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City University of New York PH.D. 1984

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GEORGE S. MESSERSMITH: A DIPLOMATIC BIOGRAPHY

by

JESSE H. STILLER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1984

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1.	The Making of a Foreign Service Officer	1
2.	Berlin, 1930-1934	51
3.	Vienna, 1934-1937	116
4.	Washington, D.C., 1937-1940	193
5.	Havana, 1940-1942	291
6.	Mexico City, 1942-1946	337
7.	Buenos Aires, 1946-1947	450
	Epilogue	511
	Bibliography	528

Chapter One

The Making of a Foreign Service Officer

"The distant and remote held a peculiar charm for me as a child," recalled George Strausser Messersmith. Fleetwood, Berks County, Pennsylvania, his birthplace, would not hold him for long. Hardheaded Germans of the Lutheran and Reformed churches were first drawn to the area's fertile land around 1700. Among them were Messersmiths.[1] In the 1820s, John Messersmith, tailor, was one of fifteen craftsmen who founded the Berks hamlet of Coxtown, soon to be known disparagingly as "Crowtown," for it consisted of twenty five rude log cabins. Then, in 1857, the East Pennsylvania Railroad came. It named the station Fleetwood, and the town optimistically followed suit. Previously it was "not favorably situated to become a business place." John's son Charles, born in 1846, was one of Fleetwood's young men who endeavored to capitalize on the opportunities brought by the railroad. Charles was already managing his father's dry goods shop; in the late 1860s he formed a partnership with three others and built a wadding mill. Business thrived. By 1870 the concern employed twenty hands and registered sales of over $100,000. Charles plowed his profits into real estate, an iron mine, and a "two-story frame tenant house," perhaps for his employees. He took a wife, Caroline Schaeffer, and built her a substantial brick house. Finally he accumulated enough to buy out his associates.[2]

Reverses followed. In May 1873 the Messersmith works was destroyed by fire. Charles' loss amounted to over $45,000. He had to liquidate his remaining assets, including the family retail business. Then came Caroline's death, at the age of 26. But the grieving widower battled back. He became a partner in a new venture--fire insurance. There was a new wife: Sarah (Sallie) Strausser, a widow with two children. Soon there were children of their own: George in 1883 and Robert two years later. And, if recouping his fortune was slow and discouraging, Charles apparently never lost the respect of his neighbors. He remained active in civic affairs, sitting on the town school board and serving as postmaster from 1880 to 1886. Then, tragically, he died in 1889. Sallie was again a widow, with two young sons to raise and debts to pay. But she was a strong and resourceful woman, "a most extraordinary mother," George recalled. She cultivated his passion for reading, particularly the novels of Thackeray, Scott, and Austen. By age eleven he had read everything they wrote, books that filled him with longing for far off places and people.[3]

In his thousands of extant letters Messersmith never spoke of his father. He could not have remembered him very well; George was only six when he died. Yet his father's influence is evident. George inherited Charles's toughness, patriotism, and strong will, as well as the thrift and practicality typical of Pennsylvania Dutchmen. His father's interest in public education may also have rubbed off on him. Studious by nature, Messersmith, having graduated from high school in 1898, decided to become a teacher. Training could be had at the state

normal school in nearby Kutztown without the expense of boarding out. Two years there and he was ready for his first real job, in a local one room schoolhouse. When the term was up, Messersmith, now 18, left home for good, accepting a post as schoolmaster in the village of Woodside, Delaware.[4]

He was plainly cut out for bigger things than country schools. His drive and diligence won quick notice. Moreover, he appreciated the importance of self-promotion. Lacking useful family connections, he sought out influential people locally. In 1902 he became school principal in the town of Felton and took lodging with relatives of John Bassett Moore, America's leading authority on international law. Messersmith claimed to have read and admired Moore's weighty History and Digest of International Arbitrations (1898); and, although he was never to meet Moore during his stay in Felton, Moore heard about him from his folks and later provided Messersmith with critical guidance in his foreign service career.[5]

Staying with the Moores immediately paid off. Among the well-to-do Delawarians to whom he was introduced were the Mustards of Lewes, one of the state's leading families and certainly among the best travelled. Robert Mustard had founded the Shanghai branch of the American Tobacco Company, and his brother Lewis, with his wife and three children, joined him in China for extended stays. Their uncle, Elle W. Tunnell, was governor of Delaware during the 1880's, with close ties to Thomas F. Bayard, Grover Cleveland's secretary of state.

Bayard, at Tunnell's recommendation, first brought Moore, then a young Wilmington lawyer, to the State Department in 1885.[6]

Messersmith's circle expanded when he moved to Newark, Delaware in 1903 for his fourth teaching job in as many years. Scarcely out of his teens, he nonetheless looked the schoolmaster. Early portraits are of a thin-faced youth with a prematurely receding hairline and brisk, dark eyes radiating behind steel-framed spectacles on a long, sharp nose. Newark students recalled a demanding, but stimulating pedagogue.[7]

These were among the happiest days of his young life. Outside the classroom Messersmith was a genial companion, a good listener. He became a member of the exclusive Southern Club in Philadelphia, forty miles away, where he spent weekends hobnobbing with the well-to-do. In Newark he took up with a group of junior faculty from the state college, now the University of Delaware. W. Owen Sypherd, a professor of English and political science, became a lifelong friend. In 1905 they collaborated on a grammar; three years later, with Sypherd's encouragement, Messersmith published his own Government of Delaware, a ponderous tome that undoubtably sedated generations of students. But public officials and the press praised it warmly, and the book became the standard state civics text. He was making a name for himself. Summers, he toured the state offering seminars on

management and teaching techniques. He published a number of pamphlets on these subjects.[8]

Those who knew Messersmith in later years were invariably awe-struck by his capacity for work. Some doubted he was even capable of relaxing or sharing a joke. He admitted himself that humor and repartée were not his forté. What little can be learned of his Newark days, however, suggests a blither spirit. Far from being immune to temptation, he indulged in considerable revelry with academic friends like Sypherd. He later fondly recalled their "wild" campus parties. Nor was he oblivious to the attraction of the sexes. According to stories his niece heard, "George was quite a gay blade in his school days and always had an eye for a pretty woman." He began seeing Lewis Mustard's eldest daughter Marion, whom everyone called Marnie. A "plump, very friendly, not very bright, party-loving female" who loved to travel and spoke three languages badly, she was nine years his junior and a most improbable companion for an icecold martinet.[9]

Messersmith's active social life in Newark may explain his decision in 1909 not to enroll at Delaware College to obtain the baccalaureate. He never did receive the degree. Throughout his foreign service career there was considerable confusion, which he failed to clear up, over his educational attainments. The State Department Register listed "Delaware College" without indicating what he did there. Elsewhere it was variously noted that he was a

"graduate of Delaware College," had "three years at Delaware," or had "taken a course at Delaware." Messersmith did apply for admission to advanced standing in November 1908, and passed the entrance exam. But his two years at Kutztown left him deficient in the classics, sciences, and mathematics. The committee that reviewed his application recommended his admission upon completion of remedial work in those subjects.[10]

Messersmith apparently declined the offer. There is no record of his ever taking coursework at Delaware. Considering his promising career as educator and author, it is no wonder that he passed up freshman Greek. He was an industrious self-learner and a quick study, blessed with a superb memory that remained sharp--though not as sharp as he thought--into his seventies. He had an acute ear, if little feel, for languages, and was a keen judge of character. A career that took him to the top could not have suffered much for lack of a bachelor's degree.[11]

And yet, notwithstanding his natural gifts, a little more liberal arts training would have done him good. Never a deep student, he tended to intellectual rigidity, and was too quick to reduce complex questions to moral absolutes. He was anything but well-rounded. When he read for pleasure, it was usually a detective thriller. He cared nothing for the fine arts and never had a serious avocation.

And he lacked the gift of expression. Throughout his life, his stiff English did his ideas a disservice. He occasionally showed signs of rhetorical life, but only when he actually set pen to paper, as for a speech. Early in his career, however, he became slave to the

dictaphone, to the enduring stupefaction of his readers. He gave the transcripts a quick read, which allowed jumbled syntax and worse slip by. The results were letters and despatches that plodded along implacably and earned him the sobriquet "Forty Page George." Someone somewhere should have taught him to be succinct; someone might have in the two years of college that he missed.

It speaks volumes about the Delaware public schools in the early 1900's that someone like Messersmith--young, with unimpressive academic credentials of his own, but with an overpowering desire to get ahead--could rise so rapidly. The schools were a shambles. Delaware had scarcely been touched by the currents of national educational reform. Elsewhere, state governments, working with the new teachers' organizations, were assuming responsibilities that had hitherto fallen to local school boards, establishing uniform standards for teacher preparation, curricula, attendance,and financing. In Delaware, by contrast, control over public education continued to be vested in some 290 independent districts, parochial in outlook, financed entirely through local taxation. A citizens' group blasted the schools as "antiquated and undeveloped . . . general and local supervision are alike unstaisfactory; the teaching staff is largely untrained [and] school buildings are seriously defective . . . . Delaware buys a low and cheap brand of education."[12]

The situation cried for reform. It was a challenge Messersmith could not resist. His no nonsense approach to administration had already involved him in some nasty encounters with autocratic local school board members. On one occasion he was threatened with loss of his job and reprisals against his school unless he desisted from the expulsion of a well connected student who was a troublemaker and had defied his authority. Messersmith stood fast. The episode taught him never "to let himself be influenced by fear of a scene or of personal unpleasantness" in carrying out his duties. Now and forever after he would fight for what he believed in.[13]

This courage was noticed. He became a leader of the school reformers. In 1911 Messersmith, now principal at Lewes, was named secretary to the reorganized state board of education, and vice president a year later. In 1913 the board released a report to the state legislature proposing a complete overhaul of the system along lines adopted elsewhere across the country. Despite earnest efforts by Messersmith and his colleagues to sell the plan, local interests combined to defeat them.[14]

Messersmith took failure hard. He was now thirty, single, frustrated in his chosen profession, disgusted and "tired of struggling with ignorant and prejudiced school boards." The battle for reform had earned him powerful enemies. He decided to make a clean break: Delaware, teaching, bachelorhood. He had daydreamed about a career in the United States foreign service. And there was Marion Mustard,

whom he had been seeing off and on for years. A free spirit, "she would never be happy as the wife of a schoolmaster." The globe-trotting life of diplomacy appealed to them both.[15]

There were obstacles. Without study time, he sat for the consular exams in mid-1913 and failed. Fortunately, examinations for the diplomatic service were being held in December. This time, with some reading under his belt, Messersmith scored third highest of thirty candidates.[16]

In January 1914 he headed for Washington. He had an appointment with John Bassett Moore, then counselor of the State Department, presumably to receive his diplomatic assignment. Messersmith strode confidently into the anteroom of Moore's office in the old State, War and Navy building, across the hall from the office he later occupied as assistant secretary of state. A dozen people were waiting to see Moore, but Messersmith was shown in at once. After congratulating him for his success on the exams, Moore informed him that he had heard good things about him from Delaware, and that the Department was ready to assign him to Vienna as third secretary at $1200 a year. But "you are not going there," he continued to the thoroughly confused Messersmith, not if what Moore had heard about him was true. "I understand that you don't have a penny of private income. [The Mustards] have some means, but I am sure you are not thinking of trying to live on [Marion] and her family . . . I do not think you are that kind of

person." Messersmith recalled his saying that the diplomatic service "was a fairly good career for a man who had plenty of money and who did not care for business and who wanted a respectable way of passing his time without having to do very much work." The diplomatic service was small, and promotions came slowly. Far better, Moore advised, that Messersmith wait and retake the consular exams; hard workers belonged with the consuls. Moore went on in this vein for over an hour; when Messersmith reminded him of the crowd waiting outside, Moore brushed him off. "All of those people," he declared, "are waiting there to get something. It is far more important that I give you this time to save you from making a mistake that may spoil a lifetime."[17]

Messersmith was filled with uncertainty. Why undergo the ordeal of exams again when a diplomatic career beckoned? Certainly the marginally better salaries in the consular service--he would start at $2000 a year, still $4000 less than he was earning as a school principal--was not a deciding factor; for, whatever Moore had heard, Messersmith intended to accept subsidies from his "comfortable" in-laws to be. On the other hand, prospects did appeal brighter in the consular service. Diplomatic assignments were patronage plums, whereas consuls operated under the merit system; presumably one could concentrate on one's work and advance according to one's ability.

Messersmith sought reassurance in an interview with the director of the consular service, Wilbur J. Carr. Could a man who did his work conscientiously expect regular promotions even though lacking in-

fluential supporters? Carr said he could. That, he later claimed, was good enough for him. He passed the exams, took a whole week's training in Washington, and, on 25 June 1914, was notified of his appointment as consul of class ten, with orders to proceed to Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada. Three weeks later, he and Marion were wed at Lewes. The young couple packed their things and left for their life abroad.[18]

Messersmith had chosen well in a spouse and a career. A new spirit was in the air in the consular service in 1914. A decade before, consuls were mostly demoralized clerks operating out of rundown rooms in ports around the world. Now, under the forceful Carr, director since 1909, the service was being transformed in accordance with the principles of scientific management into a model government bureaucracy. To ensure accountability and coordination, consulates were subdivided by function, classed according to importance, and assigned specific jurisdictions; offices were upgraded, and equipment, furniture and forms standardized; an inspection corps periodically rated officers for fitness and ability. Consular spit and polish helped the service attract better men--industrious, patriotic men of modest means like Messersmith--and gave rise to a new esprit de corps. The competition for world trade was drilled into the consuls, who were expected to go out and fight for American markets. Export-minded businessmen increasingly looked to Carr's men for assistance, and the consuls gained a constituency to support their bid for appropriations from Congress. That was especially vital in fending off the competing claims of the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, whose

overseas attaches were also in the trade promotion field. Business support also helped shield the consular service from the Wilson administration's sweeping patronage policy; the consuls' Ivy League cousins in the diplomatic service, widely regarded as superfluous playboys, bore the brunt of political appointees in the State Department. Carr's organization was ready to cope with the problems that flowed from the European war.[19]

The war hardly existed for Messersmith at Fort Erie. It was a sleepy village of 900, linked by ferry to Buffalo across the Niagara River. He and Marion disembarked and boarded the train into town. The scenery was unprepossesing to begin with, and the last half mile saw a series of vacant, garbage-strewn lots. "A more desolate, dirty, and discouraging scene could hardly have presented itself to a new consul," he recalled. " I dared not look at my wife . . . but saw she was in tears, and I felt very much like weeping myself." The town was equally bleak. Housing befitting an American consul and his somewhat pampered bride was costly. The place they took cost his entire salary. They moved in to find the gas and electricity out. By candlelight they ate their first Canadian dinner, out of several cold cans.[20]

However provincial, Fort Erie was in many respects a useful first post. It gave Messersmith a chance to prove himself in matters of highest importance to Carr. The office was a glaring example of the

conditions that Carr was working to change. One of the very first United States consulates established, it had been a dumping ground for patronage appointees with sufficient influence to pull a post near home. Messersmith's predecessor was typical. Horace J. Harvey was a Buffalo speculator ruined in wheat futures, whose long second career as a consul came to an abrupt end with the visit of one of Carr's inspectors. Messersmith learned why in his first hour on the job. In a closet behind his desk he found thousands of unopened pieces of mail dating as far back as eleven years. Messersmith set himself to clearing this backlog, keeping Carr well-apprised of his progress. For his pains he was promoted to class nine, at another $600 a year.[21]

When he looked up, however, Messersmith found little regular business. Ignored by American officials at Fort Erie, Canadian-American trade in the region had long since moved twenty miles up-river to Niagara Falls, served by another consular office. This left Messersmith with considerable free time, which he put to good use. He studied the fat volumes of consular regulations, and prepared a memorandum to Carr setting forth a few suggestions for revisions in the interests of economy and efficiency. But, recognizing that this might be considered brash for someone with barely a year's experience, he sensibly kept his ideas to himself.[22]

One recommendation, though, did go forward: that the Fort Erie consulate be closed permanently, to save $10,000 a year. It was a "nice, comfortable post," but Messersmith had not joined the service

for relaxation. In any case, he had finished his study of the regulations. The Department responded cautiously, fearing protests from wealthy Americans who had summer homes near town. But when Messersmith, in Washington on his first leave, made it clear that no one cared, the shutdown was effected.[23]

Messersmith was now in line for a transfer to a post where he might put his book learning to use. He also expected a promotion in class and salary. Thus he was considerably upset by the news that he was going to Curacao, and at the same grade. He had never even heard of the place, and had difficulty locating it on a map. Then he learned that five of the seven men inducted into the service with him already outranked him and had drawn more important posts. He considered resigning, but waited to give Carr a chance to talk him out of it. The post, Carr reminded him, was in large part what the man made of it; he was sure that Messersmith would find enough to keep him busy in Curacao.[24]

Carr was correct. Curacao, the main island of the Netherlands Antilles, 100 miles off the Venezuelan coast, bustled with activity under normal circumstances. The trade winds and the deepwater harbor at Willemstad, the capital, had made it a major entrepot for the northern South American trade. More recently it had turned into an important coaling stop for Panama Canal traffic.

Curacao was unusually busy when the Messersmiths arrived in June 1916. A large German community was prominent in the island's trade and banking. With Dutch neutrality, the Germans stepped up their

activities. They transferred their assets to Venezuelan and Colombian dummy corporations to circumvent the British blockade and blacklist. A brisk trade in contraband sprung up. Curacao crawled with spies and agents provocateurs.

For a time Messersmith had more mundane matters to attend to. Housing was again in short supply. The Messersmiths wound up spending several months at the best hotel Curacao had to offer, a place that left much to be desired. Guests shared the single bathroom on each floor. Water was scarce because the Dutch government refused to finance improvements. When guests wanted to bathe, they paid twenty Dutch cents for a bucket of water, which was poured into a perforated tin can suspended over the tub. An amused Messersmith recalled that "anyone who had the temerity to ask for a second bucket, even though he was willing to pay liberally for it, was frowned upon."[25]

The American consulate occupied three rooms on the ground floor. The offices were grimy and virtually unfurnished. The files were a mess. The vice consul, a Dutch citizen, meant well, but had his own business to run. The rest of the "staff" consisted of a Dutch clerk redolent of gin and a messenger with a bad limp.

The spectacle offended Messersmith's instinct for order and efficiency. It took four long days and the hiring of several natives to clear out the office debris and restore a semblance of order, but he soon had the situation in hand. The consulate was in top shape for the visit of a consular inspector, who commended "the up to date

arrangement of the archives, files and correspondence . . . the business-like manner in which the office is generally conducted . . . [and] the excellent standing in the community which both office and officer enjoy as the result of his conduct and efforts."[26]

While straightening up the office, Messersmith made himself persona grata. Curacao boasted a busy society, and he displayed the same charm and conviviality that had ingratiated him to influential Delawarians. By early 1917 he could inform the Department "with absolute certainty that there is not a single local official with whom I am not on friendly terms . . . The Governor of the Colony has invited me to his table oftener than any other consular officer here." He paid special attention to local businessmen. The Germans were uniformly hostile, the Dutch much more congenial, particularly the Jews, whose prominence in Curacaoan trade dated to the 16th century. Messersmith pronounced them "excellent friends of the United States," charming and cultured people. They were equally taken with him, so much so that several made tempting job offers. One promised $25,000 a year to start--this when Messersmith, now consul of class eight, was earning $2600, less than "the American boilermakers at the petroleum refinery under construction here." The Messersmiths were entertaining simply and infrequently, but still found themselves forced to draw upon "personal resources"--probably Marion's savings and a "small stipend" from her parents--to get along. They had to put up with the picayune penuriousness of the Department's tightfisted bookkeepers, who ques-

tioned every voucher he submitted. But Messersmith kept his irritation to himself. He "always had the alternative of getting out of [the service] and trying to earn more," and he had no intention of leaving as long as their resources held out.[27]

Financial stringencies did not impair his effectiveness in Curacao. He quickly distinguished himself not only for sociability but also for conscience. His instinctive sympathy for the oppressed and dispossessed came into play. Curacao harbored hundreds of Venezuelan exiles, supporters of former president Cipriano Castro in his ongoing rivalry with the present office holder, the despotic Juan Vicente Gomez. Destitution was widespread among the refugees because local employers feared that Gomez, who had his own spies on the island, would retaliate against anyone who aided his enemies. Trying to set an example, Messersmith hired a former Castro cabinet member named Castillo to teach him Spanish. The Venezuelan's pride precluded his accepting Messersmith's money; they agreed to hold the lessons at lunch or dinner, so that Castillo "got at least one good meal a day." The American consul tried to raise funds to help the others, and wound up augmenting the meagre contributions himself in order to set up a soup kitchen at the local prison. Gomez learned about this--he later refused the Messersmiths Venezuelan visas--but Messersmith became a minor hero on Curacao.[28]

Thus, with American entry into World War I, he had the quiet cooperation of the local government, despite its official neutrality, in working against enemy activity. He was well prepared, having spent

hours "prowling the waterfront with a notebook," recording the origin and destination of goods in transit. Information thus acquired helped him to untangle the web of financial and legal transactions by which German trade in Curacao was camouflaged. That the United States was the island's sole supplier of coal offered a potent weapon against enemy traders. Consuls had the power to inspect neutral ships for enemy cargo and passengers before authorizing a withdrawal from coal stocks. Messersmith saw to it that those who deserved coal got it; those whom he judged guilty of collusion with the enemy watched their ships collect barnacles at dockside.[29]

This vigilence, he recalled, made him "probably . . . the most hated man in that part of the world" among smugglers. One, an Italian, decided to end his interference once and for all. One morning at the waterfront, Messersmith found a knife at his throat, his assailant muttering "you are becoming much too inconvenient for me." Only the timely arrival of passersby saved his neck.[30]

Others had cause to regret the failure of the attempt on his life. In late 1917 Messersmith began to suspect that the German consulate on Curacao was engaged in espionage. He noticed that "bright, young Germans" attached to the consulate as lowly clerks "suddenly and mysteriously" started disappearing, "one by one." Messersmith informed Washington; but the matter lay dormant until a young Dutchman walked into his office with a disquieting story. He was a former employee of the German consulate, and had received two inexplicable pieces of

mail: an insurance policy with certain sentences underlined, ostensibly issued at Baltimore for goods to be shipped from Curacao to Liverpool; and a letter confirming issuance of the policy, calling "special attention to the underlined parts." Having placed no such shipment or policy, the Dutchman was baffled; and Messersmith's "discreet inquiries" confirmed that he was a sincere, if naive, fellow. Messersmith's "intuition" told him that the documents were messages in code. After two weeks of intensive study and "literally sleepless nights," he had still not found the solution. He was about to "admit defeat" by sending the documents to Washington when he hit upon it. Within a half hour he had decoded the messages.

As it turned out, the "bright, young Germans," having completed training, had gone to the United States as spies. Aware that commercial documents like insurance policies routinely passed the American censor and that the Curacao consulate's mail was closely monitored, the Germans had decided to employ the Dutchman as a drop, hoping that he would show the documents to his old friends at their consulate. Instead, in September 1918 Messersmith learned of the arrest in Cuba of German master spy Albert Westphal, who had concocted the scheme. Although Messersmith overmodestly attributed his discovery not "to any skill on my part but rather to entirely fortuitous circumstances," his persistence had paid off with an important contribution to American counterespionage efforts, as recognized in a

commendation from Carr.

After two and a half years of strain in Curacao, Messersmith was ready for a rest. His chance came in October 1918, when he received the sad word that Marion's father, Lewis Mustard, had died. His only son was in France with Pershing's army, so the Messersmiths felt obliged to return to Delaware to discharge family business and comfort the widow.[32]

Leave approved, they steamed home, landing in New York two days after the armistice. The winter of 1918-1919 found them based at Marion's mother's house in Lewes. Rumors were that Messersmith would not be returning to Curacao; in January Carr notified him that he was going as consul to Antwerp. Messersmith "jumped at the opportunity, as Belgium was a magic word in those days." A European post was a sign of his superiors' confidence, "the opportunity which I had always hoped might come to me in the Service."[33]

There would be no magic in Antwerp for the Messersmiths, not at first. Boarding the army transport Agamemnon in New York for the transatlantic voyage, they were shown to a "palatial suite"--infested with vermin, as they shortly discovered. The army's bill for Marion's share in these pestiferous accomodations greeted them in Antwerp. They arrived on a cold, rainy day in early March 1919 to a scene of commotion amidst the destruction wrought by war and four years of German occupation. The port itself was relatively unscathed, though, and Antwerp had become a focal point for relief and evacuation efforts. Refugees from all corners of the continent came in a

steady stream, besieging the American consulate general for visas. These would-be immigrants had to be carefully screened, for fears were rife at home that the United States was about to be inundated with common criminals and revolutionary agitators, the latter courtesy of the Soviet Union. Messersmith and two army intelligence officers had been sent to assist. The expected flood of "undesirables and troublemakers" never did materialize, he wrote later, "due to the energetic steps taken at the beginning."[34]

Visa control was only one of a number of problems, official and personal, that he now faced. Antwerp was the main debarkation point for American troops in Europe. American merchant ships lined the harbor waiting to discharge their cargoes and take on doughboys, and it fell to Messersmith to arrange port clearances with the local authorities. Because of bottlenecks in internal transportation, goods piled up on the wharves, inviting thievery. On waterfront patrol, Messersmith had to contend with the usual "shore harpies," as well as with crooked American officers, who "felt no scruples in attempting to plunder their vessels and pad their accounts." Only through painstaking research in ledgers and bills of lading was he able to nab the worst culprits.[35]

The more than 4000 American troops billeted in Antwerp to run the supply and evacuation operations were another source of unnumerable headaches. Army officers arbitrarily appropriated the best hotels in town for their own use. Registered guests were left to their own devices. Sodden American enlisted men were not always models of decorum.

Local citizens complained to the consulate general. There, at least, they received a sympathtic hearing. Messersmith could commiserate with aggrieved Belgians with complete credibility, considering his own living conditions. He and Marion were staying in a secondclass hotel, heated two hours a day, at a rent in excess of his salary. As a steak dinner ate up a whole day's pay, they made do with lesser fare. Living frugally, they held their total living expenses to $6000 in 1919, twice what he now earned as a class six officer.[36]

By the winter of 1919 Messersmith was feeling the effects of overwork, nervous tension, and bad food. Ulcers developed; he was losing weight. One morning in February 1920 he was awakened by excruciating stomach pains. Bleeding internally, he was rushed to the American army hospital at Coblenz, Germany, 150 miles away. He cabled Washington from his bed, assuring Carr that he would be back at his desk within two weeks. Carr responded with a bill for $10.53, the cost of his telegram and the Department's reply.[37]

After a month at Coblenz, under the care of one of Europe's leading stomach specialists, there was no improvement. Instead he "got weaker steadily." Desperate, he turned to a young Belgian physician with a novel technique. Messersmith was warned that in his condition the surgery was "a grave risk," but the patient was confident "that it was better to take all the risk involved than to delay." In April 1920 he underwent the operation. A new intestinal duct was created. Messersmith felt so much better that he ignored doctor's orders for a long rest and foolishly returned to work after

two weeks. This set back his recuperation. A year later, still hurting,[38] he had to leave Antwerp for an extended convalescence at home.

The experience changed his life. He became a model patient. He held strictly to his diet, never missed his morning prunes, limited himself to an occasional after-dinner cigar, and swore off alcohol and caffeine forever. By rigorous application to this regimen he hoped to save himself from his own compulsive work habits. Still he worried endlessly about his health. It was noted that he unconsciously rested his forefingers over his wrist, checking his pulse. Some considered him neurotic; his teetotaling was conspicuous in a world of toasts and tippling. But he staying on the job and out of the hospital until 1945.[39]

By the time Messersmith returned to action in the spring of 1920, his "internal geography altered," daily pressures at the consulate general had eased considerably. The last of the American troops were packing for home, the throngs of visa seekers were thinning, and local law enforcement was reestablishing itself at the waterfront. Antwerp was caught up in rebuilding and preparations to play host for the summer Olympic games. The consulate general's problems were more and more social in nature: arranging reception, accommodations, and side trips for the luminaries who were to accompany the athletes to Antwerp. All about was a palpable desire to forget the war, which had lingered so long in the city, and to get on with the business of peace.

For old hands at the consulate general, the resumption of peace meant the resumption of sloth. So it seemed to Messersmith. Now that the clutter

of war was gone, he was appalled to see how negligible the American presence at Antwerp really was. He beheld one of Europe's preeminent ports, gateway to the rich markets of northern France and western Germany, with a well-integrated rail and river network, and an abundant, productive, and intelligent labor force. Wages were relatively low, but, since the end of wartime shortages, so was the cost of living: Messersmith noted that socialism held little appeal for Antwerp's workers. European manufacturers were rushing to exploit these advantages. New factories were going up all over the city. Yet Americans and American products were scarcely to be seen. Before the war, American trade at Antwerp "was practically of no importance." And, although the immediate postwar brought many American ships to call, Antwerp was not served regularly by a single United States merchant line. Messersith explained that over 100 European lines competed for scarce docking and storage facilities. Nor were Belgians clamoring for American products. Due to high labor and transport costs and the strength of the American dollar, United States goods bore premium prices, yet were perceived as qualitatively inferior.[40]

Breaking into this market would not be easy; Messersmith faulted the consulate general for not trying. Its reputation was "very poor." Consul General Harry Morgan did not get along with the local authorities. Unhappy in Antwerp, Morgan in 1919 asked that the Department move him and the consulate general to Brussels. Messersmith was to be left in charge of the Antwerp consulate. Carr approved.[41]

With his new responsibility, Messersmith redoubled efforts already begun to establish American influence at Antwerp. His interest in promoting exports was as much political as economic. Having spurned membership in the League of Nations, Americans, especially consuls like Messersmith, emphasized the importance of commerce as a stabilizing force. "Economic ties," he told a group of Belgian and American businessmen, "determine the nature of political relationships in our day." Trade, when the advantages were mutual, was "one of the surest safeguards of peace." A "political grievance," he maintained, "is no[t] sufficient for war if economic ties between the countries concerned make it undesirable." One sided trade, however, aroused resentment in the inferior partner and inevitably gave rise to economic and political nationalism, which hurt everyone. Although philosophically opposed to protectionism, Messersmith was too much a realist to think that tariffs could be dispensed with entirely. Free trade to him was a goal to strive towards; in the meantime, he held, the growing interdependence of the world business community would continue drawing nations together, creating a climate of trust and prosperity in which political problems could be settled amicably, with or without the United States seated at Geneva. Truly, Messersmith told his businessmen, "you are among the pioneers in the movement for international peace."[38]

So fortified, he dedicated himself to creating opportunities for Americans in Antwerp. "This consulate," he announced in a circular letter sent to firms requesting information, "is desirous of doing

all in its power to promote trade relations between the United States and this part of Belgium . . . All specific inquiries will receive our careful attention, and representatives of American firms visiting the city are cordially invited to call at the consulate." He undertook to bring together Americans already operating in the city. In early 1921 Antwerp's American Club, formed at his initiative, held its first weekly meeting. The club, as its first president informed the State Department, "presents a united front on American interests which has certainly not failed to impress those in positions of commercial influence and the civic authorities in Antwerp."[43]

This unified front helped Messersmith find room in the harbor for American shipping. His every effort, he told Washington, was "directed towards securing . . . the advantages, in the way of quays and warehouses, which were needed to meet the competition of other flags, [and] to assist in every way those who were endeavoring to build up the interests" of American shipping at Antwerp. His efforts rapidly bore fruit. By 1922 the Department was receiving letters from private American shippers and the government's Emergency Fleet Corporation crediting him for their sudden success in acquiring permanent berths. By 1924 five United States merchant lines (all with "adequate terminal facilities," Messersmith reported proudly) called regularly at Antwerp.[44]

The overall results were impressive. Although Belgian statistics were not broken down by city, covering the country as a whole, Belgian-American trade boomed, and most of it came through Antwerp, by

1922 surpassing Rotterdam as the continent's number one port. Messersmith's initiative was a large factor. He gave intensive study to overall market conditions in the city and beyond, and created a separate section within the consulate to prepare reports on prospects for specific products. In 1921 alone, the consulate turned out 246 trade reports on items from spark plugs to varnish.[45]

Delivering these products was another problem. Obviously few European buyers were willing to wait for orders to be sent to, and goods to arrive from America; efficiency, Messersmith recognized, dictated that stocks be maintained at strategic ports like Antwerp, "from which orders of any size may be filled quickly." Many American exporters took his advice. By 1925 Antwerp was a major distribution center for a host of American corporations. Several American auto makers set up distirbution warehouses in the city; Chrysler, General Motors, and Ford all operated assembly plants, with a combined output of over 200 cars per day.[46]

In just a few years Messersmith transformed the consulate, according to one who knew firsthand, into "a model of efficient foreign service," an outpost "where every problem of Americans abroad received prompt, personal and sympathetic attention." In 1913 the consulate's annual correspondence filled four boxes; in 1925, forty. Letters and visitors from Antwerp to the Department glowed with praise. "The right man in the right place," said one. "The most able and efficient consular officer with whom I have come in contact in Antwerp or other European cities," went another. The chief executives of

General Motors and Chrysler both sent commendations. Messersmith's "most excellent" trade report, wrote a New York firm, "covered the subject from every angle," providing "exactly what we require."[47]

Such notices naturally made an impression. William Phillips, undersecretary of state in the Harding administration, noted in 1923 that he was "one of our best younger consuls." But recognition was not enough for Messersmith. He was a man in a hurry. Determined to make up for his late start and to attain the rank of consul general by the age of forty, he tried to overwhelm the Department with reports of his good work. This irritated Carr, who frowned on obvious self-aggrandizement. When Messersmith forwarded seventy appreciative letters from firms that had received his trade reports, Carr clipped his wings: Messersmith should not waste the Department's time with what were "probably . . . form letters." A week after his fortieth birthday, 11 October 1923, there came another depressing message from Washington, making Antwerp again the consulate general--Morgan had been transferred to Argentina--naming Messersmith not consul general in charge, but rather "consul in charge of the Consulate General pending assignment of a Consul General," suggesting that he would soon be relinquishing the top spot in Antwerp. So it was a plainly discouraged Messersmith whom Paul C. Daniels, later a top Latin American specialist, then a Yale undergraduate contemplating a diplomatic career, called upon in

1923. "Young man," Messersmith told him, "the same talent, brains, and energy applied to something else will get you much further." But those attributes finally paid off for him. In June 1924 he was promoted to consul general.[48]

Messersmith was "overjoyed," and yet apprehensive that the promotion would be accompanied by a transfer. He was now five years in Antwerp, about as long as any officer could hope to remain at a post. He desperately wanted to stay. He understood, of course, "that an officer must be willing to serve at any post at which the Department may find it desirable to use his services." But, he wrote Washington, he felt that he had "a special usefulness" at Antwerp that argued against his removal. The situation for United States shipping had much improved, but the competition for dockside facilities was still fierce. To switch officers at this point, even if the new man were "an officer of much more capacity than myself," would be a mistake. In the time it would take for the newcomer to familiarize himself with conditions and local officials, American interests would be vulnerable. If only Messersmith had "a year or two more," the American position at the waterfront could be consolidated.[49]

Official concerns do not, however, fully explain Messersmith's desire to stay put. The years since 1920 had been the happiest and most productive of his and Marion's life together. He had learned French to go with his Spanish and German. The high prices of 1919

were a memory. Belgium, he later wrote a foreign service officer headed there, was "probably the cheapest of the advanced nations in Europe from the point of view of living and for what one gets for one's money." His salary, now $7500, supported a fairly comfortable lifestyle. Still they were spending "at least twice" his earnings. There were club membership fees, often waived for diplomats, but not consuls. He considered himself a diplomat, even if accredited otherwise, and golf was a skill that the complete diplomat must possess. By his own admission he was "a very poor golfer," because he had no interest in the game itself. He needed to belong to the Antwerp Polo Club, for example, as a matter of social conformity and entree into influential circles.[50]

Of course, consular salaries made no allowance for country clubs, however useful in the line of duty, nor for entertainment on anything like the Messersmiths' scale in Antwerp. Marion proved herself an adept and gracious hostess who could arrange a reception for sixty as easily as for six. Over 250 were in attendance at their September 1920 dinner-dance to mark the closing of the Olympics. The Messersmiths' doors were always open to visiting Americans, local officials, and businessmen. Guests were often invited to spend the night, a courtesy they could extend without inconvenience now that they occupied a 26 room mansion with a full complement of servants. The days of bone-chilling hostelries were over. He had spent over $1100 on freight charges alone--none reimbursed--bringing furniture over from home. In short, he had a considerable financial stake in Antwerp, a

fact that he hoped "may be of interest to the Department" if it was considering a transfer.[51]

Messersmith's finances deserve more than passing mention because of his reputation as a diplomat who managed on his salary, one of a "handful in a field preempted by millionaires," as Robert Bendiner put it. Messersmith never disputed the point. It is clear, however, that the decline in the Belgian cost of living and his modest salary hikes do not explain the rather dramatic improvement in their material conditions. Marion had inherited a considerable sum upon her father's death, perhaps $200,000, and apparently some stock besides. And, although Messersmith never discussed it, there is evidence that the "small stipend" they had been receiving from her parents became much larger in Antwerp and thereafter. In 1920 her widowed mother, Virginia Lee Hickman Mustard, came to live with them, which she would do intermittently until her death in 1945. Her granddaughters remember her as "a marvelous person"--warm and refined--and George was a devoted son-in-law. She was fond of him, and he was not above accepting her contribution to household expenses. Her largesse and Marion's inheritance, on top of his salary, enabled them to live luxuriously abroad. It was one reason why the Messersmiths preferred to stay abroad. He often protested that he was a poor man, which, strictly speaking, was true. But the Department, which had to consider such things in its assignment decisions, assumed him to have substantial private means. It can be concluded that freedom from financial wor-

ries was an important factor in his professional success. Foreign service officers could live on their salaries, but not in the style essential to advancement.[52]

Material abundence was one of the pleasures of Antwerp life that Messersmith hated to leave. The household saw a steady stream of visitors. "It is very seldom," he wrote Carr, "that we do not have several interesting people either for dinner or lunch." Family came for extended stays. The Messersmiths never had children of their own. He once confessed to having lacked "braver[y] . . . in facing the responsibility" of fatherhood. More likely, they decided at the beginning of their marriage to forego children in the interests of economy and freedom of movement. The constant transfers and uprooting that were the lot of foreign service officers were difficult enough by themselves.[53]

Messersmith's tender side thus remained largely hidden. But those who thought the crusty schoolmaster a child-hater were wrong. While "not the type to romp with children," he was devoted to his six nieces and nephews on Marion's side, and took a paternal interest in their upbringing. Her sister's two girls, Virginia and Ann, were the apples of his eye, and they spent a substantial portion of their young adulthood with the Messersmiths at their various posts. In Antwerp, Ann recalled, George "had plenty of time to take us to all sorts of places for fun." He arranged a full schedule of activities: language lessons, college courses, excursions throughout western Europe, tours of the galleries and public buildings, but also horseback riding and

skating. The girls loved to rib him "for being so pompous," and he cheerfully endured their teasings. They saw unforgettable sights and met scores of fascinating people, and Messersmith, for his part, delighted in showing them off.[54]

Clearly he had compelling personal reasons for wanting to stay in Antwerp, aside from concern about the status of American shipping. His record entitled him to some consideration; and Carr, in May 1926, assured him that there would be no transfer for at least a year. Two months later, the Department changed its mind: Messersmith was needed in Athens, Greece. The telegram so notifying him was not the usual summary directive, however. Messersmith was politely asked to "inform the Department if your arrangements are such as to make you available for the post." In a handwritten postscript, Secretary of State Frank Kellogg encouraged him to "feel entirely free to express your wishes."[55]

Messersmith expressed them. A few recent changes, he informed Kellogg, made a transfer more inconvenient than ever. After Carr's earlier assurances, Messersmith had leased a new, still larger house. Cancelling the contract would involve a $900 loss. Already $1500 had been spent on renovations and "special fittings practically useless elsewhere." It added up to more than he could stand to lose; he was sure the Department would "appreciate fully [the] circumstances which compell me to request [that] I be permitted [to] remain at Antwerp."[56]

He got his way and two more years in Belgium. They brought new satisfactions. "Practically a month does not pass," he reported in March 1928, "that a new American firm does not establish a branch

office here." Five did in that month alone. The American Club, now with over 100 members, reflected this presence. So many American manufacturers had set up in Antwerp that he started worrying about the consequences for employment at home. Belgian exports to the United States kept pace; by 1926, they amounted to more than $75 million, compared to $20 million in 1913. Messersmith himself had become a fixture of Antwerp's official life; friendships had ripened with time. In March 1928 he became doyen of the city's consular corps, but he had already assumed a place of honor in the community.[57]

Then it was over. In June 1928 arrived "the not unexpected but dreaded news" (as the president of the American Club put it) that Messersmith was going "to another post which would take him far away to another continent." He was to become consul general in Buenos Aires. Messersmith expressed his appreciation to the Department for "having left me here long [enough]"--now going on nine years--"to enable us to carry out at least the major lines of the program . . . which I had laid out." He could not gripe when the Department had so long deferred to his wishes, but he grumbled to himself. Among State Department officers, Latin America was considered punishment duty. The odium was partially mitigated by the fact that the American dollar went a long way--except in Buenos Aires. It was among the most expensive cities in the world. Messersmith faced the painful prospect of a reduction in their standard of living or drawing down Marion's inheritance. The Department denied his request for a

post subsidy, pointing out that the entire post appropriation for 1928 was $100,000; priority had to go to officers with dependents earning under $5,000 per year.[58]

If Messersmith had misgivings about the transfer, there was deep dismay on the part of his Antwerp friends and colleagues. They recognized that his leaving "would create an extraordinary void" in the city's official life. Departure day saw a great outpouring of sentiment. The municipal government held several dinners in his honor. The mayor saluted Messersmith's "unforgettable services." More kind words, "in most cases undeserved," he reported modestly, came from local businessmen and his own staff. He had left his mark. Years later, he heard from one of his successors that "the memory of you and Mrs. Messersmith is still warm indeed in all circles in Antwerp."[59]

After vacationing in France and Germany, the Messersmith entourage, including her mother and their two lifetime Belgian servants, the housekeeper Mary and Arturo, "as good a cook as there is," set sail for Argentina. They arrived in October 1928 to a warm welcome from the United States ambassador, Robert Woods Bliss, and the American business community. Bliss sponsored a luncheon where Messersmith heard himself praised as a miracle worker for his Belgian accomplishments. He returned the compliments: although sorry to leave Antwerp, he told the group, Buenos Aires "was on his list of places he would wish to be appointed to . . . first on the list in order of preference."[60]

That was a white lie. Right from the start, Buenos Aires justified his apprehensions. Their seven room house, twenty miles from the office,

cost $3800 a year, without heat and light--a bargain by the city's standards. He figured their year's budget at $17,000, not including clothing, entertainment, or leave. He was prepared to make up the difference over his $8000 salary, he told the Department, but his "keep interest in the Service" demanded that he speak out. It was "unquestionably undemocratic and contrary to the spirit of our institutions" that consuls should be forced to either subsidize the government or live in poverty at expensive posts. When needy Americans became objects of pity and derision, he insisted, the country's interests and prestige suffered.[61]

His argument underscored the shortcomings of the 1924 Rogers Act. It created a new unified foreign service, at least on paper. It made Carr an assistant secretary of state. But the consuls in the field received little succor. Insofar as Rogers provided for better remuneration, the benefits went to the diplomats, reclassified for salary purposes with the somewhat better paid consuls. Rogers authorized representation allowances--but for consuls only in exceptional cases. (Congress made no appropriation for the purpose anyway.) Officers received a pension plan--and had five per cent of their salaries taken off the top. If anything, the Rogers Act left the consuls poorer than before.

In practice, the diplomatic and consular services remained separate and unequal. The new single promotion list was supposed to open diplomatic positions to worthy consuls, but the diplomats resisted, maintaining two lists. "There will be no 'weaving back and forth'

between the two branches, as the consuls wish," Undersecretary of State Joseph Grew declared. The diplomats continued to view them as overweening clerks deficient in polish and brains.[62]

Buenos Aires gave Messersmith a taste of diplomatic arrogance. He had been the Department's top representative in Fort Erie and Curacao, and in Antwerp had little contact with the embassy in Brussels. In most countries, however, the consulate general and the embassy worked out of the capital, from separate quarters. That had always been the arrangement in Buenos Aires--two establishments, operating independently--and Bliss did not wish it disturbed. The good ambassador washed his hands of the new consul general after that introductory luncheon. When Messersmith shortly thereafter ventured to suggest physical consolidation and embassy-consulate coordination, the ambassador turned hostile. Bliss, he recalled, fervently believed that "while the consulate was useful, it was not quite as respectable [as the embassy] and should not contaminate the embassy by too close proximity."[63]

It was bad enough that, despite Rogers, the State Department remained divided against itself, and not only for the consuls' pride. Compartmentalizing political and economic foreign policy hampered both. Certainly it gave rise to all manner of negotiating complications, in, say, combating tariff increases or other acts of a host government (which only diplomats could approach formally) affecting American interests. The problem of uncoordinated foreign representa-

tion was much compounded by the profusion of attachés, who took orders from the Treasury, Commerce, Labor, of Agriculture Department in Washington. Faced with the often conflicting objectives of a half dozen Americans claiming to speak for their government, foreign officials often did not know what to think.

Friction with Bliss and the pesky attachés did not distract Messersmith from business. The obstacles that had faced American trade in Belgium were as nothing compared to those he found in Argentina. Foremost was the whole troubled history of Argentine-American relations. Argentines, a proud, prosperous, and cosmopolitan people, considered themselves rivals of the United States for Latin American leadership. Washington's every attempt to impose its dominance over the hemisphere, beginning with Secretary of State James G. Blaine's Pan-American initiative in the 1880s, met resistance from Buenos Aires. Although cultural and political differences all played a part, economic conflict was fundamental. As great agricultural producers, the United States and Argentina competed for world markets. American tariff policies discriminated against Argentine products. Naturally, Argentina looked for manufactured goods less to the United States than to its European trading partners, especially the British, who took most of her meat, wheat, wool, and hides. British capital predominated. A tide of immigration from Spain, Italy, and Germany after 1880 reinforced Argentina's European orientation.[64]

Argentine-American relations took a turn for the worse in the decade before Messersmith's arrival. Argentina not only remained neutral during World War I, she induced most of South America to do likewise. Argentine neutralism seems to have been grounded in nationalism and resentment over British economic control, rather than the influence of her German population or her rivalry with the United States. The Allies still saw Argentina as pro-German.[65]

Ill will carried over to the postwar. In 1926 the Coolidge administration gave way to ranchers' pressure and banned imports of fresh Argentine beef, ostensibly to protect American herds from the hoof-and-mouth disease allegedly endemic in Argentina. The Argentines, beholding perfectly healthy beasts, took the measure as a "deliberate insult," an act of economic warfare calculated to besmirch their reputation in world markets.[66]

The furor had scarcely subsided when Messersmith arrived on the scene. He quickly learned that Americans were not the most beloved members of Buenos Aires's international community. The local press flayed the United States and demanded Argentine retaliation. Messersmith's office was bombed; luckily, he was not in it. United States businessmen were losing customers, mainly to the British, who, Messersmith reported, were working behind the scenes to take advantage of anti-American feeling. At first he had all he could do just to get Argentine authorities to see him.[67]

It was an inauspicious environment in which to promote trade. Once introduced, Messersmith, as always, easily made friends in

high places. He got on close terms with the Argentine president, Hipólito Irigoyen, and did everything to alert American firms to the market. Argentina, he kept pointing out, was almost entirely dependent on imported manufactures, and expanded trade, he maintained, was the best way to improve Argentine-American relations. But he could not be optimistic when mutual mistrust ran so deep.[68]

Had he remained in Argentina, he might have helped ease this animosity. After little more than a year in Buenos Aires, however, in October 1929, he headed home. His return to Fleetwood was prompted by family tragedy: in late June his brother Robert, a Marine Corps major, died suddenly at Quantico, Virginia. He had resembled George in every way except looks--"Bobby" was a strikingly handsome man--tough, able, and patriotic. Over the years they saw each other as often as their government assignments permitted. His death was a great loss for George, and it devastated their mother. But his homecoming was not unrelievedly somber. Messersmith found himself a celebrity in Fleetwood. The town opened its heart to the local man who had already made good and whose future seemed still brighter. The Fleetwood fire hall sparkled that night in November, as old friends and neighbors gathered to fete him. There were speeches, gifts, and selections by the high school orchestra. One of his Kutztown teachers delivered a homily that cited Messersmith's career "as an illustration of how a man can succeed if he applies himself to his chosen profession."[69]

Three separate Departmental actions over the next six months attested to how true this was, to how far Messersmith had come after fifteen years of government service. Carr designated him to represent the Department at a series of trade conferences. During two hectic weeks of December 1929 Messersmith addressed groups in Baltimore, Chicago, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Carr had chosen wisely; Messersmith proved an able spokesman for the consuls. Earnest and unaffected, he doubtless dispelled a few preconceptions about State Department personnel. Discussing his own accomplishments in Antwerp, he sold the consular service and its aid to American business abroad.[70]

Messersmith had hardly settled back in Buenos Aires after this exhausting itinerary when Carr ordered him off to inspect American missions in South America. Before 1924 diplomatic offices were outside the pale for Carr's inspectors, who held the title consul general at large. The Rogers Act changed that, creating the position Foreign Service inspector, with authority to scrutinize the legations as well.[71]

With this mandate, Messersmith, accompanied by a female secretary, set off for Rio de Janeiro, the first leg of his tour as inspector and administrative troubleshooter. Arriving in late March 1930, he found the situation "serious." Problem number one was the ambassador, Edwin V. Morgan. After eighteen years in charge of the embassy, Morgan had come to regard himself as a virtual sovereign. He was another

example of diplomatic superciliousness in action, "a complete snob," Messersmith wrote later, who disdained contact with local Americans in favor of Brazilian high society. He received Messersmith coldly, and informed him that "there was going to be no inspection," not without explicit instructions from Washington--which, in fact, he had received. No consul would judge him. Besides, everything was in order; the Department need not trouble itself. When Messersmith insisted, Morgan threatened to withhold his cooperation. Messersmith called in his secretary and dictated a telegram to Washington about the ambassador's attitude. After a few sentences, a fuming Morgan relented.[72]

As Messersmith discovered, Morgan had everything to hide. His operation was "a distinct discredit to our Government." The legation's permanent offices were "dilapidated." Furniture was "old [and] in many cases worm-eaten." The embassy's proposal for new offices, Messersmith concluded after a review, was based, at least so far as location was concerned, upon considerations of "the personal convenience of officers rather than that of the public." He ordered new studies. In the meantime an emergency grant for rental space and new furnishings was in order.[73]

Messersmith's mission was not limited to questions of buildings and management. He had instructions to look into a number of non-administrative problems. Foremost in Rio were allegations of Brazilian government discrimination against the American National City

Bank. The bank, for violations of exchange regulations, had been forced to post a $3 million bond with the government. The bank did not deny wrongdoing; its complaint was that other foreign banks, "well known" to have engaged in the same practices, had suffered no such penalty. The embassy had been of little assistance, and was disinclined to assist Messersmith's investigation. "The less the Department knows about things of this kind," Morgan told him, "the better." Again, he had to be bludgeoned into turning over the relevant file, and to set up appointments with Brazilian officials. When he did, Messersmith found the Brazilians eager for a settlement. They had only been awaiting the American initiative that Morgan never undertook. Within weeks the bank had its money back. The Department put Morgan on a tighter leash. He resigned his post in 1933, but died before he could leave the country. According to his wish, he was buried in his adopted home.[74]

Things were better elsewhere in Latin America. The attachés were nuisances, offices were not always up to snuff, and consuls suffered repeated snubs from diplomats. By and large, though, State Department officers were cooperative and upright. He also found American businessmen to be fair employers, properly aloof from local politics. There was no basis, he decided, for charges of exploitation and intermeddling against United States capitalists, who, like the copper and nitrate interests in Chile, made the host country prosperous without impairing its sovereignty.[75]

Having seen Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile, Messersmith was about to leave for Bolivia and Peru when happy news arrived: appointment as consul general to Berlin. It was, with London and Paris, the consular service's first prize, by far his "most important assignment . . . a realization of my ambitions." The prospect of leaving South America, with its many vexations, and returning to advanced society pleased him. But his time in Argentina and the inspection tour, although abbreviated, was invaluable experience. He had gained insight into Latin America that would prove a national asset when Washington's relations with the southern nations turned critical.[76]

Abbreviations Used in the Notes

I	Items from the Papers of George S. Messersmith, Special Collections, Library of the University of Delaware, Newark.
GSM	George S. Messersmith
GSMM	George S. Messersmith typescript memoirs, Messersmith Papers.
FRUS	United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers.
OF	Official File
PSF	President's Secretary's File
SD MSS	United States Department of State, Central Decimal Files, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington D.C.
PF	George S. Messersmith personal file, 123 M 561, documents numbered sequentially until 1945, SD MSS.
CF	Clippings File, Messersmith Papers
desp.	despatch
tel.	telegram
inst.	instruction
FDRL	Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York
HSTL	Harry S Truman Library, Independence, Missouri
CUOHP	Columbia University Oral History Project, Butler Library, New York, New York
FDR and FA	Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs, Edgar B. Nixon, editor.
SF	Speech File, Messersmith Papers

Chapter One

1. "First Days in the Service," I 1924, GSMM. Ward, "Introductory History," pp. 5-13. Wagner, The Story of Berks County, pp. 36-37.

