Winston Churchill is not the only great statesman of our time who has been obsessed with the idea that in personal conversation with certain other heads of state he can settle matters which otherwise seem to be without solution. He undoubtedly keeps in mind the conversations which he had with President Roosevelt during the war. The relation between them was a very unusual one, but it was not quite the easy one which is generally supposed. Both Roosevelt and Churchill wanted their way and they both thought they knew how to get their way. Churchill through many years had been a bit spoiled by having his way, and the fact that he had his way in certain times of crisis, not always with the best results thereafter, did not deter him from his faith in these personal conversations. I have had the good fortune to know so many of the great personalities of our time. It is a matter of deep regret to me that I have never had the opportunity of talking with Churchill and of really knowing him. On three different occasions, he happened to be in Washington when I was there. It was a remarkable coincidence that each time that I happened to be in Washington and the President and Churchill had been having conversations, when I saw the President on three different occasions he said, "George, it's too bad you missed him again when he has just gone out the back door and is leaving for home." I have read everything that I know of that Churchill has written. I have followed as closely as one can from the outside, and at the time when I had the opportunity to do so from the inside, at least in a measure, what he has done. I have unbounded admiration for the man, not only for his capacity and the breadth and depth of his views, but for his understanding and above all for his courage. Few men will leave a greater impress on their times than Churchill. It is doubtful whether Britain has produced a greater statesman than he.

There are many similarities between the personal character and their official activity of Churchill and Roosevelt. I think that Roosevelt and Churchill will by future historians be judged to be the greatest statesmen that the world
has ever produced. Their performance has to be measured in the picture of the
times in which they lived. Never before had the world really been faced by more
complex problems. Roosevelt had the same characteristics in many ways and in many
ways the same ways of working that Churchill had. I often wonder which was the
greater man. My own conclusion is, based on what I know, that Roosevelt is the
greater of the two. My principal reason for thinking that he is a greater man is
that he had greater flexibility of thought, while at the same time adhering to
principle. Another thing which personally inclines me more to Roosevelt than to
Churchill is the fact that without any doubt Roosevelt was a man of greater warmth
of heart and greater human understanding than Churchill. There have been men in
the past in various countries who have instilled fear in other countries. There
have been men who instilled respect, but there has been no man, I believe, in the
history of our times and in the history of times in which history is able adequately
to record the circumstances, who had a greater appeal to the great masses of people
and to practically all classes of people than Roosevelt. There is certainly no
man who was more greatly and more widely loved than he. Those who knew him well
could not help but love and respect him. The fact that by a few, particularly in
his own country, Roosevelt was as much hated as any man and as strongly hated as
any man that we have had in our country, is just an indication of how great his
appeal was to the masses.

I recall that when Secretary Hull called me on the telephone at my office in
Mexico the Embassy in [illegible] on the afternoon of President Roosevelt's death at 4
o'clock very shortly after the President had passed away at Warm Springs, John
Snyder was in my office. He was then the vice president of the leading bank in
St. Louis and happened to be in Mexico City for a [illegible] meeting of Mexican and
American bankers. John's reaction, when I told him what the Secretary had said
to me over the phone, was, "That is bad news for everybody. It is bad news for
our country, it is bad news for the rest of the world and it is bad news particularly for me." I asked him what he meant by it being particularly bad news for him. John said that he had a promise which he had to keep to Mr. Truman that if ever he should need him he would answer the call. He said that now that Mr. Truman was being sworn in almost at that moment, or perhaps had already been sworn in as President, he felt very sure that before the evening was out the President would get in touch with him. John said that he was vice president of this bank in St. Louis, which happened to be the second in importance in St. Louis and one of the most important in the southwest. He had every reason to believe that in due course he would be president. He said, "I know what it means to go to Washington. I shall do whatever the President asks me to do because I told him that I would if this situation arose." He said, "I am perfectly willing to make the sacrifices that are involved for a number of years, but it will mean that all the desires that I have nourished so far as my career in banking are concerned, will be gone. I know that when my work in Washington is over, I will not be able to return to my bank."

I had to make a quick call that afternoon after John left my office to go to an office in town. I had to do part of the distance on foot. The city of Mexico had the appearance of a city in mourning. I have never seen anything like it anywhere. In spite of the feelings which had existed between Mexico and the United States and certain essential differences for many years, it is clear that the passing away of no Mexican statesman and no Mexican individual could have made such a profound impression on everyone whom one saw on the streets. For several days the city was as though some great devastating influence had passed over it. It was not only that I felt this but that others felt it as well, for they spoke to me of it.