2. The history of the Messersmiths in Fleetwood has been pieced together from Montgomery, History of Berks County, pp. 31, 481, 919-21, 924; headstones in the town cemetery, Fleetwood; Reading Eagle, 20 May 1889; "Last Will and Testament of Charles A. Messersmith," 3 June 1889, Berks County Historical Society, Reading; interview with Mrs. Quentin Messersmith (George's cousin), 22 June 1980.

3. GSM to Herbert Feis, 30 Dec. 1935, Feis Papers. "First Days," I 1924, GSMM.

4. Ibid.

5. "Tradition and Legend," I 2033, GSMM.

6. Telephone conversation with Ann L Scott (Messersmith's niece), 11 Apr. 1980. "First Days," I 1924, GSMM. John Bassett Moore to GSM, 4 July 1937, Moore Papers. GSM to Moore, 29 July 1937, ibid.

7. Dean to Dawson, 23 Sept. 1974, I 2059.

8. "Anthony Drexel Biddle," I 1976, GSMM. GSM to Perkins, 8 Dec. 1955, I 1917. See the publisher's blurb in the copy of his Government in the Berks County Historical Society library. N.A., Delaware: A History, 4: 418-19.

9. GSM to Sypherd, 31 July 1953, I 1904. Scott to author, n.d. (Apr. 1980).

10. New York Times, 21 Mar. 1934, p. 13. Hull to Roosevelt, 23 Mar. 1934, PF 419. Reading Times, 3 July 1937, CF. Delaware College Faculty, Minutes of Meetings 1908-1916, University of Delaware Archives.

11. John M. Clayton (university archivist) to author, 7 Sept. 1979.

12. Wiebe, The Search for Order, pp. 118-120. Cremin, The Transformation of the School, pp. 85-89 and passim. Federal Writers' Project, Delaware, p. 261. Wilson, Dreams and Realities, p. 138.

13. Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, p. 66.

14. N.A., Delaware, p. 419. Weeks, History of Public School Education in Delaware, p. 138. Taggart, "The Modernization of Delaware's School Tax System," pp. 153-79.

15. "First Days," I 1924, GSMM. Reading Eagle, 21 Mar. 1934.

16. "Tradition and Legend," I 2033, GSMM.

17. "First Days," I 1924, GSMM.

18. GSM to Wilbur J. Carr, 8 July 1924, Carr Papers.

19. Israel, "A Diplomatic Machine," p. 148. Crane, Mr. Carr, pp. 121-34, 152. Heinrichs, Jr., "Bureaucracy and Professionalism," p. 136. Ilchman, Professional Diplomacy, pp. 69 ff. Werking, "Selling the Foreign Service," pp 185-207. Werking, The Master Architects, pp. 88-120. Schulzinger, Diplomatic Mind, pp. 5-32.

20. "Fort Erie Days," I 1925, GSMM. Carr to Harvey, 12 June 1914, 123 H 26/8a. GSM desp., 8 Aug. 1915, 125.3873/8.

21. Carr to Harvey, 12 June 1914, 123 H 26/8a. GSM desp., 8 Aug. 1915, 125.3873/8.

22. "Fort Erie," I 1925, GSMM.

23. Alford, "Introduction," 1: ii-iii. GSM #35, 1 June 1916, 125.387/1.

24. "Curacao," I 1926, GSMM.

25. "The Policy of the Dutch Government Toward Curacao," I 1928, GSMM.

26. GSM #8, 1 Aug. 1916, 125.3473/18. GSM #11, 29 Aug. 1916, 125.3472/19. GSM #249, 17 Oct. 1918, PF 38.

27. Ibid. GSM desp. 14 Sept. 1916, PF 26. "Kind Offer by the Maduro Family," I 1941, GSMM.

28. GSM #39, 19 Mar. 1917, 831.00/787. "Gomez, Dictator of Venezuela," I 1940, GSMM.

29. GSM #178, 14 May 1918, 862.20256b/6. GSM #66, 3 Sept. 1917, 763.72112/4764.

30. "The Ordinary and unusual Risks of the Foreign Service Officer," I 2032, GSMM.

31. "A Fortunate Discovery," I 1930, GSMM. GSM desp., 11 Sept. 1917, 702.62/13. GSM #144, 3 Apr. 1918, 862.20237/11. Carr to GSM, 27 Apr. 1918, ibid. Hengstler to GSM, 3 Sept. 1918, ibid.

32. GSM #248, 16 Oct. 1918, PF 37.

33. Carr to GSM, 29 Jan. 1919, PF 41a. "Transfer to Antwerp," I 1933, GSMM.

34. Ibid.

35. GSM #473, 29 Mar. 1921, PF 75.

36. GSM to Lansing, 21 Aug. 1919, PF 57.

37. "The Practice of Giving for Charity," I 1944, GSMM. GSM tel., 26 Feb. 1920, PF 61. Carr to GSM, 12 Mar. 1920, ibid.

38. GSM to Breckenridge Long, 25 June 1936, Long Papers. Messersmith apparently underwent a gastrectomy with a duodinal resection. GSM #473, 29 Mar. 1921, PF 75. GSM to Dunn, 3 July 1936, I 689.

39. See an undated (prob. Jan. 1940) "Washington Merry Go-Round" column, CF. Braden, Diplomats, p. 421.

40. GSM #282, 30 Sept. 1920, PF 71. GSM #1994, 8 May 1925, PF 121. GSM desp., 9 Nov. 1921, 855.00/234. GSM #140, 4 Feb. 1920, 855.156/5.

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44. GSM #1994, 8 May 1925, PF 121. GSM #839. 23 Feb. 1922, 855.1561/1. Love to Carr, 15 Nov. 1922, PF 103.

45. GSM #823, 13 Feb. 1922, 600.00/88. Carr to GSM, 14 Mar. 1922, 125.1436/46a. The consulate, beginning in May 1922, volunteered massive monthly reports on "Market, Financial, and Shipping Conditions in Antwerp," as well as annual summaries (655.0001).

46. GSM #1994, 8 May 1925, PF 121. GSM #1790, 18 Dec. 1924, 655.1125/2. GSM #2069, 7 July 1925, PF 125. GSM #3082, 2 Apr. 1928, 655.1125/5.

47. Unnumbered desp., 5 Sept. 1928, PF 190. Wright to Hughes, 13 Apr. 1921, PF 76. Eldridge to Carr, 30 Mar. 1923, PF 95. Chrysler to Kellogg, 25 Aug. 1926, PF 140. Rumely to Castle, 27 Sept. 1928, PF 192.

48. Entry for 10 Sept. 1923, William Phillips Diary. GSM #2279, 20 Jan. 1926, 125.1436/62. Carr to GSM, 10 June 1926, 125.1436/64. Carr to GSM, 11 Oct. 1923, 125.143/13a. Paul C. Daniels oral history interview, HSTL, pp. 1-2. Carr to GSM, 7 June 1924, PF 108a. GSM to Carr, 8 July 1924, Carr Papers.

49. GSM #1994, 8 May 1925, PF 121.

50. GSM to John C. Wiley, 28 Aug. 1935, Wiley Papers. "Golf Game with President Avila Camacho," I 1996, GSMM.

51. Telephone conversation with Ann L. Scott, 11 Apr. 1980. GSM to Carr, 2 Sept. 1920, 125.1436/36. GSM #1994, 8 May 1925, PF 121.

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55. Carr to GSM, 29 May 1926, PF 126a. Carr to GSM, 8 July 1926, PF 136c.

56. GSM to Kellogg, 14 July 1926, PF 137.

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59. GSM desp., 5 Sept. 1928, PF 190. GSM #3185, 8 Aug. 1928, PF 185. Wiley to GSM, 21 Oct. 1935, Wiley Papers.

60. GSM to Spruille Braden, 23 Apr. 1946, Braden Papers. GSM #15, 17, 31 Oct. 1928, PF 200, 201.

61. GSM #55, 5 Jan. 1929, PF 203.

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63. "Inspection Trips as Consul General in Buenos Aires," I 1946, GSMM.

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72. "Inspection Trips," I 1946, GSMM. State Dept. to Rio embassy, 15 Mar. 1930, 125.7676/59.

73. GSM #1, 28 Apr. 1930, PF 253. GSM desp., 28 Apr. 1930, 125.7671/115. GSM desp., 28 Apr. 1930, 125.7672/198.

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Chapter Two

Berlin, 1930-1934

In 1930 the crisis began that toppled the German republic. Foreigners, particularly Americans, had financed German prosperity during the 'twenties; after October 1929 the trend was to liquidate, consolidate, and repatriate, as investors scurried to cover their losses. When the prop of foreign loans was withdrawn, the German economy tumbled. By February 1930 unemployment stood at three and a half million. Misery bred political extremism. In the Reichstag elections in September the Communists boosted their representation by almost fifty per cent. The big winners, however, were Hitler's Nazis, who registered an eightfold increase. The balance of power now rested with Weimar's enemies. On the streets Communists and Nazis clashed in bloody brawls; in the Reichstag they cooperated in opposition to the centrist chancellor Heinrich Bruning. Germany continued to sink.[1]

The buoyant, gemutlich Germany the Messersmiths had come to know intimately from Antwerp in the 'twenties was no more, and they were unprepared for the contrast. The business world was dead. For awhile Messersmith endeavored to resuscitate it himself, exhorting German and foreign capitalists, in speech after speech, to take prudent risks to stimulate recovery, to save themselves.

But individual initiative was no remedy for the sickness gripping the industrial world. Protectionist walls grew impenetrably higher, ensuring that the afflicted countries would be unable to trade their way back to health. Messersmith sensed disaster around the corner.[2]

Consuls, like all American public servants, knew hardship first hand during the depression. The drop in tax revenues forced Congress to enact an across-the board ten per cent cut in salaries for the fiscal year beginning 1 July 1932, and another fifteen per cent the following year. The State Department, already underfunded, suffered greatly. Paid leaves went by the board. The steady depreciation of the dollar compounded the loss of purchasing power. Men in the lower grades were forced to give up insurance policies, take children out of school, and scrimp on food and housing.[3]

All told, by the end of 1932 Messersmith's $9000 salary had, by his own calculations, shrivelled in real value by almost a third. He was not, of course, one who had to worry about a roof over his head. Rather, his dinner parties grew larger and more frequent. For the many impoverished lower officials, American and German, whom he kept adding to his guest list, the meal, he knew, was more the attraction than the company. Frequently, guests took home leftovers for their hungry families.[4]

Messersmith gave of his energy as well as his hospitality to help his junior colleagues at the consulate general. Vice consul Cecil W. "Joe" Gray was a softspoken Tennessean who had come with

him from Buenos Aires. Gray's keen interest in administration and office procedure made them especially compatible. When Messersmith moved to Vienna in 1934, Gray went with him again as third secretary. A year later, at Messersmith's recommendation, Gray was named chief secretary to another Tennessean, Secretary of State Cordell Hull.[5]

Messersmith's first lieutenant was consul Raymond H. Geist of Ohio. Born in 1885, Geist earned a Ph.D. in English from Harvard, where he taught for a time. After a stint in the wartime navy, he entered the consular service, with posts in South America and Egypt until appointed to Berlin in October 1929. In the months prior to Messersmith's arrival, Geist had developed wide contacts and a sterling reputation. Messersmith leaned heavily upon him at the beginning, and discovered that Geist was blessed with "unusual tact and judgment . . . real character and courage." In the stormy days ahead, he proved a "tower of strength" in defending American interests, as well as a political reporter of the highest order, surpassing Messersmith and virtually everyone else in the accuracy of his forecasts.[6]

Although only two years his junior, Geist became Messersmith's protégé. Messersmith never missed a chance to boost him for promotion. After a 1936 return visit to Germany, he wrote the Department that Geist was "by far the best informed man in our establishments [and] doing a splendid job . . . There is hardly any reward which we could give to him . . . which would be in proportion to what he has earned." Geist was too much needed in Berlin to be moved, and there he remained until 1940, when finally brought home at Messersmith's initiative to

head up the new division of commercial affairs in the reorganized State Department. He held this position until 1945, when he rejoined his old chief and patron as embassy counselor at Mexico City.[7]

Geist was ever grateful. "Nobody did more for me in this than you," he wrote touchingly in 1940. "I thank you with all my heart." There was real affection between them. Few officers met Messersmith's exacting work standards, and those who fell short he treated like recalcitrant pupils. One former subordinate remembered that "he couldn't help talking to you as though you hadn't done your homework." Geist, like Gray, was one who did do his homework, and modelled himself after Messersmith, studying and emulating the older man's approach. "I have always tried to be an apt scholar," Geist wrote him in 1934. His career proved that he had learned well.[8]

For the likes of Gray and Geist, Messersmith spared no assistance. The men were "behaving splendidly" in the face of financial pressures, but inevitably, Messersmith warned Carr, deprivation would affect performance. For him, organizational efficiency had become a humane, as well as a bureaucratic, imperative.[9]

In the spring of 1931, he and Gray set off to inspect the thirty American consular establishments in Germany. They found business so generally depressed that major economies were possible. At Cologne, for example, rented office space was reduced by half. The Stuttgart consulate moved into smaller quarters, saving $2300 a year. By the time Messersmith had finished shuffling personnel and consolidating offices, expenditures for the United States consulates had been

brought well within the austere limits imposed by Washington. Whether or not this eased the pressure on the beleaguered officers, Messersmith's leadership--his compassion, generosity, and initiative--heartened his men during their time of trevail.[10]

Government retrenchment had one redeeming consequence as far as Messersmith was concerned. The commercial and agricultural foreign services were decimated. Commerce's appropriation was slashed fifty per cent; half of its personnel were fired, and half of its fifty two foreign offices were shut down. By a May 1933 agreement with State, the departments of agriculture and commerce promised to confine their remaining overseas people to capitals.[11]

But the attaches proved dilatory in evacuating provincial posts. And when they finally complied, a small horde of superfluous bureaucrats descended upon Berlin, complicating Messersmith's life. As before he found the attaches at once indolent and meddlesome. Hardly a one of them, he wrote disgustedly to Carr, put in "a day's work in a week. Most of them spend their time 'promoting trade' in some of the hotel bars"--this while consuls struggled with overwork and too little pay. He was now convinced that the attaches would have to be taken under the State Department's wing.[12]

One day he would do just that. In the meantime, there was ample room for reform within. The consulates having been whipped into shape, Messersmith proposed to consolidate State's establishments

in Berlin. Everything depended upon the cooperation of the embassy people, and they were a mixed lot. The best of them was the man from whom Messersmith expected the least, the ambassador since 1930, Frederic M. Sackett, Jr., a wealthy businessman and former United States senator. Fortunately for Messersmith, Sackett was as unencumbered by diplomatic prejudices as by diplomatic experience, and so welcomed his assistance. The ambassador readily assented when Messersmith proposed that he and Mrs. Sackett occasionally accompany him on his inspection rounds. Cloistered in Berlin and wrapped up in its society, diplomats rarely paid attention to the hinterlands. Yet it was clear that Germany was in the midst of an upheaval largely rooted in local conditions, which were best understood on-the-spot. An official visit, Sackett appreciated, would be a signal honor for local dignitaries, and the publicity would enhance American prestige and facilitate the work of the local consulate. Besides, the ambassador was glad for the chance to leave his desk.[13]

Everything went according to plan. By the end of 1932 Sackett and Messersmith had visited every German city with an American consulate. A hectic schedule of public ceremonies, receptions, factory tours, and cultural events invariably greeted them, but Messersmith arranged for private talks as well. He also made sure that Sackett toured each office and spent some time with the staff. Their morale needed the boost.[14]

Messersmith used their time together to convince the ambassador to approve the Berlin merger. He had even found a likely facility:

the old Bluecher Palace near the Brandenburg Gate, spacious enough to house the chancery and the consulate general, and the attachés as well. Best of all, the owners, strapped for cash, were willing to let the Palace go for a mere $1.8 million. Sackett, a practical person, was enthusiastic, and enlisted the support of his erstwhile colleague, Senator Claude Swanson, to secure congressional approval. In September 1931 the government acquired title.[15]

Messersmith exulted. Several of Sackett's career diplomats, on the other hand, recoiled at the prospect of rubbing shoulders with consuls on a daily basis. The embassy counselor, George Gordon, was especially disturbed. Alabama-born and a Harvard classmate of William Phillips, Gordon was considered an egregious snob even by his aristocratic peers. With his "gray-white hair and mustache which looked curled, elegant dress, gloves, stick and proper hat, a complexion of flaming hue, clipped, polite and definitely condescending accent," he caricatured the old-line diplomat. Consuls, particularly pushy ones like Messersmith, he loathed especially. He did not mourn, therefore, when, on the eve of the move, fire gutted the Palace. The United States now had to decide whether to commit at least another $200,000 for repairs or to sell, absorbing the loss and leaving the Department's representatives in their original Berlin quarters.[16]

If Gordon assumed that consolidation was buried in the Bluecher rubble, he had another thought coming. Messersmith was determined to see it through, and not only to promote economy and efficiency. He

could no longer endure the conceit of "old line diplomatic officers" like Gordon "who think it . . . a desecration of the sanctity of the diplomatic establishment to associate it with so matter of fact an establishment as the Consulate." Such thinking, he decided, had been too long tolerated, to the detriment of the foreign service and American interests.[17]

Congress agreed. In 1928 Senate investigators had found the Rogers Act being applied "in a manner far at variance from the purposes of the legislation." Diplomatic officers were receiving the lion's share of promotions. Because the position of minister was not included in the promotional hierarchy, recommendations for ministerial appointments were decided by the foreign service personnel board, where Carr was outnumbered by the diplomats. Although a handful of senior consuls did receive diplomatic posts, the diplomats continued to brazenly favor their own for top spots. This prompted the Senate probe and subsequent passage, in February 1931, of the Moses-Linthicum Act. It sought to close the loopholes in Rogers by transferring all the Department's administrative functions to Carr's office and making him chairman of the personnel board. With this authority, Heinrichs writes, Carr "strove constantly for commonality in the service: a single set of regulations, commissioning under both diplomatic and consular titles, and consolidation of diplomatic and consular work in capital cities."[18]

Messersmith would have rejected this assessment, at least the "strove constantly" part. He had grown increasingly disenchanted with

Carr's leadership. He never doubted Carr's devotion to the principles of administrative unity, but he had lost faith in Carr's ability to enforce them. Too many years in Washington and too many bureaucratic battles, he believed, had taken their toll. As a result, the "reactionary diplomats" still held sway, "educating and training a new class of snobs," among whom the "idea remains firmly fixed that a diplomatic assignment, no matter how low in grade, is more important than a consular assignment." The only answer was for the Department to take "the bull by the horns" and implement "constant and recurring transfers" between the services. Moses-Linthicum gave Carr the power to do just that, but Messersmith gloomily predicted that he "would be slow to take any initiative on it himself." Sure enough, with the exception of Robert Peet Skinner, named ambassador to Turkey, no more consuls received diplomatic missions. In Berlin the Bluecher Palace question remained unresolved, thanks to the obstructionism of Gordon, his colleagues at the embassy, and their allies in the Department.[19]

Messersmith had done everything in his power and had come up empty. He approached his fiftieth birthday with his prospects uncertain. He had risen to the top of the consular world, and was ready to move on. Yet he faced the depressing possibility that the Department's de facto segregation might preclude a promotion to diplomacy. Moreover, there were hints that his superiors were displeased by his pertinacity. It was not unknown for officers who rocked the Department boat to be indefinitely exiled to a remote post.

If State wished to punish him for his heresies, it soon had a convenient pretext. In November 1932 came the announcement that the renowned physicist, Professor Albert Einstein, had accepted an invitation to do research at California's Mount Wilson observatory. The news drew the attention of several rightwing groups in the United States, who charged that Einstein was a communist, or at least leaned left, and demanded that the State Department determine by interrogation whether he posed a political threat before issuing a visa. Carr meekly complied, issuing the appropriate orders to the consulate general in Berlin. There, Geist, substituting for Messersmith, in Breslau on an inspection tour, received Professor and Frau Einstein on 5 December and, following instructions, questioned them about their politics. She refused to answer; and, before he could, she got up and stalked out, her illustrious husband in tow. A crowd of waiting reporters heard her denounce the "consul general" for conducting as "inquisition." There would be no trip to America, she vowed, unless the consulate apologized and approved the visas within 24 hours.[20]

As reported back home, the story provoked a storm of criticism in the liberal press. Walter Lippmann dubbed Messersmith, to whom the incident had been erroneously attributed, "The Perfect Bureaucrat," and demanded his recall. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, declared that his "heart wept for his country at the spectacle of what happened at the Consulate General in Berlin." The American Civil Liberties Union opened an investigation into State Department visa practices.[21]

Messersmith hurried back to Berlin when the story broke. He concluded that the consulate's hands were clean. If anyone were to be blamed, he felt, it was Carr, for caving in to a handful of noisy extremists and ordering extraordinary and "silly procedures"; the Einsteins, for feigning offense at Geist's questions to conceal associations that, Messersmith suspected, would have indeed prejudiced their application; and, above all, with the Berlin newsmen, who had not bothered to get the consulate's side of the story before reporting it. The journalists' irresponsibility had turned a routine case into a sensation. Geist was mortified at the embarrassment he had caused his chief. Messersmith never felt worse, not since that first dreary day in Fort Erie. It seemed entirely possible that the Department, having begun by truckling to the right, would offer up Messersmith and/or Geist as scapegoats to people like Lippmann.[22]

Happily for both careers, events developed favorably. At first mention of Messersmith's involvement, friends from Antwerp, Buenos Aires, and Berlin sent messages to the Department in his defense. The Einsteins got their visas and immediately set sail. Aboard ship, they acknowledged to reporters that the consulate had not behaved improperly, and hoped that no disciplinary action would be taken against the men. At his 10 December press conference, Secretary of State Henry Stimson, who appreciated the injustice, exonerated Messersmith and the consulate, and telephoned Lippmann, who two

days later retraced the charges. Most of the papers that had editorialized on the incident followed suit.[23]

The cloud lifted, and Messersmith's demeanor improved. His friends had come through when he needed them, and he was "eternally grateful" for their support and Stimson's. His confidence revived. He started saving his letters and clippings. Perhaps he sensed that the episode foreshadowed the more important work and recognition ahead.[24]

Another auspicious development was the imminent transfer of power in Washington to the Democrats and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Like his father before him, Messersmith had always cast his vote as a Democrat, but party politics meant little to him. His commitment to nonpartisanship, in the public schools and the Foreign Service, ran deep. So it was more out of concern about his country's faltering economy than as a party loyalist that Messersmith welcomed the results of the election of 1932. Still, the changing of the guard in Washington did promise major shifts in State Department personnel likely to create opportunities for him and other worthy consuls. He doubtless was privy to rumors that the president-elect intended to shake up the State Department, to dislodge the old diplomatic clique. Although it was unclear whether this would be done by filling ministerial posts with political appointees or by encouraging promotions within the ranks, or both, Roosevelt's attitude seemed to bode well for the likes of Messersmith.[25]

He was therefore emboldened to volunteer his thoughts and person to the new administration. Writing to an acquaintance he believed friendly with Roosevelt, he scored the diplomats for their failure to carry out Congress's will. He suggested that Roosevelt start by firing all of the Department's current assistant secretaries with the exception of Carr, who, whatever his failings, was still "in many respects the most valuable officer within the Department." To "complement and work with" him, Messersmith urged the appointment of someone with wide administrative experience. He was thinking of himself. Although "not eager to serve in Washington," he wrote with perfect political decorum, he would be willing "to make the personal sacrifices involved" if the president wanted him. Although Roosevelt saw his letter, Messersmith, otherwise an unknown, was surely a very long shot for an assistant secretaryship, as he was undoubtedly aware. But the idea of entering the Department with a presidential mandate for reform was such an exhilarating one that he could not help but put himself forward.[26]

That was the last he heard of it. He was probably more actively concerned with Roosevelt's choice for secretary of state. He applauded when it turned out to be Cordell Hull. Messersmith had met him in 1923, when Congressman Hull stopped in Antwerp during a European junket. He had invited Messersmith to his hotel room that night for talks, a courtesy deeply appreciated. Hull had impressed him greatly: "a saintly-looking man," he recalled, "with a charming, engaging personality, shy and modest." More importantly, he and Hull saw eye-

to-eye on the importance of international trade. The new secretary, a Wilsonian internationalist, was convinced that "unhampered trade dovetailed with peace; high tariffs, trade barriers, and unfair competition with war." Throughout the 1920s and early '30s Hull had crusaded against the prevailing tide of pretectionism at home and abroad, repeatedly warning his House and Senate colleagues that economic nationalism would cost the country its foreign markets and lead to unemployment. Events had borne him out. Hull at the helm of the State Department was expected to be an emphatic advocate of liberal trade policies to remedy the world's current economic and political ills.[27]

The appointment heartened the like-minded consuls, who could see their ascendancy in the Department under the commerce-conscious Hull. Moreover, the unaffected new secretary seemed likely to feel more at home with the consuls than with the mannered diplomats. Messersmith suddenly had basis for confidence that the long campaign for Departmental reform--vital in its own right, essential if he were to advance--would finally bear fruit in the new administration.

His opportunity came sooner than he dreamed possible. While he was embroiled from afar in Departmental politics, Germany was sinking fast. Bruening's government had fallen in May 1932, a victim of the worsening depression. His successor as chancellor, Franz von Papen, "a well bred buffoon," hardly inspired confidence. Papen proved to be the tool of a camarilla of military men and

assorted enemies of the republic. In the 31 July Reichstag elections, the Nazis easily outdrew seven other parties. Hitler rejected all overtures to form a coalition government, insisting on terms that would effectively make him dictator of Germany.[28]

Pressure continued to mount. In late December Messersmith predicted "fireworks here pretty soon." Actually the momentous transfer of power took place peacefully. On 30 January 1933 Hitler was named chancellor. Germany would not know real peace again for a dozen years. On 27 February the Reichstag burned, offering the Nazis a pretext to curtail civil liberties. Mass arrests were carried out. In the 5 March elections, Hitler secured a working majority in the relocated Reichstag, which promptly voted itself out of practical existence. Hitler now controlled the state. The first stage of the Nazi revolution was over. Where it was headed was anybody's guess. One thing was clear: the coming months would see events of extraordinary significance for Germany and the world.[29]

Ambassador Sackett had kept Washington well informed on these critical developments. But he owed his position to the outgoing Republican administration; and when, shortly after Roosevelt's election, he tendered his resignation, as was customary, it was accepted. By the end of March he had departed Berlin.[30]

A replacement was not immediately forthcoming. In the face of the Nazi upheaval, Roosevelt regarded Berlin as perhaps the most important diplomatic assignment he had to make. He sought someone of attainment and moral stature, a liberal who would serve as an example before

the German people. In the president's mind, this disqualified the career diplomats. Messersmith would have made an ideal choice for Berlin, but Roosevelt confined his search to the worlds of politics, religion, and academics. The strains and expense of the Berlin mission led his first five choices to decline. Not until June did he finally find someone suitable and willing: history professor William E. Dodd of the University of Chicago. By the time Dodd closed out his affairs, briefed himself in Washington, and arrived in Berlin, it was mid-July.[31]

Thus, for some hundred days the United States lacked an ambassador in Germany. They were days of horrifying events and high tension, which placed an unprecedented strain on the representatives of foreign governments. Gleichschaltung--imposing Nazi control over every German institution--began immediately upon Hitler's assumption of power. Leftists and Jews were purged from official life with ruthless avidity. Hitler and his henchmen proclaimed the New Germany, vowing to undo the Treaty of Versailles and restore the nation to its place in the sun.

While the politicians and bureaucrats maneuvered behind the scenes, violence reigned in the open. The Nazi party and its fighting arm, the brown-shirted S.A., conducted their revolution in the streets. The promise of pillage and jobs had held that paramilitary force in check since 1921. Now, more than a million strong, the S.A. considered its time at hand. Germany convulsed in lawlessness and

cruelty, as Brown Shirt thugs engaged in kidnapping, beatings, and murder for sport and profit. There were accounts to be settled in business, too. Party connections were exploited to secure positions and promotions and to ruin competitors.[32]

Messersmith endeavored to make sense of the chaos. He and other close observers concluded that Hitler had gained power mainly on the strength of his demagoguery. The Fuehrer apparently had no program to speak of, no set ideas beyond economic recovery and revisions in the postwar settlement, objectives supported across the German political spectrum. When it came to specifics, his approach had been "promising everything to everybody," a strategy he was living to regret. Finding himself unable to satisfy extravagant expectations and fearing the consequences, he let his followers take matters into their own hands. The movement he started had gone out of control. The S.A., the largest and most potent armed force in the country, had let it be known that it would not be restrained. Any attempt by Hitler to bring it to heel, Messersmith thought, would spark a counterrevolution seeing Hitler and his entourage deposed by "real radicals."[33]

The months ahead would see a change in the consul general's perspective, a change as dramatic as the events he was reporting. For now, it was significant that he was reporting them at all, in lengthy regular despatches to the State Department. That was supposedly the embassy's job; and Gordon, chargé d'affaires since Sackett's

departure, did not appreciate the competition. Messersmith, who deplored such duplication by the attachés, became guilty of it himself. But he had an ulterior motive that meant more to him than all the canons of rational administration. The ambassadorial vacancy was his opportunity to prove his mettle and consular competence generally. He violated the Department's division of labor and struck a blow for a truly unified foreign service.[34]

Under the circumstances, his ordinary duties were taxing enough. Democratic ideals were never more in danger than in Germany in early 1933. Convinced that most Germans were appalled by S.A. excesses, Messersmith determined to make a stand for truth and decency. The Hitler regime needed to be reminded of its responsibility before world opinion to restore law and order. Foreign service personnel and journalists had to impress upon the Fuehrer that Germany's problems could only be resolved with the assistance of the major powers. Indeed, as Messersmith wrote in March, Germany was seeking the lifting of Versailles restrictions at the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva, and was hoping for a reduction in interest rates on its foreign indebtedness at the World Economic Conference, scheduled for June in London. Hitler must be made aware that the continuation of S.A. outrages would prejudice Germany's claims on the world. By reporting all that was happening inside the country, foreigners, he thought, might prod Hitler into meeting the S.A. challenge.[35]

By late March Messersmith spotted some movement in this direction. Hitler's speeches suggested that he frowned on violence and was sensitive to adverse publicity. Foreign protest rallies, like that of 27 March at New York City's Madison Square Garden, and movements to boycott German products created, Messersmith reported, "what was almost hysteria" in responsible German circles. Joseph Goebbels' propaganda apparatus sought futilely to calm world outrage. Prominent Jews and foreigners were enlisted to publicly praise the Nazi revolution for its tolerance. The excitement moved Hitler to denounce the troublemakers as Communists dressed as Nazis. Other high ranking officials--Prussian Interior Minister Hermann Goering, Foreign Minister Konstantin von N eurath, and Ernst Hanfstaengl, the foreign press chief--claimed that all was quiet, lambasting "enemies" of the Third Reich, particularly the Jews, for telling "lies." On 28 March came the announcement of a boycott of German Jewish businesses as retribution for Jewish "slanders."[36]

Was this a government seeking a pretext for further persecution or was it trying to restore order and satisfy world criticism? Messersmith leaned toward the latter interpretation. Although Nazi racism in any form was abhorrent to him, the boycott seemed to represent an initiative by Hitler and his moderate associates to take control. They could not risk a sudden crackdown on S.A. hooliganism, but the boycott, Messersmith suggested, might serve to blunt and absorb S.A.

fury, a first step toward trammeling that organization. His thesis gained credence when the boycott went off peacefully. Many Germans even patronized Jewish shops in defiance of S.A. pickets. On 4 April the regime announced that the boycott had "achieved its purpose and therefore need not be resumed." Messersmith noted a sharp decline in street violence in the ensuing days.[37]

There were other signs as well that the regime was amenable to reason, desirous of internal tranquility, and not without good will toward the outside world. S.A. ruffianism, random or calculated, inevitably struck United States citizens and property. In early March the first American victims in Berlin came to light. Several people vanished without a trace.

On 31 March, in one of several incidents that week, three Americans were seized and taken to an abandoned warehouse converted into an S.A. prison. They were stripped naked and forced to sleep on the frozen floor. The next morning they were beaten unconscious and tossed like refuse into the gutter.

Messersmith suffered with them. His earlier demands for protection and punishment of the culprits had gone unanswered. The police, though sympathetic, were paralyzed by uncertainty as to whether the regime really wanted the violence stopped. In fact, early pronouncements seemed the align the government with the attackers. "The police," Goering told a crowd at Essen on 11 March, "do not exist in order to protect the swindlers, scoundrels, profiteers, and traitors." Such remarks encouraged Brown Shirt mayhem.[38]

Messersmith tried one more time. He prevailed upon American journalists to hold up their reports of the latest incidents. In meetings with police officials, he made it clear that the news would be cabled to the United States unless he got satisfaction. He felt certain that the question was decided by higher authorities, for the police were "extraordinarily active, efficient, and rapid in the action which they took." Within 24 hours a number of Brown Shirts had been arrested, "sharply reproved," and expelled from the S.A.[39]

Although attacks on Americans did not entirely cease, Messersmith was convinced that they would if the regime had its way. Hitler issued several calls for discipline, and ordered the police to move swiftly against offenders. On 26 April Goering established the Gestapo (State Secret Police), with a first year budget of almost four million marks and a mandate to reestablish order. Geist was on close terms with the Gestapo chief, Dr. Rudolf Diehls. When Geist informed him that the United Press's correspondent, Dr. Paul Kecskemeti, had disappeared, Diehls promised to find him. He phoned the next day to report that the journalist was again a free man. The S.A., Messersmith concluded triumphantly, "was no longer above the law."[40]

Messersmith also detected a trend toward moderation in the economic sphere. Here too, he believed, Hitler's cynical campaign strategy had placed him in a bind. Just as the S.A. were wooed with the promise of Jewish spoils, small businessmen and the unemployed had

responded to Hitler's pledge to break up concentrated wealth. He had inveighed against large corporations, department stores, landed estates, and foreign capital, all the while privately reassuring the upper classes. Now he was being called to account. He apparently appreciated, Messersmith reported, that the radical economic experiments demanded by the masses would lead to "economic ruin and the reduction of Germany to a country of peasants," as well as the estrangement of big business, whose cooperation was essential to ending the depression. Moreover, the regime could not discriminate against foreign capital unless it was prepared to brave foreign censure and probable retaliation.[41]

At first, Hitler's answer seemed to be evasion. "The government," Messersmith reported on 25 April, "has no real [economic] program; it is drifting with the tide." The Fuehrer's speech of 1 May, which was expected to outline a recovery plan, contained only the usual platitudes glorifying the German worker. Aside from a few small public works projects, the regime had so far done nothing for the unemployed. "The situation of the individual German," Messersmith concluded, "has in no sense been made easier"; the regime apparently had no idea what to do next.[42]

Local party leaders were not so circumspect. Acting, as one scholar put it, "on the assumption that Hitler privately wanted them to do what the government could not do officially," they launched a campaign against "non-Aryan monopolists" in early March. The party sought to organize disgruntled small businessmen into its "Combat League of

Middle-Class Tradespeople," or Kampfbund. S.A. troopers were assigned to enforce sanctions against the chain and department stores, the bane of small shopkeepers. That many of the large stores were entirely or partially American-owned seemed only to make them more tempting targets, as Messersmith quickly learned. Several F.W. Woolworth outlets were shut down entirely. Sometimes Kampfbund intimidation compelled the big stores to eliminate departments that competed directly with local merchants. The Hermann Tietz store, Germany's second largest, backed by almost $10 million in American capital, had to abandon its profitable restaurant concession. Store executives who resisted risked Brown Shirt picket lines or worse.[43]

Drunk with success, the Combat League took on larger quarry. Big industrial concerns soon felt its interference. The League demanded that Jews and moderates in upper management be replaced with party kommisare, usually, Messersmith observed, young incompetents. Foreign-owned firms again received special attention. Many did business with German municipal, state, and central governments. In April the Combat League decreed that government contracts would henceforth be restricted to companies certifyably Aryan--that is, not dominated by Jews, communists, or foreigners. Approved vendors were listed in a party directory distributed to all government purchasing offices. American firms were excluded. As Messersmith wryly commented, they could "only answer affirmatively they they are not based on 'Marxistic' principles." When the companies complained, the party suggested that they fire all of their Jews, deposit funds

equal to 54 per cent of their total capital into the Reichsbank, and provide regular party kickbacks.[44]

On Messersmith's advice, all refused to submit to what he concluded was "systematized blackmail" and a gross violation of the 1923 German-American Treaty of Friendship, Amity, and Commerce, which forbade such discrimination. Officials of the regime backed him up. His protests to the Reich ministry of economics brought a promise of quick redress. Goering, already one of the most powerful men in Germany, could not have been more accommodating. He condemned the party's intereference in business, and pledged to help stop it.[45]

Action was soon on its way. On 1 May Alfred Hugenberg, the economics minister, ordered "all independently placed kommisare removed," and urged businessmen to resist unauthorized interference. Goering threatened to dissolve the Combat League at once unless its meddling ceased. American firms received "clean bills of health" as "pure German firms." On orders from Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, the department store pickets were removed. At the same time, Kampfbund cells began being absorbed into Dr. Robert Ley's German Labor Front, a process completed by mid-August.[46]

It was an impressive display of authority, indicative, as Messersmith wrote the Department, of "an almost unbelievable movement in the direction of moderation." Goebbels, who struck Messersmith as the most malign member of the ruling circle, appeared on the eclipse. A respected insurance executive, Kurt Schmitt, replaced Hugenberg. Schmitt promised foreign businessmen fair treatment. His speech before the

German Trade Council, lamenting the ouster of Jewish managers and emphasizing the importance of foreign commerce, impressed Messersmith as "the most constructive statement by any public man in Germany on economic matters."[47]

Although the regime had yet to announce a definite economic policy, Messersmith was now "convinced of the sincerity" of the leadership when they claimed not to want "foreign interests or capital disturbed." Despite popular pressure for repudiation, Germany nonetheless continued to service its external debt. Foreigners were again safe on the streets. So were the Jews. Messersmith had "reason to believe that Hitler disapproved of the general anti-Jewish action" and was "moderate in his views in this respect." The regime seemed to be reassessing its position on Jews in the country's official and cultural life. The removal of Jewish artists like the conductor Bruno Walter had aroused such public indignation that Messersmith felt safe in predicting on 23 May that they would be "gradually brought back to their old places."[48]

The martial aspect of early Nazi Germany was most disturbing to Messersmith. The constant parading and rallies, the bellicose speeches, all gave the impression that Germany was a country preparing for war--that is, unless its grievances could be resolved peaceably. This seemed entirely possible to him, for Hitler's demands, as for equality in armaments, sounded reasonable. All in all, although Germany had undergone a revolution with the inevitable bloodshed and brutality, Messer-

smith could conclude in May that "a good deal of the greatest danger is over." Germany would be "a trouble spot for a long time," but it seemed fair to say in the late spring of 1933 that Germany was in the hands of traditional, if inexperienced, politicians.[49]

Messersmith had helped see German-American relations through the storm. Working quietly with the police and concerned ministries, he had staved off a public crisis. The State Department expressed its gratitude. And Hitler's government, apparently concerned with its world image, had a lesson in the value of good behavior and reassurance that the United States, at least, would be patient while Germany was restored to moderation and responsibility.[50]

Berlin's whole foreign community acclaimed Messersmith's performance under fire. Americans who had run afoul of the S.A. and been saved by him had the most reason to be grateful. They found him that rare public servant who cared with all his being and brought results. One American considered him "truly magnificent," noting that he was "held in such high esteem by his colleagues that he is practically regarded as having ambassadorial rank." Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of Foreign Affairs and the first American to talk to Hitler after he took power, left Berlin in May convinced that Messersmith was "the ablest of our officials." Another American in Berlin praised his "burning courage and . . . passionate devotion to democracy, decency, and truth." But he had managed to control his passions to get the job done.[51]

The kid gloves came off in combat with Nazi extremists. He displayed a bracing intolerance of cocky young ruffians like Karl Ernst, a twenty eight year old former hotel porter now S.A. chief in Berlin. One bout with Messersmith left the self-proclaimed executioner mute and "red in the face." Thankfully, Ernst and similar party low life rarely travelled in diplomatic circles. Men of some refinement, like Neurath, Goering, and Hjalmar Schacht, the Reichsbank president, were more likely to be encountered on the social circuit. Unlike most foreigners, Messersmith always saw these opportunists for what they were, but even he was occasionally grateful that "normal conversation" could be had with them.[52]

Other top Nazis were impossible boors, completely out of their element in civilized company. "Putzi" Hanfstaengl was a prime offender. A Harvard graduate, with a certain musical talent and superficial charm, Putzi had wangled his way into Hitler's inner circle. Messersmith learned that the Fuehrer kept him around mainly as a favor to Putzi's mother, who had sheltered Hitler during his footloose days in postwar Munich. Although "never more than a court jester," Hanfstaengl, Messersmith recalled, "thought that his position as Hitler's favorite and his uniform permitted him to do anything." Messersmith first encountered him at an American embassy reception. Putzi dripped sarcasm. "Oh," he said, "so this is the famous Messersmith who knows everything that is going on here and doesn't like it." As if to test him, Putzi started pawing the leg of the wife of one of the embassy secretaries seated next to him at the dinner table. Messersmith noticed. Un-

deterred by fear of a scene, he rose to excoriate the Nazi "in unvarnished language," and threatened to bring his conduct to the attention of Goering, "who would not stand for that sort of thing." Messersmith recalled with satisfaction that Putzi "was an exemplary guest the rest of the evening."[53]

Hanfstaengl never forgot the humiliation. Employing the favorite Nazi smear, he started the rumor that Messersmith was a Jew, a falsehood that gained surprising currency. In February 1934 Putzi was out trying to collect evidence of Messersmith's "unfriendl[iness] to the German Government and the German people" to support a demand for his recall.[54]

Putzi had company in wanting Messersmith out of the way. Brown Shirts twice tried running him down in the streets outside his office--or so he later recalled. Goebbels, he heard, "frothed at the mouth" at the mention of his name, and, Messersmith was certain, had tapped his phones. The pixyish Goering introduced Messersmith as "a man who hates me." It was indicative of their respect for a redoubtable foe. A Nazi newspaper grudgingly conceded that Messersmith proved that a foreigner could "approach the German spirit."[56]

It had not been easy for him. The daily pressures, the long hours, and high stakes, all left him exhausted. But, with the apparent return to national sanity and the arrival of Ambassador Dodd, Messersmith anticipated a respite. The Dodd party--the ambassador and his wife and their adult children, William Jr. and Martha--landed in Hamburg on

13 July. Messersmith met the new envoy two days later. He "liked Dodd from the outset." Indeed, they had much in common. Both were simple, patriotic, hardworking, plainspoken men. Messersmith was no scholar, but he was still the schoolmaster over his consuls. Dodd was determined to bring Jeffersonian simplicity and economy to diplomacy. Dodd too was intolerant of sloppy staff work, and of diplomatic snobbery and laziness. Messersmith must have been heartened when he took an immediate dislike to Gordon and let his staff know that he disapproved of work habits geared more to socializing than business.[56]

He also found Dodd a discerning observer. The new ambassador's knowledge of the country and the language, gained during graduate study at Leipzig, helped. "Few men," Messersmith wrote later, "realized what was happening in Germany more thoroughly than he." Dodd's early analysis also emphasized the trend toward moderation. And Dodd, in Messersmith's view, himself contributed significantly to that trend during his first weeks. The Nazis kept trying to elicit remarks from him that could be used for propaganda; but Dodd, his consul general observed, had a knack for parrying leading questions. In his speeches and interviews Dodd cleverly drew upon history to remind the Nazis by inference that extremism could not succeed. It was, Messersmith thought, a "splendid" approach, bound to have a salutary effect in high places. At the end of Dodd's first month in Berlin, Messersmith assured the Department that his appointment was "one of the wisest that could have been made."[57]

But the ambassador had conspicuous limitations. A short, slender man, Dodd, at the age of 63, "gave the impression of being rather fragile"; Messersmith wondered whether his physique would stand the strain of Nazi diplomacy. He was an authority on the Old American South, but seemed to have "little knowledge of economics or business," matters of the utmost importance in German-American relations.[58]

His temperamental adequacy was also questionable. He struck Messersmith as having been too long sheltered in academe. It was soon evident that the ambassador had "very little contact with some of the realities of life," and "very little comprehension of what the duties of an Ambassador were." His intention to live simply was admirable but misguided, Messersmith felt, for the Germans "would not understand nor respect such modesty." So, despite Dodd's expressed wish for standard accomodations, Messersmith arranged with the manager of the fashionable Hotel Esplanade, where American ambassadors customarily resided, to let Dodd have the royal suite at less than half the usual rate. The innocent ambassador marvelled that "six embarrassingly elegant room with beautiful furniture" cost only 40 marks a day.[59]

Messersmith also noted naivete in Dodd's attitude toward the embassy and his staff. The ambassador's eagerness for reform seemed to be the outgrowth of his prejudices. Long before taking up his post, Dodd had adopted the common American notion of diplomacy as a prime refuge for ostentatious and useless millionaires. He quickly

came to dislike the whole diplomatic scene, with its frippery and dissipation. Since his entire Berlin staff had private income, he suspected them all, and the embassy stenographers as well. Shortly after his arrival he began peppering Roosevelt and Hull with long handwritten letters urging the removal of "wealthy staff people" who "think more of wearing good clothes than doing good work" and who made themselves and their government "rediculous [sic] imitating Louis XIV."[60]

Messersmith, of course, heartily agreed that Gordon and his ilk could be infuriating. In his view, there was indeed waste and inefficiency at the embassy and a sore need for firm and experienced supervision. He hoped for closer coordination with the consulates and greater staff discinpline. Unfortunately Dodd proved unequal to the task. Messersmith recalled charitably that the ambassador "was a bit vague" on administrative procedures. He was a complainer, not a doer. He could not control embassy spending because he had "no real comprehension of accounting practices and responsibilities." And alienating his staff with highlevel criticism did nothing to improve their work habits.[61]

Despite Messersmith's reservations, he and Dodd got on well together. They could exchange views frankly. Dodd gave high marks to the consuls, especially Geist, and praised Messersmith as "a good disciplinarian [who] keeps his staff in order" and "sense[s] things accurately." Best of all, "there is not a lazy streak in him." After Messersmith left Berlin, however, their relationship cooled, partly because Dodd

suspected--correctly--that Messersmith was after his job. By 1936, suffering, or so Messersmith thought, from mental deterioration, Dodd turned on him. In a bitter letter to one of his few friends in the State Department, R. Walton Moore, Dodd both denied and regretted having endorsed Messersmith for promotion, now regarding him as "unequal to real estimates of situations" and too well off financially. Yet when Messersmith moved to Washington in 1937, Dodd continually called upon him for various favors. Messersmith could rarely oblige, but, out of residual loyalty and affection, always made the effort.[62]

All this lay ahead. Dodd and Messersmith were just beginning to become acquainted during the summer of 1933. Although initially in accord as to the direction of the Hitler regime, differences developed between them. One disagreement centered on the Berlin correspondent of the Chicago Daily News and president of the city's foreign press association, Edgar Ansel Mowrer. Mowrer had gotten into the Nazis bad graces early on, with the publication of his book, Germany Puts the Clock Back, in January 1933. A scathing attack on Nazi philosophy and methods, the book gave many westerners their first detailed look at the forces behind the Third Reich. Mowrer's daily despatches, lurid accounts of Nazi barbarity, also caused distress in the government. In April the Germans endeavored to get rid of him. Foreign journalists came under various restrictions, to remain in force, it was implied, until Mowrer resigned as their spokesman. He offered, but his colleagues refused to consider it. Messersmith took pleasure in delivering their

decision to Goering. The regime, he told the Reichsmarshal, had better get used to the foreign press reporting the facts; Mowrer's despatches accurately reflected German conditions. Messersmith was sure that the message sunk in, for the following days saw a relaxation of the restrictions and an end to the harrassment of Mowrer. To Messersmith it reaffirmed the effectiveness of direct talk in dealing with Nazis.[63]

Three months later Mowrer was again an item of controversy. Within two weeks of Dodd's arrival, in late July, the attacks on American citizens and property resumed, dashing Messersmith's hopes that the Hitler regime would continue on its moderate path. As before, Mowrer reported the bloodcurdling facts, and the Nazis stepped up their efforts to have him removed. The German charge in Washington, Rudolf Leitner, twice demanded that the State Department arrange his recall. Leitner got back a lecture on the importance of a free press.[64]

Stymied on the diplomatic front, the Nazis resorted to physical intimidation, at which they were past masters. There were threats on Mowrer's life. The police stationed guards outside his home, but warned that nothing further could be done to protect him. In discussions with Messersmith, Mowrer decided to carry on. The consul general dutifully pointed out the risks, but he would have made the same courageous decision himself. Fearing the worst, Mowrer affixed Messersmith's home phone number to both of his night stands. Evidently tiring of this

game, the regime simply ordered Mowrer and his wife out of the country. He and Messersmith called on Dodd, hoping for the embassy's support in fighting the expulsion order. The interview went badly. Dodd emerged feeling "that Mowrer was almost as vehement, in his way, as the Nazis," and that the foreign journalists would be better off if he left. In any case, in Dodd's view, the question became academic when, on 20 August, Mowrer's publisher, Frank Knox, assigned him to Tokyo. Two days later, at a meeting with Hans Dieckhoff of the Wilhelmastrasse, Dodd agreed to urge Mowrer's immediate departure. Dodd did, and Mowrer never forgave him for it. Messersmith was also disturbed. Dodd, he feared, failed to see that the Nazis would be emboldened to strike again against American interests. The Mowrers left a few days later. Messersmith, alone among American officials, Mrs. Mowrer remembered, "left a dinner party to come down to the [railroad] station to embrace Edgar for the last time."[65]

The loss of Mowrer, whom Messersmith regarded as one of the most courageous and conscientious of the foreign correspondents, was a serious blow, coming as it did as the regime seemed to be throwing caution to the winds. The "almost unbelievable movement toward moderation" of early July had in less than a month reverted to the bedlam of early spring. Messersmith's respite was over almost before it began. Files on Americans assaulted in the streets again piled up on his desk. A young American tourist couple, she pregnant, were

set upon in Leipzig. He suffered "internal injuries [from which] he may never recover"; she miscarried and "will never again be able to bear children." In Berlin, an American medical researcher, hurrying to his office on the Unter den Linden, made the mistake of not stopping to return the Nazi salute to a passing S.A. corps. Later that day a number of Brown Shirts visited to administer a thrashing that left the doctor "a mass of raw flesh." Messersmith was summoned. The consul general "took one look and got as quickly as I could to one of the basins where the doctor washed his hands."[66]

Another incident was grimly ironic. The noted radio commentator, H.V. Kaltenborn, arrived in late August to prepare a series of broadcasts. Talking with Messersmith, Kaltenborn expressed skepticism about the reports of Mowrer and others. Messersmith assured him that he would find out for himself. Four days later Kaltenborn's wife and son, strolling the Berlin streets, were beaten bloody while two policemen, standing ten feet away, looked on.[67]

As the regime had demonstrated the power to stop such outrages, Messersmith reasoned, so only with its connivance could they have resumed. In fact, Germany appeared to be abandoning reason and cooperation on all fronts. American business experienced renewed discrimination. Here too, a critical difference emerged: initially the outgrowth of personal feuds and private opportunism, assaults on United States trade and capital now originated with the regime, in open defiance of the 1923 treaty. On 11 August the commerce ministry issued orders

requiring travellers leaving the country to obtain permits if they wished to book passage on non-German transportation. Under another edict, German firms were permitted a tax deduction for replacement machinery if and only if purchased from other German firms. Currency restrictions, amounting to a virtual ban on the repatriation of profits, were tightened. In June Schacht had promised equal treatment for all foreign bondholders. After concluding a settlement with Americans, calling for 75 per cent of the interest due them, Schacht negotiated separate agreements granting Swiss and Dutch bondholders 100 per cent. On 18 September the regime announced changes in import regulations for 1934 that openly violated the most-favored-nation clause of the 1923 treaty. The American prune quota was reduced by two-thirds; Yugoslavia, which had agreed to accept German manufactures in barter, had its quota doubled.[68]

These actions sparked a resurgence of random meddling by the S.A. The Kampfbund may have been dissolved, but, Messersmith noted, the sentiments it had drawn upon were still strong. The department stores experienced renewed harrassment. By November Messersmith concluded that some $40 million in American investments in the stores were "a complete loss." The S.A. organized and enforced a "buy at home" drive. German-made products bore an S.A. seal of approval. Newspapers running advertisements for foreign products became S.A. targets. Shippers came under pressure to patronize German carriers exclusively. The value of American investments, Messersmith reported, was "con-

stantly shrinking" under Nazi discrimination.[69]

Pressure also mounted on the Jews. Far from being restored to their positions, they were subjected to cruelties "of the most refined and deadly character," with the regime's encouragement. Expelled from the civil service and the professions, barred from public facilities like theaters and swimming pools, robbed and murdered with impunity--with all this, Messersmith concluded, "the life of the Jews has become absolutely impossible." He finally saw that making Germany judenfrei was one of two objectives--the other being the annexation of Austria--on which the Fuehrer was "absolutely implacable."[70]

Messersmith tried to do his job. But the government was no longer of assistance to him. Officials who had behaved entirely rationally suddenly displayed symptoms of fanaticism. Dr. Roland Freisler of the Reich ministry of justice was typical. Back in the spring, Freisler had helped free Americans caught in S.A. clutches. When Messersmith called on him in August in connection with the latest victims, he found a different Dr. Freisler, who launched into "the usual Nazi harangue," his eyes becoming "those of a maniac." Almost overnight Gestapo chief Diehls turned indifferent to Geist's problems. Goering again promised satisfaction, but by the end of September no arrest had been made, and the attacks on Americans went on.[71]

Having exhaused informal avenues, Messersmith now advised formal protests. On 4 September Hull summoned Charge Leitner and warned that the State Department would advise Americans to stay out of Germany for their own safety. Responding for the Wilhelmstrasse, Dieckhoff expressed his government's "deep regrets," piously assuring Dodd that "these incidents did not indicate any anti-American or anti-foreign sentiment." In October the State Department tried again, with similar lack of results.[72]

Therefore, Hull instructed Dodd to take up the attacks and the trade discrimination with Hitler personally. As Messersmith remembered it, Dodd responded with something less than alacrity. The ambassador had not yet met Hitler, but knew of his propensity for tantrums. The prospect of a confrontation with the Fuehrer made Dodd squirm. Claiming to be down with the flu, Dodd begged Messersmith to deliver the protest for him. Citing protocol and principle, he refused. Hitler would never deign to see a consul when there was a resident ambassador; besides, Dodd had to face up to his responsibilities. To Dodd's acute relief, Hitler stayed under control during their 17 October talk, limiting himself to a brief tirade against Versailles. The ambassador felt the interview had been "favorable"; as Messersmith recalled, he "recovered rapidly from his influenza." The meeting accomplished nothing. Hitler had promised to "personally see to it that any [S.A. attacks on Americans] would be punished to the limit of the law," and in fact a few

well publicized arrests were made. Unfortunately, Messersmith learned from his informants, the accused were all actually political prisoners standing in for the real culprits, who had been let off scotfree. Sporadic attacks continued.[73]

Formal protests did not satisfy American economic grievances, either. More than anything else happening in 1933, Nazi trade restrictions angered Hull, striking as they did at the most-favored-nation foundation of his traditional liberal economics. In September, fed up with Germany's "numerous collossal frauds" and flagrant violations of American treaty rights, he authorized Dodd to take all necessary steps to secure the "immediate and effective removal of discrimination against American trade." Again Dodd moved halfheartedly, his natural diffidence reinforced by his aversion to American "plutocrats," whose interests he was presumably being asked to defend. He presented the American case at the Wilhelmstrasse with a notable lack of conviction--in at least one instance, ignorant of the facts--and excessive sympathy for the German position. After all, he wrote Hull, "German exports to the United States are only one-fourth of American exports to Germany"; it was understandable that Germany favored the trade and creditors of nations with whom she enjoyed a better trade balance.[74]

Dodd's failure to present American demands "in a forcible manner" infuriated Hull and his diplomats. But Messersmith frankly doubted the efficacy of a more emphatic approach. After everything that had happened since summer, he believed, there was no more mistaking the

true character of the Nazi regime. One British journalist, he wrote Phillips on 29 September, "said that the motto of this revolution is 'Brutality, Mendacity, and Loquacity.'" Messersmith suggested a fourth: "duplicity." Indeed, he and others who had thought Hitler a traditional statesman and open to reason had been deceived. Instead, the worst was true: Hitler and his henchmen were literally madmen, "psychopathic cases [who] would ordinarily be receiving treatment somewhere." Moderates like Goering had fallen from grace. Schacht, Messersmith learned, had tried to impress upon Hitler the importance of world opinion, but, finding the Fuehrer deaf to his appeals, "has about given it up. Schmitt has little influence except insofar as the internal [economic] situation is concerned," and even here was losing ground to radicals like Walter Darre and Robert Ley and to S.A. vigilantism. Papen, the vice chancellor, was "nothing more than a messenger boy." Neurath was retained "as a decorative and protective front because of the confidence that the diplomats here and chanceries outside have in him . . . " In fact, the whole foreign office was "out of the picture," stripped of all but routine responsibilities. Foreigners, Messersmith argued, were "playing the party's game" by ignoring the new reality.[75]

Where were Nazi "lunatics" headed? It was, he admitted to Phillips, impossible to predict the future any more than "the keeper of a madhouse is able to tell what his inmates will do in the next hour." But the inmates had taken control of the madhouse. Domestic opposition

having mostly been crushed or absorbed, Hitler's aim was "to make Germany the most capable instrument of war that there has ever existed." The evidence was unmistakable. "Wherever one goes in Germany," he wrote Phillips, "one sees people drilling, from children of five and six on up to those well into middle age." Hitler Youth groups spent weekends under military instruction throwing "dummy hand grenades from a trench at dummy torsos of soldiers." Through the controlled media a "psychology is being developed that the whole world is against Germany and that it lies defenseless against the world." The people were being told "the most extraordinary fairy tales," that, for example, Germany's enemies planned to bomb the country at any moment; investments in air raid shelters became tax deductible. Messersmith doubted whether Nazi propaganda had succeeded to the point where "the majority of the German people . . . desire war," but he was certain that, in a matter of months, the normally apathetic German masses had been so whipped up that most were ready to follow the Fuehrer wherever he led them.[76]

On 14 October 1933 he led them out of both the League of Nations and the World Disarmament Conference, moves ratified by national plebiscite a month later. He regretted the need for such extreme steps, Hitler, told Germany and the world, but he had to protest the lack of progress on general disarmament. German honor did not permit her to remain at Geneva as an inferior. Nonetheless, Germany's wish for peace was "unshakable." His greatest desire was for permanent reconciliation

with France: "It would be a mighty occasion for all mankind," Hitler declared, "if the two peoples could forever dismiss force from their mutual dealings."[77]

Many foreigners, including Dodd, took Hitler at his word and saw some merit in his position. Messersmith refused to be tricked again. The State Department, he advised, should "judge Germany by her actions rather than by the declarations of her leaders," which were intended to confuse world opinion. Hitler's pronouncements notwithstanding, he had "no desire for peace unless it is a peace which the world makes at the expense of complete compliance with German desires and ambitions." Hitler's excuse for leaving Geneva was the purest hypocrisy, for what Germany "is interested in is not so much the other countries cutting down their armaments, as having a free hand . . . to go ahead and rearm herself."[78]

In the weeks ahead Messersmith reported important strides to do just that. The drive to speed the production of machine tools looked innocent, but he was certain its aim was to provide hardware for the army. Some factories had already been converted to the production of light arms and shell casings. Aircraft construction, ostensibly for commercial purposes, boomed, using many components purchased abroad. American firms like Pratt and Whitney, Sperry Gyroscope, and United Aircraft were involved in the trade, which, although perfectly legal, was clearly helping Germany rebuild the Luftwaffe.[79]

Messersmith perceived that German economic policy was the servant of the rearmament program, another sign of Nazi determination to take on the world. As Germany had withdrawn from international conferences, so was she pulling out of the global economy. Her flagrant violations of the 1923 treaty demonstrated Nazi contempt for international law generally and normal commercial intercourse particularly. The attacks on American firms, the discrimination against American bondholders and trade, and the currency restrictions were, he wrote Washington, elements of a criminal scheme to eliminate foreign economic influence and confiscate foreign property. Germany's goal was self-sufficiency. Imposts, he predicted, would increasingly be limited to raw materials essential to the military; non-strategic materials Germany would take only in barter for her manufactures. Regimentation of the domestic economy was proceeding. Basic commodities like copper, petroleum, and textiles had come under government control, with rationing contemplated. German science was hard at work in search of laboratory substitutes.[80]

By late fall 1933, then, Messersmith was absolutely certain that Nazism represented a grave threat to world peace, that it embodied the darkest side of human nature, the antithesis of everything that was good and decent in man. "There is absolutely no humanitarian principle in this government," he wrote Phillips. Others had territorial ambitions, but not like these. The truth was incredible, but it had to be faced. Nazi megalomaniacs aimed at world conquest. Goering had

told him matter-of-factly that all the land south of the Rio Grande would eventually be Germany's; perhaps the Reichsmarshal meant to reassure Messersmith that Germany had no designs on the United States proper. It was too easy to laugh off such claims as mere propaganda or the grandiose delusions of warped minds. Messersmith took Goering and the others seriously. Those warped minds controlled a nation of sixty millions. As long as they did, no one could sleep soundly.[81]

His logic was impeccable. To avoid the certain agonies of a Nazi future, "in some way or other a more moderate Germany must be restored." But how? Constructive diplomacy was predicated on certain common assumptions and limited objectives; there was no negotiating with the devil. Some observers were predicting that foreign opinion would ultimately force Hitler out or back onto a moderate course. Messersmith did not reject the possibility out of hand, but felt that this was a "slender reed on which to lean." The Nazi upheaval had dominated the foreign press for some weeks at the beginning, but the world economic crisis and the heroic efforts of the new American administration had pushed it off the front pages. At best, outside interest in German developments would be difficult to sustain.[82]

There was only one sure answer. In his letters to Phillips, Messersmith spoke occasionally of the need for "forcible intervention" or a "preventive war" to crush the Nazi monster in its infancy. Only occasionally, because he knew that realistically there was "no chance" for

armed intervention. France could not undertake such an operation herself, and public opinion in Britain and the United States precluded involvement. And yet Messersmith was confident that the winter of 1933-1934 would see the downfall of the Hitler regime from within, as Germany felt the inevitable failure of Nazi economics. Unemployment, declining wages, and shortages of consumer goods were endemic. Nearly all the country's cotton and wool was going into uniforms; there were predictions that the average German would be wearing "paper-clothes" by spring. Party taxes and dues eroded purchasing power. Appeals were out to all citizens to give up a meal a day, to save food. German exporters, Messersmith observed, were growing "panicky" as their markets disappeared.[84]

He could only see the situation going from bad to worse. Germans tended to defer to authority, but Messersmith was sure that their patience would run out. The end would be a counterrevolution, returning "a government with an appreciation of the real principles and facts that form the bases of domestic and international exchange of goods and services," a government "with which we can deal in the ordinary way." It was the "only hope for Europe and for all of us."[84]

It was hope nourished by illusion. He forecast economic collapse while acknowledging that conditions were "somehow . . . better than at home," where there had been no popular uprising. Messersmith's passions had overtaken his intellect; the horror of Nazism had crept into his soul. He could never accept that Hitlerite Germany would

would survive to torment the world. It must fall; under the weight of its internal contradictions and an ineluctable justice, he trusted it would, despite mounting evidence to the contrary. He clung stubbornly to his faith over the coming years, clutching at every straw that supported his assumption that it was only a matter of time before the "disintegration of the Nazi regime" was complete. As late as January 1939 he was still unready to concede that the regime was not going to crumble of its own iniquity.[85]

The irony was that he was providing implicit justification for isolationism and inaction. According to his analysis, not only was there nothing the outside world could practically do, its interests lay in doing nothing. The peace-loving countries had only to sit back and watch the Hitler regime self-destruct. Already the Nazis, desperate for economic relief, were importuning for trade agreements and other foreign aid; of course, these overtures should be spurned. When the internal situation became intolerable, he suggested, the major powers might announce their willingness to come to the aid of a non-Nazi Germany, and let hungry Germans do the rest.[86]

So Messersmith saw no need for foreign economic sanctions, and actively opposed consumer boycotts of German products, even though her economic crisis would surely be exacerbated and redemption hastened if foreign markets and materials were cut off. The depressed West, he decided, might have its cake and eat it, too. He did not wish to place American investments in further jeopardy. And he was determined to retain what was left of the German market for American agriculture

and business, even if that trade helped sustain a baleful regime. Messersmith had one eye turned home, where a debate was shaping up over whether the United States, fighting for its own economic life, could afford to be overly fastidious about its customers. He staked out the position between those who would ignore the character of Hitler's government to sell all that Germany would buy, and those advocating economic warfare to bring the regime down.[87]

Unable to better reconcile the demands of the crisis at home with the challenge of Nazism, Messersmith took refuge in the hope that Hitler would himself resolve the dilemma by falling spontaneously. The false sense of security this fostered may have been fatal for some who turned to Messersmith for advice. Many Jews, German and American, had come to regard him as a friend--one of the few State Department officials who could be counted upon for sympathy and solicitude. At a time when State was playing down reports of German anti-Semitism to stave off domestic protests, Messersmith did not flinch from the appalling truth. "There is no greater crime in history," he wrote a prominent American Jew in September 1933, "than that which the German government is committing against the Jews." He made his feelings plain to his hosts. When Goering, on one occasion, suggested that the United States also discriminated against its Jews, Messersmith offered an indignant refutation. There "might be social prejudices," but he had never heard any American advocate "any interference with their completely equal rights in the Government, in the professions and in business and before the law." At the insinuation that

President and Mrs. Roosevelt were surrounded by "practically nothing but" Jewish advisers, Messersmith replied that "if the President had Jewish friends or Jewish advisors it must be because they were fine people and good citizens of our country." As for the first lady, it was natural that she have Jewish friends, "as she is an intellectual woman [who] moves in philanthropic and educational circles," and "Jews in the United States have taken such a fine and important part in such activities."[88]

In contrast to the barely-concealed anti-Semitism of many State Department diplomats Messersmith looked like a saint to Jewish leaders. Rabbi Stephen Wise, head of the American Jewish Congress, was among his earliest and most ardent admirers. "As far as there can be a Refuah [healer], he is that for our unhappy people in Germany," Wise wrote in 1933. Notable Jews like Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter were to become staunch supporters. They rejoiced when he became assistant secretary of state in 1937; when he left Washington three years later, Brandeis lamented, Jews "lost their only active friend among the higher ups in the State Department."[89]

Considering the indifference or hostility they regularly encountered at State during the 1930s, Wise and the others were appropriately appreciative. But Messersmith's record on the Jewish problem, in Germany and thereafter, did not warrant unqualified praise. His compassion was genuine, but he let opportunities for meaningful assistance slip away. Carr had written in June, reminding him

of his responsibility to uphold the restrictive immigration laws. He need not have worried, for Messersmith believed in those laws and prided himself on their rigorous enforcement. He professed to have domestic considerations at heart; but his opposition to admitting more refugees on the grounds that "we still have an enormous amount of unemployment at home" was only half the story. Messersmith harbored prejudices of his own. Most Jews, he conceded, "will be very glad to make a home for themselves and to fit into our picture," but others, radicals "who feel they have a mission in life . . . may potentially be a danger to us . . . which we cannot ignore." His views hardened over the years, partly because after leaving Germany he no longer had to witness the Jews' tribulations first hand. For all his sympathy, a scholar has written, Messersmith was scarcely different from his superiors in fearing "the impact of Jewish intellectual power and its threat to WASP hegemony of American culture."[90]

Thus, when would-be refugees applied to the Berlin consulate general, they found a concerned listener and a rigorous judge. Moved as he was, there were no special dispensations, no visas for applicants who did not meet the letter of the law. Although he did secure exit for a number of prominent Jews, most were turned away, back to a life that, as he knew so well, was "absolutely impossible" and getting worse.

Any qualms attending this grim business were eased by his conviction that Jewish suffering would be shortlived. There was, he assured Jewish friends in Berlin, no reason for precipitate flight with the

collapse of Hitlerism so near. Even those qualifying for visas he advised "not to run away but stay here and adopt a policy of watchful waiting." By winter's end, Hitler would be gone and normal conditions restored. Whether or not a single Jew declined to leave at his advice, the complacency he encouraged was a dangerous fantasy.[91]

In December 1933 he made ready for leave and a deserved rest after nine grueling months with the Nazis. He hoped that when he returned in the spring, it would be to a Germany restored to sanity. Actually he hoped not to be returning at all. In October he heard that the American minister to Prague, Francis White, intended to resign. Messersmith decided that he was perfect for the post. Two recurrent themes in Hitler's speeches--expansionism and Aryan solidarity--convinced observers who took him seriously that Czechoslovakia, with its long common frontier and many ethnic Germans, would become an early target of Nazi foreign policy. Washington needed accurate reportage from this likely hot spot, and Messersmith, with his profound understanding of Nazism, believed he "could do a very worthwhile job at this Prague post."[92]

He was at a personal crossroad. His fitieth birthday made him take stock of himself. It was time, he concluded to a friend, "to begin to think of my own health and future." He had proved himself in Berlin, and waited long enough for the rewards to come his way. "There is nothing ahead of me in the consular branch." He could not "continue indefinitely" to carry the "heavy burdens" of a supervisory consul general. He was "satisfied that the time has arrived for me to transfer to

the diplomatic branch where I can get a post as Minister in which I can be reasonably active and render useful service." Prague would be "a logical and proper step in my career."[93]

Getting the post was another thing. Notwithstanding the financial burden that had forced White's resignation, Prague was much sought after. The list of contenders included virtually every Latin American mission chief, many his senior in time of service, and innumerable Democratic loyalists. Messersmith had well-connected friends of his own, ready to support his candidacy. But foreign service officers, under the merit system, were not supposed to jockey for place. Messersmith feared that so doing "might eventually hurt me in my career." So, he wrote Dodd in January 1934, he had decided to "do nothing to encourage my friends to work on my behalf," trusting his fortunes to fate.[94]

He did no such thing. No sooner had he learned about the likely Prague vacancy than he launched a campaign to win the post. There was a long personal letter to Boston businessman Edward A. Filene, asking him to speak to his friend Roosevelt. Filene sent a warm recommendation to Hull. In later November the Department received a half dozen letters from prominent Delawarians, which must have been prompted, touting him as "probably the most outstanding man in the Service today." Naming Messersmith to Prague, one leading Democrat wrote, "would please a large number of people in this State."[95]

Upon his arrival in New York on 11 December, Messersmith began sounding out his prospects. He met with leading businessmen, including Henry Morgenthau, Sr., Owen Young, Thomas Lamont, and Felix Warburg. He had a long lunch with Henry Stimson. Everyone evinced an "intense" interest in Germany and, encouragingly, an appreciation of his work in Berlin. Proceeding to Washington, he conferred with Carr, Sumner Welles (assistant secretary after a brief, tumultuous tour as ambassador to Cuba), and Francis Sayre, Hull's chief trade adviser. He found Undersecretary Phillips and Jay Pierrepont Moffat, in charge of the Division of Western European Affairs, "extraordinarily interested" in his Nazi stories and "very appreciative of the information they are getting from Berlin," but, oddly in his view, more concerned with Russia than Germany. They were also noncommital about Czechoslovakia.[96]

After visitng Delaware, Messersmith headed to Fleetwood to spend the holiday season with his mother. What he wanted for Christmas, however, was Prague. He wrote Moffat thrice in a week, inquiring anxiously about the matter. Not wanting to appear too eager, he always expressed his "ambivalence" about the post, but confessed the obvious: he was "hoping that the President will decide to send me there." Moffat assured him that a decision would soon be forthcoming.[97]

By mid January, although he had heard nothing definite, Messersmith was optimistic, at least in a 28 page letter to Dodd. He felt

> sure that the Department has suggested me to the President as the career man for the post. Mr. Phillips and Mr. Moffat seemed to be very favorable indeed. I understand that Secretary Hull, before he left for [the Pan American conference at] Montevideo was very favorable . . . My impression is that the President is very well informed, is quite favorable to my appointment, and will appoint me if he appoints a career man.[98]

Messersmith's intuition was on target. Hull's feelings cannot be established, but the president was indeed favorably disposed. Messersmith had never met him, but he correctly suspected that Roosevelt knew "something of the work I have been trying to do." As early as November he had spoken to Phillips "about promoting Mr. Messersmith to a legation." Roosevelt's antennae were picking up all sorts of glad tidings about this combative consul who stood up to Nazi bullies. He occasionally received digests of Messersmith's letters and despatches. Jewish groups and leading liberals like The Nation's Oswald Garrison Villard volunteered glowing words. The Nation, moreover, included him on its "Honor Roll for 1933," citing him for "upholding the rights of American citizens in Germany."[99]

And he was a consul. Messersmith's burden was now his blessing. The career diplomats seemed to represent the very things that the American electorate had recently repudiated: wealth, elitism, the Republican party. The president's own anti-foreign service bias received confirmation late in 1933, when the diplomats tried unsuccessfully to derail his planned resumption of relations with Russia. An irritated Roosevelt began leaning increasingly on informal foreign policy advisers like Henry Morgenthau Jr. and William Bullitt. But

there was a warm spot in his heart for the salt of the earth consuls, the State Department's long suffering underclass. His presidency would see sporadic initiatives to democratize the foreign service, to see Rogers and Moses-Linthicum into practice. Messersmith was to be among the first consular recipients of Roosevelt's patronage. Thus, when the president learned of White's probable resignation, he immediately thought of Messersmith as a replacement, "as a reward for his excellent work as Consul General in Berlin."[100]

The State Department, as Messersmith thought, also seemed to be on his side. Responding to a letter from Villard, Phillips assured him that "everyone of us in the Department is anxious to see him promoted to a ministership." Writing to Frank Knox, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, who had compelling personal reasons for wanting Messersmith rewarded, reported that State was "as full of admiration of [him] as we are." Mowrer concluded that if Messersmith wanted Prague, and Knox and others "remember to back [him] up, he should have no difficulty about obtaining the job."[101]

He did want it, and they did back him, and on 29 January Phillips called him in to offer him the post--as minister to Uruguay. Prague went to that charter member of the diplomatic fraternity, J. Butler Wright, whom Messersmith was to replace in Montevideo.[102]

What had happened? Professor D.K. Adams, who has examined the evidence, speculates that Wright pressed his claim on Hull during their time together at the Pan American conference. But all of Wright's persuasive powers would have little availed him without Phillips'

support. The undersecretary meant for Messersmith to have a ministership, but not Prague. It was one thing for a consul to get a legation and quite another to make it one of the choicest in the service. Messersmith could bide his time in the South American "swamps" and wait his turn. Phillips' diary reveals his smug satisfaction in denying the ambitious consul his preference.[103]

Roosevelt went along. He did so partly, no doubt, because Phillips, as Martin Weil observes, "really dug in his heels" when it came to selecting the career man for those posts alloted them, as against political appointees. In any case, the principle of consular-diplomatic interchangeability would be advanced regardless of whether Messersmith would up in Prague or Montevideo.[104]

Messersmith did not seem to care. Returning to Berlin on 9 March prior to taking up his new assignment, he was, as Dodd saw, a "very happy" man. At last he was entering the diplomatic ranks; and, he wrote Dodd, he looked forward to Latin America and building on the "splendid foundation" Hull had built at Montevideo.[105]

Eight days later happiness turned to elation. The American minister in Vienna, George Earle, had suddenly resigned to run for govvernor of Pennsylvania, and was planning to leave Austria before the end of the month. Messersmith, not yet departed for Uruguay, was an obvious replacment. Phillips decided that "no one [was] better qualified . . . to fill this key position"--as though that were not as true for Prague. He saw Roosevelt on 16 March and "persuaded" him to approve the switch "In view of the fact that [Messersmith] was

probably better informed than anyone else at our disposal on the Nazi program and activities . . . "[106]

Roosevelt required little persuasion. He was right pleased with the outcome, which placed Messersmith in the region he originally wanted him, and pleased with himself, as John Gunther, then the Vienna correspondent of the Chicago Daily News, discovered in an interview some months later. "Ha, ha!," the president cackled. Messersmith's appointment "was a good joke on the State Department, wasn't it! Just think what the career boys will say! I've put a lowly consul into a diplomatic post. Ha, ha, ha!"[107]

Messersmith was too full of the moment for badinage. For him, the news was "the most pleasant surprise in my life." Vienna put him "nearer old friends and in touch with a situation which I have been following so closely . . ." He gushed gratitude to Phillips for "this mark of confidence which the President and the Secretary and you all have shown in me." Hearty applause came from the American press. Editorials appeared praising him and his promotion as an illustration, as the New York Times put it, of "the advantages of our comparatively new system under which men of proven ability may pass from the consular to the diplomatic service."[108]

The news, according to the Times' Berlin correspondent, aroused "conflicting sentiments" in official German circles. Even though Messersmith "thoroughly understands the German viewpoint . . . he has been the most persistent and thoroughgoing contender for all that is

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due the United States, both in letter and in spirit, with whom the Germans have ever had to deal." For this "he has won their entire respect." But, the writer added, "they may not mourn his passing."[109]

Among Americans in Berlin and his many German friends, the dominant sense was loss. They were happy for him, as attested by the flurry of farewell banquets and parties hurriedly arranged for him. But it was joy tempered by the unsettling recognition that truth and justice were losing a champion in Nazi Berlin.[110]

Chapter Two

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18. Senate Foreign Relations Committee report quoted in Barnes and Morgan, Foreign Service, p. 214 ff. Schulzinger, Diplomatic Mind, p. 183. Heinrichs, Jr., "Bureaucracy and Professionalism," p. 182.

19. GSM to Bundy, 23 Nov. 1932, 120.00/144. For Carr's administrative conservatism, Carr to Bullitt, 27 Mar. 1937, 120.1/301. Phillips memo, 11 Dec. 1933, 124.621/303.

20. New York Times, 4 Dec. 1932, p. 1; 6 Dec. 1932, p. 1; 7 Dec. 1932, p. 4; 8 Dec. 1932, p. 20; 10 Dec. 1932, p. 6; 11 Dec. 1932, p. 3; 13 Dec. 1932, p. 15.

21. Detroit News, 7 Dec. 1932; Los Angeles Times, 8 Dec. 1932; Santa Barbara Press, 9 Dec. 1932, all CF. New York Tribune, 6 Dec. 1932, p. 14. GSM memo, 10 Dec. 1932, I 53.

22. GSM to Villard, 20 Dec. 1932, I 87. GSM to Villard, 27 Dec. 1932, I 98.

23. Ibid. Entry for 10 Dec. 1932, Stimson Diary. Transcript of Stimson press conference, 10 Dec. 1932, I 49. New York Tribune, 12 Dec. 1932, p. 16. Antwerp Neptune, 17 Dec. 1932, I 81.

24. GSM to Gary, 27 Dec. 1932, I 97.

25. GSM to Villard, 20 Dec. 1932, I 87. Freidel, FDR: Launching, p. 360.

26. GSM to Stone, 28 Dec. 1932, OF 896, Roosevelt Papers.

27. "Cordell Hull and My Personal Relationships with Him," I 2035, GSMM. Hull, Memoirs, p. 81. Drummond, "Hull," p. 185.

28. McKenzie, Weimar, p. 229. Fest, Hitler, pp. 345-69.

29. GSM quoted in Fromm, Blood and Banquets, pp. 65-66. Mommsen, "The Reichstag Fire," pp. 129-222.

30. For his perceptive reporting, Sackett to Stimson, 3 Mar. 1933, FRUS 1933, 2:201-04. Sackett to Stimson, 9 Mar. 1933, ibid., pp. 204-09.

31. Offner, American Appeasement, pp. 54-55. Dallek, Dodd, pp. 187-90.

32. Bullock, Hitler, pp. 277-80.

33. GSM #1214, 31 Mar. 1933, I 131. GSM #1210, 28 Mar. 1933, I 128.

34. "Dodd," I 1956, GSMM.

35. GSM #1234, 11 Apr. 1933, I 146.

36. GSM #1184, 14 Mar. 1933, I 118. GSM #1210, 28 Mar. 1933, I 128. Wheaton, Prelude, pp. 276-77, 280.

37. GSM #1205, 25 Mar. 1933, I 125. GSM #1214, 31 Mar. 1933, I 131. GSM #1216, 3 Apr. 1933, I 133.

38. GSM #1195, 14 Mar. 1933, I 118. New York Times, 20 Apr. 1933, p. 11. Goering quoted in Wheaton, Prelude, p. 225.

39. GSM #1212, 31 Mar. 1933, I 130.

40. GSM #1421, 10 July 1933, I 211. GSM #1326, 22 May 1933, I 184. Peterson, Hitler's Limits, pp. 90-91. Wheaton, Prelude, p. 298. GSM #1405, 30 June 1933, 123 G 271/167. GSM #1421, 10 July 1933, I 211.

41. GSM #1216, 3 Apr, 1933, I 133. GSM #1232, 11 Apr. 1933, I 144. GSM #1252, 25 Apr. 1933, I 153. GSM #1295, 9 May 1933, I 165.

42. GSM #1252, 25 Apr. 1933, I 153. Wheaton, Prelude, pp. 301-02.

43. GSM #1208, 28 Mar. 1933, I 127. GSM #1216, 3 Apr. 1933, I 133. Peterson, Hitler's Limits, pp. 47-48.

44. GSM #1233, 11 Apr. 1933, I 144. GSM #1243, 18 Apr. 1933, I 148. GSM #1370, 19 June 1933, I 197. GSM memo, 8 May 1933, I 163.

45. GSM #1531, 23 Aug. 1933, I 268. GSM #1243, 18 Apr. 1933, I 148. GSM #1296, 9 May 1933, I 166. GSM #1273, 2 May 1933, I 156. Offner, American Appeasement, pp. 64-65.

46. GSM #1273, 2 May 1933, I 156. GSM #1322, 22 May 1933, I 181. GSM #1489, 9 Aug. 1933, I 246. Peterson, Hitler's Limits, pp. 47-48.

47. GSM to Phillips, 14 Aug. 1933, I 255. GSM #1413, 6 July 1933, I 208. GSM #1590, 10 Aug. 1933, I 250. GSM #1741, 14 Nov. 1933, I 338.

48. GSM #1301, 12 May 1933, I 171. GSM #1329, 23 May 1933, I 185. GSM #1330, 23 May 1933, I 186. GSM #1335, 24 May 1933, I 191.

49. GSM to Moffat, 20 May 1933, I 180.

50. Carr to GSM, 7 June 1933, I 192. Phillips to GSM, 10 May 1933, I 167. Phillips to GSM, 13 July 1933, PF 365: "You and Gordon have shown yourself an admirable team [!] and your reporting, as well as your success in protection cases, has received the highest praise." Hull, Memoirs, pp. 236-37. Offner, American Appeasement, pp. 71-72. Pratt, Hull, 1: 180-81.

51. Fromm, Blood and Banquets, pp. 126, 162. Armstrong, Peace and Counterpeace, p. 530. Mowrer, Journalist's Wife, p. 302.

52. "General Ernst," I 1952, GSMM. "Dr. Hanfstengel" [sic], I 1960, GSMM. "Character of Nazi Leaders," I 1963, GSMM. "Goering Doesn't Become Foreign Minister," I 1953, GSMM.

53. Dr. Hanfstengel," I 1962, GSMM. GSM to Moffat, 13 June 1933, I 378.

54. Fromm, Blood and Banquets, p. 162. At least two American diplomats in Berlin--Second Secretary A.W. Kliefoth and Ambassador William E. Dodd--thought he was Jewish--half Jewish, in Dodd's case. GSM to Moffat, 14 June 1935, Moffat Papers. Dodd to R. Walton Moore, 21 June 1934, Moore Papers. GSM to Moffat, 13 June 1934, I 378.

55. "Addition to Memo on Attempts on My Life," I 1997, GSMM. "Dr. Goebbels," I 1953, GSMM. "Goering," I 1952, GSMM. The last prewar ambassador to Germany Hugh Wilson, was also convinced that the propaganda ministry had bugged the American consular and diplomatic offices in Berlin. A planned inspection by a U.S. Navy eavesdropping expert apparently never took place. Wilson to GSM, 17 Mar. 1938, Wilson Papers. GSM to Wilson, 6 Apr. 1938, ibid. GSM #1464, 28 July 1933, PF 366.

56. "Dodd," I 1956, GSMM. Dallek, "Beyond Tradition;" pp. 240-41. Entry for 28 Mar. 1934, Carr Diary.

57. "Dodd," I 1956, GSMM. GSM to Phillips, 14 Aug. 1933, I 255. GSM to Phillips, 28 Oct. 1933, I 324. Dallek, Dodd, pp. 198-202. Ford, "Three Observers," pp. 450-01.

58. "Dodd," I 1956, GSMM.

59. Ibid. M. Dodd, Through Embassy Eyes, pp. 22-23. Dodd Diary, p. 12.

60. "Dodd," I 1956, GSMM. Dallek, "Beyond Tradition," pp. 240-41. Dallek, Dodd, pp. 205, 231. Dodd to Roosevelt, 23 Dec. 1933, Nixon, ed., FDR, 1:548. Dodd to Moore, 17 Aug. 1936, Moore Papers. Pratt, Hull, 1:185-86.

61. "Dodd," I 1956, GSMM. GSM to Hull, 24 Oct. 1939, Hull Papers.

62. "Dodd," I 1956, GSMM. Entries for 28 Mar. 1934, 24 Apr. 1936, Carr Diary. Dodd to Moore, 21 June 1934, Moore Papers. Dodd to Moore, 17 Aug. 1936, ibid. GSM to Hull, 24 Oct. 1939, Hull Papers. GSM to Dodd, 21 June 1938, Dodd Papers. It may be observed that Dodd, who distrusted diplomats with corporate investments, possessed an impressive stock portfolio of his own, as detailed in his 1937 Federal income tax return, in box 54 of his papers.

63. Mowrer, Journalist's Wife, p. 297. GSM #1303, 12 May 1933, I 172.

64. Hull memo, 11 Aug. 1933, FRUS 1933, 2: 403. Moffat memo, 19 Aug. 1933, ibid., pp. 403-04.

65. GSM #1499, 10 Aug. 1933, I 249. Mowrer, Journalist's Wife, pp. 297, 307-08. M. Dodd, Through Embassy Eyes, p. 39. Dodd Diary, pp. 24, 26. Offner, American Appeasement, pp. 69-70. Dallek, Dodd, pp. 201-02.

66. GSM #1448, 22 July 1933, I 221. GSM #1454, 26 July 1933, I 223. GSM @1496, 9 Aug. 1933, I 247. GSM #1520, 19 Aug. 1933, I 263. Pratt, Hull, 1:182. "Conversation with Goering," I 1958, GSMM.

67. GSM #1564, 1 Sept. 1933, I 287. "Hans von Kaltenborn," I 1960, GSMM.

68. GSM #1521, 21 Aug. 1933, I 265. Dodd Diary, pp. 36, 42. Dodd to Hull, 7 Sept. 1933, FRUS 1933, 2:464-67. Dallek, Dodd, p. 208. Offner, American Appeasement, pp. 72-74.

69. GSM #1741, 14 Nov. 1933, I 338. GSM #1413, 6 July 1933, I 208. GSM #1453, 26 July 1933, I 224. GSM #1696, 1 Nov. 1933, I 326.

70. GSM to Phillips, 28 Oct. 1933, I 324. GSM to Phillips, 14 Aug. 1933, I 255. GSM to Phillips, 29 Sept. 1933, I 312. GSM #1596, 21 Sept. 1933, I 305.

71. "Character of Nazi Leaders," I 1963, GSMM. GSM #1590, 16 Sept. 1933, I 303. Dodd Diary, p. 36. GSM #1610, 25 Sept. 1933, I 306.

72. Hull to Dodd, 4 Sept. 1933, FRUS 1933, 2:388-89. Dodd to Hull, 8 Sept. 1933, ibid., p. 389. Hull to Dodd, 12 Oct. 1933, ibid., pp. 392-93. Hull memo, 12 Oct. 1933, ibid., pp. 393-94. Dodd to Hull, 14 Oct. 1933, ibid., pp. 394-95. Dodd Diary, p. 44.

73. "Conversations with Goering," I 1958, GSMM. Dodd Diary, p. 49. GSM to Phillips, 19 Oct. 1933, I 320. Dodd to Hull, 17 Oct. 1933, FRUS 1933, 2:396-97.

74. Offner, American Appeasement, pp. 67m 71-74. Hull, Memoirs, pp. 238-40. Hull to Dodd, 21 Sept. 1933, FRUS 1933, 2:467-68. Pratt, Hull, 1:185-87. Dodd Diary, pp. 42, 49.

75. Pratt, Hull, 1:186. GSM to Phillips, 29 Sept. 1933, I 312. GSM to Phillips, 26 June 1933, Peace and War, pp. 191-92. GSM to Phillips, 28 Oct. 1933, I 324. GSM #1741, 14 Nov. 1933, I 338. Messersmith's understanding of the powers behind German foreign policy was true. See Craig, "The German Foreign Office," pp. 406-36.

76. GSM to Phillips, 19 Oct. 1933, I 320. GSM to Phillips, 26 June 1933, Peace and War, p. 192. GSM to Phillips, 23 Nov. 1933, ibid. GSM to Phillips, 29 Sept. 1933, I 312.

77. Wheaton, Prelude p. 383. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy, pp. 164-67. GSM #1733, 14 N ov. 1933, I 337.

78. Dallek, Dodd, p. 209. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy, p. 167. GSM to Phillips, 19 Oct. 1933, I 320. GSM to Phillips, 23 Nov. 1933, Peace and War, pp. 194-95.

79. GSM to Phillips, 24 Mar. 1934, I 357. GSM to Phillips, 29 Mar. 1934, I 361.

80. GSM #1965, 22 Mar. 1934, I 356. GSM to Phillips, 13 Apr. 1934, I 364.

81. GSM to Phillips, 29 Sept. 1933, I 312. "Goering," I 1952, GSMM.

82. GSM to Phillips, 29 Sept, 1933, I 312.

83. Ibid. GSM to Phillips, 23 Nov. 1933, I 342. GSM to Phillips, 28 Oct. 1933, I 304. GSM #1741, 14 Nov. 1933, I 338. GSM #1964, 22 Mar. 1934, I 356. GSM to Phillips, 21 Apr. 1934, I 367.

84. GSM to Phillips, 13 Apr. 1934, I 364.

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85. GSM to Phillips, 19 Oct. 1933, I 320. GSM to Dodd, 4 Apr. 1934, I 363. Geist to GSM, 22 Jan. 1939, I 1136. GSM to Phillips, 8 Jan. 1935, I 460. Moss, "Diplomacy of Limits," p. 114.

86. GSM to Phillips, 13 Apr. 1934, I 364. GSM to Phillips, 27 Apr. 1934, I 369. GSM to Moffat, 14 Apr. 1934, I 365.

87. GSM #1964, 22 Mar. 1934, I 356. GSM #1670, 18 Oct. 1933, 611.623/66. Moffat to Phillips, 23 Nov. 1933, 611.623/68.

88. Billikopf to Mack, 14 Sept. 1933, I 298. GSM to Phillips, 28 Oct. 1933, I 324.

89. Wise quoted in Shafir, "Messersmith," p. 35. GSM-Frankfurter correspondence in box 83, Frankfurter Papers. Brandeis to Szold, 22 Oct. 1940, Urofsky and Levy, eds., Brandeis Letters, 5:646.

90. Morse, Six Million, pp. 150-71. Carr to GSM, 1 June 1933, Carr Papers. Carr to GSM, 1 Aug. 1933, I 238, GSM to Hull, 21 July 1933, I 220. Shafir, "Messersmith," p. 36 and passim.

91. Billikopf to Mack, 14 Sept. 1933, I 298.

92. GSM to Moffat, 13 Nov. 1933, Moffat Papers. GSM to Dodd, 11 Dec. 1933, Dodd Papers.

93. GSM to Filene, 19 Oct. 1933, PF 373. GSM to Dodd, 15 Jan. 1934, Dodd Papers.

94. Ibid. Entry for 12 Dec. 1933, Moffat Diary.

95. GSM to Filene, 19 Oct. 1933, PF 373. Filene to Hull, 4 Nov. 1933, ibid. Bodziak to Hull, 27 Nov. 1933, PF 381 and PF 374 ff.

96. GSM to Dodd, 15 Jan. 1934, Dodd Papers. Entry for 25 Jan. 1934, Stimson Diary. Entries for 15 Dec. and 20 Dec. 1933, Phillips Diary.

97. Reading Eagle, 28 Dec. 1933. Moffat to GSM, 17 Jan. 1934, Moffat Papers. GSM to Moffat, 17 Jan. 1934, ibid. GSM to Moffat, 18 Jan. 1934, ibid.

98. GSM to Dodd, 15 Jan. 1934, Dodd Papers.

99. GSM to Filene, 19 Oct. 1933, PF 373. Phillips to FDR, 16 Oct. 1933, 862.00/30971/2. Phillips memo, 23 Nov. 1933, OF 896, Roosevelt Papers.

Villard to Howe, 22 Dec. 1933, ibid.

100. Weil, A Pretty Good Club, pp. 67-74. Entry for 28 June 1934, Phillips Diary. FDR to Hull, n.d., PSF 87, Roosevelt Papers. Edith Nourse Rogers, widow of John Jacob Rogers of the Rogers Act and an influential member of Congress in her own right, described Roosevelt as "definitely unfavorable to the diplomatic side but thought consuls were good." Crane, Mr. Carr, p. 314.

101. Villard to Phillips, 19 Dec. 1933, OF 896, Roosevelt Papers. Phillips to Villard, 20 Dec. 1933, ibid. Mowrer to Knox, n.d. (prob. Dec. 1933), box 4, Knox Papers.

102. Entry for 29 Jan. 1934, Phillips Diary. Reading Eagle, 11 Feb. 1934.

103. Adams, "Messersmith's Appointment," p. 23. Phillips to FDR, 23 Nov. 1933, OF 501, Roosevelt Papers. Entry for 29 Jan. 1934, Phillips Diary.

104. Weil, A Pretty Good Club, p. 73.

105. Dodd Diary, p. 103. GSM to Dodd, 3 Apr. 1934, I 363.

106. Earle to FDR, 10 Mar. 1934, OF 969, Roosevelt Papers. Entry for 16 Mar. 1934, Phillips Diary. Phillips memo, 18 Mar. 1934, PF 411.

107. FDR to Guffey, 21 Mar. 1934, OF 166-B, Roosevelt Papers. Gunther, Roosevelt in Retrospect, p. 23.

108. GSM to Phillips, 24 Mar. 1934, I 357. GSM to Moffat, 14 Apr. 1934, I 365. New York Times, 23 Mar. 1934, p. 22.

109. Ibid., 25 Mar. 1934, p. 4.

110. Ibid. Fromm, Blood and Banquets, p. 158. GSM to Dodd, 13 Apr. 1934, Moore Papers.

Chapter Three

Vienna, 1934-1937

"In my earliest youth," wrote Hitler in Mein Kampf, "I came to the basic insight which never left me, but only became more profound:that Germanism could be safeguarded only by the destruction of Austria." She looked ripe for destruction in 1933. Conceived in defeat like Weimar, independent Austria seemed destined for an early demise herself. Her troubles had begun at birth and never let up. For three centuries the cultural and administrative center of a great empire, Austria in 1919 found herself a rump republic of six and a half million. She lost her traditional markets when sister successor states Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia went protectionist. Austrians had a hard time coping with instant democracy. Socialists battled the clerical-monarchist parties in parliament and in the streets. Rival militias--the rightist Heimwehr and the socialist Schutzbund--filled the vacuum created by the peace of Saint-Germain, which imposed stiff limits on Austria's regular forces. By 1930 Heimwehr-Schutzbund skirmishes had escalated into virtual civil war. Then came financial disaster: the crash of her premier bank, the Credit-anstalt. Taking office in April 1932, Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss inherited record unemployment, a grave budget deficit, and a disastrous trade imbalance.[1]

The merest push from Hitler, it seemed, would send Austria over the brink. Forty-three thousand Austrian Nazis eagerly awaited

the Fuehrer's directives. In the spring of 1933 they loudly demanded representation in the Dollfuss cabinet and new elections. Leaflets were dropped from the air urging Austrians to rise against their tottering government. Nazi sabotage and terrorism made for jumpy nerves and the worst tourist season in memory. Trade and tourism from Germany came to a halt. Hans Frank, Bavarian interior minister, publicly warned Dollfuss that the suppression of Austrian National Socialists would force Reich Germans to "take upon themselves the task of assuring the freedom of their fellow Germans in Austria." When Vienna protested these threats, the Foreign Office in Berlin replied that Nazis did "not regard Austria as a foreign country." In his infinite arrogance, the Fuehrer picked Reichstag deputy Theo Habicht as Dollfuss's successor, and assigned him to the Vienna legation as press attaché, with diplomatic immunity to do his dirty work.[2]

But Hitler underestimated his adversary. War hero, agrarian reformer, hard-driving technocrat, the diminutive Dollfuss, who, as Messersmith wrote later, "always looked like a boy," possessed manly reserves of courage and political dexterity, as Hitler soon learned. Playing upon Italian disquiet over Hitler's ambitions, Dollfuss secured guarantees from Il Duce, who nonetheless exacted his pound of flesh. He insisted upon internal "reforms" to transform Austria into a corporative state after the Italian model. Dollfuss was obliged to go along, but, it must be said, he evidence little duress in his dissolving par-

liament and the Schutzbund. With Italian backing and unrestricted authority, he could stand Hitler toe to toe. In speech after speech he roused Austrians to the defense of their country. A nation-wide manhunt for Nazi terrorists was launched. Habicht was expelled after a search of his quarters produced proof of his sedition. On 19 June Austria outlawed the Nazi party, arrested its officers, and put the rank-and-file to flight across the German border, where they regrouped into the so-called Austrian Legion. At Geneva Dollfuss described Austria's brave defiance of Nazi bullying, winning new admirers and visitors from the world over.[3]

Having weathered Hitler's initial assault, Dollfuss in early 1934 tried to reduce his dependence upon Italy, which worried him nearly as much. He appealed for British and French support, but the historic anti-Austrianism of France's allies Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania--the Little Entente--conspired against him. In the end his overtures west only brought expressions of "interest" in Austrian independence from London and Paris and angry warnings from Mussolini, who ordered him on with his "reforms." In February the Heimwehr was unleashed. Three days of fighting, replete with artillery and spot executions, claimed nearly a thousand casualties, most of them socialists. It was the most brutal manifestation yet of the madness over Central Europe to assault the world's senses, and a bucket of cold blood on its sympathies. Despairing now of assistance from the West, Dollfuss signed the Rome Protocols, a mutual consul-

tative pact, with Italy and Hungary. Austria was still independent, but her fate rested with the dictators in Rome and Berlin.[4]

The situation nonetheless seemed stable. Washington was in no great hurry about Messersmith's taking up his new post. The State Department found a special mission for him to do first. In late 1933 the American embassy, consulate general, and the various attachés in Paris had all moved into a new United States government office building on the Place de la Concorde. Paris, Carr observed, was State's "most conspicuous establishment," and so where it wanted to look its best. The new building was a good start, but visitors from Capitol Hill complained about overstaffing and inefficiency inside. The situation cried for a hardnosed organizer like Messersmith. So, on 14 April, Hull ordered him to Paris "for the purpose of studying and planning with the Ambassador [Jesse Isidor Strauss] further economies in personnel and management."[5]

The Department's people in Paris restrained their welcome. Straus, reported first secretary J. Theodore Marriner, deeply resented the dispatch of "an outsider, with no knowledge of the situation" to help direct "what the Ambassador very properly considers his own show." Only with difficulty had Marriner dissuaded Straus from "a violent, direct outburst to the President." Hopefully, he wrote, Messersmith's "personal tact will be sufficient to keep things smooth."[6]

It apparently was, for within two weeks a reorganization plan was ready for submission to Washington. Messersmith's hand

is evident. By consolidating the embassy and the consulate general, clerical savings of $50,000 annually were projected, not to mention improved internal communications. Consuls were to receive dual (diplomatic-consular) commissions; the consul general was to become the ambassador's chief commercial adviser; the first secretary was to assume the title of counselor and political adviser. But the attachés could not be touched.[7]

The plan benefitted everyone except the ten laid off clerks. Counselor-to-be Marriner and pinchpenny Carr applauded. The prospect of diplomatic status cheered the consuls and distressed Undersecretary Phillips, who was nonetheless relieved that the embassy was to retain "a dominating position" in the new arrangement. Most of all, the plan appealed to Roosevelt as a step toward Moses Linthicumism and consular-diplomatic fusion. In August Roosevelt ordered Paris into effect.[8]

Messersmith returned to Berlin to pack, and, on the morning of 18 May, he, Marion, and the two Belgian servants set out in the car for Vienna, arriving in time for dinner. He planned a week of rest and informal orientation before taking charge of the American legation. No sooner, however, had the Messersmiths checked into the fashionable Hotel Bristol (there being no official minister's residence) than came a message from Dollfuss, requesting an early introduction. So much for their holiday. The next morning he presented his credentials to the Austrian chief of state, President Wilhelm Miklas. They had a long

and "unusually cordial" talk, whereupon he was whisked off to the chancellery on the Ballhausplatz, where a cabinet meeting was just breaking up. Messersmith entered to find the Austrian chancellor emptying the ashtrays. "Well," he remembered Dollfuss saying with a broad grin, "you have caught me cleaning up." Messersmith had to chuckle, too.[9]

The mood turned abruptly somber, as they settled down and Dollfuss blurted out his fears for his country. Messersmith, heralded as "the terror of Nazi Germany," was a predictably sympathetic listener. The Austrian chancellor was on edge over the recent resurgence of Nazi terrorism, fearing that those small crimes were a prelude to invasion by the Austrian Legion. From what he was hearing about conditions inside Germany, Dollfuss said, Hitler might be looking to score a diversionary foreign policy coup. Messersmith agreed that Nazi Germany was on its last legs, that, with "the internal dissensions in the Party" and "the increasing economic and financial difficulties," Hitler had two months at most. The diplomat did not rule out a last-gasp German invasion, but expressed confidence that Italy and France would rush to Austria's defense in that event and deliver the coup de grace to the Hitler regime. The Austrian government, then, needed only to "hold on" and await Hitler's inevitable downfall.[11]

Messersmith surveyed the scene and conclusded that Austria would hold on. Under Dollfuss's ministrations the economy had made impressive improvement. The Creditanstalt had been reorganized.