Before John left my office shortly after 4 o'clock the day of the President's death, he said that as he would probably hear from the President that night and that
it might be difficult to get north immediately by commercial airlines, would I be able to have one of the Embassy planes take him to Washington. I told him that all he had to do was to let me know and that within an hour or so he would be able to leave. I immediately asked the Air Attaché of the Embassy to keep a plane ready to leave anytime during the course of the night. In the early evening just after [REDACTED] my wife and I had received the visit of the members of the Diplomatic Corps and their wives who came to express their condolences, I had a call from John saying that the President had just called him to ask him to come to Washington as soon as possible and I told him that the plane was ready at the airport, awaiting him, and he left that night.

I shall speak in other places in these memoranda of my relationships and friendship with John Snyder during the years, of the constructive role which in my opinion he played as Secretary of Treasury and of the devotion which he showed to his friends and the sacrifices which he made in order to remain in the public service. I do wish to note here that I know of no man who left the Treasury, and I speak of course only of my own knowledge, who left the Treasury with more general respect than John Snyder did. It was not that he came out of it as a poor man, because his honesty and integrity were always unquestionable. Whether it was in banking circles in New York or in Boston or Chicago or in San Francisco or in New Orleans or in any other part of our country or whether it was in important business circles, John had the respect of everyone who knew the work he was doing.

To return to what I was starting to dictate with regard to Churchill not being the only one who had this belief that he could settle things through direct contact with heads of state, I wish to recount a few circumstances which may not be well known with regard to President Roosevelt. President Roosevelt had the definite feeling, in fact a conviction, that if he would be able to sit down particularly with Hitler and with Mussolini that he would be able to avoid the outbreak of the war. He felt that in some way he could compose the situation. How he thought
he could do it I do not believe he ever said to Secretary Hull or to those with
whom he discussed it. This idea became a sort of obsession with him. Secretary
Hull mentioned a number of times to me that the President had spoken of his desire
to have such a meeting and was pressing the holding of such a meeting. Mr. Hull
always did everything he could to discourage the idea. One morning the Secretary
called me in early in the morning. He said that he had had a long evening at the
White House and that he had got to bed very late. The Secretary liked to retire
very early and when he was kept up late he usually complained about it. He said
that the President had again spoken to him at great length about this trip which
he had in mind, during the course of which he would meet Hitler and Mussolini. He
said that the President now had the idea that if he would get aboard a cruiser and
Mussolini and Hitler would do the same, they could meet somewhere at sea and no
one would really know anything about it. He would find some reason for making the
cruise. He was convinced that if the three of them could sit down together and
talk it out, that the war could be averted. Mr. Hull said that he had exhausted
every argument. He said that he had talked it over so often with the President
that he had made his last effort the night before. He wanted me to know that the
President was really bent on it. I gathered the impression that he had the feeling
that Sumner Welles might be encouraging the President in this idea.

The Secretary said that he felt almost certain that the President would talk
it over with me. I do not know whether Mr. Hull had suggested this to the President
or not, but in the course of the next few days the President asked me to come over
and he began to talk about such a meeting. It was the first time that he had
mentioned the matter to me even in the most indirect way. I knew from Mr. Hull
that he had talked it over with him a number of times over a period of months.
This was the first time, however, that the idea of a meeting at sea had been speci-
Fically suggested. The President briefly told me of his plan and asked
me what I thought about it. I said to him that in the first place the idea of
holding a meeting which would not be known by all the world was quite out of the question. There were no arrangements which could be made to prevent such a meeting from being known. That was a factor which had to be kept in mind. If the results of the meeting were good, then all was to the good. If the results of the meeting were bad, then the situation would be incredibly worsened. For that reason alone, and as I felt sure that the meeting would almost certainly be a failure, it should not take place. The President, I was sure, would not think of taking any step which would make the situation worse rather than better, or in which the percentage of risk of making the situation worse rather than better was so great. I had the feeling that this particular argument had not been presented to the President before, for he seemed to be visibly taking note of it.