Bank deposits surpassed predepression levels. Currency stability had been achieved. Declines of seventy six per cent in the trade deficit and sixteen per cent in unemployment since December 1932 reflected the revival of industry, particularly steel and textiles. Dollfuss's "heroic efforts" had almost balanced her 1934 budget. Foreign bankers seemed ready to discuss a rescheduling of her external debt.[11]

The internal political picture was also brightening. Observers might have concluded that Messersmith and Dollfuss were old confidants instead of total strangers given their long, almost daily meetings. Flattered, Messersmith became a quick and frank admirer. Defending the accused murdered of socialists was risky business, but they were risks Messersmith characteristically ignored. He was simply convinced, and more every day, that Dollfuss was the victim of a naive and vicious calumny with potentially tragic consequences. Hitler and Mussolini, he insisted, were the real villains behind the February calamity; Dollfuss had merely bowed to the dictates of national survival over his protesting conscience. Furthermore, he meant to restore the constitution just as soon as Austria was rid of the Nazi threat. Meanwhile the chancellor's essential goodness and force of personality were helping to heal the nation's wounds and uphold its sovereignty. Dollfuss, Messersmith concluded, deserved the West's support and understanding, not its censure.[12]

Nor, the American minister decided, were Major Emil Fey and Prince Ernst Rudiger Starhemberg, the Heimwehr leaders, the malevolent characters of repute. Unlike Dollfuss, they were fascists, and ambitious ones. But like him, they were both patriots above all else. Messersmith cited as evidence a cabinet shake up on 1 May, in which Fey agreed to relinquish the largely ceremonial vice chancellorship as better suiting the dashing young Starhemberg, who loathed desk work. The shift, everyone agreed, presaged still more serenity on the political scene.[13]

Late June brought more good news. The announcement that Hitler and Mussolini were to meet for the first time in Venice had caused consternation in Vienna, but Messersmith saw no chance for Italo-German rapprochement. The Duce, he assured Dollfuss, would never barter away Austria for Hitler's friendship. The Fuehrer was the suitor, and, Messersmith predicted, he would be scorned by a Mussolini who saw his German counterpart as "a very poor miniature of himself." The Duce was too vain to associate with Nazi upstarts.[14]

The conference results seemed to sustain Messersmith's analysis. H.R. Knickerbocker, who stopped by on his return from Venice, confirmed what proved to be entirely erroneous reports in the Vienna press that Italian pressure had forced Hitler to disavow his designs on Austria and suspend the terror campaign. Still, on 18 June, Messersmith could report the sudden cessation of Nazi incendiarism. The next day French foreign minister Louis Barthou

arrived. He publicly pledged "France's whole power" to defend Austria and Dollfuss. With the recovering economy, internal tranquility, and foreign support, "the Austrian situation," Messersmith concluded on 28 June, "is one that need not give us great concern."[15]

Austria's best guarantee, the self-immolation of the Hitler regime, seemed reassuringly on track. In March the supposedly desperate Germans had formally petitioned Washington for trade talks, though, Messersmith failed to notice, hardly on hands and knees. They proposed concessions for their exports, credits for the purchase of American raw materials, and abrogation of the most favored nation clause so that Germany could discriminate against American products and make preferential deals with her neighbors.[16]

In frantic letters to the State Department, Messersmith urged rejection of the German overtures. He did so, he assured Phillips, in full view of the economic crisis at home and the importance of foreign trade to recovery. He appreciated that "we want an outlet for raw matierals and that Germany is potentially one of our best customers for such materials." But the Nazi regime could not be trusted to honor its contracts or pay its bills. He doubted whether a "new treaty would be worth any more than the old one," which the Germans were systematically violating. In any case, the national interest dictated that "we must not give them any aid or comfort or support in any way," even if that involved certain short term sacrifices. Messersmith's German business contacts agreed that "increasing economic distress" was the best way

to "bring Germany to reason and make it possible for a decent government to be established." The United States, then, had "practically nothing to gain and much to lose" from a German trade agreement.[17]

One historian has suggested that Messersmith's letters persuaded the State Department to refuse the German bid. Top officials, however, had reached that decision without his help. For Hull, reciprocity was practically non-negotiable. Messersmith's letters were of "extreme importance," as Phillips assured him, but mostly as ammunition against bureaucratic interlopers. Expanded bilateral trade with Germany had a champion in the Roosevelt administration. George N. Peek, the president's foreign trade adviser, headed the government's new Export Import Bank (Eximbank). Peek's overriding objective was to dispose of price-depressing surpluses overseas, and cared little about how, or with whom, such deals were consummated. Commodity-hungry Germany beckoned, and Peek was eager to grant her Eximbank credits to buy American copper, cotton, lard, and petroleum, lest she take her business elsewhere.[18]

The State Department objected--less because American taxpayers would be subsidizing German rearmament than because Peek's plans collided with Hull's vision of multilateralism and general tariff reductions. The Trade Agreements Act passed by Congress on 5 June 1934 authorized the president to adopt either or both approaches to revive American commerce. Hull and Peek viewed the latter's German initiative as a precedent-setting assertion of his economic nationalism, an attempt to "take over"

the New Deal trade program.[19]

This was the setting in which Messersmith's letters were pressed into service. Roosevelt swore his devotion to liberal trade in Hull's presence, but, as Phillips observed ruefully, the president had "something of a New England trader in him." Privately Roosevelt ridiculed Hull's panaceas. Suspicious of dogma generally, he had little use for one that spurned sure immediate markets for uncertain future ones. But Hull's sensibilities also had to be considered. He was a critical link to key Southern Democrats in the New Deal coalition. Roosevelt could not afford to alienate him, although he sometimes seemed to forget so. Having entrusted the State Department to the none-too experienced Hull, Roosevelt sidestepped both whenever possible. Many were the affronts and slights that Hull accumulated in his dozen years with Roosevelt. But, convinced that the president wished him gone, Hull determined to deprive him of the pleasure. He hung on grimly when others would have resigned, using his understated mastery of the infighters' art to frequent advantage. In the tussle with Peek, for example, Hull played upon Roosevelt's mounting concern over the German threat. While Peek was out trying to drum up the support of business, the State Department was working on the president directly. On 5 July Phillips sent him long extracts from Messersmith's letters, suggesting enticingly that Hitler would fall if the United States withheld help. In an appended memorandum, Herbert Feis, State Department economic adviser, asserted that it would "be difficult, if not impossible,

for Germany to get along" without American raw materials. Later in the year, a special State Department committee on relations with Germany came to the same conclusion, pointing out the inadvisability of trade negotiations or credits when the "whole complexion of affairs may be quite different in a year or two. It is not likely that the current German commercial policy can last . . ." Before long, in short, the regime would be forced to its knees and the abandonment of its economic heresies.[20]

The Department's counterattack won the day. After initially supporting a Peek agreement to sell Germany 800,000 bales of cotton, Roosevelt swung against it. Peek's position was fatally undercut. He was to leave the administration in November 1935.[21]

Cotton was actually the least of Hitler's problems in 1934. While the Hull-Peek contest was getting interesting, German develop emtns were building to a bloody climax. Or so it seemed. Over the weekend of 29 June-1 July 1934 the entire S.A. leadership (including Messersmith's old nemesis General Karl Ernst, seized as he left for his honeymoon) was slaughtered at Hitler's order. The world recoiled in horror; to Messersmith, the purge simply "showed the true murderous spirit of the Nazi regime." But Hitler's butchery would do him no good. "The so-called cleansed government," Messersmith wrote confidently on 5 July, "will no more be able to solve Germany's problems than the form it presented a few days ago. The situation within the country is bound to go from bad to worse unless help from the outside is given."

Considering current world opinion, outside assistance, Messersmith trusted, would not be forthcoming. Germany was now "definitely isolated." If Germans had any "decency and honor," they would rise up and rid themselves of their false prophet. "But if not . . . the economic and financial factors" would soon do the job.[22]

July 1934 would see the Nazi blight striking again. Summertime doldrums in Vienna were this year welcome relief from all Austria had undergone, testimony to her recovery. A blithe Dollfuss shooed foreign diplomats off on their holidays. The weeks ahead, he assured them, would see nothing worth their staying.[23]

25 July thus found only two ministers of major powers on the job in Vienna: newcomer Messersmith and the German, Kurt Rieth. A little after noon, Messersmith heard the startling bulletin that Dollfuss had resigned; Dr. Anton Rintelen, the Austrian minister to Rome, was reportedly the new chancellor. Feverish telephone calls revealed that a putsch was in progress, although no one was yet certain whether the insurgents were Nazi or Heimwehr. Rumors had Dollfuss and his cabinet being held prisoner at the chancellery.

By 5 PM local time this news was on its way to the State Department in the first of four cables Messersmith filed that fateful day. The third, transmitted at 10 PM reported Dollfuss's murder, shot twice in the neck during the occupation of the Ballhausplatz by 150 Austrian Nazis. His captors had watched him bleed to death on the couch in his office. But the coup had failed miserably.

Dollfuss had been alerted to a plot during his morning cabinet meeting, which he had immediately adjourned. When the conspirators stormed in, expecting to seize the entire government, they found only the chancellor and two of his ministers. The rest of the cabinet reassembled elsewhere and established contact with President Miklas, who was vacationing in South Austria. Kurt von Schuschnigg, the minister of justice and education, was designated chancellor. Police and Heimwehr surrounded the chancellery. The insurrectionists were arrested as they tried to leave under a promise of safe passage arranged by Rieth and promptly disavowed by the government. Messersmith could retire for the night secure that the excitement was over.[24]

The next morning, as the world awoke to the shocking news and the absentee diplomats scrambled back, Messersmith paid his condolences. At the Foreign Office he was taken aside and asked whether, in view of "the great friendship between the Chancellor and myself," he would care to view the body. He almost could not bring himself to do it. "I am one who knows righteous anger," he wrote years later, "but I cannot begin to describe the feelings which I had in the few minutes that I was in this room . . . with the man whom I had admired as a patriotic and courageous defender of the liberties of his country."[25]

Austria plunged into mourning. The 28 July funeral drew over a million people, who heard Miklas and Starhemberg delivering eulogies and pledging themselves to Dollfuss's policies. Schuschnigg, the new chancellor, was no Dollfuss, but was, as far as

Messersmith could tell, "a sound man of determination and many good qualities," undoubtedly the "best man available." The populace seemed united behind him. Nazi radio appeals for a general uprising had been ignored on the twenty fifth; Austrian patriotism was at an unprecedented high in its wake. "Dollfuss as a martyr," Messersmith declared, "has solidified the nation." He detected "a real unity of purpose" among the politicians, a willingness to "submerge personal rivalries and ambitions." Starhemberg was surprising everyone with his sudden diligence.[26]

These were all encouraging signs. But, as Messersmith wrote Feis on 31 July, "poor Austria's fate does not depend so much on her as it does on those who built this house in which she has to live." The abortive coup had showed how dependent she was upon her friends. At 4 PM on the twenty fifth Mussolini had dispatched four divisions to the Austrian border to head off a follow-up incursion by the Austrian Legion. The Italian show of strength, Messersmith was told, had prompted Hitler to cancel the invasion at the last minute. Europe had skirted a precipice. Messersmith felt the close call had sobered London and Paris, where it was "increasingly recognized that political peace in Europe rests on the maintenance of Austrian independence." Prospects now looked more favorable for a tripartite guarantee treaty, vital lest Austria remain a vassal of Rome.[27]

It even seemed possible--especially to Messersmith--that the shock waves would carry off Hitler, too. Germany's position, the diplomat wrote the day after the funeral, "has never been weaker";

she was totally isolated, "insecure and trembling" in the face of world outrage. Perhaps the Reichswehr would take the initiative.[28]

He was disappointed again. Hitler barely broke stride. On 26 July the Fuehrer published a letter denying involvement in Dollfuss's death, "which the Reich Government most sharply condemn and regret." He so wished to normalize relations with Austria, the Fuehrer wrote, that he was replacing Rieth with one of his "most intimate and trusted co-workers," Franz von Papen--the reported recipient of a last-minute reprive from the Blood Purge.[29]

All this happened so fast as to raise questions about German complicity, questions Messersmith endeavored to quash. A week before the coup, he wrote in exasperation to Phillips, Goebbels had informed the Italian ambassador in Berlin that a Nazi government would be installed in Vienna within the month. Then there was Rieth's intervention, "one of the most extraordinary things that I have ever heard of." Actually Rieth appears to have been the one German without advance notice of the coup. Hitler did know, and approved the conspiracy. But, as Messersmith began to note, the West was all too eager to believe his professions of innocence and good will.[30]

His ability to withstand the Dollfuss contretemps led Messersmith to revise, but not abandon, his prediction of Nazi downfall. His contacts in the German business community still insisted that Hitler's days were numbered. But they also cited the "tremendous rate of rearmament and conversion of industry." Upon

the death of German president Paul von Hindenburg on 2 August, Goebbels announced that Hitler would assume that office as well if the nation approved by plebiscite. In a mass ceremony just hours after Hindenburg's death, the entire German army, officers and enlisted men alike, swore "unconditional obedience" unto Hitler. In the 19 August poll, nearly ninety per cent of German voters blessed the consolidation of executive power.[31]

These unexpected lifesigns forced Messersmith to conclude that collapse was not imminent. "The present German regime," he wrote Phillips on 1 August, "is on its last legs, but it can last some months longer." The coming winter would surely accomplish what the previous winter had not; this time, cold and hunger would have their effect. "The German people," he insisted, "are a patient one . . . but once the conviction comes that the enemy may be on the inside, the regime . . . is not likely to be tolerated." As long as the world withheld sympathy and support, "she will crack and a prostrated Germany may learn humility."[32]

Until then, Austrian insecurity was palpable. Despite Hitler's crocodile tears for Dollfuss, Messersmith maintained, Nazi Germany had "in no sense given up her aims." Hitler's only "definite convictions" concerned Austria, land of his birth, and the Jews. "He had," Messersmith explained, "felt an outsider in Germany until he can bring Austria as a gift to the Reich." The putsch having failed, Hitler was expected to adopt a more covert approach,

as suggested in his 5 August interview with British journalist Ward Price. Hitler publicly challenged the Schuschnigg government to submit itself to popular vote, as he had done in Germany. The implication was that free elections would see a great outpouring of repressed pro-German feeling. Of course, Messersmith wrote Phillips, Hitler knew better; the Nazis were calculating that elections would undermine Austria's fragile political unity. Hitler's new strategy, most diplomats agreed, was to bide his time until some combination of Austrian weakness and German strength enabled him to impose his will.[33]

The designated agent of this strategy took charge of his legation in October 1934. Papen was one of the regime's establishment front men who moved in European society in cutaways rather than khaki, bemoaning the revolution's excesses. Papen, however, seemed to have a singular talent for making himself foolish. Few took him seriously, least of all Messersmith. The new Austrian foreign minister, Baron Egon Berger Waldenegg, conjured up a scenario in which Hitler's "most trusted coworker" would be gunned down by Nazis in Heimwehr uniform, giving Germany a pretext for invasion. Suggestions that Papen's arrival presaged some shift in German policy tolerant of Austrian independence were soon laid to rest. Early talks with Schuschnigg and Berger Waldenegg made it clear that Papen brought no demarche from Hitler. Messersmith reported that Papen appealed to the Swedish minister for help in his "difficult mission," but could not, or would not, say what that mission was.[34]

Papen managed nonetheless to insinuate himself into Viennese society. Sir Walford Selby, the British minister, a staunch anti-Nazi himself, still came to the conclusion that Papen was not a bad chap. For his part, Messersmith vowed to steer clear of a man who "can have nothing but the contempt of decent people." But protocol obliged him to extend Papen an official invitation. The German walked into his office at the appointed hour and greeted him "like an old friend." Messersmith spurned his outstretched hand. Papen never offered it again, Messersmith explained later, "because he knew that I would not take it." The American sat tightlipped at his desk. Papen soon got the hint and left.[35]

The tables turned; Messersmith had to accept Papen's invitation. The German welcomed him magnanimously. "This time," Messersmith recalled him saying, "we are in my legation, and although you may not talk, I will talk and you will have to listen to me." Messersmith did not object. Papen "could be the most indiscreet man in the world"; he hoped that some secret would slip out. Indeed he heard an extraordinary monologue. Claiming as usual to deplore much that was going on inside Germany, Papen admitted that Hitler had sent him "to see that the Anschluss was brought about peacefully." The Austrian government, he said, was in power against the will of its people, who really wanted to be part of Germany. He was on a mission of liberation, one which, he assured Messersmith, would succeed, putting Austria out of her misery.

For Messersmith it was again occasion for righteous anger. Barely containing himself, he replied that he had had "many experiences and surprising conversations, but never one like this." "Diplomacy," he continued, "has often been devious, but I have not known of any time in history where a man has been sent by his government to endeavor, under diplomatic immunity, to undermine [another] government and to destroy its soveriegnty." In disgust he withdrew from Papen's legation, never to enter again. Avoidance aided Messersmith's digestion, if not his intelligence.[36]

Luckily for Austria, Messersmith assured everyone, Papen was "a great spinner of webs" who "usually gets tangled up in them himself"; his basic stupidity would foil him in the end. Messersmith recalled the bungling that got then-military attaché Papen thrown out of the United States for espionage in 1915. Nineteen years later, in the fall of 1934, there was the same old maladroit Papen, now mostly shuttling between Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, and Sofia, entertaining local Nazis. "It seems," Messersmith observed, "that he is to be Minister at a number of posts to which he is not accredited, with nothing to say at the post to which he is accredited," and nothing to do except abuse his hosts' hospitality. He made his status in the local diplomatic corps an issue. According to his credentials, he was minister on unspecified "special mission." Papen had his cards engraved accordingly, and pushed his supposed precedence at official functions. His behavior created "more amuse-

ment than anything else" among his colleagues, Messersmith reported, but also serious embarrassment for the Schuschnigg government, which recognized no "special mission," and yet did not wish to offend Germany. Papen, of course, appreciated Austria's predicament and exploited it without shame. When, after months of indecision, the government finally prepared an updated diplomatic list showing Papen as a regularly-accredited minister, he protested so vehemently that the list, still in proof, had to be withdrawn. An exasperated Berger Waldenegg told Messersmith that Papen "always counted on the other man's being a gentleman." Messersmith agreed that he was "absolutely impossible."[37]

By these and other offenses, the peripatetic Papen made himself a thorn in Austria's side. When the Saar plebiscite of 13 January 1935, went in favor of union with Germany, he assured the Vienna press that Austrians would vote likewise if only given the chance. Messersmith reported that Papen "opened a book at the German legation in which the 'enthusiastic'--to use his words--could inscribe their congratulations" on this latest Hitler triumph--which all Germans in Vienna dutifully did. In June Berger Waldenegg told Messersmith that Austria was contemplating declaring Papen persona non grata. The American minister advised against the move. Why risk a crisis with Germany when Papen would probably soon be recalled? "He has been utterly inept here," he wrote Moffat. Messersmith could not imagine that Papen's bosses in Berlin were unaware that his clumsy machinations were succeeding only in solidifying support for Schusch-

nigg.

In fact, despite continuing internal problems--unemployment, the alienation of the socialists, restiveness in the Heimwehr--Austria was rapidly recuperating from the 25 July trauma. Schuschnigg, Messersmith decided, was a worthy keeper of the Dollfuss tradition. His first months as chancellor revealed a statesman, "highly intelligent with a penetrating mind," untutored in big power politics, but who "thinks clearly and will learn fast." What he lacked was Dollfuss's charisma. With "the air and manner of a scholar," noticeably uncomfortable around people, he would never inspire love. He often spoke longingly of his days in the education ministry. Messersmith suspected that his "inner mind" leaned toward a Habsburg restoration as a bulwark against Germany and surcease from the burdens of office.[39]

Whatever his ambivalences, Schuschnigg was on the job, working to broaden his support, both internal and external. The two were very much related, for the curtailment of Austrian democracy and the continued ostracism of socialists were prime impediments to Western assistance. Schuschnigg, Messersmith felt, was inclined to liberalize and conciliate, as Dollfuss had started to do before his death. But fear of antagonizing Mussolini and the Heimwehr, and of Hitler exploiting the return of party tumults held the chancellor back.[40]

Although Austria remained a quasi-autocracy, the Western powers finally relented. Meeting in Rome in January 1935, French and Italian representatives agreed to consult should Austrian

integrity again be threatened. Britain adhered a month later. Austria's neighbors, including Germany, were invited to take a pledge of nonintervention. Messersmith hailed the accord's "far reaching significance": France and Italy, rivals in the Mediterranean, had "committed themselves publicly to work for peace in Europe." Rome, he believed, marked "tremendous progress"--and the "bitterest pill [the Germans] have had to swallow since Nazism came to power."[41]

State visits by Schuschnigg and Berger Waldenegg to Paris and London in late February 1935 left good feelings all around. The Austrians feared demonstrations, vilificaton, and pressure to liberalize at home. Instead, the opposition in both countries maintained a decorous silence; there were no mass protests; the Austrians received a sympathetic hearing and cleared up misconceptions about Austrian "fascism." It contributed, in Messersmith's judgment, to the Austrians' heightened sense of security, a feeling that "they have a good part of Europe behind them."[42]

Moreover, the winter tourist season, so important to her economy, was shaping up brilliantly. The heir to the British throne, Edward Prince of Wales, was taking his annual ski vacation at Kitzbuehl. Thanks to the publicity, there was hardly a room to be had in the Austrian Alps. The Austrian Nazi party was "shot to pieces," and pro-Anschluss sentiment "has never been so weak." In general, Messersmith reported on 19 March, the situation was "more satisfactory in practically every major respect than it has been during the past two years."[43]

For reasons he could well understand, the Austrian government did not share his contentment. "Yes," the impudent Papen had told Berger Waldenegg upon the latter's return from London, "you have your French and English friends now and can have your independence a little longer." Although Hitler had not rejected the Rome call for nonintervention, there was no evidence that he had forsaken his aggressive designs either. Berger Waldenegg concluded that the Fuehrer was stalling for time. Messersmith concurred. With Europe aligned against him, Hitler recognized that Germany had "to appear reasonable and willing to talk." But Messersmith was convinced that if "the solid front is maintained, Germany will have to sign" a nonintervention pledge after all. That would hand Hitler a diplomatic defeat that "will at least give [Austria] a breathing spell," and "increase the possibility of a more reasonable regime coming into power" in Germany.[44]

It was precisely because the Austrians did not think that the united front would hold up that they remained jittery. Schuschnigg had little faith in his supposed allies, individually or collectively. Royal vacations aside, he especially doubted British support--as well he might in view of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's 11 March declaration that Britain had assumed "no military commitments, direct or indirect," in connection with the Rome agreement. French interests Schuschnigg considered too bound up with the Little Entente nations, which were obsessed with fear of restored Habsburgs. This

left the field to the Italians, whom Schuschnigg deeply distrusted. Born in South Tyrol, he had been an Italian prisoner of war. Cultural and historical considerations only reinforced his convictions about the two countries' basic incompatibility. Messersmith agreed that the relationship was not a natural one, "for after all Italy is a Latin country and Austria is a German country, and the two cultures do not mix easily." Convinced that Austria could not rely on the Rome signatories, Schuschnigg embarked on a policy of appeasement with respect to Germany, avoiding, as he put it, everything that "would give Germany a pretext for intervention," doing everything "to secure in some way Hitler's toleration of the status quo." As we shall see, this was to culminate in the Austro-German treaty of 11 July 1936.[45]

Buried under paper, much of it from the American legation in Vienna, Undersecretary Phillips could only spare a few words of thanks for Messersmith's coverage of the events of 25 July and their aftermath. "It must have been a thrilling time for you," he wrote with a twinge of jealousy on this sticky 15 August in Washington. Although it was also hot in the Austrian capital, the Messersmiths' leased house boasted a shaded garden ideal for al fresco entertaining. But by mid August the excitement Phillips envied had already worn off. Messersmith had settled into a routine which was to continue undisturbed for the duration of his stay in Vienna.[46]

The truth was that American interests in Austria required only his occasional attention. Not that the United States was indifferent to Austria's fate. The Austrians knew, he wrote later, that "we had this deep and friendly interest [in the maintenance] of their sovereignty and integrity." But, as "great realists," they also knew that the United States, resolutely isolationist, could offer little more than moral support. They did not need to be frequently reminded.[47]

Austro-American trade totalled a mere $17 million in 1934--of which seventy six per cent were U.S. exports to Austria. Among her major trading partners the imbalance in favor of the United States was most acute. The Austrians periodically approached the State Department with proposals for evening things out. Not wishing to jeopardize a good thing, Washington was consistently evasive. In February 1934 an Austrian trade delegation arrived with a long list of sought-after concessions. Assistant Secretary Sayre agreed to examine their requests, but informed the Austrians that their timing was bad. The administration's foreign trade program was still pending before Congress; the State Department lacked legislative authority to talk. Moreover, Sayre made plain that Austria was not at the top of the list for reciprocal trade agreements. Hull planned to begin with America's principal suppliers, especially those who were in a position to take more American farm products. Austria did not qualify on either count.[48]

In May 1935 Vienna tried again. Schuschnigg's minister in Washington, Edgar Prochnik, came armed with statistics showing Aus-

tria as an important American source of magnesite and certain machine parts. These items, Prochnik suggested, might serve as a basis for trade talks. The Department professed to be unimpressed. In late June it formally declined to engage in treaty discussions on the grounds that the "amount of effort required to prepare for them would not be warranted in view of the limited number of products which Austria ships to the United States." That a treaty, although of limited economic value, would be a welcome expression of friendship for Austria apparently did not count. In any case, the Department pointed out, Austria stood to benefit under the most-favored-nation clause from the generalization of tariff concessions granted by the United States to other countries--provided, of course, that Austria did not start discriminating against American exports.[49]

Austria was thus in a bind, unable to stem a small invasion of her market by the United States without losing her most-favored-nation treatment, vital if she was to boost sales in return. Minister Prochnik, who seems to have been more sympathetic to the Hull trade program than to his own government's difficulties, undercut his own representations by volunteering that Austrian factories were too accustomed to American raw materials for Austria to divert purchases to countries that took more of her exports.[50]

Austrian exports to the United States did rise after 1 April 1935, the date of the executive order according her most-favored-nation status, but American exports rose faster. Few complaints of anti-American discrimination came to Messersmith's attention, and

those that did he found either baseless or "of a very minor character." By mid 1936 the American trade position, he reported, was "very good . . . about as good as we can expect it to be," almost embarrassingly good "in view of the very large favorable balance of trade which we enjoy with Austria." Messersmith's only worry was that the government would succumb to plea for import restrictions from the economics ministry.[51]

Messersmith helped forestall that threat, partly by maintaining a low profile on all bilateral trade questions. He had decided, he wrote Moffat, "to keep silent" on the whole subject, "as the trade balance . . . is so tremendously in our favor that the less we say about it and the less we attract attention to it, the better it is." Americans with trade grievances would have to understand that "nitpicking" over "indirect and unimportant" discrimination might irk the Austrians and hasten restrictions. The best approach, he concluded, was for him to continue making himself scarce at the economics ministry.[52]

With the United States politically aloof and perfectly content with the commercial status quo, Messersmith and the Austrian government had precious little to say officially to each other. He met regularly with Berger Waldenegg, but Schuschnigg, unlike Dollfuss, rarely took him into his confidence. Their conference in November 1935 was the first in nearly nine months; and, by Messersmith's account, the entire forty five minutes was taken up with the minor complaints of American journalists in Vienna.[53]

Administrative matters consumed some time. Messersmith found the U.S. establishment abysmally housed. Legation offices consisted of two converted flats; the consulate rented quarters elsewhere; the commercial and treasury attachés maintained still other premises. Messersmith was "distressed" by this "unbusinesslike and inefficient" arrangement, but not until late in 1934 could he address it. By November 1935 new consolidated offices were ready for occupancy. The attachés at first refused to move, but Messersmith finally prevailed. The whole American establishment, he noted proudly, was now housed for exactly what it had cost for the consulate alone.[54]

As always, he was also looking out for himself. The gardened house on the Lustig Preangasse was pretty but expensive, and in need of basic renovations. He insisted, however, that these personal considerations "in no way" influenced his recommendation that the United States purchase the house for him. At $50,000, he wrote, it was simply too good a bargain to let go. For that "ridiculously small sum," the government had an opportunity to acquire a first class permanent residence for its ministers. "A poor man like myself can live in it," he declared, "but it is equally adapted for the purposes of a rich man."[55]

Twice the Department turned him down, claiming lack of funds. Then he learned that houses in Rio and Ottawa had just been purchased for mission chiefs who, he noted indignantly, "are in a much better financial situation . . . than I am." He would see about that. "I

have the distinct impression," he wrote his colleague in Budapest, "that in order to get a thing through of this kind, one has to bring it to the attention of the right people in certain quarters." He wrote letters and had friends visit the Department to recommend the purchase. He took photographs of the house and sent them to Roosevelt and Hull. The bureaucracy was no match for this. In December 1935 Keith Merrill, chairman of the Department's buildings commission, came to inspect the place, and agreed to recommend the allocation of $100,000--$56,000 for the purchase (the price having gone up while Washington dithered) and $44,000 for "repairs, alterations, and furnishings." Final approval made for "a very nice New Year's message" for Messersmith.[56]

Serious staff problems arose. Aside from the excellent "Joe" Gray, the third secretary, Messersmith was saddled with two disreputable characters. Alfred W. Kliefoth had been Sackett's second secretary in Berlin. Transferred to Vienna in May 1933, he served as chargé d'affaires after George Earle's departure. Knowing that Kliefoth would be with him "almost took away the pleasure that [Messersmith] had felt in going to Vienna." The man was incompetent, and a pathological liar to boot. Shortly after his arrival, Messersmith heard that Kliefoth was telling Austrians that he was a Jew. Messersmith was "dumfounded." He found it "almsot inconceivable that [Kliefoth] should do such a thing, especially after our four years' service together in Berlin he knew quite definitely that I was not a Jew." He also understood, correctly, that Kliefoth was making

"quite derogatory remarks about me" to American diplomats in Europe and to State Department officials. He was hopeless. "He just cannot help this disloyalty and not sticking to the truth," Messersmith wrote Moffat, "as it is a temperamental failing which he has consistently shown." And he was "lying down on the job in addition."[57]

Messersmith would not have it. In Washington in April 1935 he told Carr that he wanted Kliefoth out, suggesting helpfully that he bo moved to a consulate and "closely watched." Just before Messersmith sailed back, he recieved an impertinent telegram from Kliefoth, "practically a royal command for me to return to Vienna so that he could go on his leave as planned." When Messersmith arrived soon after, Kliefoth bragged that his summons had turned the trick. That did it. "It is absolutely impossible for Kliefoth to return here," Messersmith fumed to Moffat. "I do not think that I could stand seeing him again." Kliefoth was shipped off the the consulate in Cologne.[58]

Consul general Ernest L. Harris was a relic of the old service, "a nice man," wrote Messersmith in November 1934, who "since I have been here has done really no work, and I doubt that he has done any for years." After a lifetime in government service, the sixty five year old Harris was due to retire, quite against his will. Messersmith informed the Department that Harris would probably ask to have his retirement postponed, and advised that it be denied. "We have too many people who are deserving of promotion to keep men

with his attitude."[59]

By September 1935 Harris had been separated from the service under a cloud of scandal. In early 1934, during the ministerial interregnum, he had secured from two Vienna banks loans totalling 170,000 schillings (about $8500), ostensibly for official business, actually used for (and lost in) currency speculation. Messersmith found out when the bankers came to him for repayment. He was shocked and disgusted. "I did not trust Harris," he wrote Moffat, "but I did not think him capable of anything like this." The affair made him "almost physically ill." Harris was immediately recalled. Although Carr was ready to bring criminal charges, the Department's personnel board decided to be merciful in view of his long and otherwise unblemished record. He was retired rather than fired, so that his pension could be applied to his debt. [60]

In the meantime, Messersmith had also lost the trustworthy Gray, promoted to the Department, with his blessings, as Hull's assistant. The Vienna staff was now down to a single diplomatic secretary, a thirty year old career officer on loan from his Moscow post. George F. Kennan had arrived in Vienna in January 1935 for treatment of ulcers aggravated by Russian food. After two months he was ready to resume work. In view of the depletion of Messersmith's staff, the Department ordered him to stay put until replacements came. By September, however, Ambassador William Bullitt, who appreciated Kennan's worth, wanted him back. Messersmith fought to retain

him until at least one of the designated substitutes--Alan Rogers, a consul in Paris assigned to him as third secretary, and James Barclay Young, consul general in Lima-Callao, Peru, to hold a dual commission as consul general and first secretary--had arrived in Vienna. Rogers came first, in late Ocotber. Messersmith would have preferred to keep Kennan. "I need not tell you," he wrote a colleague, "wit what regret I see Kennan leave here. He is one of the finest of our younger officer." For his part Kennan came away deeply impressed by Messersmith's "combative stoutness" and steadfast dedication to principle. Looking back on it, he decided that Messersmith was "one of those chiefs who left an indelible mark on my concept of what American diplomacy could and should be."[61]

Shorthanded as he was for much of his stay in Vienna, his duties were few and light. That was what he had wanted. After the strains of Berlin he had looked forward to leisure time with Marion and her family. Vienna was surely the fulfillment of this wish. The summer of 1934 brought a host of interesting visitors from home. A number of his colleagues from other European capitals and from the Department came. So did Roosevelt aide Harry Hopkins, sent by the president for a badly needed vacation-cum-inspection tour. Everyone was treated to the Messersmith hospitality and the Messersmith analysis of current events. Herbert Feis, who stayed a week in August, returned to Washington wishing, or so he wrote, he were back "wandering around the streets of Vienna with you, listening to you talk." The nieces, Virginia and Ann Layton, arrived for what

Ann recalled was "a glorious year." "Uncle George"--as some colleagues were beginning to call him behind his back--returned to action. Rare was the weekend he could not get Marion and the girls into the car for trips to the countryside and neighboring capitals.[62]

These were happy days. The prestige and responsibility of his first legation gave real satisfaction. He was with people he loved. Christmas 1934 promised to be an especially merry one. Early December brought her sister's youngest, four year old Robert Barnes. Born with the Messersmiths in Berlin, Bobby had spent much of his young life with them, who felt "toward him as though he were our own." A week after his arrival in Vienna, the child was suddenly striken with "some strange stomach ailment." Messersmith spared "no pains to get the best [medical] advice," but the doctors were baffled. Five days after his admission to the hospital, despite "loving care," the boy died.

Messersmith was almost choked with grief. Watching Bobby sink put him through "a veritable hell." "Not having any children of my own," he wrote poignantly to Moffat during the ordeal, "the little fellow has become very much a part of my life and it is heartbreaking to see a little one suffer and to feel so utterly powerless . . . My whole household is absolutely broken up and I have no been any good for the last three or four days myself." He wanted Moffat to understand why there would be no letters from Vienna for awhile.[63]

The day the boy died, Ann underwent emergency surgery. By the time she was up and about, her stay and her sister's were nearly up. Messersmith "dreaded" their departure. It left a void in his life the more painful for the lack of official business. With the girls gone, he had more time on his hands than he knew what to do with. There were still weekend jaunts with Marion, and the social life she loved so well. But that life left him intellectually and temperamentally unsatisfied. He found Viennese society "boring." "It is strange," he wrote a friend, "how much the formalism of the old Court still weighs on certain aspects of official life here." He endeavored to liven things up, entertaining like a man with nothing else to occupy him. In one month alone the Messersmiths gave five formal dinners for fifty or more, and, over two days, had 600 guests to tea. But the stultifying lethargy soon returned. "We are not having a very exciting time," he confessed in October 1936, "for there is not much going on here." Afternoon naps became a habit out of character. He over-indulged his literary predilection--Chandler and Hammett were his favorites--reading, he was rightly "ashamed to say," a book a day.[64]

And yet there was a deceptive air of perpetual crisis at the American legation--stenographers rushing about, typewriters clattering with the minister's communications to the State Department. Mission chiefs, of course, were supposed to report by despatch, and Messersmith did plenty of that. But procedure had grave drawbacks.

Incoming despatches were routed to the appropriate regional or national desk, where they were digested by junior officers. Something was inevitably lost in the translation. Who knew what senior officials finally saw? Refusing to entrust his warning about Nazism to so haphazard a system, Messersmith in late 1933 had started addressing the policy makers directly in long "personal" letters. They encouraged the practice. Moffat's successor in charge of the Division of Western European Affairs (EUR), James Clement Dunn, assured him that the letters were "very helpful in forming a picture of what is going on." When Phillips left to become ambassador to Italy in August 1936, Messersmith wrote to Assistant Secretary R. Walton Moore and to Hull, who more than once thanked him for his "careful, painstaking and diligent efforts to report fully." He swelled with pride on hearing "four or five times" from Moore that his letters had gone to the White House so that Roosevelt could "have my 'considered views.'"[65]

All this went right to his head, and he overdid it in return. Compulsively thorough, Messersmith made it a point to "convey all of the interesting and worthwhile information which reaches me here." The results, he admitted, were "sometimes rather long" and "disjointed," often running thirty or more single spaced pages. But he felt that "when we are passing through such an important period as at present, the Department will want to get all the information which I can get." Besides, "it is better to err on the side of giving too much rather

than too little."[66]

He was mistaken, as he recognized with hindsight. Giving too much ran the risk that "the most important officers"--those to whom the letters were addressed--"would not read them" at all. Hull rarely did. Thirty pages of Messersmith was hard work. So his letters--and apparently only his--were returned to EUR to be abstracted. He might have saved everyone the trouble.[67]

Phillips, Moffat, Dunn, and Carr probably did read their letters, though Messersmith may have been better off if they hadn't. They were of the school that judged diplomatic communications as much for form as for content; sticklers, as Heinrichs observes, for "precision, conciseness, clarity, an orderly structure of logic, and the avoidance of stylistic excrescences." Messersmith failed on every count. In Vienna he had the leisure to write carefully, but he persisted in dictating and rushing off rough transcripts, which made a bad impression. "Two more long letters from Messersmith," Phillips sniffed in his diary, "very verbose, as usual." But what could be expected of a consul? Carr, always defensive about such things, finally ordered Messersmith in late 1936 to shorten his letters. Messersmith said he would try, "even if I think that in some ways their effectiveness may suffer." In any case, he wrote Moore on 22 December, "I have made a firm resolution to keep my letters shorter during the next year." Moore next heard from him two weeks into 1937, to the tune of fifteen pages. Hull was no sooner back from the Pan American conference in Buenos Aires than Messersmith

hit him with two letters totalling thirty one pages.[68]

Messersmith apologized profusely to Carr. "I hope that you do not think that I was not mindful of your good advice about the length of my letters." He had found it "difficult to keep them within a few pages [when] discussing such complicated situations." He promised to write less frequently, if not less copiously. Before he had a chance to make good, Roosevelt summoned him home to serve in the Department. Only then, when he was on the receiving end, was he to learn how burdensome letters from the field could be.[69]

His line of argument also went down hard, especially his plea for cooperation with the Soviet Union to stop Hitler. The State Department's European specialists by no means approved of what was going on inside Germany in 1935, but there was a tendency to give Hitler the benefit of any doubt, to blame the worst of Nazism, as had Messersmith, on the popular passions Hitler had unleashed but could not control. Washington and London were also plagued with guilt over the punitive treaty of Versailles, whose oppressions Hitler belabored. And there was considerable anxiety over Hitler's successor in case he did fall. If from the right, Junker militarism, which had already given the world a war, would be back in the saddle. A victory for the left, on the other hand, would be the biggest since November 1917, bringing, Phillips was convinced, "more chaos than ever" and, it was feared, the encirclement and eventual collapse of non-communist governments in Central and Eastern Europe. Hitler was considered a known--and possibly lesser--evil.[70]

As Thomas R. Maddux and others have shown, Westerners also labored under serious illusions about Soviet Russia in the 'twenties and 'thirties, illusions compounded of popular hopes and fears and Soviet ideological window dressing. Polar perceptions of an ideal or an anathema formed. The class hostility of Western foreign offices was reinforced by some slippery Soviet diplomacy and deliberate boorishness in contact with their capitalist counterparts. Despite lively debate over the relative influence of ideology and national interest in STalin's diplomacy, nearly all of the Europeanists in the Department and in the field endorsed the conclusion that Soviet Russia was an unreliable ally and an unfit partner for the democracies in their security arrangements.[71]

Messersmith cut through this fog. He practically dismissed Marxism as an objective of Soviet diplomacy, and scoffed at the suggestion that the Kremlin was actively exporting revolution. "Nine tenths of the Communist agitation laid to the account of Moscow," he maintained, "has no connection whatever with that country." There was even some evidence that Stalin was moving domestically away from collectivism toward a kind of state capitalism not unlike Mussolini's set up. In fact, Messersmith was more and more convinced that Russia and Germany particularly were cut from the same cloth, alike "dictatorships based on the worship of force," under the thumb of nationalists posing as revolutionaries. Hitler ranted about saving civilization from Bolshevism, but that too was deception; in reality, Messersmith explained, the Nazis perceived in the Soviet "not such

a dangerous social, economic, or political doctrine, but the system that presents its greatest obstacle to world supremacy. The two systems are almost identical in their objectives . . . and methods, hence their enmity."[72]

There was, however, a critical difference. "The ultimate aspirations of the Soviet regime," he wrote Phillips, "may be as dangerous to the peace in Europe as those of the present German regime," but the German threat was imminent and the Russian remote. Internally weak, beset east and west by greedy and powerful neighbors, Russia would not be in a position to make trouble, in his opinion, "for years to come." For the present, "no country . . . wishes peace and . . . has more reason to fear war than Russia." To its avoidance, Stalin was prepared to collaborate in good faith, purely as a matter of Russian self-interest. Purely as a matter of Western self-interest, Messersmith advised, his overtures should "not be spurned but [rather] availed of with, of course, always wide open eyes." After disposing of Hitler, the democracies would then be free to turn to "the menace that might come from Moscow when that inert giant may feel himself strong enough to move and become aggressive."[73]

It was a sober and realistic analysis, delivered as events marched in the opposite direction. Inside Russia Stalin's terror ground into high gear, and Western conservatives thanked God, again, for the revival of the German bulwark. And in early 1935 Messersmith got the first incontrovertible evidence that the West lacked the will to stop Hitler, with or without Soviet assistance. The anti-

German unity of Rome, repeated in April at the Italian town of Stresa, was instantly compromised by Britain's compensatory feelers to Berlin. On 26 February it was announced that the foreign secretary, Sir John Simon, was going to see Hitler on a mission of friendship. Messersmith was stunned. "It is almost inconceivable," he exploded to Phillips, "that at the moment of Germany's most complete isolation and at a time when her internal situation is in reality most critical, any move should be contemplated which will tend to add prestige to and prolong the life of a regime which has in it so much danger." On 16 March Hitler responded with an announcement of his own: the reintroduction of conscription, with plans for a peacetime army of 550,000. Britain condemned this first open violation of Versailles, and then asked Berlin whether Simon's invitation stood.[74]

More bad news awaited Messersmith in Berlin, where he stopped for a week in late March before sailing home on his first leave from Vienna. He had been tempted to drop everything back in December, when he got word from Fleetwood that his mother, just turned eighty six, was "having one heart attack after another." But, he explained to Moffat, "there is too much dynamite stored about for me to leave here with any peace of mind." Fortunately his mother stopped having heart attacks--she was to live another three years--and Messersmith, having again demonstrated his dedication to duty, finally pronounced the situation stable enough for him to leave.[75]

He stayed up late that first night in Berlin, 20 March, listening to old friends tell a grim story. Another winter had come

and gone, and by all accounts Hitler was stronger than ever. The economy limped along, barely, but the populace seemed almost oblivious. Indeed, it was clear that Germany had taken further leave of its senses in the year since he last visited. Goebbels' propaganda machine had produced "popular hysteria"; Messersmith observed that Germans were "completely disoriented with respect to practically every social and economic problem and with respect to the outside world," and united behind their Fuehrer. Perhaps most disheartening, the Reichswehr had submitted to the regime, in gratitude for the breakup of the S.A. and the rearmament program.[76]

As a result, Messersmith reported, "Hitler and his associates are absolutely drunk with power and their illusions, and believe that the whole world is afraid of them, and that no one will move against them no matter what they do." Simon's impending visit had produced euphoria in government circles. In talks with Messersmith, the French ambassador, Andre François Poncet, could barely contain his disgust over recent British policy; his British counterpart, Sir Eric Phipps, whom Messersmith met on 25 March, was no less "melancholy."[77]

Despair was contagious. Messersmith departed Berlin "tremendously depressed." Everything was going wrong. Perhaps on its rickety economic base, the expanding Nazi military machine would crack at the first show of resistance. Perhaps not. In any case, there were no volunteers for the test. Hitler was right: the world was intimidated; he could proceed unmolested. Eventually the demo-

would wake up--of this he was sure--but maybe not until it was too late for the United States. Given the pace of German rearmament he observed, as early as 1936 the confrontation with Nazism might spill over and involve "us . . . in spite of all that we shall do to keep out."[78]

Once in Washington, however, he hid these forebodings and self doubts, reverting to the internal collapse thesis. Messersmith was a big one for sticking to his guns. His faith in human nature argued that Germans would eventually rediscover their consciences and do their moral duty. But it was not merely for pride or consistency's sake that he held to a thesis he wished were valid but increasingly knew not to be. It was his way of attacking the apathy and resignation he encountered at the State Department. He was not yet alone in insisting that Hitler could be undermined from within. As late as March 1937 Herbert Feis expressed doubt that Germans would put up with "ever harsher measures of economic control and coercion." From Cologne, Alfred Klieforth (neé Kliefoth) concurred into 1938. And some officers at the Berlin embassy, like first secretary Joseph Flack, still held that Hitler would not last. But they were a dwindling minority whose counsel was increasingly discounted. By the end of 1934 Ambassador Dodd, who had come to hate Nazism with at least Messersmith's passion, had dropped his assumption of economic breakdown, joining those who gave the regime a long lease on life. Douglas Jenkins, Messersmith's successor as consul general, agreed. "When I came to Berlin," he wrote Hull in late 1935, "foreigners

and many Germans still clung to the idea that the Nazis could not endure, and predicted the early collapse of the Hitler regime. I think I can say that few people entertain this thought today." Raymond Geist declared that "those prophets who predict a collapse in the near future are not well-advised." Writing to Moffat in January 1935, Geist, with accuracy uncanny even for him, predicted that "if Hitler lives, he will conduct the destiny of this nation for the next decade at least."[79]

As in Hull's battle with Peek, the question had serious policy implications. German Ambassador Hans Luther was pressing the Department again for trade talks and, Messersmith observed nervously from the scene, "no rebuff seems to stop him." Messersmith might have persisted himself. If anything Luther found the negotiating climate somewhat warmer than in 1934, when the State Department was advising Roosevelt that the end of Hitlerism was in sight. Now Peek was effectively out of the way, and the new consensus, as Messersmithdiscovered to his dismay, was that "Hitler will be around a long time and we might as well treat with them [sic]." The idea of weaning Germany from autarchy through a trade agreement had never lost its attraction for Hull and Sayre. Two years of half-hearted disapproval, of withholding "aid and comfort and support," Messersmith's prescription, seemed only to have made Germany more united and belligerent. It seemed time to be more forthcoming, in the hope that, as Feis later put it, "were Germany's immediate economic situation alleviated, it would accept the rules of a peaceful

international society."[80]

Messersmith personally presented his dissent. His arguments were by now familiar, even tired: Luther's importunities bespoke his government's desperation; Nazism could never be tamed; a treaty would recognize a regime hellbent on war and would undermine the efforts to preserve real peace. "Even if we cannot do very much in a positive sense to help this effort," he argued, "we should at least refrain from doing anything negative."[81]

In June 1935 representatives of the United States and Germany initialed an extension of the 1923 treaty of friendship, commerce, and consular rights. The State Department defended its handiwork as a practical necessity: Americans and their interests in Germany would otherwise suffer the loss of consular protection. In lunatic Germany that was no small matter, as Messersmith could attest. The Reich gained no special trade concessions; the most-favored-nation clause of the 1923 treaty, which the Nazis had never observed anyway, was eliminated, disqualifying German products for generalization.[82]

Certainly the treaty was not the coveted breakthrough. Neither side would surrender its trade principles. Still, this treaty, any treaty, was a moral victory for Nazism and a bitter pill for Messersmith. "Friendship" indeed. However justified, the treaty also legitimized and regularized German-American relations. Hitler, the State Department was saying, was in power to stay, an

assumption that was henceforward to guide its German policy. It was a small episode in the early history of appeasement.

Attitudes were thus ossifying in Washington. By being gracelessly and interminably contrary, and slightly unhinged on the subject of Germany, Messersmith had effectively sealed himself off from the State Department mainstream. But he was also getting encouragement from above. There had been fifteen minutes with Roosevelt, their first meeting, on the eve of his return to Europe the year before, and now again, 12 April 1935. What they said to each other cannot be known, for Messersmith made no memorandum and neither, according to custom, did the White House. But Roosevelt, who could be beguiling with people he loathed, was genuinely delighted to see him again. Recent intelligence told him that in sending him to Vienna he had not only tweaked "the career boys'" noses, but had made a splendid diplomatic appointment as well. For Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins' inspection report was decisive: Messersmith was the only American mission chief Hopkins met in Europe more than perfunctorily interested in conditions at home. This touched a sore spot with the president, who was deeply annoyed by Foreign Service types more eager to dissociate themselves from their country abroad than to represent it. Messersmith, a proud product of American democracy, was clearly a breed apart.[83]

Historians have called attention to Roosevelt's habit of encouraging his envoys to "drop me a line from time to time, as yours is one of the best listening posts" in Europe or wherever. This

practice irked Hull, who favored a more orderly chain of communication through him. As a concession to his sensibilities, Roosevelt limited the invitation to write him largely to the non-career men, who had little loyalty to the State Department anyway. By contrast, the president instructed career envoy Messersmith to continue writing to Hull and company; he, Roosevelt, would see that the letters were forwarded to him. Responding retrospectively to the longwindedness charge, Messersmith recalled asking Roosevelt in 1936 whether his letters were proving satisfactory. The president replied that he had "read them all" and that, regardless of what people like Carr might think, "I was not to shorten them." To the end of his days Messersmith wondered where the president "found the time to read them." In fact only three substantive letters from Vienna, sent over by Moore in late 1936, appear in the president's papers. In such miniscule doses, the letters were much more palatable.[84]

And, perhaps, more influential. As a result of Robert Dallek's seminal work, a picture has taken shape of Roosevelt who had concluded by the spring of 1935 that Hitlerite Germany represented a threat to civilization that the United States would eventually have to stop. His internationalism was repeatedly frustrated, however, by the isolationists in congress, to whom he was forced to defer in order to carry the New Deal, so as to prepare the country for this future test of strength.[85]

Messersmith later took generous credit--which Dallek disputes by omission--for Roosevelt's understanding of European realities.

His letters, he would assert, were "the ones in which he placed the greatest dependence concerning developments in Central Europe." Roosevelt may have told him so; Messersmith was very susceptible to flattery, and Roosevelt used it often on him and others. Surely Messersmith was not alone in stressing the Nazi menace. Dodd in Berlin, Straus in Paris, Robert W. Bingham in London, among others, were all sounding that alarm regularly and directly to the White House. This president prided himself on the diversity of his sources, most of whom were reporting that Hitler would indeed last.[86]

But it seems fair to say that Messersmith already ranked as high as any of the career diplomats save perhaps for Sumner Welles, the president's Groton chum. Welles was the consummate professional, dapper and detached, an artist with words. Messersmith was none of those things, and that may have been the key. Roosevelt seems to have admired his singularly unaffected independence and fire. "He is one of the best men we have in the whole Service," he wrote a mutual friend in December 1935, "and I count greatly on his judgment." More responsibility was in store for him.[87]

In late May 1935, a month earlier than planned, there was Vienna again, with Messersmith refreshed and confident. His time stateside had helped him forget the melancholy realities that had buffeted him in Berlin. He had caught the spirit of recovery at home. The New Deal, he wrote gratefully, had spared "our people . . . the social and political disorders which are disrupting this

old continent." His short shrift at the State Department was overshadowed by the rapport with Roosevelt, who may have explained the domestic constraints upon his foreign policy. In any case Messersmith again professed optimism that Europe's troubles would come to a head in time to be contained, and opined that the United States could not and should not pull anyone's chestnuts out of the fire but her own. Washington, he decided, might provide moral support for collective security, but the temptation to "actively participate . . . must be sternly resisted, for it can accomplish no permanent good in the old world, which must settle its own problems in the best way it can."[88]

This was American public opinion talking. Isolationism was never more appealing than in the last half of 1935, when collective security fell ignominiously apart. June witnessed the Anglo-German naval agreement, another breach of the five week old Stresa front. Then Geneva was put to the test in East Africa. By the time Messersmith returned from leave, Mussolini had amassed half a million troops for an invasion of Ethiopia, scene of Italy's humiliating defeat in 1896. Western analysts guessed that he would strike at the end of the rainy season, in the fall.[89]

For London and Paris the quandary was acute. On the one hand, Messersmith wrote Phillips on 6 August, they recognized that "Italy was treated like the black sheep of the Allied family at Versailles in the matter of colonial spoils and that she does need

a place to expand." France especially regarded Ethiopia as a small price to pay to keep the Duce content and committed to the anti-Hitler front. On the other hand, they could not "permit the rough-shod way in which Mussolini has been proceeding," not without making a mockery of collective security and the League, of which Ethiopia was a full member.[90]

No third state was more affected by these developments than Austria. For her, Messersmith saw, an Italo-Ethiopian war would be a "catastrophe." The diversion of Italian forces from the Brenner would leave the door ajar for Hitler. If Geneva imposed sanctions, Austria would be forced to choose between collective security or her protector. Mussolini might be driven into Hitler's embrace; and the Fuehrer would surely make Austria the price of his friendship.

Yet Messersmith assumed that Mussolini would pull back before it was too late. Austrians and friends like Messersmith tended to see the Duce through glasses colored rose by his heroics on 25 July 1934. Messersmith's Mussolini, for all of his posturing and bombast, was a realist with the courage to act, then rare qualities among European statesmen. It followed that he would abandon the Ethiopian project when pressed by his Stresa partners, appreciating, as Messersmith concluded on 6 June, that the German threat and "the Austrian situation and cooperation with England and France

are far more vital to Italy than Abyssinia."[91]

This proved all wrong. The Duce was more interested in glory than security, and understood thattrying to resist Hitler's absolute determination to have the Anschluss might deprive him of both. He had invested too much in the African buildup to turn back, even for a generous negotiated settlement. Instead he made "the reaction to his Abyssinian policy the test-case for his future attitude toward other European countries." While the West threatened sanctions, Hitler was muzzling German criticism of Italy and rejecting an Ethiopian bid for arms. This attitude was noted and appreciated in Rome.[92]

As diplomatic prospects dimmed, Austria groped for the guarantees that would permit her to stand with the West in defense of collective security. But Berger Waldenegg returned from Geneva emptyhanded and, in a 19 September talk with Messersmith, "hopeless." The Ethiopian invasion, he reported dolefully, would commence any day; the sanctions under consideration at Geneva would prove futile. Austria had to align herself with Italy for self preservation. She might have to leave the League altogether if Mussolini so decreed. The Duce, he added, was ready to come to terms with Hitler, even if if meant withdrawing from the Brenner.[93]

One by one the Austrian's forebodings came true. Writing to Phillips on 27 September, Messersmith expressed confidence that Mussolini would ultimately "back down." A week later Italian troops moved into Ethiopia. The League immediately considered sanctions.

Austria came under intense Italian pressure to bolt the debate. She stayed, only to join Albania and Hungary, the other Italian client-states, in a declaration of non-cooperation when sanctions were voted. It was, Messersmith observed, "a reminder to the League that Austria owes its national life to Italy."[94]

He beheld civilization at a crossroad. He wanted to conserve Stresa as much as anyone, but making an example of a renegade Italy, he decided, would have still greater cautionary impact on Germany. He made the connection explicit. "It Mussolini succeeds in flouting the League and in having his way against almost entire world opinion by the application of force and intransigence," he declared, "then the League is dead and within a half year or less Nazi Germany will . . . proceed on a much more definite and dangerous path and have a much better chance of getting away with it." Only one thing could save the situation now: "Anglo-French cooperation which is so definite and far reaching and so clear to the whole world that there can be no mistaking it whatsoever." If this precipitated war, so be it. "As a lover of peace almost to the degree of being a pacifist," he wrote Phillips on 15 October,

> it is my duty to tell you [that] I believe that it would be the greatest mistake for Europe and the world if it does not come to conflict now . . . The greatest danger is that a face-saving formula may be arrived at. If, in order to avoid what . . . would be a very short war, and a comparatively bloodless one, a compromise is arrived at, a war a few years hence of a devastating character which will engulf Europe and involve the rest of the world, is certain.[95]

The compromise was attempted. Early December brought the bombshell revelation of the Anglo-French proposal to restore Stresa by handing Ethiopia over to Mussolini. Messersmith joined in the ensuing hue and cry over this Hoare-Laval plan, nearly exhausting his stock of apt clichés. It was "a sorry spectacle," "a great danger," "a rude shock," "a definite blow to British prestige, to the Empire, to the League, to collective security, and to peace." Of course it was not Europe's peace that he was concerned with. Hoare-Laval would have ended the Ethiopian conflict had Mussolini gone along, which, with second thoughts about the whole venture now that it was underway, he was tempted to do. Messersmith was quite prepared to write off Ethiopia and Europe in order to spare American democracy. Every time the confrontation with lawlessness was put off, the United States came a step closer to war herself.[96]

Still the picture was not all bleak. The days following Hoare-Laval gave him "new encouragement and hope." Public outrage had prompted a quick retraction by Britain and France, and the dismissal of both principals. Collective security had received a ringing popular endorsement that he believed the statesmen in London must heed. His British colleague Selby told him that London was in possession of information that Germany had already violated the naval agreement, which would presumably make her think twice before dealing with Hitler again. Inside the Foreign Office proponents of Anglo-German rapprochement were said to be losing ground to the likes

of the permanent undersecretary, Sir Robert Vansittart, a Nazi-hater who urged rearmament and close cooperation with France. Messersmith rushed to the conclusion that "the iron ring around Germany is becoming stronger . . . with the realization that there is only one way of saving Europe from disaster--through the disappearance of the present regime."[97]

To make the regime disappear, Westerners closed their eyes. On 7 March 1936 German troops marched into the Rhineland, demilitarized under the terms of Versailles and the Locarno pact of 1925. Messersmith excitedly fit the fast-developing story into his framework. The Nazis' demons seemed to have finally caught up with them. "The external pressure on Germany and the internal pressure of the economic and financial situation," he hypothesized on the ninth, had forced "a morale-raising adventure," a frontal assault on the European security system that would surely prove suicidal. It was a strained interpretation that attributed Nazi dynamism to weakness and desperation rather than strength and Hitler's supreme confidence that he would meet no resistance. It was an interpretation that even Messersmith clung to with difficulty as the days dragged on, as talk begat only more talk, as it became clear that Britain, and therefore France, were not going to move. By 20 March it was clear that Hitler had scored his greatest victory yet by again capitalizing on Europe's fear of war. With one audacious stroke, he had silence the doubters. With Britain scrambling to save face, "almost on her knees to Hitler

'to make a gesture'" for peace, begging him to explain himself at Geneva--with all this, Messersmith asked disgustedly, "who can blame an increasing majority of the German people for believing that after all Germany is invincible and has a mission to carry through by the domination of Europe [?]"[98]

The Rhine exploit sent tremors through Central Europe. Messersmith reported that Austria was gripped with "a new sense of insecurity" born of the recognition that England and France, having acquiesced on the Rhine, were "even less likely to do anything" for her "if the next fait accompli is in this direction." So Hitler apparently intended. Papen, who had assuredly not been recalled, was since mid 1935 carrying out new orders from Berlin "to put Austro-German relations on a basis satisfactory to both sides, which should gradually lead to an Anschluss." With great fanfare it was announced that the Reich was at last prepared to normalize relations by way of a treaty. Austria smelled a rat. For months Papen found Berger Waldenegg evasive and dilatory,when he could find him at all: their relationship, Messersmith reported on 23 August, had become a game of "hide-and-seek." But the changing complexion of Europe made such standoffishness increasingly untenable. Although the League's sanctions were not impeding the rape of Ethiopia, they were serving to estrange Mussolini from the West. In a long talk with Hitler's ambassador Ulrich von Hassel in January 1936, the Duce declared that Stresa was "dead and buried," that Germany's "benevolent neutrality"

had made it "possible to improve fundamentally the Italo-German relations, and to remove the last bone of contention, the Austrian problem." Austria, he agreed, might become "practically a satellite of Germany."[99]

He broke this devastating news to Schuschnigg during the semiannual Rome Protocols get together in late March 1936. Messersmith, about to leave again for home, completely misread the situation. The Duce, he declared, had called the conclave "to show how important he was in the Danubian area," to demonstrate to the world that "at a time when all confidence in written agreements was gone, a proved friend was ready to assert his friendship and support" for Austria. Such friendship would be the death of her. Mussolini told Schuschnigg that

> n view of the general situation and the Italian commitment in Africa, he regarded an improvement of Austro-German relations as urgently necessary; Vienna should make direct contact with Berlin; this would be an effective extension of the Rome Protocols and offer the best possible international guarantee of Austria's independence.[100]

Returning on 13 June, Messersmith found Vienna abuzz with the impending rapprochement. With the cut off of Italian subventions, the anti-German Heimwehr was falling apart. Starhemberg and the equally anti-German Berger Waldenegg lost their portfolios. Schuschnigg opened talks with Papen, talks Messersmith was sure would be fruitless. Mussolini, he wrote stubbornly to Phillips, although no longer "averse" to an Austro-German treaty, still supported Schusch-

nigg's "minimum conditions" regarding recognition and non-intervention--terms Messersmith believed "will be unacceptable to Germany."[101]

Explaining this failure of analysis is not hard. Messersmith simply refused to believe that Papen had a successful negotiation in him. He lacked inside informants, too. The expansive Papen might have kept him apprised himself had Messersmith not shunned him so assiduously. On the Austrian side Berger Waldenegg remained a loyal friend from his exile as ambassador to Rome. But Messersmith's understanding of Nazi methods should have predicted the outcome. For three years he had been warning others that Hitler could sign anything because his signature meant nothing. Schuschnigg's "minimum conditions" posed no problem for Papen because any treaty was intended to be torn up at the opportune time. By the end of June agreement had been reached. Austria bound herself to German foreign policy, to amnesty Austrian Nazis, and to provide the Pan Germanist "national opposition" with cabinet representation. Papen accommodatingly dropped other demands, such as for a veto over any restoration plan, when Schuschnigg objected. Hitler and Mussolini bestowed their blessings. Not until 8 July, three days before the treaty was announced, did Messersmith quietly report that agreement was "very probable" in "ten days to two weeks."[102]

Caught unawares by the 11 July treaty, he was not slow in grasping its implications. "No one in Austria," he wrote Hull on the twelvth, except her enemies, "are [sic] very enthusiastic about

the agreement." Austrian expectations of increased German trade and tourism would probably "be much disappointed." Experience showed that Germany would take Austrian raw materials only in barter for coal and arms, which she did not need. Currency restrictions had long done away with the freespending German sightseer. The treaty's benefits were illusory, but its dangers were all too real. Whatever it provided or implied, Messersmith concluded, there had been "no change in Germany's ultimate objectives." The pact actually brought Anschluss closer. Incurably subversive Nazi zealots were back on the streets. German newspapers again circulated legally, which, Messersmith observed, "will not be conducive to internal order here." Nazi sentiment inside Austria was now "bound to grow, for a good many people here will take the agreement to mean the beginning of the end despite this affirmation of Austrian independence."[103]

Schuschnigg, however, appeared determined to resist. In the weeks following the treaty Messersmith reported "a valiant effort . . . to maintain real Austrian soveriegnty." The two new cabinet appointees--Edmund Glaise Horstenau, minister without portfolio, and Dr. Guido Schmidt, state secretary in the foreign ministry--were indeed Pan Germanists, but not pro-Nazi. The chancellor retained full control over foreign policy, which he privately vowed to keep independent and neutral. Moreover he demonstrated that Nazi sedition would be resisted. In a mass rally in Vienna that turned violent, 700 party members were arrested and returned to prison.

Messersmith applauded Schuschnigg's decisiveness. Hitler had secretly contributed to the calm. On 16 July he summoned Austrian Nazi leaders and ordered discipline. They could not be permitted to run amock, as Messersmith recognized, without destroying "the pact's intended effect on western Europe" and jeopardizing the nascent friendship with Italy.[104]

Thus, thanks to Schuschnigg's firmness and Hitler's wish to lay low, Austria enjoyed peace. How long this would last, Messersmith wrote Hamilton Fish Armstrong on 4 August, "it is difficult to say, for, as before, Austrian developments depend on developments outside." Nothing had changed. Despite near economic recovery, domestic tranquility, and Schuschnigg's solid, if uninspired, leadership, the country's independence was not hers to save. Schuschnigg quickly learned that those who could still help her no longer deemed Austria worth saving. She had never been loved in the West, where she was an embarrassing reminder of postwar mistakes. Liberals had always deplored her quasi-autocracy, while many conservatives insisted that Austria and Germany were historically and racially destined to be one. With the German treaty her remaining friends in the West virtually gave her up for lost.[105]

So too, apparently, Italy, notwithstanding Mussolini's continued assurances to the contrary. Juergen Gehl has observed that the 11 July agreement was "in fact more of a settlement of the differences between Germany and Italy than between Germany and Aus-

tria." Messersmith instantly recognized that the pact provided "the first basis for real active cooperation between Rome and Berlin," but he insisted that no such cooperation would come to pass. Although ready to concede that Mussolini seemed to be "washing his hands of Austrian problems," Messersmith, in a 31 July letter to Hull, maintained that "Italy is not ready to desert the Western powers nor to throw her lot definitely with Germany." Even if current British and French overtures to Rome failed, the Hitler-Mussolini relationship, he assured Washington, could never last. The clash of interests and personalities would preclude more than "surface cooperation." Hitler was a madman who had "tied Germany into a know, which there is no untying"; the Duce was "still susceptible to reason and has some flexibility."[106]

Every development belied his line. The outbreak of the Spanish civil war on 17 July and the Duce's entanglement with the Franco insurgents sped him into the German camp. The advent of the moderate left Popular Front in France drew the two fascist powers together in the anti-Bolshevik cause. Western overtures were icily rebuffed. Consistent with his new orientation, Mussolini entrusted foreign policy to his young son-in-law Ciano, who was only too eager to jettison Austria for an alliance with Berlin, which he visited in October. Talks with Neurath, Goering, and Hitler left him "completely overawed," as Messersmith put it, "with German military power and professions of German friendship." More momentously, he reached

agreement on the framework for an alliance--what would become known, after a 1 November speech by Mussolini, as the Rome-Berlin Axis.[107]

In contrast to the staged adulation he tasted in the German capital, Ciano's reception in Vienna three weeks later was subdued. Messersmith reported that Schuschnigg "pulled out the stops" for him, but from the Viennese, the hurt Italian grumbled, "never a salute, never any applause, never a shout." He had his revenge. Austria was desperate again. The 11 July agreement was only weeks old when Hitler's demands started up again: currency and customs unification, a bigger role for the Austrian Nazis, and a military pact, which envisaged the integration of the Austrian armed forces with those of the Reich. Ciano relished denying Schuschnigg the support he needed to withstand these pressures. The growing Spanish involvement, he told his hosts curtly, prevented further Italian arms shipments. He suggested that Austria turn to Germany instead. He then berated them for their failures to quit Geneva and recognize Franco's government.[108]

Written off in the West and left in the lurch by Italy, Austria faced Germany alone. In late November Schmidt paid a state visit to Berlin, and returned as overawed as was Ciano. Messersmith reported "a perceptible, if slow increase in German infiltration." Pro-German diplomats began being brought home to fill high offices in Schmidt's foreign ministry. The anti-Nazi Austrian envoy in Berlin, Stefan Tauschitz, was recalled. Obviously, Messersmith wrote Edgar

Ansel Mowrer, Hitler's strategy was "to penetrate quietly and peacefully . . . undermining the position of this government so that it will be followed by a weaker one and eventually a [Nazi] one which will declare the Anschluss."[109]

Despite his isolation, Schuschnigg continued to assert Austrian sovereignty and to enjoy popular support. Internally the chancellor's position remained "impregnable"; Messersmith credited rumors, which again were unfounded, that Schuschnigg would soon purge Schmidt and Glaise Horstenau. These rumors may have induced Schmidt to bargain hard during six weeks of trade negotiations with Papen. The result, Messersmith reported, was a commercial agreement "meagre and unsatisfactory" from the German standpoint. The Viennese gave the lie to German propaganda about the great stifled yearning for Anschluss when the Fuehrer's foreign minister visited in February 1937. Aside from a few "very feeble" demonstrations, involving, Messersmith estimated, perhaps 7000 "mostly boys and women," Austrians gave Neurath the cold shoulder. The Nazi press assailed Schuschnigg for "sabotaging" the 11 July agreement, but Neurath did not harp on the matter. Germany, Messersmith concluded, was unready to provoke another crisis.[110]

The way he had it, Germany literally could not afford to. Everything he was hearing about the Nazi economy suggested to him that the long-awaited breakdown was about to occur. He had been wrong before, of course. But, he protested to the State Department, he could not be blamed for making "a mistake which was made as well by the Nazi

leaders themselves, for there is no one more surprised than they that they have been able to hold out as long as they have." In any case, he wrote hopefully to Hull on 30 January, "even those who have been giving the regime a still fairly long lease on life now see the end this year [1937]." He still placed credence in his German businessmen, who were reporting dwindling raw material stocks and "very unsatisfactory" progress toward laboratory substitutes. Some factories, he heard, had even had to shut down. The regime itself acknowledged the food shortages. One insider--Franz Hueber, a former Austrian minister of justice and Goering's brother-in-law--told Messersmith, who promptly passed the word to Washington, that Hitler, for some unspecified reason, was about to hand the chancellorship over to Goering, who was sure to adopt "a much more moderate program." Goering was in fact among the most ardent Anschluss immediatists in Hitler's inner circle.[111]

The apparent absence of a reliable ally also argued against Hitler's hazarding new foreign policy dramatics. On 30 November Messersmith reported that Ciano's talks with Neurath had yielded "no binding agreements" (which, strictly speaking, was true), and asserted that, regarding Hitler and Mussolini, "each distrusts the other just as much as ever and that the basic opposition of their interests is just as great as ever." The much-ballyhooed Rome-Berlin Axis was "in reality very wobbly." Bogged down by guerilla resistance in Ethiopia and the escalating Spanish conflict, Italy

struck him as near economic exhaustion herself. William Phillips wrote him from Rome that Italians were entirely in the dark as to the Spanish involvement--the troops having been told that they were going to Africa to subdue barbarians--and forecast trouble when they found out. Mussolini appeared to him to be losing his grip: "nervous and worried," "aging fast," and not to be relied upon in a crisis. In fact the Duce was finding refuge from his tribulations in dreams of omnipotence. Consultations with Berlin for the larger war against England he intended to wage went forward.[112]

Confident, then, that there was "not much prospect of the peace of Europe being disturbed by some overt act of Germany in the near future," Messersmith decided that he could safely take his accustomed spring leave. Besides, he wrote Hull, he did not want to disappoint his mother, now nearly blind, who "always looks forward to seeing me at this time of the year."[113]

The spring of 1937 ushered in a new Roosevelt administration and high anxiety throughout the federal service. Chiefs of diplomatic missions underwent their quadrennial rite of resignation. At the very least there would be transfers. But not, apparently, for Messersmith. He heard through the grapevine that he was staying put in Vienna. That prospect, he wrote Phillips on 2 April, "pleases me very much, as I cannot conceive of my having a better post than this." Truly, the three years in Vienna had generally been happy ones for him and Marion. Certainly a transfer was likely to be to a non Euro-

pean post, to a new setting and a new cast of characters.[114]

But there were posts he would have preferred. He craved action and was not getting enough of it in Vienna. He wanted Berlin. It was the job he coveted above all others and never obtained. In 1937, however, it looked ready to open up. Dodd was talking retirement. The State Department rejoiced at the prospect. Upon the resignation of the mortally ill Jesse Straus in August 1936, Moffat wished out loud that "it had been the Berlin Embassy rather than the Paris one which fell vacant." As far as Messersmith was concerned, Dodd had always seen things accurately enough, but lacked the requisite backbone. Their meeting on 4 April 1937 during his customary Berlin stopover lent credence to the resignation rumors. Messersmith was shocked--and no doubt encouraged--by Dodd's deterioration. "Senility," he recalled, "had already set in." Dodd had become "an utterly ineffective and futile person . . . frustrated, bewildered, wandering in his expression and conversation, unable to concentrate adequately . . . no longer capable of reasoned thought and judgment."[115]

Dodd's days in office were clearly numbered, and Messersmith considered himself an heir possible if not apparent. In April 1936 Roosevelt, acting through an intermediary, had offered him the Moscow ambassadorship vacated by William Bullitt, who replaced Straus in Paris. The intermediary was Colonel Edward M. House, Democratic elder statesman and occasional Roosevelt confidant. Suspecting

that Messersmith would decline the post, the president had decided to spare him the embarrassment of doing so directly. His hunch was correct. Messersmith was well informed on the rigors of Moscow. He feared for his stomach, like Kennan's. He did not know the language. Most of all, the luxury-loving Marion "would not stand in my way in accepting the post [but neither] would she go." Living without his wife, he decided, "would be a great handicap." But the offer buoyed him. If Moscow in 1936, he reasoned, why not Berlin in 1937?[116]

The answer was twofold. The president preferred envoys capable of civil communication with their hosts. Bullitt had been transferred because after three frustrating years in Moscow his anti-Bolshevism had become all consuming. Sending Messersmith to Berlin was sure to make the fur fly, to the possible detriment of American interests. Besides, the post was already spoken for. When Messersmith turned down Moscow, Roosevelt gave it to millionaire businessman Joseph E. Davies, with the promise of a transfer to Berlin within the year. Messersmith would undoubtedly have accepted Moscow on those terms, with or without his wife. In any case, the State Department was pressing not his claim to Berlin but (unavailingly) that of veteran career diplomat Hugh Gibson, languishing in Brazil since 1933. Unbeknown to Messersmith, who sailed from Hamburg on 7 April 1937, Davies had a veritable lock on Berlin.[117]

Messersmith's name had also come up in connection with another office. He had returned to Vienna from his 1935 leave to find,

as he wrote Moffat,

> that all sorts of rumors are current about me--mainly that I went home to arrange to get Carr's job as Assistant Secretary as he was to retire this fall! I need not tell you that I am happy in my job here . . . and certainly would not seek Carr's, who I hope will stay in the Department many years, for I consider he has done a great task and should be kept at it. How these rumors get started is too much for me.[118]

His exasperation was sincere, but not the encomium to Carr. Messersmith was less than a year in Vienna at the time, and unprepared for a move. The cost of living in Washington was another strike against it. But, as the months dragged monotonously on, Washington looked better and better to him. Nineteen thirty-seven marked Carr's forty fifth year in the State Department, the last thirteen as assistant secretary for administration. Without slighting his achievements--which had, after all, made it possible for a consul to become minister to Austria--Messersmith had been dissatisfied with his leadership since 1930. Not enough had been done, he felt, to prevent and restore the budget cuts of the early 'thirties, to promote consular-diplomatic interchangability, or to coordinate the bothersome commercial attachés. When rumors of Carr's retirement revived in 1937, Messersmith's interest perked up, too.

Hoping for an offer of Carr's job or Dodd's, Messersmith, who arrived in Fleetwood in late April, requested an interview with the president. They met on the morning of 14 May. Neither possibility came up. Roosevelt gave him to believe that he was to return to Vienna. Two weeks later, just before he was due to sail, Messersmith

called again. This time he came right to the point. "I have heard," he remembered saying to the president, "that I would be asked to serve in the Department." Was there anything to it? Roosevelt said no. He wanted Messersmith back in Austria because "the information that I was sending from there was so valuable and vital."[119]

Messersmith complied. Three days after his return to Vienna the telegram arrived. He was to return to Washington for consultation, after which "the President desires to appoint you as Assistant Secretary of State." In light of Roosevelt's assurances less than a month before, the news "came as probably the biggest surprise I have ever had . . . we had just unpacked our trunks." Now they had to repack them, and quickly. The Department, he explained to his colleague in Bucharest, "seems to want me at home as soon as possible." He booked passage from Hamburg for 13 July. This left a scant two weeks to wrap up their affairs and say their goodbyes, which were many after three years. Messersmith felt as though they were "leaving like a thief in the night." In any event, he wrote lightheartedly, "I shall try to see that our bills are paid."[120]

They departed on 11 July, after final talks with Miklas, Schuschnigg, and Schmidt. The chancellor was among the crowd of notables that gathered at the train station to see them off. It was by consensus a token of Austria's esteem.[121]

Chapter Three

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79. Entries for 10 Apr. and 2 May 1935, Phillips Diary. Feis to Hull, 25 Mar. 1937, Hull Papers. Dodd #1465, 14 Nov. 1934, FRUS 1934, 2: 251-53. Jenkins #642, 4 Nov. 1935, FRUS 1935, 2: 266-72. Geist to Moffat, 26 Jan. 1935, I 470. De Santis, Diplomacy of Silence, p. 70.

80. GSM to Dodd, 1 July 1935, Dodd Papers. Feis to GSM, 18 Mar. 1937, Feis Papers.

81. GSM to Dodd, 1 July 1935, Dodd Papers.

82. On the Washington negotiations, FRUS 1935, 2: 441-51. Offner, American Appeasement, p. 99.

83. Entries for 13 Feb. 1934 and 12 Apr. 1935, White House Usher's Diary, PSF, Roosevelt Papers. Crane, Mr. Carr, p. 314. Cf. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 571. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, p. 63. Roosevelt to Caffery, 20 Mar. 1935, FDR and FA, 2: 450.

84. Friedel, Launching, p. 362. Hull, Memoirs, p. 200. "Scope of Memoirs," I 1934, GSMM. Moore to Roosevelt, 27 Nov. 1936, PSF 32, Roosevelt Papers, enclosing GSM to Hull, 6 Nov. 1936, I 752; GSM to Moore, 9 Nov. 1936, I 756; 16 Nov. 1936, I 763. The only other Messersmith letters to Roosevelt from Vienna are routine thanks for the White House's annual Christmas greetings, PSF 44.

85. Dallek, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, p. 102. In the same vein, Kinsella, Jr., Leadership in Isolation, p. 2-3.

86. "Scope of Memoirs," I 1934, GSMM. Kinsella, Jr., Leadership in Isolation, pp. 33-44. Schlesinger, Jr., New Deal, pp. 522-23.

87. Roosevelt to Mack, 4 Dec. 1935, FDR and FA, 3: 111.

88. GSM to Hull, 6 Nov. 1936, Hull Papers. "A Resume of the General European Situation Today," 10 Oct. 1935, I 591.

89. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy, pp. 210-16. Selby, Diplomatic Twilight, pp. 48-49.

90. GSM to Phillips, 6 Aug. 1935, I 539.

91. GSM to Phillips, 6 June 1935, I 504. Mack Smith, Mussolini, p. 191.

92. Gehl, Austria, pp. 117-18. Taylor, Origins, pp. 88-90, 109. Lowe and Marzari, Italian Foreign Policy, pp. 240-90.

93. GSM to Phillips, 20 Sept. 1935, I 576.

94. GSM to Phillips, 27 Sept. 1935, I 582; 4 Oct. 1935, I 588. GSM #573, 11 Oct. 1935, I 592.

95. "Resume," 16 Oct. 1935, I 591. GSM to Phillips, 15 Oct. 1935, I 595.

96. Braddick, "Hoare-Laval," pp. 152-71. GSM to Phillips, 17 Dec. 1935, I 632.

97. GSM to Dunn, 20 Dec. 1935, I 634. "A Brief Resume of the European Situation Today as Seen from Vienna," 12 Feb. 1936, I 650.

98. "Movement of the German Army Across the Rhine," I 1975, GSMM. GSM #721 and enclosures, 9 Mar. 1936, I 667, 668. GSM to Phillips, 13 Mar. 1936, I 670. GSM memo, 27 Mar. 1936, I 677. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy, pp. 239-63.

99. GSM to Dunn, 21 June 1935, I 511. GSM #475, 3 July 1935, I 516. GSM #484, 10 July 1935, I 520. GSM #493, 13 July 1935, I 524. GSM to Phillips, 23 Aug. 1935, I 556; 12 Sept. 1935, I 570. Gehl, Austria, pp. 109-11, 122.

100. Enclosure #1 to GSM desp., 27 Mar. 1936, I 677. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy, pp. 264-66. Schuschnigg, Brutal Takeover, p. 138.

101. GSM to Phillips, 18 June 1936, I 682. Edmondson, Heimwehr, pp. 256-59. Gehl, Austria, pp. 128-30.

102. Gehl, Austria, pp. 130-32. GSM to Hull, 8 July 1936, I 691.

103. GSM to Hull, 12 July 1936, I 693. GSM to Dunn, 20 July 1936, I 698. GSM to Hull, 31 July 1936, I 703.

104. GSM to Hull, 12 July 1936, I 693. GSM #857, 10 Aug. 1936, I 709. GSM #908, 18 Sept. 1936, I 719. GSM to Hull, 2 Nov. 1936, Hull Papers. Gehl, Austria, pp. 147-48. Pauley, Forgotten Nazis, pp. 163-71.

105. GSM to Armstrong, 4 Aug. 1936, I 706. GSM to Hull, 14 Aug. 1936, I 710.

106. Gehl, Austria, p. 133. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy, pp. 264-71. GSM to Frankfurter, 9 July 1936, I 692. GSM to Hull, 31 July 1936, I 703; 21 Aug. 1936, I 711; 16 Oct. 1936, I 735; 6 Nov. 1936, I 752. GSM to Moore, 5 Dec. 1936, I 790.

107. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy, pp. 331-37. Mack Smith, Mussolini, pp. 206-08. Lowe and Marzari, Italian Foreign Policy, pp. 297-309. GSM to Hull, 6 Nov. 1936, I 752.

108. GSM to Moore, 23 Nov. 1936, I 771. Ciano quoted in Gehl, Austria, pp. 136-37.

109. GSM #960, 16 Nov. 1936, I 766. GSM to Moore, 23 Nov. 1936, I 771; 30 Nov. 1936, I 784. GSM #979, 30 Nov. 1936, 762.63/331. GSM #1023, 21 Jan. 1937, I 827. GSM to Mowrer, 24 Feb. 1937, I 829.

110. GSM to Moore, 16 Jan. 1937, I 819. GSM #1022, 18 Jan. 1937, I 823. GSM to Dunn, 23 Jan. 1937, I 829. GSM #1035, 29 Jan. 1937, I 837. GSM to Hull, 23 Feb. 1937, I 860. GSM #1067, 26 Feb. 1937, 762.63/344. GSM #1078, 8 Mar. 1937, 863.00/1337. "Vienna-Von Neurath," I 1979, GSMM.

111. GSM to Hull, 8 Oct. 1936, I 733. GSM to Dunn, 16 Oct. 1936, I 736. "Memorandum Covering Aspects of the Present Situation in Germany," 15 Dec. 1936, I 798. GSM to Hull, 30 Jan 1937, I 838. GSM to Moore, 16 Jan. 1937, I 819. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy II, p. 268.

112. GSM to Moore, 30 Nov. 1936, I 784. GSM to Hull, 8 Mar. 1937, I 837; 3 Apr. 1937, I 888. Mack Smith, Mussolini, p. 213.

113. GSM to Hull, 13 Mar. 1937, I 878; 30 Jan. 1937, I 838.

114. GSM to Phillips, 2 Apr. 1937, I 887.

115. See, for example, GSM to Stresemann, 9 Nov. 1936, I 759. Moffat to Norman H. Davis, 7 Oct. 1936, Davis Papers. "Visits to Berlin and London," I 1977, GSMM. Dodd knew that Messersmith was one of the people after his job. Dodd to Moore, 17 Aug. 1936, Moore Papers. See also entry for 24 Apr. 1936, Carr Diary: "Messersmith . . . wants to succeed Dodd though he denies he has any desire to do so. His technique is to [sic] apparent. But he would be several hundred per cent better than Dodd." Dallek, Dodd, implicitly disputes the senility diagnosis.

116. "New York--Meeting with Colonel House," I 1980, GSMM.

117. See, for example, Bullitt's #1537, 20 Apr. 1936, in Bullitt, ed., For the President, pp. 154-57. Davies, Mission to Moscow, pp. xii-xiv, 140, 143. Davis to Wilson, 8 Feb. 1937, Davis Papers. GSM to Dunn, 22 Mar. 1937, I 883.

118. GSM to Moffat 24 May 1935, Moffat Papers.

119. Phillips to GSM, 12 May 1937, PF 482. GSM to McIntyre, 20 May 1937, OF 896, Roosevelt Papers. "Conversations on Return to the Department," I 1981, GSMM.

120. Hull to GSM, 24 June 1937, PF 514. GSM to Hull, 28 June 1937, I 894. GSM to Harrison, 7 July 1937, Harrison Papers.

121. Young #1169, 17 July 1937, PF 526. New York Times, 12 July 1937, p. 6. Selby to GSM, 18 Oct. 1939, I 1292.

Chapter Four

Washington, D.C., 1937-1940

Messersmith's homecoming was a featured event in "one of the biggest shake-ups in years" at the State Department. Roosevelt had been promising to clear out the deadwood at State ever since 1933, when, with that in mind, he appointed Brain Truster Raymond Moley assistant secretary of state. Six months later Moley was again a private citizen. With no specific departmental functions or friends, he proved easy pickings for the career diplomats, who easily persuaded Hull that Moley was undercutting his authority. Hull demanded his head, and Roosevelt was too distracted to resist. With Moley disposed of, the State Department virtually ran itself for four years, with only episodic interference from the White House. That was to change. With war clouds gathering over Europe and the Far East, a housecleaning at State became a more pressing priority than ever. Having learned from the Moley debacle, Roosevelt this time entrusted the task to Sumner Welles, who was named undersecretary in April 1937. Welles knew the system from twenty-two years of experience, but his first loyalty was to the president.[1]

Martin Weil, an engaging chronicler of these events, implies that Roosevelt wanted Welles to sweep out all the Republicans among the senior diplomats in the field and in the Department. Certainly Mrs. Roosevelt and the New Deal lieutenants--Henry Wallace, Harold Ickes, Harry Hopkins, and Henry Morgenthau--favored the meat cleaver approach. But by 1937 the president had given up the idea of a whole-

sale purge, if he ever seriously entertained it, as both impractical and unwarranted. Overall, he wrote career diplomat Jefferson Caffery, the Foreign Service was "so vastly better" since Rogers and Moses Linthicum that "no great changes should take place." Roosevelt's remedy for the Service's remaining ideological and social biases was more Rogers, more promotions through the ranks, more professionalism, not less. A presidential purge would devastate morale and set back the career principle he wished to promote. Besides, ousting all the professional diplomats out of sympathy with the New Deal would leave very few professional diplomats at their posts just when Roosevelt needed them most. Rather, he seems to have meant for Welles to prune people guilty in his eyes of egregious foppery, favoritism, or disloyalty to the administration's foreign policy. High on the hit list, for example, was Ray Atherton, counsellor of the London embassy, whom the King of England had derided, in a comment that reached Roosevelt, as an "imitation Englishman." Others to be exiled included Robert Kelley, head of the anti-Soviet division of Eastern European affairs, and Edward Reed, chief of the Mexican division. Reed's blind hostility to Mexican president Lazaro Cardenas and his brand of economic nationalism ran head on into Roosevelt's and Ambassador Josephus Daniels' sympathy for what they saw as a south-of-the-border New Deal.[2]

Another marked man was Wilbur Carr. He had been allowed to stay on in 1933, but his position was precarious in the extreme.

As early as November 1933 Roosevelt contemplated naming him minister to Czechoslovakia, in the hope, perhaps, that Carr, who had never seen service abroad, would choose to retire instead. Phillips talked Roosevelt out of it, claiming that Carr could not be spared. He remained, only to see his relationship with the White House sour steadily. In June 1934 Roosevelt took him brutally to task for not implementing consular-diplomatic fusion fast enough. For his part, Carr suffered silently as his cherished bureaucratic order came undone under Democratic patronage, budget cuts, and Roosevelt's administrative approach. Moley, Moore, Phillips, and Welles were invited to bypass Hull and come directly to the White House. Hull, whom Carr disgustedly characterized as "amazingly diffident" and "lacking in courage," not only did not object, but actually encouraged his subordinates to deal directly with Roosevelt so that he, Hull, would not have to do so himself. True to his principles, Carr, according to his biographer, "never went to the President except in the regular channels through Hull." That deprived him of the opportunity to answer people like Bullitt and Messersmith, who complained to the president about Carr's personnel policies.[3]

Welles displayed a nice flair for public relations in the execution. On 21 May Hull called in the press to announce the merger of the Mexican and Latin American divisions into a new division of the American Republics, the first step, the secretary said, of a long planned overhaul of the Department in the interests of "modern

efficiency." He planted the suggestion that the change was "revolutionary" by gratuitously denying that it was. Reed received a one-way ticket to Rome. A fortnight later came the announcement of the consolidation of the European divisions and Kelley's appointment as consul general in Istanbul. There followed a grabbag of transfers set in motion by the recall of the minister to Switzerland, Hugh Wilson, to become assistant secretary in Welles' stead. Well down the list was Atherton, "promoted" to the legation in Bulgaria. On 2 July a straightfaced Hull informed reporters that the Department, in deference to Carr's "desire . . . to take a mission in the field," was sending him to Prague, thus assuring "the services of a tried official with just the right qualifications in one of the trouble spots of Europe." Carr's office, the secretary said with more candor, fell into good hands, for Messersmith, with his "considerable and varied experience in personnel and administrative mattters," not to mention his knowledge of Europe, was "the most capable person in the service who is available for such an assignment." To cap the operation, the New York Times Magazine ran a puff piece by Harold B. Hinton, who covered the State Department for Times Washington columnist Arthur Krock, Hull's friend. The article extolled the "revolution" that had transformed the Department from "a more of less lumbering contraption" into a "disciplined organization geared to the new necessities" of foreign policy.[4]

It was a deft performance, duly applauded by the editorial writers who took notice. In his regular Newsweek column, Raymond Moley, who spoke from experience, pronounced the shake up "an event of first-rate importance to the peace of this country," a blow against the "incompetence in our State Department and Foreign Service" that "invites embroilment in foreign wars." He particularly praised the Wilson and Messersmith appointments.

> Both are the working type of professional duplomatist, easily distinguished from the many "cookie-pushers" who flourish in the Service. Both are extremely well-informed on European affairs and will help to infuse into the Department . . . a more sensitive awareness of what is going on across the Atlantic. Both are impatient with those men representing us abroad who are long on social graces and short on knowledge.[5]

The most astute observers sized up the Carr transfer as the most significant of the lot. They snickered aside the talk of his "desire" and "qualifications" for Prague; Carr knew no languages and, by his own admission, next to nothing about foreign policy. Rather, one journal revealed, his "'transfer' is really a demotion which FDR has promised Carr's critics for more than two years." The president had finally "turned an old war horse out to pasture," ridding the Department of Carr's "tight bureaucratic control of the career service and his favoritism toward the 'white-spat boys' in the diplomatic hierarchy."[6]

Changes were expected under Messersmith. As an outstanding product of the career system, he was the best advertizement the "new" State Department could offer up. The Washington Post sounded a com-

mon theme in hailing a "promotion . . . richly deserved" for a "brilliant career diplomat" whose skills "are frequently said to have been an important factor in the preservation of European peace." The New York Times cited his "intimate knowledge of the difficult questions of inter-departmental relationships [and] close acquaintance with the work and personnel of the foreign service." Moley confidently predicted that he would "slash red tape and increase the emphasis on merit (as opposed to family background) among career men."[7]

Messersmith's advent was about the only silver lining New Dealers could find. Evaluating the changes, the Times rightly beheld "the latest proofs of the President's confidence in the capacity of the career men," or at least in the career principle. For all the claptrap about the "revolutionized" State Department, the pre-Rogers Act diplomats generally gained ground in 1937. Hugh Gibson, Jefferson Caffery, Butler Wright, and Leland Harrison all came out with choice posts. Hugh Wilson, whom Moley badly misjudged, assumed the critical "political" assistant secretaryship. Moffat returned from Australia to head up the consolidated European division, and Dunn moved over to the office of political adviser.

Drew Pearson, whose syndicated column was a regular conduit for the liberals' gibes at the Department, expressed their indignation at what they considered a sham of a shake up. "The old Harvard clique" was "back in the saddle," and Pearson blamed neither Hull

nor Welles, but their "chief in the White House, Franklin Roosevelt, Harvard '04." Pearson considered it "amazing" that the president had decided to retain diplomats who "fit identically with the definition of 'economic royalist' against whom he preaches and who, furthermore, do not rate particularly high." And they were treacherous. "Several" prominent career men, Pearson charged, had "secretly cooperated" with William R. Castle, Harvard '02, undersecretary under Hoover and "ardent Republican, in the drive to elect [Alf] Landon" the year before. For reasons Pearson could not fathom, Roosevelt had wasted his opportunity to fire the turncoats.[8]

The truth about this reorganization fell somewhere between the Department's press releases and Pearson's postmortem. Policy indeed remained safe in the same conservative hands. Latin Americanist Welles was to spearhead the bid for negotiations with the dictators. The anti-Soviet orientation found a home with Moffat, Dunn, and Wilson; Kelley would hardly be missed.

A potentially unsettling factor was the other new assistant secretary. Messersmith's discordant political views were well known. The question was whether he would be able to make them count. Carr had stayed out of policy, partly by choice, partly by necessity. Running the Department was a fulltime job, and then some. Messersmith was supposed to continue Welles' internal reorganization--a major undertaking in itself. The myriad mundane duties of office alone would seem to preclude Messersmith's meddling in policy.[9]

But the status quo had taken a serious blow. Messersmith immediately began moving able men into midlevel positions long occupied by less able Carr associates. G. Howland Shaw replaced Thomas M. Wilson as chief of the division of personnel. "One of the most brilliant men in the State Department," Shaw was a refreshing anomaly to its critics: an independently wealthy Harvard graduate who led "an austere bachelor existence" and was "eager to abandon the snobbish standards of the Department." The division of foreign service buildings, mismanaged for years by Keith Merrill, an intimate of Mrs. Carr, went to Frederick Larkin, who had expertly handled similar work for the treasury department.[10]

Even Pearson admitted that these changes had done State "a world of good." But, with the advancement of the "white-spat boys," he wrote sadly, the shake up "has undone all that it has done." What Pearson and his antagonists alike failed to recognize was that Messersmith, even if confined to his office, now had the power to accomplish gradually what the New Dealers had wanted Roosevelt to do summarily. The decisions Messersmith would be making in his capacity as chairman of the boards of personnel and examiners would affect the composition of the Foreign Service for years to come. As budget officer, with responsibility for appropriations, he had a chance to promote democratization by improving salaries and benefits. The diplomats and their critics were all correct: there had been no "revolution" at the State Department, and none was to come. But Messer-

smith's two and a half years in Washington were to see significant progress toward a unified, professional, more open Foreign Service.[11]

Such grand thooughts were far from his mind on 22 July, when the Messersmiths landed in New York, the worse for wear after a storm-tossed crossing. What was on his mind, and making him grumpy, were the prospects of summer without his wife--she was staying with relatives on Cape Cod and the Delaware shore--Washington at its sultriest, and a bed at the Metropolitan Club. Somewhere on the North Atlantic the thrill of his new title had yielded to disgruntlement over the manner in which it was conferred and many questions over what the position entailed. The one sentence telegram to him in Vienna, "so phrased as to be an order" rather than an offer, left him guessing even as to which assistant secretaryship he was to fill. He learned it was Carr's from the press. By this stage of his career he expected and deserved more consideration. Others were getting it. Hugh Wilson accepted his assignment to the Department "as a sort of grim duty" only after negotiating satisfactory terms, which included a promise from Roosevelt of "a more agreeable post later on." Messersmith still had no idea of what he would be doing or for how long. He wanted to know--as did his new colleagues--whether responsibilities were being shuffled as well as personnel, whether he was simply to take over Carr's machine or, especially, whether there would be room for policy participation. If not--if his European experience was going to go to waste--he feared a very frustrating tenure in Washington.[12]

Thus it was an out-of-sorts Messersmith who walked into Moffat's office at noon on Sunday 25 July. Moffat commiserated with him over lunch, pointing out, however, that his "worries might be entirely dissipated after he had talked with the President and the Secretary." When Messersmith did--that afternoon with Hull, Monday morning with Roosevelt--he was enormously cheered. The president said he regretted having to recall him without warning, but

> we have to prepare ourselves for the day to come. He said [Messersmith later related] that unfortunately there were too many people in Washington who felt that Europe was a good deal further off than it was, and the Orient even further . . . In the Department of State there were too few who had any understanding of this situation.