I then went on to say that I felt that the President did not really adequately know Hitler and Mussolini. If there was anyone in the world outside of their own countries who knew both of them without ever having met them or talked with them, he certainly did. I said that I did not know Mussolini. I had never seen him nor met him. I had at least a partial knowledge of the character of Mussolini. So far as Hitler was concerned, I could speak from first-hand knowledge. He was after all the No. 1 man in this combination of Hitler and Mussolini. Mussolini was rapidly becoming completely subordinate to Hitler. Mussolini I was sure did not realize that he was signing his own death warrant in getting into these close relationships with Hitler. Mussolini felt that he was stronger and more intelligent than Hitler. He felt as many in Germany and the rest of the world felt, that Hitler was not a stable man. Mussolini had the obsession that he would be the big man in the partnership. This was so obviously ridiculous without any foundation. In any combination of Italy and Germany, Germany had to be the strongest factor because of her financial, industrial and moral resources. That alone settled the question as to who was to be the bigger man in the combination. Completely aside from this, Mussolini was overestimating himself and underestimating Hitler. If he was not underestimating
Hitler he was underestimating the forces which were behind him. I said therefore to the President that if such a meeting took place he would have before him two men, one Hitler, who would not be subject to any reason whatever, and Mussolini, who might be subject to a certain amount of reason but who would be completely dominated by Hitler.

I said that the fundamental mistake that I thought the President was making in thinking of such a meeting in the way that he did was that he considered Mussolini and Hitler to be amenable to reason. Again I said I did not know Mussolini well enough first hand to have any impressions which were worth while stating to the President in so important a matter as that which he had raised. So far as Hitler was concerned, I knew that he was not amenable to any reason under any circumstances. No one knew better than the President what the objectives of Hitler were and how implacable he was and would be in carrying them through. It was a very important thing for our country and for the world that he, the President, realized how single minded and determined Hitler was in reaching these objectives, without war if he could, and with force and war if he could not reach them by any other means. Hitler was not going to compromise on anything. The idea of reaching a solution on the basis of some compromise was out because Hitler was not a man who would or could compromise. But I said there was something more fundamental, and that was that Hitler was not amenable to reason. I then recalled to the President a number of things which had happened from time to time, and I will not burden this memorandum by going into the incidents which I raised briefly with the President. These were incidents with which the President was very familiar. They were incidents that showed that Hitler was not subject to any reason but acted only on passion and prejudice.

I said to the President that he had powerful arguments to advance. I said that he had a personality which could impress itself on men. This personality, however, in my opinion would have no effect whatever on Hitler and perhaps little
on Mussolini. I knew that I was treading on dangerous ground, because the fact that the President had this feeling that he could convince was known to many of us and at times he depended too much on it. It was, however, a very delicate thing to speak of, but in as clear a way as I could and with all respect I tried to make the President see that the basic reason, which was his own persuasive powers, which he had for thinking that the meeting could be a success, had no basis whatever in fact. I told the President that the whole world knew and our country knew that he wished to do everything to avoid a war. Our country in particular knew and informed people in our country knew how well he was informed on the intimate details of developments in every aspect of the situation in Europe. If, therefore, such a meeting were held, our people would believe that the President must have good reason to think that it could be a success. I respectfully advanced the opinion that he did not have sufficient reason to think that it would be a success, but the contrary. I said that he had this overwhelming role to play as President of our country, and our country had this overwhelming role to play in the situation, and that as he and I had often spoken about the matter, we knew that when the war came we would have to bear the principal responsibility of it and the principal burden of it before the war was over. I said therefore that keeping in mind what I thought were his responsibilities in the next years before war broke out and when war actually came, it would be a disastrous thing for his prestige and for the influence of our country if he should have taken the initiative in holding such a meeting which was bound to have bad consequences. There was still hope that the war could be avoided. It was almost certain, if not certain, that it could not be avoided. Therefore every decision had to be based on keeping our prestige and our position and in the maintenance of his position as a leader. I would consider it a serious mistake if such a meeting were held and if he should take the initiative in arranging for such a meeting.

I said to the President that he knew that I appreciated and valued the
friendship which he had shown me, that I valued the confidence which he had shown me. I appreciated particularly his asking my opinion about things. I had to tell him in this case where he had asked my opinion that I felt as strongly about it as on any question that he had every asked my opinion.

The President thanked me. The matter was never raised again in conversation between us. Mr. Hull told me weeks afterwards that he thought my conversation had had a great effect and that the matter had not been mentioned again, and he doubted whether it would be.