Messersmith would have his hands full, the president continued, with routine adminsitrative duties and certan Departmental reforms he wished him to carry out. But he expected Messersmith to sit in on policy meetings when possible, and to be ready with political advice on request.[13]

More reinforcement came the next day. He joined Carr at the old man's last oral examination. Carr had definite preferences as to his successor, and Messersmith was not on his list. He rightly suspected him of involvement in the whispering campaign that discredited him with Roosevelt. Messersmith's "cocksureness" irritated him. But the examination together impressed him with Messersmith's "ability in sizing up personnel," and he told him so. Moffat observed that Messersmith was "far more cheerful than he had been on Sunday."[14]

His qualms dispelled, he dove in and very nearly foundered in the end. It required two separate State Department orders to list all his official duties, which included the "administration of the Department of State and the Foreign Service, with supervision of personnel and management matters, Departmental appropriations, consular affairs, passports, visas, Foreign Service buildings, and international conferences." With an authorized complement of 713 Foreign Service officers and more than 4000 clerks assigned to the Department in Washington and to 312 consular and diplomatic installations over the globe, the Service was a ponderous ship to pilot under the best of circumstances. Messersmith set immediately to put the Service on an emergency footing. By the end of July the personnel division was at work compiling two new indexes: a card for every overseas post, noting special conditions and needs, and a card for every officer, setting down "specific capacities for specific kinds of work." Consultations with the political divisions on personnel matters got underway. To provide the systematic orientation newly appointed envoys never had before, Messersmith implemented a practice he had long admired in the British and French foreign services, requiring departing mission chiefs to leave detailed memoranda for their successors.[15]

It was a summer of innumerable small innovations, a summer of transition for Messersmith and the administration of the State Department. He filled out his staff. Ruth Shipley of the Passport

office was the only Carr holdover among the eight division heads reporting to him. All the newcomers strained to learn on the job. Messersmith quickly offset Vienna's sloth in overtime.[16]

State's budget request for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1939 was the first order of business. The statistics assembled by budget assistant Charles B. Hosmer told the story almost as eloquently as the privations they produced. The Department's current appropriation totalled $18.6 million--just what it was in fiscal 1932. Even that figure was inflated. Some four million dollars was being spent on "international obligations"--American contributions to the Pan American Union and the Mexican-American boundary commission, for example--leaving only $14.2 million for operations. Anticipated revenues from passport and consular fees reduced the amount actually drawn on the Treasury to $9.8 million--less than a third of one per cent of the total Federal budget, the least by far of any executive department.[17]

The case for more was never stronger. The emergencies in China and Spain brought out the best side of the Foreign Service. Americans evacuated from the war zones gave admiring accounts of individual heroism and general aplomb under fascist fire. Messersmith might have tried to turn the publicity to immediate advantage. Instead, not wishing, perhaps, to arouse too much controversy his first trip through the budgetary gauntlet, he asked for a very modest

increase, some $570,000, in order to restore the Service to its 1932 strength of 755. There would be some money for salary and allowance increases as well.[18]

His timing was unfortunate. In 1937 Roosevelt shifted economic priorities. The emergency was declared over, and attention turned to reducing swollen Federal deficits, which were seen as a threat to recovery. Across the board cuts were ordered in the executive departments. The State Department, one that had not benefitted under the New Deal, was hardest hit in relative terms. Acting budget director Daniel W. Bell not only denied State its increase, but slashed an additional $3.3 million. Only after Messersmith appealed directly to the president, arguing that the proposed cuts "take lean meat and muscle from a Department in which there is no fat," did Bell relent, restoring $1.2 million, to a total of $16.6 million.[19]

Congress came next. Messersmith was not a complete stranger to Capitol Hill. Ten years before he returned from Antwerp for a morning's discussion of the diamong smuggling problem with the House Ways and Means committee revising the customs laws. This inexperience was to show. Fortunately the 75th Congress brought a change in chairmen on the House Appropriations subcommittee. The ornery Coloradoan Edward T. Taylor, who had made Carr's life miserable, yielded to the fairminded Thomas S. McMillan of South Carolina.[20]

Hearings opened on 8 December and lasted for eight gruelling days. Messersmith came out whole, with several new admirers. In a September column, Drew Pearson had blasted the foreign service buildings program, citing cost overruns, the still uninhabited Bluecher Palace, and other small scandals. Minority members of the House panel took up the attack. Messersmith admitted that the buildings program "was the one aspect of the Department's work of which we could not be proud." He promised "real progress." No funds would be requested for new projects while old ones were pending. He assured the panel that it would be kept fully apprised. They were "appreciative."[21]

In fact, H.R. 9544, reported to the House on 18 February 1938, called for $16.6 million, a small increase over Bell's authorization. A speech by Representative Robert L. Bacon of New York, a member of McMillan's committee, clinched passage. Hailing the Foreign Service as "one of the finest bodies of men who serve the United States Government in any capacity," he went on to eulogize J. Theodore Marriner, consul general in Beirut when struck down in December by an assassin's bullet, as an illustration of the "human element--men in gruelling conditions in far-off places, often in grave peril of their lives, obliged to make heavy sacrifices . . . "[22]

Anticipating smooth sailing in the Senate, occupied on other fronts--particularly with Larkin on the buildings mess--Messersmith declined an invitation to come before Kenneth D. McKellar's Senate

appropriations committee. That was a mistake, for McKellar's panel was quietly doing away with a provision of extreme importance to State. Under current rules, executive departments were permitted to apply up to ten per cent of any budget item to other purposes. State especially needed this flexibility to cope with exchange fluctuations and overseas emergencies. McKellar's committee thought this gave too much latitude to the departments; and, though aware that State might justifyably want the provision retained, construed its silence as indifference.

Only when H.R. 9544 reached the Senate floor did Messersmith notice. He begged majority leader Alben Barkley and Key Pittman, chairman of the foreign relations committee, to work for restoration of the ten per cent allowance. When the bill came up for debate on 28 March, they rose to "exonerate" hom of negligence. Pittman explained that Messersmith, new on the job, "did not have a thorough knowledge of how the matter was [supposed to be] handled." McKellar went along, acknowledging that the Department deserved consideration and "the highest praise for the modesty of . . . its requests for appropriations." The bill passed easily, and Roosevelt signed it into law on 27 April 1938.[23]

Messersmith had nothing to celebrate. Most of the approved economies, $1.6 million worth, could be achieved through nonrecurring items in the 1938 budget, but this was scant consolation in light of the urgent need for more. He was deeply embarrassed at

having nearly lost State's discretion in spending the relative pittance appropriated. But the experience awakened his fighting spirit. "One of the things which I must accomplish during my present tour of duty," he vowed, "is to get for this Department the appropriations which it needs for the proper conduct of its work." In State's case, poverty was self-perpetuating. Because "our appropriations are so small," he observed, "the Budget and the Congress can go into every item of our expenditure with a care which is obviously not possible in the case of a Department whose appropriations . . . contain single items almost as large as our whole appropriation." McMillan's panel had excoriated State for changing its typewriter ribbons too often. The War Department, with its $600 million budget, was not subjected to such minute scrutiny. In effect, State was "penalized for good administration."

But, as Messersmith appreciated, a more basic reason for the Department's chronic impoverishment was the absence of an organized constituency to pressure Congress on its behalf. This was State's own doing. By long tradition it disdained the crush for place at the public trough. One critic denounced the "tacit understanding . . . between a Congress that begrudges money . . . and a State Department that doesn't want too much money for fear of losing its exclusiveness." State preferred conducting its affairs without Congress gazing over its shoulder. Dollars were sacrificed for privacy. Carr had kept close tabs on what money there was to prevent the men

without private incomes from starving. With his accountant's mentality, he then decided that asking Congress for more amounted to an admission of failure in controlling State's finances.[24]

This was one tradition Messersmith intended to break. Convinced that "we must get the right kind of sentiment behind the Department if we are to have the moral and financial support which is indispensable," he took to the stump "to bring the work and needs of the Department before our people." In four major speeches between November 1937 and February 1938, he hammered home the Department's role as "the guardian of our peace." Spectacularly in Spain and the Far East, "quietly but effectively" everywhere else, dedicated men and women, he told his audiences, were "working many hours of the day untiringly" upholding the country's "vital interests." Those interests, he said in an oblique swipe at the isolationists, "lie beyond our shores in only a limited sense," for the "things which do happen daily in so many places intimately concern . . . every one of us." The Department's ability to handle "the many details involved in [foreign] relations," he said, would ultimately determine "whether you and I will be able to live here at peace in this country."

It was therefore "only wise and prudent" that State receive "all the funds which it may need" to discharge its responsibilities. At a time when the country was building battleships at $60 million a copy, he argued, it was absurd that the department charged with obviating their use should have to make do with less than the Federal

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government contributed annually to the state agricultural colleges. The nation's "peace arm" had been reduced to penury. There was "an almost desperate need" for new personnel and equipment, for higher salaries and post allowances.

> Almost every other country makes materially greater provision for representation, and our failure to provide adequate funds for this purpose is entirely out of line with our democratic ideals, in that it precludes certain officers with no private means . . . from accepting posts where the representation responsibilities are heavy.

The American people could support the Department's work with "a good conscience," knowing that "the return on the investment is unquestionable."[25]

His speeches were favorably received. The New York Times praised one as "a useful corrective" to the notion that State was "a relatively unimportant accessory." Representative Bacon inserted them all into the Congressional Record. Civic groups came forth with letter writing campaigns to Congress. From The Nation's Oswald Garrison Villard came an offer to form a national commitee "to bring before all sections of our people through newspapers, periodicals, books [and] radio . . . adequate information concerning the work, policies, and needs" of the Department. Messersmith was enthusiastic. Such a "pressure group . . . working for us as [others were doing] for the Army, the Navy, Commerce, etc.," was in his view exactly what State needed. He excitedly envisioned "a large nation-wide committee" with an executive board of eminent academics and businessmen. He compiled a list of prospects, and asked Villard

to draft a statement of intent for their consideration.[26]

The plan got no further. The idea of outsiders like Villard making propaganda for the Department was too much for Welles, who scotched the plan. Messersmith, still feeling "very definitely that [it] would be a very helpful and proper movement," had to ask Villard to call it off.[27]

Messersmith moved on to a key audience. Whether businessmen knew it or not, the politicization of world trade made them dependent upon State. This reality Messersmith now endeavored to impress upon them.

> It no longer makes any difference [he declared] whether "A" in New York or Kansas City wishes to sell an article in Paris, and whether "B" in Paris is eager to buy it. Whether or not the sale is consummate depends entirely upon whether the laws of France and the myriad of regulations we have to deal with today will make that sale possible.

Keeping trade channels open was "a matter of negotiations . . . between governments." The growth of American exports under Hull's trade agreements program--up sixty per cent with the sixteen nations that had signed trade treaties with the United States by 1937--attested to the Department's success.[28]

Yet he acknowledged that State had a reputation for being "not deeply interested enough in the problems of American businessmen." Sometimes depicted as intimate partners in a rapacious dollar diplomacy, businessmen and diplomats seemed more often at odds. Their manners and interests frequently clashed. With the studied indifference of inherited wealth to matter pecuniary, the pre-Rogers diplo-

mats accorded commercial considerations a low priority. The old stereotypes--of businessmen as narrow, amoral boors, patriots for a price; of diplomats as stuffed shirts who had never done an honest day's work--poisoned relations. In his prewar heyday Carr effected a temporary rapprochement. But as his reforms began bearing fruit, as fusion became a reality, the consuls lost their separate identity, and with it their reputation for hardheaded service.

The upshot was that State had lost business's support, to the extent it ever had it, and, what was worse, lost it to the commercial attaches. Riddled by the Economy Act of March 1933, the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce had hit bottom the following August when, under White House pressure, Secretary of Commerce, Daniel Calhoun Roper signed a coordination agreement with William Phillips, acting secretary of state. The attaches would now have to report through diplomatic channels. But Roper immediately began to sabotage the agreement and rebuild his foreign service. He hinted that Hull's trade program would lose Commerce support unless coordination were scrapped, and made "deliberate propaganda" suggesting loosely that the emasculation of his service and the Great Depression were cause and effect. He set up a high-powered Business Advisory Council, whose lobbying helped get his budget back. In the field the attaches became more brazenly intractable than ever, engaging in policy discussions "without the knowledge or consent"

of mission chiefs, "refusing to accept orders," and, as Messersmith knew from Vienna, resisting office consolidation. With a fine touch, Roper touted Commerce as a place where officials "sit around with their coats off, and . . . talk the businessman's language," in contrast to the "high hats" at the State Department. Business knew where to turn.[29]

Messersmith resolved to bring business back to State; the attachés would follow. Unification of the foreign services, Messersmith's "old dream," was an idea whose time had come. State had viewed Roper's resurgence indulgently, but by 1937 even the apathetic Carr was convinced that the growing pretensions and power of the commericial foreign service had to be checked. On 22 July Senator Royal S. Copeland of New York, anti-Roosevelt Democrat, chairman of the commerce committee, great patron of the attachés, introduced a bill (S. 988) tp provide his charges with the benefits of Rogers and Moses Linthicum: commissions by class, automatic promotions, representation allowances, and a separate pension plan. The bill would put the commercial service on a permanent statutory basis, crushing Messersmith's dream.[30]

The State Department rose to the challenge. Carr, about to depart for Prague, fired off a memorandum to Welles, urging an appeal to Roosevelt. Copeland's bill, Carr wrote, was "definitely in conflict with the President's policy." Roosevelt, deeply interested in improved government administration, agreed that conso-

lidation was long overdue. He had led State to believe that he would make it official and final under the bill for executive reorganization now before Congress. Passage of Copeland, Carr pointed out, would block that plan. Moreover, S. 988 was inherently objectionable. It provided a pension plan for the attachés based on "the very provisions that have placed the State Department's retirement fund in an insolvent condition"--a mximum contribution of five per cent of salary, matched by the government. At that rate, the Department's fund was running an actuarial deficit of nearly $5 million a year, and faced exhaustion by 1960. Carr suggested that Roosevelt explain to "his representatives in Congress" that Copeland would provide another 175 government employees with a false sense of security.[31]

But Roosevelt had bigger problems to contend with than civil service pensions during the summer of 1937. His attempt to enlarge the Supreme Court had sparked a monumental Congressional rebellion. CIO sit-down strikes in the steel and auto industries were blamed on the New Deal for being soft on labor radicalism. In August the economy plunged, partly due to the cuts in Federal spending. Buffeted by outsiders and outside forces, Roosevelt had no patience for conflicts within his official family.[32]

Messersmith and the State Department were thus on their own. He considered and quickly rejected active opposition to S. 988 in Congress. Hosmer pointed out that such a lobby would smack of spite and "a purely selfish desire on our part to prevent members

of the Foreign Commercial Service from enjoying our benefits." It would also call embarrassing attention to State's own insolvent pension. Besides, Messersmith was no match for Roper on Capitol Hill, and he knew it. Messersmith decided to trust to fate. Perhaps S. 988 would run aground. Or, Roosevelt's reorganization, preempting it, might pass first.[33]

Where he felt he could help was with those whom a merger would most affect. He was delighted by what he heard from the half dozen senior attachés he sounded out. To a man they agreed (privately, of course) that consolidation was overdue. Like the consuls before them, the attachés had long felt the sting of diplomatic condescension. For them, integration into the State Department would be a big step up in status. They also believed in unity as a professional good. "As long as the services of the two Departments remain apart," one wrote him, "there will be duplication, unnecessary expenditure, and an absence of that high type of service and assistance to which American business interests are entitled." Resistance could be expected, another warned, from "a few die-hards in the Bureau" and from Roper, but "if the Commercial men in the field felt that they would be fairly taken care of in any consolidation scheme they would be entirely for it."[34]

Messersmith also discovered an encouraging openmindedness on the part of business. In early November he attended the three-day annual convention of the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC)

in Cleveland. Previous conventions had witnessed "vicious attacks" by Commerce Department officials against State. This year Commerce had been shut out; Messersmith and Sayre, who had also been invited, had the floor to themselves. Sayre spoke on the mechanic of trade agreements, which Messersmith thought "went over very well." For himself he made it a point to be present at every session during the three days. "There was not a single speaker," he reported flatteringly to Hull when it was over, "who did not mention the trade agreements program in an approving fashion and who did not speak of the great service which you are rendering to our country."[35]

Messersmith addressed the assemblage on 3 November. It was another plea for appropriations, tailored to his audience. The State Department he described was a model of efficiency that all American businessmen ought to be proud to call their own. In fact, he declared, no department was doing more to advance business interests abroad. Under Hull's leadership and the tide of political isolationism, State's work had become "preponderantly economic." The new orientation was evident in the Service entrance examination, which stressed economics as never before; in the officers' training school, whose curriculum was being revised to include more trade-related subjects; and, of course, in the trade agreements program, which had already produced such outstanding results. Messersmith asked for support in order to continue these efforts, to "make it more than ever your State Department."[36]

Business responded in kind. In late December Messersmith received a delegation from the NFTC led by organization president Eugene T. Thomas. They were "still under the excellent impression" created by his speech, which, they said, had "opened the eyes of a lot of people present to . . . what State was doing for them," and, conversely, to what the attachés were not. They said they were now aware of the confusion flowing from the present arrangement, and wished to go on record as favoring "further consolidation." Messersmith considered this "very significant," as the Council "until recently has been rather strongly supporting Commerce."[37]

This shift in support had, however, yet to make itself felt on Capitol Hill. Nineteen thirty-seven was drawing to a close without action on Roosevelt's reorganization bill. Its prospects in 1938 looked no better. Democrats who had split with the administration over court-packing were ready to lead the fight against reorganization, which was being depicted as another presidential power grab. At best, mutilation by amendment was probable. Roper was mobilizing his attachés and the Business Advisory Council in the fight for S. 988 and an impregnable commercial service.[38]

Still lacking confidence in his ability to influence the legislative process without White House support but needing to do something, Messersmith proposed an administrative stopgap. He suggested reviving the 1933 coordination agreement, which was practically void, but theoetically still in effect. The attachés might thus be

brought to heel while their fate was up in the air. Messersmith had always believed that "lack of direction and initiative by our own officers" was responsible for coordination's breakdown in the first place. He now took the initiative to provide the direction, in the form of a thirty page circular instruction he would distribute to American mission chiefs. It outlined the rules and principles that were supposed to be governing the attaches' conduct, called attention to practices in violation of those rules, and encouraged American diplomats to impose discipline.[39]

It was a bureaucratic declaration of war, a transparent attempt to steal a march on Congress with a dead letter. Hull refused to authorize its distribution until Messersmith had Roosevelt's approval. He tried, but did not get it. When they met at the White House on the afternoon of 1 February Roosevelt was his most agreeable self, except with respect to the purpose of the call. The reorganization bill, Roosevelt said, was at a critical stage; the State Department should not interfere.[40]

Messersmith collected himself--he was never at his best in Roosevelt's presence--and appealed in writing on the tenth. It was essential, he argued, "in these difficult and increasingly critical times that our establishments abroad should operate with the greatest effectiveness until your reorganization plan can bear fruit." Messersmith promised that the memorandum would cause Roosevelt no grief with his cabinet; no department, he maintained innocently, could

possibly object to a directive that "does not in any way change accepted and existing practice" but merely "clarifies the practice and brings it to the attention of the chiefs of mission."[41]

Roosevelt was not deceived. In late March Messersmith gave up and filed his memorandum away. Then came another setback. Reorganization had squeaked through the Senate, but House opposition could not be overcome. Congressmen who wished to restrict executive authority, protect pet bureaus, or inflict a defeat upon the president united against it. On 8 April the House voted it down, 204-196.[42]

For Messersmith it was a "disappointment" he could not safely linger upon. While the fight for reorganization was heating up, S. 988 had quietly passed the Senate and gone on to the House commerce committee. One exchange between Representative James Wadsworth Jr. of New York and Dr. Alexander V. Dye, director of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, bespoke the mood of the House hearing.

> Rep. Wadsworth: Did you notice any profound reduction in our foreign commerce as a result of the [commercial service's 1933 budget] reduction?
>
> Dr. Dye: There was a profound change; but it would only be fair to say that there was a great depression at the time, which also reduced our commerce very much.

When this inquisition was over, the committee voted unanimously to report the bill intact to the House floor.[43]

In a memorandum to Welles marked "Urgent," Messersmith recommended that Roosevelt's support be sought in order to head off the bill. If anything, the House version was worse than Copeland's for it expanded the commercial service's scope to embrace "economic" as well as "commercial and industrial" matters. Messersmith considered this "a direct invitation . . . to engage in political reporting." In almost every particular--pensions, promotions, salary, allowances--the bill would place the attaches on par with State Department officers and "perpetuate the present divided responsibility in certain aspects of our foreign relations."[44]

With House action imminent, Messersmith maneuvered for time. He asked Representative James McReynolds, chairman of the foreign affairs committee, to move for the return of S. 988 to the commerce committee, on the grounds that "it directly affects foreign policy and had not been brought to the attention of the State Department for possible amendments."[45]

Meanwhile Messersmith sought to persuade Roper to abandon his claim to "economic reporting." They met on 22 April, Messersmith arguing that "the line of demarcation between economic and political reporting was a very narrow one." Roper professed to see the light and pledged to amend the bill accordingly.[46]

Messersmith was also contemplating a rather more sweeping amendment to S. 988, one authorizing Roosevelt to consolidate the foreign services by executive order, accomplishing exactly what

he had promised to do under the abortive reorganization bill. Welles, who had dropped off Messersmith's "Urgent" memorandum at the White House a few days earlier, returned on the twenty-sxth. Roosevelt apparently liked the idea of amending Copeland to death. After a 13 May cabinet meeting he took Hull and Roper aside and told them that "in view of the general situation and what we have to face," consolidation "should not await the reorganization bill," which he intended to modify and resubmit to the next Congress.[47]

With the president's go-ahead, Messersmith hit Capitol Hill. Meetings with Pittman and McReynolds on 28 April produced a plan of action. They would move for the return of S. 988 to allow "amendments being considered by the president" to be heard. They agreed not to divulge the nature of the amendments until Hull met with Roper to try to arrange his cooperation.[48]

No sooner was it formulated than the plan fell apart. Far from cooperating, Roper threatened to resign if the president proceeded, and hinted as much to the press. On 14 May White House press secretary Stephen Early was obliged to issue a statement pooh-poohing a Hull-Roper feud. Roper followed with a terse public denial of his own: because "no conclusion has been reached" as to the disposition of the foreign commercial service, "no resignation is pending." In Congress the attaches' stalwarts vowed to fight any motion to recommit. Pittman and McReynolds declined the challenge.[49]

Messersmith quickly came up with another alternative. If his consolidation amendment were attached to Moses Linthicum rather than to S. 988, it would fall to the more tractable foreign relations committees. But it was late in the session, and Roosevelt, smarting from his recent defeats, had had his fill of legislative combat. He returned from a long Memorial Day weekend at Hyde Park having decided to pacify Roper and to let S. 988 run its course.[50]

House passage was now a foregone conclusion. The bill came up on 6 June, and a half dozen congressmen rose to rhapsodize over the attaches. B. Carroll Reece of Tennessee declared grandiloquently that "no group of employees has done so much toward extending the scope of American commerce abroad," and urged that the commercial service be "enlarged and extended." Luther Johnson of Texas attacked critics of a bill that "merely gives to the [attaches] the same rights and privileges that are given to men in the State Department who do exactly the same work . . ." Robert Crosser of Ohio lamented that there were only eighty nine commercial attaches in the field at present, "a very small number and I think it should be greater. Considering the valuable service they perform, I think it would be well to increase the personnel substantially." The bill carried by voice vote.[51]

Messersmith's last hope was Roosevelt's veto. Certainly, he wrote Hull and Welles on 9 June, a veto was in order. Roper had reneged on his promise to remove the "economic reporting" clause. The bill's salary and promotion schedules turned out to be even more

attractive than State's, which "is from every point of view highly objectionable and dangerous to morale . . . unjust and obnoxious." To make a veto palatable, he shrewdly suggested that Roosevelt cite the certain insolvency of the bill's pension plan. Instead of taking sides in the Hull-Roper feud, the president could pose as defender of the attaches' fringe benefits.[52]

Welles went to the White House that morning, and returned with Roosevelt's agreement to kill the bill. Messersmith's draft veto message expressed the president's "hearty accord with legislation tending to bring all Government service to a common basis," but also his determination that "the whole subject of coordinating the work of several departments and agencies of the Government which relates to foreign service . . . be acted on comprehensively at the next session of Congress." Moreover, the "retirement system provided . . . will not provide a fund adequate to meet eventual requirements," and was "not therefore in the interests of the public or the personnel concerned." Roosevelt sent the message to the Senate on 10 June, as the 75th Congress was adjourning.[53]

Messersmith was vastly relieved. Roosevelt was apparently "firm in his determination" for consolidation, which Messersmith saw happening "early next session."[54]

He was too optimistic. Roosevelt still needed convincing that the State Department merited his patronage and exclusive charge of the nation's foreign relations. "The Messersmith Reorganization"

--so named by his friend Graham H. Stuart, Stanford political scientist, in his The Department of State (1949)--aimed to do just that. By the end of 1938 two new divisions had been established. Cultural relations, charged with stimulating international intellectual contacts, was targeted at Latin America. Welles conceived it as an instrument of Pan Americanism, Messersmith as a counter to Nazi cultural infiltration. With a first year's budget of only $28,000, it was able to do little of either, serving primarily as a clearinghouse for private activities. The division of international communications was supposed to deal with the intergovernmental ramifications of commercial aviation, telecommunications, and shipping. Other minor shifts in personnel and responsibility were phased in throughout 1938. When all was done, Messersmith felt that State was "functioning better than it has in all my years of service."[55]

Whether or not Roosevelt noticed the improvement, another Messersmith undertaking assuredly pleased him. A project he had begun during sleepy days at Fort Erie came to fruition. A series of executive orders beginning 14 July 1938 promulgated a revised and unified version of the Department's Instructions to Diplomatic Officers and Consular Regulations. The new Foreign Service Regulations of the United States brought no momentous changes in procedure; but it did take the Service a step closer to the ideal envisioned by the reformers of 1924 and 1931.[56]

Regulations could be consolidated and the organizational chart redrawn, but Messersmith knew that the caliber of the Department's personnel was all important. He was"not afraid to be ruthless in the matter of incompetents," and there is evidence of a mini-purge during his nineteen months as chairman of the personnel board. That the few bad apples could be isolated and removed was for Messersmith proof of the soundness of the Department's personnel machinery, which, as he assured Roosevelt during their 1 February meeting, had produced what was "generally regarded as the best foreign service in the world." The merit system was operating unimpaired, with predictable results. "We have today," he wrote in January 1938,

> the most democratic form of selection we could possibly have for the Foreign Service. Any young man in this country can enter . . . if he can pass the examinations. There is absolutely no politics in the matter and no preference. We have no fixed requirements in the way of previous scholastic training or other experience . . . It means that the best young men from every part of our country can come up for this written examination and if they pass it they come up for the oral, [with which] we can test their resourcefulness, judgment and general adaptability for the Service. We are getting through this method . . . the very cream of the young men of the country.[57]

Statistics bore him out. The Service was attracting more, better educated men than ever before. The 1936 written had drawn 725 candidates representing every state in the union, the biggest turnout in the Department's history. Nine out of ten applicants held undergraduate degrees from no fewer than 242 colleges and universities; more than half had some graduate school under their belts.

The successful candidate in 1936 was less likely to be a northeasterner or an Ivy League graduate than in any previous group. Clearly there was diminishing basis for claims that the Foreign Service was unrepresentative of the American people.[58]

Under Howland Shaw's daily direction and Messersmith's general supervision, the system was fine tuned and the career principle strengthened. The short-answer written exam had given rise to private Washington "cram schools" that charged as much as $300 to drill Foreign Service aspirants in likely questions. The schools could point to the generally greater success of their graduates. Recognizing that the exam as it stood discriminated against those lacking the tuition, the Department, Foreign Service officer Joseph C. Green in charge, had in 1931 begun phasing in changes that allowed for more essays and less memorization. It was a start.[59]

At Messersmith's first examination board meeting (20 September 1937), Green proposed commissioning Princeton professor Carl Bingham, "the best man in the country" in his field, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Department's examinations. Bingham's report, approved in February 1939, called for changes that, although not drastic, pleased many critics when they were adopted. The revised written stressed mathematical reasoning, analytical ability, foreign languages, and, dear to Messersmith, business concepts. To accomodate the new format, the exam period was extended from two to four days. The cram schools stayed in business, but attendance afforded

less certainty of a passing grade.[60]

Bingham also offered recommendations for improving the oral, where critics charged, examiners weeded out candidates who did not fit the Department's social or political mold. Sensitive to these allegations, Messersmith, Shaw, and Green sought to make the oral more "scientific." Bingham's report redefined the personality traits essential to the career, and suggested questions to flesh them out. But the oral remained essentially subjective. Most of Bingham's criteria-- appearance, adaptability, initiative, readiness, earnestness--were not reducible to neat formulae. Differing conceptions of the ideal Foreign Service type colored the examiners' judgment; prejudices inevitably came into play.[61]

The results of the orals Messersmith chaired (January 1938 and 1939) reflected his own preferences. He sought men who were "products of our American life and institutions." He got them. The twenty three who passed the oral in 1938 represented fourteen states and the District of Columbia, and twenty difference colleges. Nine were products of the Ivy League, nine were state university graduates, and five were from other private institutions. The 1939 oral yielded a similar distribution: only one of thirty five successful candidates was a Harvard man. Moreover, business experience became an asset, as evidenced by Shaw's complaint about the "disproportionate representation [of] go-getting American business types" in the class of 1938. Messersmith apparently acquired a strong selling point in his bid for business support.[62]

Economic and commercial subjects predominated in the revised Foreign Service school curriculum. Most of the Department's assignments were consular, and Messersmith insisted that recruits be trained accordingly. He also wanted to prepare them to assume the attaches' functions. Thus, additional class hours were devoted to the intricacies of trade protection and promotion. Neophytes received intensive instruction in shipping procedures and market analysis. Experts from the Commerce and Treasury Departments lectured on New Deal trade philosophy, tariff regulations, and international finance. Nor was political education neglected. Leading behavioral scientists like Harold Lasswell offered insights into national character and conflict resolution. These innovations, according to one scholar, "revitalized" the Foreign Service School. Messersmith's program remained basically unchanged through 1946, when the Foreign Service Institute was born.[63]

Messersmith could have rested on these not inconsiderable laurels. For his own sake he probably should have. From his Washington vantage point he was coming to understand the unhappy inexorability of American foreign policy in his time. Appeasement was going to be played out and isolation taken to the last limit. That was what Americans were demanding and, coincidentally, what the State Department was working to achieve. In helping to cajole the revisionist powers to the conference table while disowning responsibility for the results, American diplomats did the clear majority will. The appeasers here and in England called themselves

realists and, in the sense of what was practically possible, maybe they were. There was nothing sinister or cynical in trying to head off war, nothing dishonorable in their appeals to reason and humanity.

What was Messersmith to do? He might have surrendered to the temptation to do nothing. He was already well overworked without also undertaking a hopeless crusade against specious realism. He had no chance of persuading Welles and Wilson and Dunn and Moffat and the others to give up their efforts to save civilization from war and Bolshevism on the grounds that, in effect, it could not be done. He had no niche in the policy structure from which to advance this inadmissible view, no access to the cable traffic through which policy was transmitted, no authority to interject himself save for a casual mandate from a preoccupied president. The moral consensus on appeasement resisted dissent, and his proved virtually excludable.

Still he tried, for the record and his conscience, to divert American foreign policy off its tragic course. Under such unfavorable circumstances, the wonder was that he managed to influence events as much as he did. Pure persistence and his credibility with Roosevelt and Hull paid off. Indeed, late in 1937 the president was taking the first tentative steps toward collective security. On 6 October in Chicago he made his famous speech calling for a quarantine against "the epidemic of world lawlessness." Isolationist leaders

howled, but there was much favorable comment as well, heartening Messersmith no end. Roosevelt was emboldened to endorse the League's condemnation of Japanese aggression in China, and to accept an invitation to Brussels, where further steps against Japan were to be considered. Roving Ambassador Norman H. Davis, no appeaser, was named to head the delegation. In December Americans rallied impressively around the flag in anger over the sinking of the U.S. gunboat Panay by Japanese warplanes over the Yangtze river. Fascist aggression had hit home, and Washington delivered itself of the toughest talk yet.[64]

But the president's initiative faltered and public outrage died down, as would happen again and again. When it became clear that Roosevelt had no magic formula for stopping aggression by means short of force, enthusiasm for quarantines waned. Japan tendered profuse apologies and reparations for the Panay misfortune, salving American honor. Isolationists concluded that American ships should get out of Chinese waters. And, perhaps most telling, Representative Louis Ludlow's two year crusade for a constitutional amendment requiring a nationwide referendum before Congress could declare war finally gained enough supporters to force debate on its discharge from the House judiciary committee.[65]

The fact was that Roosevelt, however keen his appreciation of the fascist menace, would go little or no further to meet it than public opinion permitted, which was not very far. The presi-

dent's ego also led him astray sometimes. Welles encouraged him to think that the dictators could be assuaged, like Democratic ward bosses, through liberal application of his justly celebrated charm. Personal diplomacy, Messersmith recalled sadly, was "a sort of obsession" with Roosevelt. And there was the president's weakness for novel ideas in foreign as well as domestic policy. After telling reporters that his quarantine speech signalled a fresh search for "some way to peace," he was particularly receptive to the imaginative Welles, who brought in a proposal for a world conference "to secure general international agreement as to the fundamental norms of internaional conduct." Welles predicted that Germany and Italy, though probably not Japan, would subscribe to an agreement guaranteeing them access to raw materials. Concessions by the West, he concluded, would be necessary.[66]

On 11 October Messersmith handed Hull a long rebuttal, his first full analysis of the international situation since his return to Washington. He warned against the assumptions implicit in Welles' scheme in particular and appeasement in general. The world crisis involved a "basic clash of ideologies" that, in his opinion, no conference could resolve. The "three lawless states," he declared, stood for "the doctrine of force and of might and [of] an entirely different international morality . . . directly opposed to our concepts, basic ideals, and principles of action." He outlined a gigantic scheme of world conquest orchestrated by the Hitler regime, which

"is the main spring of the movement and the real power behind it."

> The maneuvers now in progress in the Far East, in Spain, and in the Mediterranean . . . are only steps along a long road which the dictators have fairly well surveyed and laid out . . . [Their] final aim . . . is the disintegration of the British Empire, the consequent weakening of England in Europe and the opening of the way to attack on the United States . . . the richest and strongest country in the world . . . It is really against the United States and England that the program is directed, for we are considered the only worthy antagonists and we have what they want.

The threat to the Americas, he insisted, was real and growing. This was no "idle supposition," but a fact drawn from "first-hand conversation with major leaders of the German Government, who . . . have made no secret of their intentions." "Hitler's own words" and the upsurge of Nazi espionage and sedition throughout the hemisphere left "no logical escape from the conclusion that the United States are the ultimate object of attack of the powers grouped in this new system of force and lawlessness." If unlikely to find fertile ground in North America, Goebbels' agents would doubtless fare better in Latin America, where, Messersmith observed, conditions were "already fairly propitious to receive a certain doctrine of force."

Everything then hinged on how long the democracies would go on submitting to blackmail. So far the outlaws had achieved "a success that seems incredible" by arming "themselves to the teeth and brandishing their armaments before the world with the hope that through the threat of force . . . they may gain advantages contrary to inter-

national morality, right and decency." Their diplomacy capitalized on "the fear of war . . . which persists in the democratic states, and understandably so," to gain cheap victories. But if this trend continued, if "truth [kept] being ignored," "if too dangerous compromises continue to be made," "disintegration will proceed inexorably and to the point at which the peace of the world will be definitely endangered and catastrophic war the sole possible outcome."[67]

Hull read it and caught fire. He was never an isolationist. To internationalists like Henry Stimson Hull indignantly denounced the peace-at-any price crowd's campaign, "which he said could not have been better designed to aid the governments of Japan, Italy, and Germany than if they had been employed by those powers." Nazism horrified him. Messersmith's broadside set his courage surging. He stormed off to the White House with the memorandum under his arm, and before the president denounced the Welles project as "illogical and impossible." The three bandit states, he argued, would "laugh" at the idea; "it would be fatal to lull the democracies into a feeling of tranquility through a peace congress at the very moment when their utmost efforts should actually be directed toward arming themselves for self-defense." Hull's unaccustomed vehemence apparently persuaded Roosevelt to back off the scheme, which he had probably not taken very seriously anyway. To justify his decision to those disappointed by it, he ordered Messersmith's critique circulated

anonymously in the State Department. Roosevelt's thinking was that the piece "would have more effect and value if it did not appear to come from me [Messersmith], as there were so many who thought of me . . . as a warmonger and an alarmist." The memorandum was attributed to "a particularly well-informed observer." But the prose and the gist of the piece identified him as unmistakably as if his name were in lights on every page. Welles appealed, but the president had made up his mind--for now.[68]

A fleeting flush of optimism thus closed out Messersmith's 1937. Brussels produced no agreement on anti-Japanese sanctions, but it seemed significant that the United States had been present at all. Anglo-American relations were warming up under the new Chamberlain government. Reciprocal trade talks were moving briskly ahead. Britain was rearming in earnest. "What I am hoping," Messersmith wrote a friend in December, "is that England and we can work out some common action and put up a stiff front, for I believe that that is still sufficient to save us."[69]

He even managed some enthusiasm for Roosevelt's choice to succeed Dodd in Berlin, concealing his disappointment at not getting the post himself and his real reservations about the appointee, his colleague Hugh Wilson. In a letter to Raymond Geist, the one person to whom he always found time to write these busy days, Messersmith accentuated the positive. The Wilson appointment, he wrote bravely, "is a very good one and in many respects I could not con-

ceive of a better one . . . That a career man should be sent to Berlin is, I think, a great achievement," and not only for the career. Sending Roosevelt's friend Davies as originally planned would have sent the wrong message to Berlin. As for Wilson, he was in Messersmith's opinion "a particularly well informed person . . . highly intelligent and considered." Under the circumstances, Messersmith decided, "in some ways it may be better that he should go than I. He will arouse less antagonism and, if he does not know the situation as well as I do, this may be counterbalanced by other factors." He could think of none offhand.[70]

But the isolationist resurgence soon belied the talk about Americans being ready to face international responsibility. "Our hands are tied," Messersmith wrote despairingly in February, by a "hysterical desire for peace" which was "encouraging the gangsters." The limits of his influence at the State Department became clear. Despite Hull's concern about the drift of American policy, he was surrounded by "realists." Dunn, regarded by liberals as "one of the most politically unenlightened men in the State Department," became Hull's "surrogate son," his "closest friend and most trusted adviser." The preoccupied Messersmith could not compete against Hull's diffidence on issues unrelated to his trade program. The peace congress controversy of Ocotber showed that Hull was responsive to moral suasion and opportunities to undercut his bete noire Welles, but Messersmith could scarcely count of him to present the

case against appeasement, either to his opposite-minded advisers or to Roosevelt, with regularity or conviction.[71]

When Messersmith's vigilence slackened, the realists had the field to themselves. He was doing oral exams full time on 10 January when Welles, apparently inspired by William Bullitt, returned to the White House to resuscitate the plan that Messersmith and Hull had helped shoot down. Roosevelt now agreed to sponsor another world congress, this time with small nations drawing up codes of international conduct, which would be submitted to all nations for ratification. The idea, Welles explained, was to "lend support and impetus" to British and French efforts to arrive at "a practical understanding" with Germany and Italy "both on colonies and upon security." With Hitler and Mussolini coopted, Welles reasoned, their support for Japan "will be very greatly weakened--at least to an extent sufficient to oblige Japan to make peace with China upon terms non inconsistent with the principles of the Nine Power Treaty" guaranteeing China's territorial integrity.[72]

This time Britain scotched Welles' plan. The Chamberlain government was pursuing a more direct line of appeasement. In November Lord Halifax, Lord President of the Council, had visited Berchtesgaden. He gave Hitler the welcome news that Britain was prepared to consider "possible alterations in the European order"--particularly regarding Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia--in order to preserve peace. Chamberlain regarded the visit as "a great success"

that had paved the way for the comprehensive settlement. To that end, he wrote Roosevelt on 14 January, Britain was ready also to recognize the conquest of Ethiopia if the Italians gave "evidence of their desire to contribute to the restoration of confidence and friendly relations." The prime minister hoped that the president would "consider holding his hand for a short while" on the congress scheme and await the results of his talks with the Axis. Of course Roosevelt agreed.[73]

British policy, Alan Bullock observes, "amounted to an invitation to diplomatic blackmail which Hitler was not slow to exploit." Convinced that Britain and France would not fight, if indeed he ever doubted it, Hitler now resolved to have the Anschluss. On 12 February 1938 Schuschnigg came to Berchtesgaden to discuss problems arising under the July 1936 treaty. Instead he was subjected to one of Hitler's most memorable tirades. Austria must lift all bans on Nazi activity, parole all imprisoned Nazis, and appoint the Nazi Arthur Seyss-Inquart minister of the interior (with control over the police) or, he strongly implied, German troops would march. Schuschnigg was browbeaten into submission. By the sixteenth, Austria had complied with German terms. London and Paris, assuming the crisis was over, congratulated Schuschnigg for his good sense.[74]

It was really the beginning of Austria's last chapter, as Messersmith recognized. When by the eighteenth he had not been asked to comment on a situation he knew as well as any American, he volun-

teered his depressing thoughts in a long memorandum to Hull and Welles. There was now no hope for Schuschnigg. If he resisted--Messersmith believed he would--he was "likely to meet the same fate as Dollfuss." "Rapid absorption" of Austria into the Reich would follow. The July 1936 agreement had been ruthlessly and unilaterially abrogated, which ought to "convince a certain group in England which has been fostering such agreements, how utterly futile and fatal is any idea . . . that they can make lasting and binding agreements with Germany under present conditions." Yet, incredibly, it seemed that "English policy is more than ever oriented toward such agreements." The next would surely involve Czechoslovakia. Messersmith doubted whether Czech president Eduard Benes could "hold on . . . for more than four or five months" without Western support. The annexation of the two Danubian states would give Germany much of the "raw materials and agricultural products which now make it impossible for her to make war." And, he repeated, the gangster states intended to take that war to the western hemisphere, where they had "definite objectives."[75]

His Austrian scenario developed in due course. By the end of February Nazi subversion had become intolerable; and Schuschnigg, in a last attempt to save his country, adopted a desperate expedient. Seeking finally to disprove Hitler's contention that a majority of Austrians favored Anschluss, he called a plebiscite for 13 March, the queston being whether Austria should remain "free and

and independent, German and Christian." A furious Hitler began to mobilize. Seeking suitable pretext, he pressed a series of impossible demands upon Vienna. President Miklas finally capitulated, but it was too late. At daybreak, Saturday 12 March, the German Eighth Army crossed the border. After lunch came Hitler himself. Himmler had arrived in Vienna the night before to supervise the arrests, including Schuschnigg's. On 13 March Austria was declared a province of the Reich. Britain and France filed perfunctory protests. The Anschluss was history.[76]

Messersmith mourned, for the Austria that had been home and for the Austrians he had called friends, the poor people who now faced the unspeakable horrors of German occupation. The hounding of Jews and leftists, the murders and suicides, the systematic plundering, were all reminiscent of Germany in the spring of 1933, but worse; after all, Messersmith wrote bitterly to John F. Montgomery in Budapest, the Nazis "have made great progress in the meantime . . . in the refinement of cruelty." For his part, Montgomery was "very happy that you and Mrs. Messersmith were not in Vienna when all this took place. I think having passed through it in Berlin must be enough to last you a lifetime, and that it would be incredible to have to endure it twice." Messersmith was better off not having to watch his friends suffer and Austria being looted bare. The Germans' first order of business was to move Austrian bullion reserves to Berlin. Austrian civil servants were expelled; German

bureaucrats took over the government. "Has there ever been," Messersmith cried, "the rape of a country more complete? For years, Austria has been struggling . . . to build up her economic situation and now her people are to be impoverished."[77]

The Anschluss created all sorts of problems at the State Department. American minister John C. Wiley was accredited to a government that no longer existed. The status of his legation had to be decided. So too the status of Austrian passports, Austrian visa quotas, Austrian accounts in American banks, and Austrian bonds, $25 million worth, in American hands.[78]

Now that the problems were procedural, they were handed to Messersmith. He put them off for a time, torn, as Moffat noted, between a conviction "that we should not recognize the new situation" and the appreciation "that there are many steps which must be taken as a practical matter which will involve a recognition of this change." Practicality prevailed. Wiley's legation became a consulate general reporting through the Berlin embassy. In State Department operations, too, Austria became a German province, her people German citizens, her wealth German property. The Department's demand that Berlin honor Austria's bonded debt was ignored. Messersmith's only consolation was that the Nazis gained no entree into the American market through their new province: on 6 April Roosevelt revoked Austria's most-favored-nation privileges.[79]

Another practical problem involved human lives. Desperate Jews by the hundreds milled about Wiley's establishment day and night in search of visas and escape from Nazi persecution. Reports of their plight moved Welles to propose that Roosevelt call yet another conference. On 22 March invitations went out to thirty three governments to meet in a cooperative effort to aid German and Austrian refugees. Meanwhile Roosevelt assembled an advisory committee comprising leaders of private philanthropic and religious (mostly Jewish) organizations, who were to explore possibilities for resettlement.[80]

The committee's search for refugee havens was quickly complicated by internecine conflicts, particularly between the leading Jewish groups. The American Jewish Committee--old, elitist, given to private persuasion--was locked in a long feud with the more militant American Jewish Congress, organizer of the 1933 anti-German boycott, which drew its strength from the rank-and-file of American Jewry. By mid April their squabbling had reached the boiling point; and Messersmith, apparently the Department official on best terms with both sides, was dispatched to New York on a peace-making mission.[81]

He went reluctantly. The refugee problem was the only one from which he ever shrank. His logic was hardheaded and hardhearted. He had already decided that the unfortunates trapped in the vise of Nazi barbarism could not be saved, not without jeopardizing human

rights everywhere. He could never divorce the refugee problem from its source. He just knew that the Germans intended "to use the refugee problem as a lever to get us to enter into trade talks" or otherwise assist them economically, to enhance their ability to make war. Bargaining with Hitler over refugees was as futile and as dangerous as over tariffs. Blackmail would be rewarded. Already the Poles were intimating that any opportunity given Germany to get rid of her Jews ought to be extended to themselves. Humanitarianism was encouraging brutality.[82]

And, assuming Hitler delivered up his hostages, who would take them? Certainly not the United States. By now Messersmith viewed the Jews of Greater Germany less as innocent victims than as unwitting agents of Nazi subversion with the potential to disrupt social harmony and economic recovery in America. Their plight had already sparked calls for liberalization of American immigration law, a movement Messersmith almost singlehandedly squelched. In New York he gravely tolk Jewish leaders that the "temper of Congress" was such that "if the issue of revision came up," the laws would be tightened rather than relaxed. He worried out loud about a nativist backlash with unhappy consequences for American Jews. They agreed that times were unpropitious for revision. Messersmith reported this decision back to the six Jewish congressmen with whom he met on 17 April.[83]

His assessment of the public mood was probably on the mark. Fortune's July poll showed that sixty eight per cent of Americans favored retention of the present quotas. Previous attempts at liberalization had in fact elicited more restrictive measures. But he seems to have been as unnerved by the possiblity that liberalization would succeed as fail. He feared an avalanche of people he wished to keep out. Their attitude irritated him. Every day, he wrote Wiley, brought "rude shocks" in the form of "some of the most extraordinary letters from professors and others who seem to be very resentful that we are not giving them on a golden platter a position which native-born Americans would be glad to get at the end of a long and hard fought career." Other visa-seekers had the gall to write him criticizing American immigration policy and to dilate on "how we ought to run things here." Fortunately, as far as he was concerned, the present regulations would serve to exclude most of these ingrates. Messersmith was "glad to say that this country still belongs to the native-born American," and expressed the hope "that the ideals of our native-born may continue to control."[84]

The world refugee conference, which opened in July at the French resort town Evian-les-Bains, showcased world restrictionism and, as Messersmith had feared, undermined Germany's moral isolation. Hitler scored a major propaganda victory when the conference broke up after nine days of speeches explaining why no nation present except Holland and Denmark could accept more Jews. The Nazi press had

a field day; Evian, one paper crowed, served to "justify Germany's policy against Jewry." Evian's single positive accomplishment, the formation of an Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGC), caused Messersmith further distress, for its mission was to engage Berlin in negotiations. He would "have counselled against its formation," but his counsel, again, had not been solicited. The IGC, under the direction of George Rublee, an American international lawyer, proceeded with Roosevelt's blessings to try establishing contact with the Germans.[85]

This latest invitation to extortion evoked no immediate response from Berlin. Hitler had bigger fish to fry in mid 1938. Austria had hardly been digested when plans to crush Czechoslovakia were set in motion. In April the Czech Nazi leader, Konrad Henlein, demanded autonomy for the Sudetenland, home of the German minority. Hitler planned to march when Benes refused, as he was sure to do. The West's devotion to appeasement, however, surprised even the Fuehrer. France had a military pact with the Czechs, but also a new government headed by Edouard Daladier, who would do anything to avoid war. As Halifax had made explicit, Britain was perfectly prepared to sacrifice Czechoslovakia in order to obtain a comprehensive European settlement. Thus London and Paris urged Benes to give way, suggesting strongly that they would not fight to save a government that denied "justice" to its German minority.[86]

After a long, tense summer of negotiations, Benes accepted most of Henlein's demands. In response the Nazis staged riots in

the Sudetenland, using their suppression as an excuse to break off talks. In a 12 September speech Hitler vowed to stop the "annihilation" of the German minority. The next day Messersmith sat down with Hull and Moffat to plan for the European war that now seemed certain.[87]

The preparations proved premature. In conferences with Hitler at Berchtesgaden Chamberlain proposed that Germany occupy the Sudetenland gradually. Mussolini, whose grandiose vision of general war bore no relation to his ability to fight one, urged Hitler to accept. France promised to compell Czech acquiescence.[88]

At the State Department Messersmith for the first time took part in discussions over how the United States might assist the cause of peace. In that context, his apparent contribution, that Washington issue a "definite threat . . . that we could not be indifferent if the Germans provoked hostilities" was, as Moffat wrote impatiently, "obviously out of the question." Instead, Moffat and the likeminded assistant secretary Adolf A. Berle, who had replaced Hugh Wilson in February, drafted a general appeal for peace, which went out to the German, English, French, and Czech heads of state over Roosevelt's signature a little after 1 AM on 26 September. At 10 o'clock that evening Messersmith phoned the president with his translation of the Fuehrer's reponse. It was the usual litany of wrongs inflicted upon the Sudeten Germans, Hitler blaming the Czechs in advance should hostilities ensue. Messersmith did not fail to add his criticism of the adminsitration's whole approach, which, as he

told Roosevelt,

> was quite useless and only created a wrong understanding of our position and . . . did not help things at all. I realized the good intentions which the President had had, but [Hitler and Mussolini] were not men . . . with whom one could deal in the manner the President had intended.[89]

Immediate developments suggested otherwise. On 28 September Hitler invited Chamberlain, Daladier, and Mussolini to Munich. Yet of all the considerations that led Hitler to accept negotiations, Roosevelt's pleas were probably least significant. The Fuehrer was much more impressed by the partial mobilization of Britain and France; by the arguments of his generals, to which Goebbels and Goering also subscribed, warning of German vulnerability in the west; by the evident apathy of the German people; and by Mussolini, to whom Hitler was eternally grateful for his having acquiesced in the Anschluss. In the end the Fuehrer fell back on the tactics that had served him so well since 1933. He took the Sudetenland as a gift, his concession to peace. The rest of Czechoslovakia would come when the time was ripe.[90]

News of the Munich conference "was greeted abroad much as was the armistice of 1918," Berle wrote in his diary. "The 'break'!," he exulted. "Thank God." The next morning, the day of the conference, Messersmith set forth rather different sentiments in another unsolicited memorandum to Hull. "Needless to say," he forced from himself, "I shared the general relief upon hearing the news [that] . . . hostilities was [sic] to be avoided by . . . the meeting at Munich today." But "optimism and relief" had to be "seriously tempered by

fears" of a "cynical sell-out of principle" that would "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." Munich could only conclude "arrangements to ward off immediate hostilities"; "no four powers can sit down and settle in a few days the general problems which are disturbing the world." Unfortunately permanent peace was "impossible until there is a regime of law and order in Germany," one "which has respect for the rights of others . . . and which is not aimed at world domination." Moreover it was unrealistic "to assume that with the gaining of its now-proclaimed objectives in Czechoslovakia, Germany will be satisfied as far as her territorial objectives are concerned." What remained of the Czech state after Munich would soon go the way of Austria. Nor would it stop there: "the Monroe Doctrine," Messersmith warned again, "is just as much of an irritant to the present German Government as the maintenance of the Czech State."[91]

Nothing that he or anyone else could say could dampen the euphoria over the avoidance of war. Chamberlain, guilty in Messersmith's eyes of "one of the most disastrous things carried through in history by a British statesman," returned from Munich to a hero's welcome. When Winston Churchill rose in the House of Commons to denounce Munich as "a total unmitigated defeat," the catcalls nearly drowned him out. It did not take long, however, for disillusionment to come. German troops poured into the Sudeten occupation zone, crea-

ting an ominous backdrop to new German demands upon Prague. With every bellicose speech, it became clearer that Hitler had no more intention of abiding by Munich than previous agreements. In the United States elation gave way to anger at those who had betrayed the poor Czechs. On 11 October Roosevelt called for a $300 million increase in military spending and received widespread editorial support. Perhaps, Messersmith decided, it had required a debacle like Munich to "shock . . .the public conscience" to the Nazi danger and the bankruptcy of appeasement.[92]

Anti-German feeling burst its bounds with the events of 10 November. At 2 AM the Kristallnacht pogrom began, an orchestrated "spontaneous" reaction to the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a Jewish youth. An American correspondent in Berlin described "a wave of destruction, looting and incendiarism unparalleled in Germany since the Thirty Years War." When the orgy was over, over 200 synagogues had been burned, 800 shops destroyed, 7500 plundered, and more than 20,000 Jews arrested.

World response showed that repeated outrages had not entirely dulled its conscience. The American press rose in condemnation. Protest rallies in most large American cities produced piles of petitions demanding retaliation.[93]

It was Messersmith's big chance. On 14 November he drew up a long memorandum urging Hull to "consider recommending strongly to the President that Ambassador Wilson be ordered home immediately

'for consultation' . . . " All the lies from Berlin did not change the fact

> that the wholesale arrests, plundering, pillaging and terrorizing of innocent men and women throughout Germany in the last days were [sic] due to the orders of the German Government . . . Of all the many acts of the present German Government against innocent and defenseless people, these last are the culmination . . . irresponsible and mad acts that our government cannot pass unnoticed.
>
> We have throughout our history let it be known where we stand on matters of principle and the decencies . . . Whenever such acts in the past have been committed, or permitted by Governments . . . we have spoken and acted . . . When a country which vaunts its civilization as superior commits in cold blood . . . acts worse than those we have in the past dealt with vigorously, the time has come . . . for us to take action beyond mere condemnation.

Recalling Wilson was sure to meet with "general and enthusiastic approval throughout the country." The American people were "waiting for something of this kind"; if the administration disppointed them, it ran "the grave risk of losing the leadership of opinion . . . at a time when this leadership is all important in our most vital interests."

A recall, he promised, would have an "excellent" effect on Germany.

> It will give heart to the right-thinking people there who are in the majority, if impotent. It will give the German Government food for thought. It will not stop action against Jews and Catholics, but it will stem the orgy.

Nor would American interests in Germany suffer with Wilson gone.

> We shall be just as well off with the remaining representation there, which can amply take care of all of our problems so far as it is possible to care for them . . . It can have no appreciable effect on our commercial relations, for Germany is only

> buying from us what she has to buy and will continue to do so.

Britain and France might take a cue from the American example to stand firm in their own dealings with Germany. As for Wilson, he could be "kept in the Department usefully until such time as the President and you [Hull] may believe it desirable for him to return to Berlin."[94]

Some of Messersmith's reasons for wanting Wilson withdrawn he kept to himself. He would have recommended the recall regardless of who the American ambassador was, but the fact that it was Wilson was sweet incentive. The furor over Kristallnacht was not only an opportunity to show Germany and the world that, as Messersmith put it, "there is going to be no Munich for us," but also to remove--he hoped permanently--an envoy who was working toward one.[95]

The two had had words just before Wilson departed for his new post in January 1938. Wilson promised to play up the good side of Nazi Germany; Messersmith told him there was no such thing. Messersmith concluded that Wilson "misunderstands Nazi psychology," but trusted this would change with a few months on the scene. Wilson, he wrote Raymond Geist of his new chief, "is a good man"; he would soon "see things in their right perspective."[96]

Wilson's perspective did not change. The independently wealthy ambassador quickly irked him with insistent complaints about the inadequacy of his $3000 a year housing allowance. "If it costs him more to get a house," Messersmith wrote testily to Geist, "he will

just be in the same boat that a good many of us have been in for a long time." More worrisome was the implication that Wilson intended to lead an active social life, as though German-American relations were perfectly normal. Messersmith appreciated that an ambassador "must do the right thing and establish contacts," but for American diplomats in Germany "the time for lavish entertaining is over." "I do not believe," he continued acidly, "we should fall all over ourselves being nice" to Nazis "when in a year or so they may force us into a war with them." Wilson should be content with modest accomodations. Messersmith did not share Geist's satisfaction in finding Wilson "a fine large villa" in suburban Gruenewald for only $2000 over the Department's allowance.[97]

By the fall of 1938 all of Messersmith's initial misgivings had been confirmed. He seethed at hearing from Geist about the ambassador's parties, like the October soiree for Goering and an overawed visitor, American aviator Charles A. Lindbergh.[98]

Worse still was Wilson's official attitude. From the first he was inordinately impressed by Hitlerite Germany. Nazism appealed to this ardent anti-Communist. In letters to Hull and Roosevelt Wilson wrote glowingly of the German economic miracle. While the democracies struggled their way out of the depression, "boom conditions" prevailed in the Reich. Nazi pageantry had pacified the working class. At his first interview with Hitler Wilson expressed pleasure at meeting the "man who has pulled his people from moral and economic despair into the state of pride and evident prosperity they now enjoyed."[99]

Convinced that the West should be learning from Germany rather than fighting her, Wilson did everything in his power to make appeasement work. He sympathized with German claims on the Sudetenland, a question he regarded as having "two sides . . . and not only the Czech side." In May he suggested to Washington that Carr should more emphatically press the necessary concessions upon Benes. In June he assured Hitler's new foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, that he would spare no effort to prevent American entry into any European war. He denounced the "Jewish controlled press" in America for its "hymn of hatred" against Germany. Munich took a load off his mind; the agreement, he wrote in relief, had opened the way to "a better Europe."[100]

Moreover, and almost as disturbing to Messersmith, Wilson industriously assisted George Rublee in enticing Berlin into refugee negotiations. Wilson's motives were clear enough: a solution to the "Jewish problem," he told Walther Funk, Hitler's latest economics minister, would serve to "banish the hatred in which Germany was held abroad" and remove what Wilson considered the main obstacle to harmonious German-American relations. He got no immediate response. But Messersmith had every reason to fear that Wilson's fawning would pay off.[101]

By November Messersmith was fed up. He vented his spleen in a letter to Raymond Geist, dated the seventh. After four years of Dodd's ill-tempered idiosyncracies, Geist and other embassy staffers

had taken fast to their charming new chief. Wilson and his wife, he wrote Messersmith, treated him "almost as a member of the family," and the ambassador recommended Geist for promotion to first secretary. Although Geist reassured Messersmith that he had "not changed my attitude an iota" about Nazism, he confessed that Wilson's friendships in Nazi officialdom made his protection work easier. He also wished the refugee negotiations success, though more for humanitarian than political reasons.[102]

Knowing Geist's feelings, it was insensitive for Messersmith to put him in the middle. As an afterthought, he asked Geist to "Destroy this Letter." He appreciated its sensitivity. His words were measured, but his exasperation was clear. "It pains me a great deal to say that I have been a good deal disappointed with the Ambassador's attitude. He seems to be quite condoning all that Germany has done . . ." Wilson was not the only American envoy in Europe whitewashing Hitler; Joseph P. Kennedy, the financier and former Securities and Exchange Commission chairman who had replaced the deceased Robert Bingham in London, was also making himself obnoxious to Messersmith by promoting a Nazi peace. The difference was that Wilson was "a career man, and we should be able to depend upon him for the definite presentation of our point of view, and we cannot expect from him the vagaries of a free-lance like Kennedy . . ." Wilson <u>was</u> presenting the Department's view--too openly and enthusiastically for Messersmith to endure.[103]

All this is background to his Kristallnacht memorandum to Hull. The secretary responded with unusual celerity, conferring with his top advisers that morning. No minute of the meeting has been found, but Hull's memoirs suggest a split decision to recommend Wilson's recall to Roosevelt. It was argued that the ambassador was needed in Berlin "to keep in close contact with the aims and acts of the German Government and to give weight to any representations we needed to make." More to the point, a Wilson recall would be a setback in the "realists'" campaign for negotiations. But public outrage over Kristallnacht needed to be stilled; and opponents of the recall probably calculated that Wilson could be returned to Berlin when the excitement died down. That afternoon, therefore, Hull saw Roosevelt, who signed the order summoning him home. The next day, 15 November, the president announced the move to the press. To the bland statement prepared for the occasion by the State Department, Roosevelt added that he "could scarcely believe that such things [i.e., the pogrom] could occur in a twentieth century civilization." Hitler retaliated by recalling Ambassador Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff from Washington. Neither envoy was to return.[104]

It was the pinnacle of Messersmith's influence in Washington, and he revelled in it. Public opinion was beginning to catch up to him. He noted with satisfaction the positive tone of the press, where Wilson was widely criticized for having been "too sympathetic to the Nazis." Anti-Nazi opinion, he assured a Belgian friend, was bound to

grow, so Wilson would not be returning "in anything like the near future." Messersmith would see to that.[105]

Some benefits he anticipated from the recall did not materialize. It did not divert attention from the victims of Kristallnacht. He seems to have hoped that the Rublee mission would collapse with Wilson gone. It did not. Indeed, the recall elicited wide public approval partly because it was not a break in relations and thus did not foreclose refugee and other negotiations with Germany. At his 15 November press conference Roosevelt had emphasized that the work of the IGC was going forward even as the American ambassador was being withdrawn.[106]

In December Rublee's overtures brought a positive response from Berlin. Embarrassed by the open excesses of 10 November, Hitler approved a plan proposed by Schacht, who delivered it to Rublee in London. A hundred and fifty thousand Jewish wage earners would be permitted to leave Germany over a three year period, their dependents to follow. The asking price was 1.5 billion marks--roughly a quarter of the wealth estimated to remain in Jewish hands. That sum was to go into a trust account administered by Berlin, to serve as collateral for foreign loans to finance German exports. Rublee listened in silence and passed Schacht's proposal to Washington.[107]

It was a plan worthy of Messersmith's purest scorn, "the most cynical thing," he wrote Geist, "which could be conceived of, and utterly unacceptable." Sure enough, the Germans were trying to use

the refugees as "pawns" in "breaking down out whole trading program," to bail themselves out of their persistent exchange problems. Hitler expected "the decent countries" not only to take his surplus population off his hands, but also to "pay . . . Germany very liberally for the privilege." Surely Roosevelt would now see that there was "no way to buy off this Government in Berlin except complete abject surrender," and order Rublee to close shop. That would crush some hopes, but Messersmith believed in facing facts. The Jews' suffering would unfortunately continue "no matter what may be done by Jews and others outside" as long as the Nazis remained in power. There was only one solution: "the reestablishment of decent government and . . .decent treatment of people at home."[108]

But Roosevelt and the State Department were ready to negotiate. Although the idea of bartering "human misery for increased exports" was revolting to Welles (Hull was attending the Pan American conference in Lima), Rublee was authorized to stay at it. The scene shifted to Berlin, where, on 18 January 1939, agreement was reached. The governments of the Dominican Republic and the Philippines signalled their willingness to admit refugees. Convinced that he had achieved his mission, Rublee relinquished his post to Sir Herbert Emerson, who was to work out the details.[109]

Messersmith remained skeptical, with good cause. The half-hearted participationof non-German Jewish leaders reinforced Emerson's innate lassitude. The immense practical problems of resettle-

ment were compounded by the addition of 350,000 Czech Jews (after March 1939) and 3.3 million Polish Jews (after September 1939) to the refugee pool. The Germans, moreover, were determined to extract the last advantage from their hostages before letting them go. Yet it remains that they wished them gone, resorting to the Final Solution--extermination--only after all possibilities for emigration had been exhausted. By doing nothing to open the doors, by refusing to bend to save lives, Messersmith upheld the worst "native American ideals."[110]

While Rublee was negotiating in Berlin, plans were afoot to send him assistance, in the person of Hugh Wilson. Wilson had given Roosevelt's summons a conveniently literal reading, leaving his wife behind in Berlin to underscore his expectation of returning. His reception in Washington suggested that she would not be without him for long. Welles ordered him to keep abreast of German developments and to hold himself in readiness to return on fast notice. Wilson lived out of his suitcases.[111]

The new year 1939, however, found him restless in Washington, with only his colleagues to console him. The attitude in the Department was that the United States had made its point, that Wilson belonged back in Berlin to restore "ambassadorial authority and emphasis" to German-American relations. He could not have agreed more. Britain and France were both on record as favoring his return, in the interests of "reconciliation." In talks with the British

ambassador, Sir Ronald Lindsay, Welles linked Wilson's disposition to German behavior--which, in early 1939, struck some as decidedly improved. The Schacht-Rublee discussions were making progress. In late December German charge d'affaires Hans Thomsen had informed Welles that Berlin was lifting restrictions that had prevented Americans from collecting the bequests of deceased German relatives, suggesting that Germany might be willing to abandon discrimination in other areas. It seemed unreasonable to prevent Wilson from returning to explore the possibility.[112]

Reasonable or not, Messersmith did his best to keep Wilson home. In memoranda to Hull, Welles, Dunn, and Moffat, he warned against "surface indications" of a German desire "to improve the status of its relationships with this country . . . " It was just another cynical shift in tactics. He cited recent speeches by Goebbels and Goering implying that "only the Jews and the Jewish problem stand in the way" of better bilateral relations, speeches designed to "stir up anti-Semitic feeling in this country," "to make it appear that the Jews are responsible for the attitude of this government." And he established the context of the concession on the transfer of legacies: Welles' threat, issued just prior to Dieckhoff's departure, to seek congressional authorization for retaliatory measures sure to hurt exchange-poor Germany much more than her restrictions had cost Americans.[113]

It was more proof that the "present Government in Germany understands only one language: . . . that of force and direct action." That was why, he wrote Hull and Welles on 15 February 1939, it was "definitely inadvisable" for Wilson to return. It would "be misconstrued . . . as a distinct retreat by the President . . . and widely exploited in Germany." It would be "demoralizing and disorienting" to American opinion, "which has crystallized along such sound lines." If firmness had had some "restraining influence" on Germany and a "heartening influence on other countries" like Czechoslovakia, why change course? Messersmith simply saw no compelling reason to send Wilson back. "Our interests in Berlin are well-provided for" by Geist and the experienced charge, Prentiss Gilbert. "We are not losing anything by the Ambassador not being there," he concluded, quickly adding that "this does not imply anything derogatory to the person of the Ambassador."[114]

His arguments again made little impression. Perhaps Wilson was simply more persuasive. He and Welles went back together to the prewar diplomatic service. Moffat and Dunn and Davis were old friends of his. He apparently bemoaned his wife's plight in Berlin, all by herself. And there was the promise of restored, possibly expanded, communications with Germany if he returned. In any case, by March, the State Department, with Messersmith a lone hold-out, was prepared to recommend to Roosevelt that Wilson be sent back. On 13 March, according to Moffat, his return was "virtually . . . decided upon."[115]

Hitler changed these plans. On 15 March German troops occupied Prague, shattering the Munich accord and the whole pretense of German self-determination. The Department's top officials gathered that afternoon. The plan to return Wilson was "completely abandoned." The debate centered instead on further sanctions against Germany. Messersmith, "his eyes aglow," Moffat grumbled, advocated an immediate break in relations. Norman Davis concurred. But Moffat, Dunn, and Berle advised restraint, and, as usual, they prevailed. On 17 March the United States publicly condemned the German aggression, continued conspicuously to deal with Czech representatives in Washington, and imposed countervailing duties, long sought by Treasury secretary Morgenthau, on subsidized German exports.[116]

It was not quite the rupture Messersmith advocated. But it was the strongest message yet to Berlin. Wilson's status had been resolved to his satisfaction. On 20 March the ambassador called his wife home. Five months later, when Molotov and Ribbentrop signed their pact, the disillusioned Wilson seemed finally resigned to not returning. But hope sprang eternal, or, in Wilson's case, until the undeclared war of 1940-1941.[117]

Messersmith was one of the few not stunned by the Nazi-Soviet pact. It simply confirmed everything he had been saying about the essential alikeness of those two totalitarian states. But he did not blame Stalin, whose repeated overtures west had been inexcusably spurned. He understood that Stalin's exclusion from Munich amounted to an intolerable isolation that he relieved in the only way he could.[117]

In the spring of 1939, in the aftermath of the crime against the Czechs, illusions about the dictators began dropping away. In Washington a more forthright attitude was starting to emerge. Hitler's faits accomplis were responsible, not Messersmith's warnings. The trampling of Munich had dealt appeasement a setback, but its underlying assumptions lived on. Even after September 1939 and the outbreak of the war for which Messersmith had been praying for years, he was kept awake at night by concern that the "realists" would induce Roosevelt to accept Berlin's invitation to mediate. Indeed, as Messersmith departed for a new post in February 1940, Welles' peace mission to Europe was in the works. Rumors a month later that the United States might appoint a new ambassador to Germany--Hugh Wilson volunteered his services to Roosevelt--roused Messersmith to take up his pen again. And once more, German aggression--this time against Denmark and Norway--not Messersmith's objections, killed the scheme.[119]

In 1953, retired from government service and preparing to write his memoirs, Messersmith reviewed the literature that had begun to appear on American diplomacy before World War II. He found to his ineffable delight that he was "really the only one of our diplomats . . . who escaped adverse criticism." In indicting the appeasers, history had vindicated him, one of the few whose hands were clean.[120]

One of the episodes he went on to recall in those memoirs involved his former colleague Moffat. Despite sometimes heated disagreements during their tenure together in Washington, the two officials were friends. Frequently, Messersmith recalled, Moffat stopped by his office in the evening before heading home. The conversation invariably turned to the world crisis. "George," he has Moffat saying at one point, "I wonder whether you know what you are doing. You are helping us to get into this war which is coming on." Messersmith wearily explained that Hitler and democracy could not coexist. "But what a horrible thing [war] is," Moffat is supposed to have responded. "How can we think of it?" When the European fighting began, Moffat was disconsolate and short tempered. "Now, George," he snapped, "you are satisfied."

> I said, "Pierrepont, you are a very just man; you have never said a more unjust thing and I am sure that you realize it." Tears came to his eyes and he begged forgiveness . . . "You have been right all the time [he said] and of course, I knew that you were right. I just could not face it.[121]

Messersmith obviously relished, and possibly embellished, the tale. But he was entitled to gloat--not only because events proved him right and the appeasers wrong, but for what he endured in sticking to his convictions. Frustration was a large part of the physical exhaustion he was increasingly suffering. Messersmith was learning his limits, of energy as well as influence. "For the first time in my life," he confessed to Geist, "I cannot altogether keep pace with what I have to do," despite eighty hour work weeks. The

few diversions he used to allow himself and most personal correspondence went by the board. By the time he got home at night--home was a fine old Georgetown estate--it was usually past 8 PM, and he was too worn out to go out. "Being as fond as I am of my fellow human beings," he wrote a friend, "I miss this very much." Marion missed it more. She compensated by filling the house with guests. Messersmith would join them for late dinner and then retire to the study to review papers in quiet reflection. [122]

This burden was largely self-imposed. But others were shirking their duties as well. Of the Department's top people, Hull was not deeply involved in daily operations, due to his many infirmities. Counselor R. Walton Moore celebrated his eightieth birthday in 1939. Assistant secretary Berle, vaguely charged "with such duties as may be assigned to him by the Secretary of State," was getting few such assignments. Hull and his associates regarded Berle as another Moley, a neophyte on secret mission from the White House, and treated him accordingly. Berle found his official duties "anything but heavy," leaving him ample time for his manifold outside activities. With Hull and Moore frequently incapacitated, a disproportionate burden fell on Welles and Messersmith, who, Moffat observed, wound up "working far harder than they should." [123]

By the summer of 1938 Messersmith was showing the strain. Moffat noted in June that he was "looking desperately tired and if he does not let up soon he will be threatened by a breakdown." Geist admonished him to take care. With this prompting, he and

Marion left in June 1938 for the quiet of her brother's log cabin near Yarmouth on Cape Cod. By mid July he was back to resume the battles against appeasement and for departmental reform.[124]

At least he had the satisfaction of a successful legislative program. The deteriorating European situation, Roosevelt's return to deficit spending, and, very possibly, Messersmith's own efforts to publicize the Department's needs, helped him to secure the first real increase in its appropriation over predepression levels. The Sudeten crisis was raging on 15 September, when he appeared before acting budget director Bell with the Department's requests for fiscal 1940: $20.4 million, up twenty per cent over the current figure. He asked for boosts in virtually every category of expenditure, and for the biggest expansion of Foreign Service personnel--264 new officers and clerks--since 1919. In his statement Messersmith depicted a Department that had husbanded every dollar, instituted every efficiency, met every challenge, and simply needed more if it was to fulfill the "real needs of our Government for the conduct of our foreign relations which perhaps at no time have been more vital to our fundamental interests . . . " He called attention to the "difficult and threatening" developments abroad, and the fact that "it is the budget of the Department which has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of peace so far as any Government agency can have any nfluence on its preservation." Scrimping now was unthinkable. Bell allowed two thirds of the requested increase.[125]

In congressional hearings beginning 12 April 1939, Messersmith reported progress in the problem areas that the appropriations subcommittee had focused upon the year before. Inefficiency at State, he declared, had been eliminated; with his reorganization, the Department's machinery was "perfected." He had promised to clean up the buildings program, and had kept his word. Projects underway in Ciudad Trujillo, Port-au-Prince, Helsinki, and elsewhere were all on schedule and under budget. He took special pride in telling the panel that as of 1 April all permanent representatives of the United States in Berlin were operating out of the refurbished Bluecher Palace. Geist had arranged with the German government for a very favorable rate of exchange, so that the job, budgeted at $200,000, had been completed for under $56,000. It was another example of the Federal government's senior and most frugal department being meticulous with the taxpayers' money. "We are perfectly content to be the Cinderella of our Government," he said in closing remarks. But even Cinderella required sustenance. That was all he was asking for the State Department.[126]

On 18 May McMillan reported the bill. While disallowing some requests, as for a State Department motor pool, his committee let stand increases totalling over $1.3 million. A hundred and twenty new positions were approved. The lawmaker paid "tribute . . . to the character of the administration of this Department," from which, he assured his colleagues, "we are truly 'getting out money's worth.'"

The budget finally passed by both houses and signed by the president amounted to $18.5 million, a twelve per cent increase. Messersmith had a valid claim to more. But the 1940 appropriation sufficed to repair much of the damage wrought by years of austerity. He could depart Washington confident that the State Department had the where-withal for the challenges ahead.[127]

He could also rest assured that Foreign Service officers and their spouses were provided for in retirement. In July 1938, after exhaustive studies, recommendations for changes in the pension plan were put into legislation. H.R. 3655, amending Moses Linthicum, was not one of the glamor issues before the 76th Congress; it passed without ceremony in April 1939. Buried within it, however, in section three, were provisions so favorable to the Service that in explaining it to the field, according to Moffat, Messersmith had "to understate the advantages to prevent an attack in the Senate." Knowingly or not, the legislators had committed the government to picking up the deficits in the Department's fund, while expanding benefits--to include widows, for example--and holding the mandatory contribution to five per cent of salary.[128]

But cooption of the attaches was most on Messersmith's mind. During the summer of 1938 he prepared for battle with Daniel Roper. Messersmith discovered why the commercial service had never published a biographical register like the State Department's when he compiled one himself. With an average 3.4 years of business experience--mostly clerical--the attaches looked pretty bad by comparison. Their quali-

fications, it seemed, were primarily political. In a memorandum to Hull Messersmith concluded "that practically all appointments and transfers in the Foreign Commercial Service are dictated by certain political personages." He presented his findings to business leaders in a bid for support. He worked to assuage the attaches' concern for their jobs with the promise of prestige and opportunity in the unified Foreign Service.[129]

On 7 September he handed Hull a seventy-five page plan for consolidation, with a proposed amendment to Moses Linthicum to put it across. It would take in the agricultural attaches as well. Commerce and Agriculture would gain representation on the Foreign Service boards of examiners and personnel, and permanent liaison officers would ensure that requests for foreign information were transmitted through State to the field; the secretaries of State, Agriculture and Commerce would consult periodically.

Messersmith guaranteed "broad support" for this plan. Having long assumed it was advantageous to have "tow competing services in the field," trade associations now saw "that this policy was a mistake," and "have informed me that they are prepared to change this attitude." "But for a few [congressmen] who wil resist the erosion of patronage," legislative approval was a sure thing. Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace had already expressed his approval in principle. Top officials of the commercial service and most of the attaches were heartily, if as yet only privately, in accord. There would undoubtedly be "narrow bureaucratic opposition"

from Roper and his closest associates, but Messersmith urged that this not deter a move so very vital, both to trade promotion and the administration of foreign policy.[130]

While Messersmith's memorandum made the rounds, Commerce was mobilizing to resist. On 6 October Roper and assistant secretary of commerce Richard C. Patterson met with their Business Advisory Council, urging an all-out fight against consolidation, which, they claimed, would "greatly weaken" government assistance to business. The group responded with a resolution to that effect to Roosevelt. Messersmith's contacts on the NFTC reported "organized opposition" to a contemplated endorsement of the merger. Patterson prepared a "Brief for the Retention of the Foreign Commercial Service," and distributed it to the press and other interested parties.[131]

Messersmith fought back. The evening of 8 October found him in New York, pleading his case over dinner with representatives of Roper's advisory council. In early November he was back for three days, buttonholing delegates to the NFTC's 25th annual convention. It was quickly clear that he had underestimated the opposition. Loyalty to Roper and the attaches, anti State Department prejudice, and hostility to consolidation ran unexpectedly deep. Messersmith argued that eighty five per cent of the foreign information delivered by Commerce was actually collected by State; that its officers were generally superior to the attaches; that the present duplicative arrangement was one no good businessman would tolerate in his own firm. But many persisted in viewing the merger as just

"another blow" against business by the New Deal.[132]

This oppostion apparently registered on Roosevelt, who had a modified reorganization bill ready for the upcoming 76th Congress. The White House had made a key concession: whereas specific reorganizations would have required only the president's say-so under the aegis of the abortive bill, the new version made such plans subject to legislative veto. The lessons of 1937 and the charge of executive tyranny had evidently cut deep. What Roosevelt now feared was that a combination of vested interests would defeat reorganization again. If any one contemplated shift, like foreign service unification, jeopardized the larger bill, Roosevelt was prepared to jettison it, too. Messersmith, who had assumed that the president was "firm in his determination" for the merger, learned in early November that he was now "undecided on the matter."[133]

Messersmith's memorandum helped persuade him. By 18 November all of State's top officers had been able to comment upon it, and all agreed it was "an unanswerable argument for consolidation." Messersmith suggested that the president get a copy to peruse during his week at Warm Springs, Georgia in early December.[134]

Roosevelt took the memorandum with him and returned determined to see the merger through, though not via Moses Linthicum. The whole idea behind reorganization was to deal with such things systematically rather than piecemeal. It seemed pointless for the State Department to go it alone while reorganization was in the works.[135]

Messersmith tried being sly. He advised Welles to warn Roosevelt of "mounting opposition" to consolidation that might indeed "jeopardize . . . the larger bill." For the sake of the latter, he suggested that consolidation be spun off. What had become of the "broad support" he cited in September he did not say. His real concern, of course, was exactly the opposite: that reorganization would fail again and drag consolidation down with it, as before. Roosevelt's new measure, he worried, would "undoubtedly be a controversial measure and will undoubtedly be under discussion for some time before it is passed," if it passed.[136]

None of this mattered in the least to Daniel Roper, who was the loser in both scenarios. He and Hull, adversaries of late, had always been in the same unenviable boat in one respect. They both lacked Roosevelt's confidence. Roper, recalled Rexford Tugwell, "might as well not have existed" in Roosevelt's inner mind. Hull fell into the same category. He may have known it better than Roper, who committed the cardinal mistake Hull always avoided. By taking a stand against the merger, Roper placed temptation in the president's path. Having threatened to resign last time if overruled, Roper had no honorable choice but to resign when he was now overruled. Resign he did on 15 December.[137]

The fact was that the president was now delighted to see him gone. That a decision for consolidation would probably trigger Roper's resignation may have actually helped Roosevelt make the decision. Roper did not figure in his future plans; Harry Hopkins

did. Until mid 1940 Roosevelt apparently had every intention of leaving power after two terms. Hopkins was his first choice to succeed him. But Hopkins had a reputation for being among the most radical New Dealers, and while that would not necessarily have been a serious hindrance in 1936, it probably would be in 1940. To help broaden his support in preparation for 1940, especially with business, Roosevelt promised him an appointment as secretary of commerce when the office came vacant. Ten days after Roper resigned, Hopkins was sworn in.[138]

With Roper's departure and constant prodding from Messersmith, consolidation proceeded rapidly. Hopkins needed the prodding at first. Unregenerate advisers like Patterson and Dr. Dye argued that submission would erode the new secretary's credibility with business and set back his ambitions. And Hopkins was none too happy about ceding a piece of his inheritance. But his own soundings convinced him that business opposition would not be serious. Messersmith arranged for Hopkins' friends Averell Harriman and Josephus Daniels to tell him they supported the merger. And, of course, the president wished it. In early February, then, Hopkins and Messersmith sat down to begin ironing out the details.[139]

Meanwhile reorganization was wending its way through Congress. Messersmith need not have feared for the bill. It passed the House on 8 March, after three days of debate; the Senate followed suit. Roosevelt signed the measure on 3 April 1939.[140]

State, Commerce, and Agriculture accelerated their negotiations. On 13 April Messersmith saw Roosevelt, who ordered him and Hopkins "to get together in a room, throw the key out of the window and come out with an agreement which could be submitted to him." The next evening, after a long day with McMillan's subcommittee, Messersmith concluded his negotiations with Hopkins' designee. Wallace came around a week later. On the morning of 25 April Wallace, Hull, and Hopkins gathered to initial the final plan.[141]

Messersmith was leaving nothing to chance. Within twenty four hours dozens of letters had gone out to business leaders and newspaper editors, explaining the plan, asking for a suspension of criticism or a favorable editorial. Several editors obliged, more, perhaps, as one wrote him back, out of "regard for yourself than from a careful study of the subject matter." He then hit Congress, only to find himself preaching to the nearly converted. Michigan Republican Arthur Vandenberg assured him that most senators viewed consolidation as "one of those things which should have been done a long time ago." Senate approval on 12 May enacted the merger.[142]

It was the signal achievement of Messersmith's career, "the biggest thing," he boasted to a colleague, "since the Rogers Act." It was not that big. Consolidation of the foreign services broke no new ground. It simply advanced Rogers' vision of unity. But it was a long stride indeed in that direction. By confirming State Department jurisdiction over trade promotion abroad, a scholar concludes, cooption of the foreign commercial service was

"the most important development of specialization in the period" 1924 to 1939. It ended three decades of conflict, confusion, and duplication in American foreign policy. When on 1 July 1939 a hundred and fourteen commercial and agricultural attaches received commissions as Foreign Service officers, the State Department gained exclusive charge of the nation's permanent civilian representation abroad. It also gained, at a fell swoop, a hundred and fourteen additional Foreign Service lines--more than had been added over the previous fifteen years. This expansion, which helped the Department to meet its manpower needs during the war, may have been no less significant an accomplishment.[143]

Despite what he told McMillan's subcommittee, Messersmith had no illusions that the Department's administration was "perfected." Although more convinced than ever that "we have on the whole the best Foreign Service organization of any government," he still saw room for improvement. As the State-Commerce-Agriculture committee set to work out their new relationship, Messersmith undertook a new project, compiling studies of foreign service practices of other nations. He hoped to pick up a tip or two.[144]

But he had achieved the goals he set for himself in Washington. The machinery had been tuned for the challenges he knew lay ahead. Actual preparations for war began during the Czech crisis, when Messersmith and Nathaniel P. Davis, chief of the division of foreign service administration, laid plans for a special division to handle wartime whereabouts and relief cases, repatriation of

Americans and protection of their property, liaison to the Red Cross, and so forth. On 29 March 1939 war zone missions were instructed to ready similar special sections of their own. Negotiations with the Navy and private steamship lines produced a detailed evacuation plan, the State Department to advance money for fares to stranded Americans on a promissory note basis. In mid August, as the Polish crisis built, Messersmith, Welles, and other top officials reviewed procedures with counterparts from the War, Navy, Justice, and Treasury departments. Over the next two weeks Messersmith tended to final details, instructing American missions to paint their roofs with the letters "U.S.A." seven feet high by one foot wide, "in chrome yellow on a black background," to guide away attacking aircraft.[145]

At 2:50 AM, 1 September 1939, a starting date Messersmith had predicted, Ambassador Anthony Drexel Biddle in Warsaw telephoned Roosevelt to report the German invasion. Twenty minutes later confirmation arrived from Bullitt in Paris, and Roosevelt ordered the machinery activated. At 4 AM Messersmith, Berle, Welles, and Hull gathered in the secretary's office, the various division chiefs drifting in as the discussion progressed. The order establishing the special division was promulgated the next morning. On 2 September Breckinridge Long, in semi-retirement since leaving Rome in 1936, returned to head it up, with Hugh Wilson as his assistant and a staff of twelve Foreign Service officers.[146]

Despite the preparations and resources of the new division, problems arose that further tested Messersmith's stamina and ability to improvise. At least 100,000 Americans who had shrugged off the Department's warnings and continued their European summer holidays now clamored for passage. The evacuation effort got off to a rocky start, through no fault of Messersmith's or Long's. Some of the maritime unions tried to extort premium wages, large bonuses, paid-up life insurance policies, and other sweeteners; it almost required a court order to force them to sign on crews. There was obduracy from certain American mission chiefs and open insubordination from Bullitt in Paris. With German bombs expected to fall on the French capital any day, Messersmith frantically arranged to move the embassy to Touraine, to the south. Budgetary restraints hampered him. And he had to contend with nagging from the Department of Commerce, which wanted its commodity reports from Europe on time, war or no.[147]

Messersmith eventually prevailed. By the end of September 20,000 berths were available to take Americans home. By then, in fact, the main problem was persuading them to return at all. Panic had subsided in western Europe. With the conquest of Poland, talk of a negotiated settlement filled the air. Far from requiring sanctuary, the diplomats returned to center stage.[148]

At the State Department, too, the crisis lost its edge, and Messersmith found time to catch his breath. For over a year he had been working at a pace that, Moffat was sure, "if he does

not moderate it, will kill him." Messersmith was too careful for anything so dire. He had managed to get away for serious rest before the pressures overwhelmed. There had been a week in New York in December 1938 set aside for sleep and theater-going and he and Marion "trying to get to know each other again." They had several extended holidays at the Cape Cod cabin. Moreover, he received significant relief from the Department in two able executive assistants.[149]

But it was someone else's turn. His understanding with the president was that he was to return to the field upon completion of his administrative reforms. Thus, consolidation of the attaches was for Messersmith not just the fulfillment of a longstanding conviction, but also his ticket out of Washington. So he assumed. The war emergency upset his plans. His domestic and social life, meager to begin with, threatened to disappear altogether. Messersmith tried to make light of Marion's resentment and concern. "My wife," he reported to John Montgomery, "continues to threaten me with divorce if I am not able to spend more time at home, but I am trying to persuade her that it would be difficult to find someone who is really on the whole nicer than I am to live with!" Of course that was precisely her point; she wanted more of him. He was undoubtedly joking about divorce, but the strain on their relationship was no laughing matter.[150]

Thus, when the crisis abated at the State Department, Messersmith apparently petitioned for his transfer. A suitable spot soon

presented itself. On 4 December 1939 Roosevelt's third ambassador to Cuba, J. Butler Wright, whose path had crossed Messersmith's before, died suddenly at his post. Messersmith would have accepted most any offer, but he leaped at Cuba. Havana afforded extraordinary opportunity for influence--as much as any American embassy--at a tropical pace. Messersmith expected interesting, but not terribly taxing, work. He could "do a real job" without overexerting himself. Moreover, Cuba's proximity to home would presumably enable him to keep track of the European and administrative "problems which have absorbed me in recent years."[151]

Eminently satisfied, Messersmith hastened to tie loose ends, to brush up his Spanish, and cram for the Cuban assignment. Any second thoughts about leaving vanished when he learned that his office was going to Breck Long, "one of the finest men I know, and if I could have selected my own successor I could not have chosen one in whom I have more confidence." By the end of January Messersmith had relinquished most of his duties. He did not clear his desk until Saturday before the Wednesday, 28 February 1940, that he and Marion boarded the S.S. Oriente in New York, Havana-bound. The press was on hand at the pier, and the New York Times ran his full-length portrait on page seven the following morning. Ever jaunty, stick in hand, a white carnation in his lapel--recent affectations--he was obviously happy to be returning to the field and escape from the job Long soon called "terrible" and Dean Acheson later described as "a perfect hell." The Department had had its

tribulations, to be sure. But Messersmith's worst problems were of his own making. He could have contented himself with daily administration and his reforms. He could have stayed out of policy controversies; he could have stopped provoking them. He did not, because he was Messersmith.[152]

Chapter Four

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29. "Address to National Foreign Trade Convention," 3 Nov. 1937, 111.12/16. GSM memo, 7 Feb. 1939, 120.1/399. Carr memo, 17 Dec. 1936, 120.1/309.

30. "The Reorganization," I 1985, GSMM. Copy of S. 988, 120.1/302.

31. Carr to Welles, 27 July 1937, 120.1/305.

32. Leuchtenburg, Roosevelt and the New Deal, pp. 231-44.

33. Hosmer to GSM, 12 Mar. 1938, 120.1/316. Polenberg, Reorganizing. Murphy memo, Nov. 1937, 120.1/309.

34. GSM memo, 12 Aug. 1937, 120.1/307. Duggan to GSM, 14 Dec. 1937, 120.1/313. GSM memo, n.d., 120.1/315. GSM memo, 30 Dec. 1937, I 922. Lockett to GSM, 24 May 1938, I 988.

35. Welles to GSM, 20 Oct. 1937, 111.12/16. Murphy memo, Nov. 1937, 120.1/309. New York Daily Mirror, 21 Oct. 1937, p. 22. GSM to Hull, 6 nov. 1937, Hull Papers.

36. "Some Aspects of Assistance," 111.12/16.

37. Estrin to GSM, 8 Nov. 1937, 111.12/17. GSM memo, 29 Dec. 1937, 120.1/314.

38. Patterson, Congressional Conservatism, pp. 216-21. Duggan to GSM, 14 Dec. 1937, 120.1/314.

39. GSM to Welles, 8 Jan. 1938, 120.1/289 1/2. "Some Observations on the Position and Functions of Attaches and Offices of Other Departments of Our Government Stationed Abroad," 20 Dec. 1937, ibid.

40. Welles to GSM, 10 Jan. 1938, 120.1/289 1/2. GSM memo, 11 Jan. 1938, ibid. GSM memo, 1 Feb. 1938, I 935.

41. GSM to Roosevelt, 10 Feb. 1938, 120.1/289 1/2.

42. GSM to Bullitt, 16 Mar. 1938, 120.1/289 1/2. Polenberg, Reorganizing, p. 175. Patterson, Congressional Conservatism, p. 226.

43. GSM to Lockett, 17 MAy 1938, 120.1/323 1/2. Hosmer to GSM, 12 Mar. 1938, 120.1/316. Memo to GSM, n.a., 14 Apr. 1938, 120.1/318.

44. GSM memo, 16 Apr. 1938, I 976.

45. GSM memo, 18 Apr. 1938, 120.1/320.

46. GSM memo, 22 Apr. 1938, 120.1/321.

47. Welles to Roosevelt, 27 Apr. 1938, 120.1/321a. Welles to GSM, 25 Apr. 1938, 120.1/322. Welles to Roosevelt, 11 May 1938, OF 3C, Roosevelt Papers. Roper to Roosevelt, 16 May 1938, ibid. GSM to Lockett, 17 May 1938, 120.1/323 1/2.

48. GSM to Welles, 28 Apr. 1938, I 982.

49. GSM to Hull and Welles, 16 May 1938, 120.1/325. GSM to Lockett, 17 May 1938, 120.1/323 1/2. New York Times, 15 May 1938, p.8. and clippings filed under 120.1/399 1/2.

50. GSM to Welles, 20 May 1938, 120.1/327. GSM to Lockett, 27 May 1938, 120.1/327 1/2. GSM to Hull and Welles, 28 May 1938, I 1000. GSM memo, 2 June 1938, 120.1/329. Roosevelt to Hull, 11 June 1938, OF 3C, Roosevelt Papers.

51. Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd sess., 68: 8233-34.

52. GSM memo, 9 June 1938, I 1005.

53. Ibid. The copy in the State Department archives (120.1/333) contains Messersmith's handwritten postscript on Welles' talk with Roosevelt. GSM memo, 14 June 1938, 120.1/388. Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd sess., 68: 1938.

54. GSM to Lockett, 17 Aug. 1938, 120.1/341a.

55. "The Reorganization of- the Department of State," I 1985, GSMM. GSM to Van Cauwelaert, 7 Feb. 1940, I 1320. GSM memo, 1 Feb. 1938, I 935. GSM to Geist, 4 Jan. 1938, I 926. Stuart, Department of State, pp. 332-46. GSM to Heineman, 7 Nov. 1938, I 1067. On the division of cultural relations, Ninkovich, Diplomacy of Ideas, pp. 28-34. On the division of international commerce, Miller, Jr., "The New State Department," p. 515.

56. Executive order #7927, 14 July 1938, 120.21/10-39. McIntyre to Hull, 19 Jan. 1939, 120.21/37.

57. Entry for 25 July 1937, Moffat Diary. Miller, Jr., "The New State Department," p. 505. GSM memo, 1 Feb. 1938, I 935. GSM to Bergman, 24 Jan. 1938, 120.313/67. GSM to Sulzberger, 28

Jan. 1938, 120.313/67 1/2.

58. Ilchman, Professional Diplomacy, pp. 217-22, 226-28.

59. Ibid., pp. 204-05.

60. GSM to Green, 20 Sept. 1937, 120.1121/139. GSM to Green, 2 Nov. 1937, ibid. "Report of the Committee on Revision," 6 Feb. 1939, 120.1121/152. Green to GSM, 29 Mar. 1939, 120.1121/159. Bingham's "Evaluation," 6 Apr. 1939, 120.1121/158.

61. Bendiner, Riddle, p. 120. "Evaluation," 6 Apr. 1939, 120.1121/158. Ilchman, Professional Diplomacy, pp. 206-07, 228-29.

62. GSM to Bergman, 24 Jan. 1938, 120.313/67. Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd sess., 48: 2160. American Foreign Service Journal, June 1940, pp. 317-18. GSM memo, 19 Jan. 1938, 120.11/22.

63. On the school before 1931, see Schulzinger, Making the Diplomatic Mind, ch. 4. Barnes and Morgan, Foreign Service, pp. 210-11. For school lesson plans, see 120.313/69-74. Shaw to GSM, 21 Nov. 1939, 120.313/81. Heinrichs, "Bureaucracy and Professionalism," p. 198.

64. Dallek, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, pp. 148-49. Jacobs, "Roosevelt's Quarantine Speech," pp. 488-99. Divine, Roosevelt and World War II, pp. 18-19.

65. Dallek, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, pp. 151-55. Divine, Illusion of Neutrality, pp. 219-20.

66. "Comparisons: President Roosevelt-Winston Churchill," I 2013, GSMM. Roosevelt's penchant for personal diplomacy has been noted by others. See, for example, Hull, Memoirs, pp. 297-98. Divine, Roosevelt and World War II, p. 21. Welles memo, 6 Oct. 1937, FRUS 1937, 1: 665-66.

67. GSM memo, 11 Oct. 1937, ibid., pp. 140-45.

68. Entry for 24 Mar. 1938, Stimson Diary. Hull, Memoirs, pp. 546-48. Langer and Gleason, Challenge, pp. 22-23. GSM to Dean, 22 July 1950, I 1898. GSM memo (covering), 11 Oct. 1937, I 901. Welles, Seven Decisions, p. 24.

69. Dallek, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, pp. 149-53. GSM to Heineman, 21 Dec. 1937, I 914.

70. GSM to Geist, 7 Dec. 1937, I 910. Davies, Mission to Moscow, pp. 254-56. Roosevelt's desire for a "distinctly formal" appointment to Berlin explains why his first choice was among his least favorite among the career men, Hugh Gibson. Gibson declined the honor,

citing the financial burden, and retired instead. Welles to Roosevelt, 26 Nov. 1937, PSF 88, Roosevelt Papers.

71. GSM to Selby, 26 Feb. 1938, I 956. "Cordell Hull and My Personal Relationships with Him," I 2035, GSMM. Weil, A Pretty Good Club, pp. 75-78. Bendiner, Riddle, p. 184.

72. Entry for 10 Jan. 1938, Moffat Diary. Welles memo, 10 Jan. 1938, FRUS 1938, 1: 115-17. Offner, "Appeasement Revisited," pp. 379-80.

73. Halifax and Chamberlain quoted in Bullock, Hitler, p. 367. Chamberlain to Roosevelt, 14 Jan. 1938, FRUS 1938, 1: 118-20. Roosevelt to Chamberlain, ibid., pp. 120-22.

74. Bullock, Hitler, p. 367. Brook-Shepherd, The Anschluss, pp. 42-63. Schuschnigg, Austrian Requiem, pp. 19-32.

75. GSM to Hull and Welles, 18 Feb. 1938, I 950.

76. Brook-Shepherd, The Anschluss, pp. 137-79. Bullock, Hitler, pp. 425-35. Fest, Hitler, pp. 545-49.

77. Richardson to Hull, 25 Mar. 1938, I 970. Rogers to GSM, 1 Apr. 1938, I 972. GSM to Montgomery, 5 Apr. 1938, Montgomery Papers. Montgomery to GSM, 25 Mar. 1938, ibid.

78. Wiley #134, 22 Mar. 1938, 124.636/94. Wiley #159, 30 Mar. 1938, 124.63/103.

79. Entry for 29 Mar. 1938, Moffat Diary. Geist to GSM, 21 Oct. 1938, I 1051. GSM memo, 6 Apr. 1938, 124.63/108. Offner, American Appeasement, pp. 238-39.

80. Wiley to GSM, 8 June 1938, I 1004. Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 22-26.

81. Ibid., pp. 9-13. Entry for 18 Apr. 1938, Moffat Diary.

82. GSM to Brandeis, 24 Oct. 1938, I 1054. GSM to Geist, 30 Nov. 1938, I 1084; 20 Dec. 1938, I 1099

83. GSM to Hull, 31 Mar. 1938, 840.48 Refugees/84 1/2. GSM to Welles, 7 Apr. 1938, 150.01 Bills/34. Hull to GSM, 17 Apr. 1938, ibid. Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 67-71.

84. GSM to Wiley, 28 June 1938, I 1012. GSM to Montgomery, 3 Apr. 1938, Montgomery Papers. GSM to Dodd, 21 June 1938, Dodd Papers, wherein Messersmith railed at would-be refugees "not willing to come here in the spirit of the pioneers who helped to build up this country." Shafir, "Messersmith," p. 41.

85. Danziger Vorposten quoted in Morse, Six Million, p. 214. Wyman Paper Walls, pp. 44-51. Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 29-40. GSM to Geist, 7 Nov. 1938, I 1066.

86. Ibid. Bullock, Hitler, pp. 442-44. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, pp. 45-48, 71-93. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy II, pp. 313-77. Taylor, Munich, pp. 390-95.

87. Ibid., pp. 407-10. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy II, pp. 424-27. Entry for 13 Sept. 1938, Moffat Diary.

88. On the Chamberlain-Hitler negotiations, Taylor, Munich, pp. 732-53, 795-830.

89. Entries for 24-25 Sept. 1938, Moffat Paper, pp. 211-13. Entry for 27 Sept. 1938, Berle Diary, p. 187.

90. Bullock, Hitler, pp. 464-65. Offner, American Appeasement, pp. 270-71. Taylor, Munich, pp. 896-97 and passim. Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy II, pp. 452-55.

91. Entries for 28 and 30 Sept. 1938, Berle Diary, p. 188. GSM to Hull, 29 Sept. 1938, FRUS 1938, 1: 704-07.

92. Churchill quoted in Fest, Hitler, p. 567. GSM to Heineman, 7 Dec. 1938, I 1092; 7 Nov. 1938, I 1067. Langer and Gleason, Challenge, pp. 35-37.

93. New York Times,quoted in Morse, Six Million, pp. 221-26.Levin, The Holocaust, pp. 78-88. Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 71-75.

94. GSM to Hull, 14 Nov. 1938, FRUS 1938, 2: 396-98.

95. GSM to Geist, 30 Nov. 1938, I 1084.

96. GSM memo, 1 Feb. 1938, I 935. GSM to Geist, 7 Feb 1938, I 941.

97. Wilson to State Dept., 5 Apr. 1938, 123 W 693/536; 21 Mar. 1938, 123 W 693/558. GSM to Geist, 5 Apr. 1938, I 974. Geist to GSM, 5 June 1938, I 1002.

98. Geist to GSM, 21 Oct. 1938, I 1001. Wilson #399, 31 Oct. 1938, 123 W 693/565.

99. Wilson to Roosevelt, 3 Mar. 1938, in Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, p. 18. Wilson to Hull, 24 May 1938, ibid., pp. 33-35. Wilson to Roosevelt, 11 Aug. 1938, ibid., pp. 44-45.

100. Wilson to Hull, unsent, ibid., pp. 51-53. Wilson to Hull, 21 May 1938, FRUS 1938, 1: 506-07. Offner, American Appeasement, P. 251. Weil, A Pretty Good Club, pp. 60-61. For a milder view of Wilson,

see Weinberg, Hitler's Foreign Policy II, p. 254.

101. Wilson to Hull, 30 July 1938, in Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, p. 43. Wilson to Hull, 18 Oct. 1938, FRUS 1938, 1: 799.

102. Geist to GSM, 1 Mar. 1938, I 958; 20 Apr. 1938, I 977; 5 June 1938, I 1002; 21 Oct. 1938, I 1051; 5 Dec. 1938, I 1087.

103. GSM to Geist, 7 Nov. 1938, I 1066.

104. Hull, Memoirs, p. 599. Hull to Wilson, 14 Nov. 1938, 123 W 693/571. Entry for 14 Nov. 1938, Moffat Papers, pp. 221-22. New York Times, 15 Nov. 1938, p. 1.

105. GSM to Montgomery, 17 Nov. 1938, Montgomery Papers. GSM to Heineman, 28 Nov. 1938, I 1083. GSM to Geist, 30 Nov. 1938, I 1084; 8 Dec. 1938, I 1093.

106. Press conference 500, 15 Nov. 1938, Complete Press Conferences, 12: 226-27.

107. Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 43-51. Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 56-58. Rublee to Hull, 15 Dec. 1938, FRUS 1938, 1: 873-74.

108. GSM to Geist, 20 Dec. 1938, I 1099.

109. Welles to Rublee, 19 Dec. 1938, FRUS 1938, 1: 876-78; 21 Dec. 1938, ibid., pp. 879-80. Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 51-64.

110. Ibid., pp. 64-68. Morse, Six Million, pp. 241-51.

111. Wilson to Mrs. Wilson, 31 Dec. 1938, 123 W 693/587.

112. Geist to GSM, 22 Jan. 1939, I 1136. Welles memo, 18 Nov. 1938, FRUS 1938, 2: 402-03. Bullitt to Hull, 28 Feb. 1939, 1: 212.

113. GSM memo, 21 Dec. 1938, I 1100; 22 Dec. 1938, I 1105; 5 Jan. 1939, I 1128; 23 Jan. 1939, I 1137.

114. GSM memo, 15 Feb. 1939, I 1157.

115. GSM to Geist, 16 Feb. 1939, I 1158. Entries for 13 Feb. and 15 Mar. 1939, Moffat Papers, pp. 229, 231-32. Entries for 3 Mar., 11-12 Mar. 1939, Moffat Diary.

116. Entry for 15 Mar. 1939, Moffat Diary. Entry for 16 Mar. 1939, Berle Diary, P. 200. Langer and Gleason, Challenge, pp. 67-68.

117. Wilson to Mrs. Wilson, 20 Mar. 1939, 123 W 693/603. Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, pp. 107-08.

118. GSM to Hull, 8 Oct. 1939, Hull Papers.

119. GSM to Hull, 26 Mar. 1940, I 1328. GSM to Long, 27 Mar. 1940, I 1330; 11 Apr. 1940, I 1341. Berle to GSM, 25 Mar. 1940, Berle Papers. Wilson to Roosevelt, 7 Mar. 1940, PSF 90 Roosevelt Papers. Welles, Time for Decision, pp. 73-74.

120. GSM to Sypherd, 29 Nov. 1954, I 1906. He expressed particular pleasure at the judgments rendered by Langer and Gleason (Challenge, pp. 21-22, 126-27) and by Franklin L. Ford, in his "Three Observers," esp. p. 460.

121. "Influence of Fear in the Attitude Toward War," I 2012, GSMM.

122. GSM to Geist, 27 Nov. 1937, I 908. GSM to Heineman, 21 Dec. 1937, I 914. GSM to Wilson, 25 Aug. 1938, I 1026.

123. Register of the Department of State 1939, p. 4. Entries for 10 Jan. 1938, 11 Feb. 1938, 26 Mar. 1938, Berle Diary, pp. 159, 164, 169-70. Entry for 5-6 Nov. 1938, Moffat Diary.

124. Entry for 1 June 1938, Moffat Diary. Geist to GSM, 5 June 1938, I 1002; 21 Oct. 1938, I 1051. GSM to Fodor, 18 Aug. 1938, I 1022. GSM to Heineman, 7 Nov. 1938, I 1067.

125. GSM statement, 15 Sept. 1938, 113/824B. Hull to Bell, 26 Aug. 1938, 113/816B. GSM to Bell, 28 Sept. 1938, 113/817A. GSM memo, 26 Sept. 1938, 113/824B.

126. Department of State Appropriation Bill for 1940, Hearings, 76th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 24-26, 205, 209-12, 290-94. Geist to GSM, 7 Nov. 1938, I 1068. Geist #174, 16 Mar. 1939, 124.621/480.

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128. Achilles to GSM, 15 July 1938, 120.3801/159 1/2. GSM memo, 18 Mar. 1939, 120.3801/161. Hosmer to Skinner, 5 Apr. 1939, ibid. Entry for 14 Apr. 1939, Moffat Diary. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 84: 2298-2300, 4192, 4391.

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130. GSM to Hull, 7 Sept. 1938, I 1030.

131. GSM memo, 8 Oct. 1938, 120.1/349. Abbink to GSM, 27 Oct. 1938, 120.1/365. Bookman to GSM, n.d., 120.1/380. Patterson's "Brief," 28 Nov. 1938, I 1083a.

132. GSM memo, 19 Oct. 1938, I 1050. GSM to Dickerman, 24 Oct. 1938, I 1052. Thomas to GSM, 5 Oct. 1938, 120.1/347. GSM to Thomas, 7 Oct. 1938, ibid. Thomas to GSM, 7 Oct. 1938, 120.1/348. GSM to Thomas, 8 Oct. 1938, ibid. Thomas to GSM, 27 Oct. 1938. New York Times, 3 Nov. 1938, p. 1. GSM memo, 8 Nov. 1938, I 1069.

133. Polenberg, Reorganizing, pp. 180-85. GSM to Lockett, 17 Aug. 1938, 120.1/341a. GSM memo, 8 Nov. 1938, I 1069.

134. GSM memo, 26 Sept. 1938, 120.1/345. GSM to Hull, 18 Nov. 1938, 120.1/347. GSM to Hull and Welles, 9 Nov. 1938, I 1071 (copy to Roosevelt, 12 Nov. 1938).

135. GSM to McMillan, 5 Dec. 1938, I 1088. GSM to Gray, 9 Dec. 1938, 120.1/386a.

136. GSM to Welles, 19 Dec. 1938, I 1097. GSM to Boal, 15 Dec. 1938, 120.1/385.

137. Roper, Fifty Years, pp. 347-50. Tugwell, Democratic Roosevelt, pp. 268, 361.

138. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, pp. 93-98.

139. GSM to Welles, 30 Dec. 1938, I 1112. GSM to Hull, 11 Jan. 1939, I 1131. Patterson to Hopkins, 5 Jan. 1939, Hopkins Papers. Roosevelt to Hopkins, 19 Dec. 1938, ibid. GSM to Hopkins, 11 Feb. 1939, ibid. GSM to Welles, 5 Jan. 1939, 120.1/395. GSM to Daniels, 26 Jan. 1939, 120.1/398a. GSM to Hull and Welles, 2 Mar. 1939, 120.1/400. "The Reorganization," I 1985, GSMM.

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141. GSM to Hopkins, 25 Mar. 1939, Hopkins Papers; 13 Apr. 1939, 120.1/399 1/2. "The Reorganization," I 1985, GSMM. Wallace to GSM, 21 Apr. 1939, I 1197. Hull to Wallace, 21 Apr. 1939, I 1198. GSM to Erhardt, 25 Apr. 1939, I 1201.

142. GSM to Meyer, 26 Apr. 1939, I 1206, and items 1207-1226. See editorial clippings in folder five, 120.1. Newbranch to GSM, 12 May 1939, I 1243. Polenberg, Reorganizing, p. 188.

143. GSM to Erhardt, 25 Apr. 1939, I 1201. Ilchman, Professional Diplomacy, p. 241. Barnes and Morgan, Foreign Service, p. 365.

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145. Circular instr., 21 Mar. 1939, citing that of 19 Sept. 1938, FRUS 1939, 1: 143-48. Dept. serial 3122, 28 Aug. 1938, ibid.,

p. 150. Stuart, Department of State, pp. 340-41. Hull, Memoirs, pp. 663-64. Entry for 17 Aug. 1939, Moffat Papers, pp. 247-48. Entry for 29 Aug. 1939, Moffat Diary. Entries for 17 Aug. and 21 Aug. 1939, Berle Diary, pp. 237-39.

146. Robert H. Jackson oral history interview, CUOHP, p. 758. Entry for 1 Sept. 1939, Berle Diary, p. 248. Hull, Memoirs, pp. 671-74. Entry for 1 Sept. 1939, Moffat Papers, pp. 259-61. Entry for 2 Sept. 1939, Long Diary, pp. 1-4.

147. Entries for 3 Sept., 4 Sept., 5 Sept., 6 Sept. 1939, ibid, pp. 4-10. Entry for 8 Sept. 1939, Moffat Papers. Entries for 25 Sept. and 29 Sept. 1939, Moffat Diary. GSM to Herschel V. Johnson, 27 Dec. 1939, Johnson Papers. GSM to Fullerton, 6 Oct. 1939, I 1287; 7 Nov. 1939, I 1297. GSM memo, 3 Nov. 1939, 120.1/462.

148. Entry for 14 Sept. 1939, Long Diary, p. 13. GSM to Montgomery, 30 Nov. 1939, Montgomery Papers.

149. Entry for 5-6 Nov. 1939, Moffat Diary. GSM to Harrison, 28 Dec. 1939, Harrison Papers. GSM to Selby, 12 Nov. 1938, I 1074. GSM to Burlingham, 13 July 1939, I 1259. State Dept. order #767, 13 July 1938, 111.12/52. State Dept. order #816, 15 Sept. 1939, 111.12/72. The executive assistants were Fletcher Warran and Laurence C. Frank.

150. GSM memo, 1 Feb. 1938, I 935. GSM to Montgomery, 14 Nov. 1939, Montgomery Papers. GSM to Fullerton, 6 Oct. 1939, I 1287; 7 Nov. 1939, I 1297.

151. GSM to Baerwald, 13 Jan. 1940, I 1316. GSM to Van Cauwelaert, 7 Feb. 1940, I 1320. GSM to Backer, 24 Apr. 1940, I 1354.

152. Entries for 10 Jan., 12 Jan., 20 Jan., 30 Jan. 1940, Moffat Diary. Duggan to GSM, 31 Jan. 1940, I 1319. GSM to Baerwald, 13 Jan. 1940, I 1316. Entry for 23 Jan. 1940, Long Diary, p. 55. GSM to Fullerton, 22 Apr. 1940, I 1357. New York Times, 1 Mar. 1940, p. 7. Long to GSM, 7 Mar. 1940, Long Papers. Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 35.

Chapter Five

Havana, 1940-1942

For that same reason there would be little rest in Havana, where he and Marion landed on 2 March. Washington had also been hot--"much hotter than Havana," he cut short embassy first secretary Willard Beaulac, who tried to warn him otherwise. By July Messersmith was a true believer. But even at its sweltering worst, the tropics were no match for his conscience. "It keeps you working," wrote Breck Long in friendly reproof, "when you ought to be playing." With its famous beaches and casinos and hippodromes, Havana was the place to play. Messersmith cared only for the cigars, which he chewed at his desk.[1]

He had the challenge of his mission on his mind. Roosevelt's previous envoys had found Cuban stability an elusive commodity, and the interventionist habit hard to break. Arriving to turmoil in 1933, Ambassador Sumner Welles arranged the resignation of the beleaguered dictator Gerardo Machado and the installation of a successor, Carlos Manuel de Cespedes. Three weeks later Cespedes was himself deposed in favor of the liberal Ramon Grau St. Martin. Welles panicked, calling for warships and the Marines--they remained offshore--and prevailed upon Washington to withhold recognition. The Good Neighbor policy was off to a bad start in Cuba. Yet, Jefferson Caffery, who replaced Welles in 1934, continued his policies. Aided by hard times, Caffery oversaw Grau's downfall and boosted the army

chief of staff, Colonel Fulgencio Batista, as the strong leader he believed Cuba needed. While the civilian government debated itself into irrelevance, Batista became the foremost power on the island. Caffery was a close second.[2]

Batista's advent opened a new era in Cuban-American relations. The Cuban army left the barracks to relieve the United States of police duty, assuring stability consistent with Good Neighborly nonintervention. As departing gifts Washington in 1934 abrogated the infamous Platt Amendment, thus making nonintervention official, and honored Cuba with the first of Hull's reciprocal trade agreements. The duty on sugar, her predominant export, was cut forty per cent. Cuba enjoyed three years of relative prosperity as a result. But the 1938 crop was a disaster, and the economy crashed. Civil unrest loomed once more, at a most unpropitious moment. The State Department began to comprehend the fragility of Cuba's monoculture and the need for more diversified development. A program took shape in Washington that envisaged Eximbank loans and modifications in the trade agreement opening the mainland market to more Cuban products. J. Butler Wright, who had replaced the controversial Caffery in the 1937 shake up, was charged with promoting this program in Havana.[3]

State's program was the Good Neighbor at its most enlightened. Although the United States stood to gain leverage over the Cuban economy in the short term, the program also promised to reduce the island's dependence on sugar and American imports. As such, it was a significant concession to Cuban soveriegnty.

But Washington could not resist a quid pro quo. When a Cuban trade delegation visited in early 1938, non-Undersecretary Welles set stiff preconditions for American assistance. He insisted, first of all, that Cuba make permanent her Decree Law 522. This gave American sugar interests control over the island's sugar stabilization board, which set production quotas. Next, Cuba would have to overhaul her corruption-ridden treasury and internal revenue departments, and balance her budget. And she would have to settle with the American holders of some $85 million in public works bonds. Grau had defaulted on these issues in 1933. While Cuba was flirting with national bankruptcy, the State Department had resisted bondholders' demands to help them collect. If hardly flush with cash, Cuba, in the Department's view, was now sufficiently solvent to address her obligations.[4]

Wright endeavored to secure Cuban compliance. In February 1938 Cuba floated bonds to retire all but $15 million of the public works debt. The ambassador pressed for settlement of the balance. So did Welles, in his Washington talks with Batista, November 1938. The result was an agreement with the remaining bondholders, subject to ratification by the Cuban senate. Two days after Batista's departure, Welles announced plans for a supplementary Cuban-American trade agreement. Two Columbia University taxation experts went to formulate a reform program. Eximbank president Warren L. Pierson toured the island with the Cuban secretary of public works examining proposals for new projects.[5]

Wright made the Good Neighbor a political reality as well. As a rule, he tendered his representations at the Cuban State Department and the office of the civlian president, Federico Laredo Bru, not at rendezvous with Batista, as Caffery had done. The charming and gregarious ambassador trumpeted the "cooperation between equals" theme in his many speeches all over the island.[5]

Cubans appreciated Wright's hands-off policy, which, however, produced scant progress on the State Department's reconditions. The bondholders relief bill ran into one snag after another. The American-sponsored program of tax reform languished. Welles complained repeatedly to Cuban Ambassador Pedro Martinez Fraga, but his promises of "rapid action" proved worthless. In July 1939 the United States threatened to break off trade talks unless Cuba mended her ways. Meanwhile the vicissitudes of the sugar market played extraordinary havoc with the island economy. Depressed throughout most of 1939, prices soared at the outbreak of war in Europe, plummeted when Roosevelt suspended sugar quotas (thereby raising Cuba's duty from .90 to 1.50 cents per pound), and revived in December, when the quotas were restored and a stopgap supplementary trade agreement was signed.[7]

Economic instability translated into victory for the anti-Batista parties in the November 1939 elections for constituent assembly, which was to draft a new constitution and schedule elections. In a field of eleven, the Cuban Revolutionary Party, known as the

Autenticos, came out on top. It was the party of Grau, whose triumphant return from four years of exile made him the odds-on favorite for president. The United States now had reason to fear a radical new Cuban constitution and a hostile new Cuban chief of state. On 6 December Batista resigned from the army and declared his candidacy, but many predicted a Batista coup unless his electoral prospects improved.[8]

Wright's sudden death on 4 December had no discernible impact of this situation, which was to his credit. Batista's and Grau's agreement to a 14 July election day cleared the air somewhat. Messersmith's arrival also had a calming effect. He immediately set to squelch speculation that he would dictate a political settlement. Wright's twenty-seven months of aloofness had by no means obliterated memories of four decades of just such overt American interference. From the moment Messersmith set foot on Cuban soil, politicians and reporters hounded him for endorsements. Former president Mario Menocal, who led the third largest bloc of delegates to the constituent assembly, called to inquire whom the United States wished him to support.[9]

Messersmith told Menocal and the others exactly what he was saying in public: that the United States was entirely impartial and would "not intervene in any way directly or indirectly in the electoral situation." But the politicians refused to believe him. They assumed, he wrote Long in amazement, "that we say this for public

consumption, but, in fact, try to run the show from the inside." When these same politicians returned to the campaign trail and alluded to their new "connections" at the American embassy, Messersmith learned yet another fact of Cuban political life: "everything which [the American ambassador] says or does is used or misused to serve personal interests when it can be done."[10]

He thus exercised "great care" in taking up the top bilateral issue. Economic relations were still hung up over the $15 million still owed American bondholders. As far as the State Department was concerned, Cuba's whole good faith and credit rode on passage of the settlement bill. Messersmith did not relish having "to begin my stay here by being a bill collector," but, as he told Laredo Bru and the secretary of state, Miguel Angel Campa on 15 March, the claims themselves were secondary. Economic development required "the maintenance and re-establishment of Cuban credit and the confidence of the American business community here and in the United States." Cuba, Messersmith said, had a splendid opportunity to show potential investors that she took her obligations seriously.[11]

The trouble was that Messersmith was speaking to the wrong people. Laredo Bru and Campa were "thoroughly understanding," but they were lame ducks with limited influence. The president did manage the move up the settlement bill on the senate calendar. On the scheduled day, however, that august body failed to raise a quorum, even though, wrote Messersmith indignantly, "there were sufficient Sena-

Senators in the lobby" to do so. Messersmith spoke to Batista, who got to the heart of the problem. It was a sad fact, he said, but the senators expected to be bribed, and were quite prepared to watch the island's credit sink until they were. Batista said that he deplored this himself, but that it might be best if the American creditors paid up, so as to remove this obstacle to Cuban-American cooperation. When an incredulous Messersmith demurred, Batista conceded that one could take realism too far, adding that he welcomed the ambassador's support for his own anti-corruption drive.[12]

Messersmith wanted to believe him. But the weeks wore on with no sign of legislative action. "For a dictator," he wrote of Batista on 19 April, "he is proceeding with unusual caution and reserve" in dealing with his senators. Perhaps campaign politics constrained him. Although aligned with Grau in the constituent assembly, Menocal had made his best deal and endorsed Batista for president. Batista stalwarts objected to the high price in patronage promised for Menocal's support. The candidate, Messersmith hypothesized generously, may have decided that it was not the time to start depriving his senators of their graft as well. But by summer, with the settlement no nearer, Messersmith depicted Batista less as the practical reformer than the arch corruptionist. The legislators, he was finally convinced, were obeying, not defying, their leader in holding the settlement bill for ransom.[13]

Messersmith also reported venality and demagoguery running riot at the constituent assembly, in session since 9 February. His own expectation--hope--of a conservative new constitution was disappointed. Instead, the assembly, Grau presiding, turned out a string of provisions Messersmith sourly judged "worse than anything Soviet Russia produced at its worst." Articles proscribing large land holdings, restricting land ownership by foreigners and creditors' rights, all threatened, in his irritated opinion, to make Cardenas' Mexico "seem like a paradise for capital" by comparison. Worse was to come. In late May the assembly took up the last item on its agenda: a measure suspending service on private debts until 1942 and forever thereafter except when sugar prices were abnormally high. Assembly leaders included special immunities for themselves.[14]

The proposed moratorium caused consternation up north. A committee of New York bankers threatened to "remonstrate" with Cuba personally unless the State Department did so for them. To many concerned Americans the moratorium seemed a deliberate Cuban provocation.

On orders from Washington, Messersmith spoke to Laredo Bru and Batista on 28 May. Emphasizing that he was not making representations, but simply "friendly observations based on our deep interest in Cuban credit," Messersmith warned against alienating American capitalists when Europe was at war and incapable of filling the fiscal void. As before, Laredo Bru was sympathetic but powerless;

and Batista, notwithstanding his pledge of assistance, was sure to "do nothing [Messersmith reported] in spite of all that I have tried to convey to him" because the moratorium was something "he has been advocating consistently."[15]

At 3 AM, 29 May, the assembly, by a vote of 49-7, adopted the moratorium. Messersmith was "unhappy," but he had done everything possible short of "direct involvement." First secretary Beaulac urged a strong response to dispell the "theory which is widely held in the Cuban Government that the United States is so anxious not to have trouble with Cuba, for the sake of inter-American solidarity, that it will accept almost any affront rather than openly protest." It was time, he felt, to retaliate, perhaps through renunciation of the Cuban-American trade agreement.[16]

Messersmith passed this suggestion on to Washington, unenthusiastically. He pointed out that the trade agreement was worth a lot more in dollars to the United States than to Cuba, and questioned the wisdom of Washington cutting off its nose to spite its face. Moreover, unilateral abrogation would reek of coercion and a return to the "Big Stick." If the United States was serious about Cubans taking charge of their own destiny, he wrote on 1 June, it would have to forebear their mistakes. At least Cuba was finally getting a constitution that, upon sober study, seemed not quite as bad as Messersmith had originally thought. It included basic safeguards for property and contracts--no small achievement given the

anticapitalist atmosphere of the assembly. Nor had the delegates discriminated: 12,000 small Cuban creditors, not American bankers, he observed, promised to be hardest hit by the moratorium.[17]

Accordingly, Washington turned the other cheek. The failure of the settlement bill and the 1940 constitution set back economic relations, but Messersmith and the State Department wished to avoid crises, not start them. Beaulac's analysis was on the mark. Cubans had come to learn that they could act with unprecedented impunity toward the United States provided that they played along regarding hemispheric security. And this Cuba was unquestionably doing. In May the State Department had engaged the American republics individually in defense discussions. Ambassador Martinez Fraga could not have been more forthcoming. In June an American military mission arrived in Havana for secret exploratory talks with Laredo Bru, Batista, and Colonel Jose Pedraza, the new army chief of staff. Messersmith reported that the talks "went even better than . . . expected," ending in "complete agreement in principle on all points raised." The details were to be worked out in staff conferences set for August.[18]

Military cooperation bought Cuba the continued indulgence of the United States in the political and economic spheres, indulgence that, in Washington's view, the islanders were taking full advantage of. Beaulac contended that such crass reciprocity was "not a healthy basis for future cooperation." He maintained that the United States could not let the Cubans, ninety miles from the mainland, sim-

ply mishandle their affairs. Cuban cooperation would be meaningless if she went to pieces internally.[19]

Even as Messersmith was counselling hands-off, he was beginning to question its efficacy himself. He thought he had seen everything, but had already concluded that Cuban politicians were self-serving and pettifogging in a way that even the Nazis never were. Very well, he wrote Long; "but they will find"--as the Nazis had--"that it is a very difficult thing to wear me down."[20]

Yet they did wear him down temporarily. Messersmith abstained from Cuban politics as much from personal preference as policy. He reported to Washington with his usual exhaustiveness, but his mind was elsewhere. Nostalgia for Washington and the "big picture" crept into his letters. He tried keeping abreast of the old political and administrative issues; friends like Long occasionally sent him gossip from the Department. By late March, however, he was already feeling "very far away from things." He consoled himself with thoughts of the future, of Havana as a recuperatory "interlude" between Washington and his next European post. Besides, he told himself in a letter to Felix Frankfurter, Cuba was vital in her own right. "Were it not that the defense of the Americas is so vital to us and that Cuba is in some respects a key country in this picture, I would be very unhappy indeed being here [instead of] in the front trenches."[21]

If this was malaise, the collapse of Allied resistance on the continent snapped him out of it. A German takeover of the Dutch, French, and, it seemed likely, British colonies in the hemisphere impended. Berlin claimed otherwise, but Messersmith could not believe that anyone took Nazi denials seriously any more. The "Monroe Doctrine," he wrote Hull, as he had been writing him for years, "has always made them see red." Now Germany was poised to challenge for the New World, just as Goering had vowed in 1933. "We are already at war," Messersmith excitedly wrote Long on 26 June, "because Germany is at war with us." Nazi aggression had placed him where he wanted to be: in the "front trenches" of the battle for civilization.[22]

In long, impassioned, even panicky "Observations" to the State Department dated 3 June, Messersmith pronounced the hemispheric situation "critical." Militarily "not a single one [of the republics] is in a position to defend itself." The security implications of government corruption seem to have suddenly dawned on him: politicians throughout the hemisphere were ready to "jump aboard the German bandwagon" for the right price. Ethnic Germans and Italians, an especially influential minority in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, needed no bribes. If, with eyes on Gibraltar, Franco joined the Axis, as Messersmith thought probable, Latin opinion might follow. The myth of German invincibility seemed to be gaining ground. Germany was working assiduously to capture more Latin American trade. Hitler's diplomats and propaganda were extolling the opportunities presented by the enlarged German market, a siren song for the impover-

ished Latins.[23]

Messersmith reevaluated conditions inside his own bailiwick, and was "not optimistic." Cuban opinion seemed dedicated to solidarity with the democracies, but fifth columnists were a problem. "There are people here," he declared, "who are potentially excellent Nazis, and the Germans know who they are and are in touch with them." The crumbling economy furnished a favorable medium for sedition. The loss of European markets hit hard. Credit was drying up, thanks to the moratorium. Government revenues plunged, as imports from the United States, which entered at lower duty, substituted for Asian and European. Rumors had government workers going unpaid. Those in a position to do so hastened to fill their own pockets before the source gave out.[24]

What was worse, these political thieves were, according to Messersmith, taking cues from Batista, who "will be elected or at least in some way become President of Cuba" when the polls closed on 14 July. And his advent would spell trouble for the United States. Batista had been an obstinate "ruler from behind the scenes," and Messersmith surmised that "he will be much more difficult to deal with once he is President." Although he professed "great friendship" for the United States, "basically I do not believe that he likes us or ever will." Most American-owned businesses were resisting his demands for campaign contributions, "very properly refusing to be shaken down," but "I think we can take it for granted that this will not make

him feel any better towards American interests." Forced to dip increasingly into his already "sizeable" ill-gotten personal fortune, Batista was betting that as president he would be "in a better position than ever to recoup," at American expense. The governing principle of a Batista administration, Messersmith forecast, would be to "try to get as much out of us as he can" in exchange for continued Cuban military cooperation.[25]

These trends, which jeopardized "every single thing to which we are attached," would have to be reversed. Convinced the German inroad owed very largely to ignorance of "the physical, moral, economic, and religious bondage which Fascist regimentation imposes," Messersmith undertook in several well publicized speeches to set the record straight. He particularly cautioned agianst Nazi economic blandishments, and exhorted his colleagues in other American capitals to do the same. The Latins had to be reminded that the United States was their "only solvent customer"; that German promises "cannot be fulfilled"; that any nation "allowing itself to be tempted" would find "economic slavery [which] will rapidly turn itself into political slavery."[26]

But Messersmith considered talk "worthless" without real United States leadership. "We must make our strength known," he counselled the State Department, "and impress it constantly upon the American Republics." "Appropriate arrangements to support their economies" were imperative. The hemispheric cartel under discussion in

Washington, designed to supervise the joint marketing of major exports, won Messersmith's eager approval.[27]

In the meantime, the republics had to be organized and armed. The American foreign ministers were not scheduled to meet again until December, in Havana, but there was provision for advancing that date in an emergency. This option, he wrote Hull on 15 June, should be "promptly" invoked to get the Latins "committed in principle unequivocally to all the action which is involved in inter-American cooperation, which must now enter the military phase." In a conference setting, under peer pressure, no Latin republic, Messersmith believed, not even Argentina, the most contrary, "could stand out from mutually reeing to military aid to the others and from accepting all kinds of military aid from us." Two days later American mission chiefs in the hemisphere were instructed to propose the Havana foreign ministers conference for "the first possible moment." This turned out to be 21 July.[28]

But even as Messersmith entered into marathon negotiations with the Cuban State Department and representatives of the Pan American Union over the Havana agenda, the hemispheric situation was deteriorating alarmingly. In a 10 June speech Brazilian dictator Getulio Vargas ridiculed "the sterile demagogy of political democracy," calling upon "virile people to comprehend the new epoch." A steady purchaser of German arms, Vargas was known to be actively pursuing expanded trade with the Reich. Yet, by the end of June, the idea of

the American-sponsored cartel had been all but abandoned at the insistence of the incurable free trader Hull. Argentina was her usual recalcitrant self. In accepting her invitation to Havana, Buenos Aires made it clear that she would not be party to resolutions compromising her neutrality. As some of Argentina's neighbors were expected to follow her lead, this did not bode well for the conference.[29]

Messersmith proposed fighting fire with fire. The Latins should be warned that the United States much preferred their cooperation, but would act unilaterally if necessary. "This is a struggle for existence," he wrote Laurence Duggan, chief of the division of American republics, "which may necessitate a return to the Big Stick"; Washington must reserve the right to intervene wherever hemispheric security was endangered. If any American government chose to consort with Berlin, "we have got to see that such a Government does not live." Threatening to boycott Brazilian coffee, he trusted, would bring Vargas back to his senses.[30]

And it was time to stop coddling Cuba. Sounding very much like Beaulac a month earlier, Messersmith advised "a stronger and firmer stand here" to disabuse local politicians of the assumption that they "can get away with anything." Their "new alibi" for not taking up the settlement bill was maddeningly typical: because the Havana conference was supposed to assemble in the senate chambers, the senators had no place to meet. Now "we will be told very solemnly that the Congress will settle the obligations matter as soon as the

Conference is over." Smugly confident in American credulity and concern for Cuban stability, Batista was openly predicting that economic assistance was on its way. "He is playing with us," Messersmith fumed, "and what is worse, he feels that he is getting away with it." Unless "we stick by our guns," refusing even to discuss the question of aid until Cuba did her part, "we can look forward to continued blackmail of our Government and of the United States interests here." The State Department assured him that it was not contemplating softening its stand.[31]

There followed slow but definite improvement in the Cuban and larger hemispheric pictures both. On 14 July Cubans went to the polls. As predicted, Batista emerged the victor. Although this produced no joy in Washington, the near absence of violence and electoral chicanery was a comfort. A week later the Havana conference opened. Hull, with Messersmith serving as personal assistant, managed in the end to secure Argentine assent to the conference's final act and convention. In this the republics unanimously endorsed the no-transfer principle of the Monroe Doctrine, and authorized preemptive intervention by the United States. It was a major diplomatic coup and a great personal triumph for Hull.[32]

On 30 July, the day before the conference adjourned, Hull, accompanied by Messersmith, paid a courtesy call on Laredo Bru, whose term expired in October. Hull thanked the Cuban president for his efforts on behalf of the settlement bill, emphasizing how vital it was for "orderly and stable governments," particularly governments

seeking financial assistance, to meet their obligations.[33]

The message got through to Batista. On the threshold of presidential power, he was now preoccupied with retaining it. Some observers gave him no more than six months in which to fix the economy before popular patience would run out. He had to have American aid. Thus, Messersmith reported on 8 August, "he has been forced into a position of giving his full approval" to the settlement bill.[34]

The politicians, however, proved obdurate. Batista enjoined them to act, but, Messersmith reported on 15 August, "these humgry members of Congress are frankly saying that for many of them it is their last chance, and that they are poor people and must be paid for voting for this bill!" Claiming to be at his wit's end, Batista prevailed upon Messersmith to help convince them that there would be no pay offs. He had obviously learned something about Cuban politicians. Messersmith invited the lawmakers to the embassy in small groups for drinks. After a low-keyed plea for the debt settlement, he steered the conversation to the international situation. The congressmen, he wrote later, appreciated being spoken to "as though they were statesmen." On 4 September, with only two dissenters, the senate passed the settlement bill.[35]

The next day Messersmith sailed home for talks at the State Department. When Beaulac reported the signing of the settlement bill, Cuba was formally invited to send a mission to Washington to "deal comprehensively with United States-Cuban economic relations." The

agenda mapped out over two years earlier--agricultural diversification, revisions in the trade agreement, and Eximbank financing for a "moderate and largely self-liquidating" public works program--was dusted off.[36]

Cuba grabbed the invitation. But the four-man mission that arrived on 5 October had its own proposals. Their leader, Martinez Fraga (an active grafter, Messersmith suspected) had gained Batista's confidence and kept his Washington post by telling Batista what he wanted to hear: that the United States was "eager and over-eager to lend money to Cuba and that Cuba could have any sum she wanted for the asking," no strings attached. Without checking with Messersmith, Batista had decided upon $50 million, and gotten his congress to authorize a loan in that amount. On 14 October Martinez Fraga handed Welles the details of Cuba's request. Ten million dollars was to cover her current budget deficit and shortfalls anticipated in the coming fiscal year. The rest was earmarked for a congeries of Batista pet projects: hospitals, roads, and the purchase of land for a national park.[37]

Back in Havana for Batista's inauguration, Messersmith recommended outright rejection of the Cuban proposal. To do otherwise, he wrote Welles, would be a "betrayal of Cuba . . . our own taxpayers . . . and our interests." Cuba had a budget deficit only because the politicians had looted the treasury for campaign funds and pork barrel projects; a loan to cover the shortfall was sure to

"stimulate increased and even more irresponsible spending." The proposed "public works" amounted to installments on Batista's political debts, projects with "vast potential" for fraud. Among them was a partially completed tuberculosis hospital, construction of which had been forced to a halt by the "disappearance" of half the allocated funds.The road projects, ostensibly for the island's defenses, were meant to enhance the value of certain real estate. Other personages stood to profit handsomely in transactions for the national park. Messersmith thought it "interesting that even supporters of the Government express fear of the misuse which would be made of money which we might give to Cuba without what they call adequate safeguards." Patriotic Cubans, people who yearned for honest government, "are hoping that we will not let them down."[38]

Messersmith's stand made the "hungry" politicians nervous, especially Martinez Fraga. His credibility was at stake. His messages to Batista continued misleadingly roseate on the $50 million loan. Messersmith's outspoken opposition forced him to defend himself. He responded by trying to have Messersmith recalled for unspecified "insolence." Being groundless, this effort failed. So did his Washington negotiations. On 4 December Welles replied formally to the Cuban requests. There would be no budget loan. The State Department demanded an immediate ten per cent cut in Cuban spending, administrative reforms, new studies on her agriculture, and extension of Decree Law 522. When Cuba met these conditions, Welles said, the Eximbank

would consider up to $10 million in agricultural credits and closely-supervised public works. In an "acrimonious" 9 December telephone conversation with his ambassador, Batista, Messersmith reported, expressed "dissatisfaction and disappointment" with these results. Martinez Fraga tendered his resignation, and it was accepted.[39]

A week later, Batista's secretary of state, Jose M. Cortina, sought to make a fresh start. In talks with Messersmith, he admitted that the Cuban government had operated under certain misconceptions concerning American attitudes, which he blamed on Martinez Fraga. He promised an improvement in the new Cuban ambassador to Washington, Aurelio F. Concheso, and begged for American economic aid. Diversification and public works were essential to the island's economic future, Cortina said, but the growing crisis in the sugar industry demanded immediate remediation. The loss of world markets had forced the sugar board to limit 1941 production to two million tons, which would mean mass lay offs in the fields and mills. Eximbank financing for an additional 500,000 tons, he continued, would stabilize the situation and consolidate Batista's position. Only with popular support, he added, could Batista proceed with the sure-to-be-bitter battle against official corruption.[40]

Messersmith was sympathetic. He had objected to the $50 million loan because little of that money would reach the average Cuban. He differentiated between the politicians' proposals and "our doing something to aid the Cuban people." Additional sugar financing

fell into the latter category, for, as he told Washington, it "would go almost entirely into the payment of wages," averting "economic disaster for Cuba" and certain political unrest. The local Communists had gained legal status for having backed candidate Batista, and were already using it to undermine him and pro-Allied feeling, "making a lot of trouble here," Messersmith reported, "exploiting the rural laborers and the poorer people of the cities," who figured to get poorer still without outside relief. More than ever, Batista needed "propping up" to survive, and Messersmith now considered his survival a matter of prime importance to the United States. Not that, in the ambassador's eyes, the presidency had transformed Batista into any paragon of strength, judgment, or rectitude. Politics, not the island's problems, remained his chief preoccupation. To Messersmith's disgust, he had appointed cabinet officers "with no real regard for their particular competence for their jobs." Cubans had the idea that they had elected themselves a caudillo, but the Batista the ambassador knew was "a timid man [who] feels himself insecure."[41]

In Messersmith's judgment, though, there were sufficient offsetting positives. As before, Cuban military cooperation was complete. September staff talks had committed the Cuban government to "full use" of its territory for hemispheric defense. And the law of averages came into play: at least two cabinet members, as it turned out, could be counted upon to talk sense to Batista. One was Carlos Saladrigas, a conservative lawyer now prime minister; the

other was Cortina, "highly intelligent and friendly to the United States," who was encouraging Batista to crack down on Nazis and Communists. Cortina insisted that Batista's government could not submit to the State Department's preconditions for assistance and "hope to live," and Messersmith believed him. He agreed to present Cuba's case for sugar financing personally in Washington and to convey Cortina's "categorical assurances" that all of the administrative reforms the Department desired would be promtly implemented as soon as Batista could do so.[42]

In Washington on 8 January 1941 Messersmith advised the Department to accept these assurances and to provide Cuba with immediate sugar relief and a general commitment on long term aid. If the sugar emergency developed, he argued, Batista's government "may well fall, and we will see it replaced by no better a one," and perhaps a worse one. The fact was that "this is the first constitutional Government which Cuba has had for seven years"; Batista's overthrow would be a severe setback for democracy and hemispheric stability. Besides, Messersmith was sure that the additional sugars would not go to waste. In the meantime, Cuban purchasing power and an $80 million a year market for American exports would be protected.[43]

Messersmith brought quick--if, for Cuba, mixed--results. He returned to the island on 14 January with an Eximbank offer to finance only 400,000 additional tons at $3.25 per hundred-pound bag, interest to be fixed at 3.6 per cent and secured by a six cent per

bag production tax. The bank, against Messersmith's advice, insisted on renewal in advance of Decree Law 522. The Cuban government, Beaulac reported, "exhibited an extraordinary sensitiveness" on that point; Cortina "deeply regretted" the bank's refusal to finance the requested 500,000 tons; the growers grumbled over the offered price; a six cent tax had already been earmarked by the Cuban treasury for other needs. Still, Cuba's immediate problem was being resolved, and for this, Cortina told Messersmith, he was "deeply appreciative." After a little haggling, the bank even agreed to pay four dollars a bag. A struggle between large and small growers for representation on the sugar board delayed action on the authorizing legislation, but Messersmith, "working intensely" with Cortina and Saladrigas, finally prevailed. The bill Batista signed on 21 March was, as Messersmith noted with satisfaction, "a sound measure with practically no extraneous provisions in it, and no one was bought off and no special interest groups were satisfied to secure [its] passage." Messersmith considered the measure "a milestone on a road which we are endeavoring solidly to construct."[44]

But, as he made clear to Cortina, Eximbank development aid was contingent on Cuba's "cleaning house." By late January, Messersmith could report real progress in that direction. His appetite whetted by American sugar aid, Batista declared war--selectively--on corruption and mismangement. He singled out the armed forces, where there was plenty of both; but more because he feared Çolonel Pedraza as a rival, possibly out to subordinate him as he, Batista,

had subordinated Laredo Bru. Messersmith applauded Batista's dismissal of crooked officers and his cuts in the military budget. He did not see the army-Batista showdown in the making.[45]

For Pedraza the last straw was Batista's firing of his friend, the chief of the national police, Colonel Bernardo Garcia. One scholar reconstructs the record to show that Garcia was fired when implicated in an illegal lottery scheme. Messersmith's despatches tell a different story: that Garcia's mistake was protesting Batista's involvement in the lotteries.

In any case, Batista and Pedraza now exchanged imprecations, declining the ambassador's mediation offer. For the first three days of February, Messersmith recalled in his memoirs, Batista was "practically a prisoner in the Palace." On the third Messersmith reported "a real danger of revolution which may or may not involve civic strife." But Pedraza did not move, and Batista seized the initiative. At 4 AM the next day he left the palace and drove to the main barracks at nearby Camp Columbia to make a dramatic personal appeal to the troops. While Pedraza slept at home in Havana, the army was submitting to its commander-in-chief. Messersmith was awakened by a message from Batista that the situation was under control, asking him to arrange flights to Miami and exile for Pedraza and two associates. Batista was back in the capital by mid-morning. He looked "utterly fatigued" at his 11 AM meeting with Messersmith, but satisfaction also registered, for, as he told the ambassador, the insurrection

had been put down with the loss of exactly one drop of blood: Batista had pricked his own thumb on a button wire.[46]

"On the whole," Messersmith wrote Welles the next day, "it was one of the most interesting . . . series of events I have passed through." The Department invited him to withdraw and consolidate the six cables sent during the crisis, but he refused, not wanting to "give the historian later a wrong impression of the degree and promptness with which we had informed the Department."[47]

Most of all, he acquired new respect for Batista, who had "gained tremendously in stature" in Cuban eyes and his own. Batista had displayed self-confidence and courage Messersmith never dreamed he possessed, not only in subduing the rebels, but also in sparing their lives. The ensuing weeks brought still more constructive action. Batista's anti-corruption campaign expanded into the civilian sector, and while politics often intruded, before long Messersmith was reporting a clear improvement in public administration. A customs house reorganization was expected to raise $1 million a year in additional revenue. Seven million dollars in new taxes were levied. A special presidential commission was set up to study fiscal reform and to review the budget. In contrast to the dragged out battle for the public works settlement, a bill providing compensation to the American owners of expropriated land sailed through the senate. Without hesitation, without even attempting to bargain, Cuba granted permission to the United States Navy to enlarge the Guantanamo facili-

ty and to conduct maneuvers on Cuban soil. Cortina told him that Cuba was preparing to raise 300,000 troops for an American war effort, and that Batista had ordered all officers to learn English. A measure outlawing the Communist Party was being drawn up. Effective anti-fascist decrees had already taken effect. In suppressing Axis propaganda and apprehending Axis agents, Messersmith concluded on 25 February, Cuba was "going further . . . than any other American Republic . . . further even than ourselves." After a year to the day in Havana, he could "safely say that on the whole we have good reason to be satisfied with developments in Cuba." [48]

This was an understatement, considering the uncertainty he had walked into. Many factors figured in the Cuban improvement. The new constitution and Batista's unsullied election set the stage for constructive diplomacy. Martinez Fraga's removal advanced Cuban-American understanding. The presidency seemed to sober Batista.

Messersmith deserved some credit. Once he began feeling at home and taking a personal interest in his mission, he became a tireless fighter for the American program. Now it was he who was wearing down the local politicians, to achieve the public works settlement and sugar authorization act, rather than they him. In the process, political non-interference became almost a dead letter. Pausing to ask himself "how I can be so occupied in this little country," Messersmith decided that it was hard getting "things done in the interests of both countries without giving the appearance of our med-

dling in internal affairs." Appearances were all that mattered anymore. From 1937 until the spring of 1940 the United States had practiced a policy of genuine aloofness from Cuban politics, making Batista responsible for stability. This experiment proved a qualified success at best. Almost immediately, or so it seemed, Cuba started unravelling. Although a reliable ally of the United States in inter-American forums and an eager participant in hemispheric defense, she looked increasingly like a potential Achilles heel.[49]

The fall of France and the specter of war in the New World had forced American policy to backtrack. To prevent further disintegration Messersmith, with the State Department's tacit approval, had begun playing a more active role in Cuban politics. But Cuban good behavior owed less to political maturity or Messersmith's enterprise than to economic neediness. Even during the time of political laissez faire, Cuba was not allowed to forget her basic dependence upon the United States. State stepped up its economic pressure after Batista's election. Personal greed, a passel of political debts, and a sincere desire to uplift his countrymen made the Cuban leader hungry for American economic aid. Finding that he had been misled, that it was not his for the asking, he simply accepted the terms dictated by the United States. These terms sometimes trespassed on Cuban soveriegnty. She had to enact the public works settlement, renew Decree Law 522, and undertake a spate of internal reforms to qualify for long term assistance. Batista rapidly complied. He

may have loved Americans no more than before, but he was doing a convincing impersonation of the loyal ally.

He certainly convinced Messersmith, who in April 1941 proudly certified to Roosevelt and the State Department that Cuba's behavior was such as "to warrant our proceeding without delay" with an Eximbank development program. Home for consultation, he "appeared satisfied" with the decision to recommend a $25 million credit for public works and agricultural diversification. Eximbank approval, he reported on 8 May, was "deeply appreciated by this friendly people who feel themselves bound to us by unseverable ties."[50]

Having aimed "to make Cuba as little as possible a source of preoccupation to us at home," Messersmith soon had reason to feel that he had perhaps succeeded too well. Cuba seemed forgotten when

solidly in tow. The economic aid program was exasperatingly slow getting started. The State Department, without shame, discovered new financial claims against Cuba to be settled first; the Eximbank officials needed in Havana to draw up the contracts and approve the initial projects were scattered all over the hemisphere on "more pressing" assignments. Other American actions seemed positively calculated to harm Cuba economically and to injure Cuban feelings. In Washington the senate passed the O'Mahoney bill, raising duties on imported sugar. At the same time, early July, the United States Navy, with new Caribbean bases to supply, withdrew the liner Oriente and her refrigerated cargo hold from the New York-Havana service,

throttling tourism and a promising export trade in perishable produce. To add insult to injury, the War Department ignored Havana's military overtures and steadily opposed arms transfers to Cuba under the Lend Lease act of 11 March 1941.[51]

After doing everything to deserve Washington's consideration, and cash, Cubans were resentful, and properly so, Messersmith felt. Washington's attitude offended his sense of fair play, jeopardizing American interests and his mission's hard-fought success. As always, he spoke up. "I do not want to make myself a nuisance," he wrote for the second time that week (21 May) to Eximbank president Pierson, begging his presence in Havana. In letters to his superiors, Messersmith blew off steam at the War Department, for "incompetence." He objected to State's "alleged [financial] claims," which were "dubious" and beneath the embassy's dignity. Pressing them, he warned, "would tend seriously to prejudice our moral position in Cuba." On 5 June he informed Hull that the Oriente withdrawal and the O'Mahoney act had aroused "grave fears and resentment . . . in others American republics as well as here," furnishing "food for attacks to all the unreasonable elements." "Single acts of this kind," he reminded Welles in two letters that very same day, "can go far towards causing infinite harm [to] our whole good neighbor program . . . and our own defense." He urged some "gesture of reassurance" to Havana.[52]

In response, the State Department dropped the financial claims. At Hull's urging, the administration rallied to secure House rejection

of the O'Mahoney measure. Cuban-American military cooperation perked up. Lend lease talks got underway in Washington. On 7 November Ambassador Concheso signed an agreement providing Cuba with $7.2 million in military materiel. The Navy bestirred itself to get on with the Guantanamo negotiations. Batista's long standing offer of air bases finally found takers: in July Welles got together with Army chief of staff George C. Marshall and Navy chief of operations Harold R. Stark to review potential Cuban sites.[53]

Best of all, on 12 June Pierson arrived with a team of experts. At noon the next day, in what Messersmith described as a "simple and appropriate" public ceremony at the presidential palace, Pierson signed the sugar contracts. The $25 million development credit was all the talk at the embassy dinner that evening and at meetings the following day. Pierson delivered a homily on morality in public administration, urging Cubans to choose projects that made economic as well as political sense. Pierson's advisers stayed behind to continue negotiating with Cuban counterparts.[54]

With the loan program on track, attention turned to a related issue, long-deferred revisions in the Cuban-American trade agreement. Because the United States had now committed $25 million to Cuban economic renewal, the islanders reasonably assumed that Washington would grant the tariff concessions its own experts deemed vital to the program's success.[55]

As always, sugar topped the Cubans' list. With rising freight charges and labor costs, Cuban sugar was pricing itself out of the American market. To restore her competitiveness, Cuba requested a seventeen per cent reduction--from .90 cents per pound to .75--in American duties. She sought stability through a permanent minimum quota, in effect a guaranteed share of the American market. To avert "the greatest crisis . . . in the history" of the Cuban cigar industry, Cortina petitioned for a minimum annual quota of twenty million cigars duty free. Moreover, he claimed that Cuba's fledgling cattle industyr faced "ruin" unless the United States provided an immediate outlet for Cuban beef that could not be consumed domestically "due to the bad economic condition of the country."[56]

On 27 September the State Department responded, and Cuba got a shock. The American counterproposals included the seventy five cent sugar duty but no permanent quota; a reduction in the beef duty but no emergency quota; and reductions in tobacco duties but no concession on cigars. In return the United States wanted concessions on thirty nine items ranging from razor blades to packing crates. Some of Washington's demands were especially irksome. Before 1937 most of Cuba's rice, the mainstay of the islanders' diet, came from the Far East. By 1941 ninety per cent of it came in from the United States at half the duty. The difference was $1 million a year to the Cuban treasury. The United States now wanted still lower duties and

and a permanent quota to protect its exporters from any revival of Asian competition. It wanted a concession on tires and inner tubes just when two new Cuban rubber factories were going into operation. It wanted a concession on cigarettes despite the admitted plight of the island's tobacco industry.[57]

In October Washington added yet another condition inimical to the diversified development it was supposedly sponsoring. Whatever the point in demanding tariff reductions on products soon to be rationed, vital strategic considerations underlay the bid to purchase Cuba's entire 1942 sugar crop. Sugar was one of many essential goods being stockpiled for war by Secretary of Commerce Jesse H. Jones's Reconstruction Finance Corporation and subsidiary agencies in cooperation with the State Department. Back in Havana after two months vacationing on the Delaware shore, Messersmith was instructed to propose the purchase to Cortina, emphasizing what "a splendid opportunity [it] was for the Cuban Government and the sugar industry to implement their assurances of cooperation." If this was not persuasive enough, he was to make clear that the trade agreement talks, "although separate, are in fact closely related to the purchase proposal"--that is, that Cuba would receive tariff concessions only to the extent that she cooperated on the sugar sale.[58]

Based on experience, Cuba was well advised to approach the sugar sale with caution. Similar transactions with the United States during World War I had burned her badly. Selling at a fixed, discount

price in return for a guaranteed market, Cubans had then resentfully watched Washington turn around and resell the sugar abroad at a profit. Meanwhile, soaring import prices were snuffing out a brief boom. Worse still was a prolonged postwar depression, as the overstimulated sugar industry suffered a precipitous drop in demand.[59]

Cubans wanted safeguards this time around, and Messersmith urged that she get them. The United States, he wrote Hull on 27 October, needed the sugar, but "we must keep in mind the problems we are creating for Cuba" in fostering expansion and disrupting diversification. Cuba would therefore insist on a multiyear contract and, above all, the permanent quota already rejected by the State Department. As such a quota would help cushion the inevitable postwar contraction, Messersmith concluded, "it is the equitable thing for us to do." Cortina was talking in terms of a sliding price scale adjustable to the price of Cuba's vital imports. Messersmith was "strongly impressed by the reasonableness of this point of view." And Cuba's proposal that resale profits, if any, be divided equally struck him as "eminently fair."[60]

Because Washington paid him no heed, the talks that opened there on 12 November foundered fast. Convinced that Cuba had to sell, the American negotiators were surprised when the Cubans insisted on their price and the safeguards Messersmith advocated. The Americans accused them of being "unreasonable." On 26 November they headed home for "reflection."[61]

Two developments broke the logjam. The first week in December, Washington met the major Cuban demands. It granted the division of profits and minimum sugar quota, and came up with an acceptable money offer: 2.65 cents per pound for the entire 1942 crop, less domestic needs and 65,000 tons for export elsewhere.[62]

Tentative agreement was thus in place when Pearl Harbor blew up. First thing Monday morning, 8 December 1941, Cortina told Messersmith formally that his government viewed Japan's crime "as an attack against Cuba and as against every one of the American states." Batista volunteered Cuba's "absolute and decided cooperation . . . and solidarity." The island government promptly declared war on the Axis, even though, as Messersmith reminded State, "Cuba is practically defenseless and open to attack." More materially, Batista squelched suggestions that Cuba try to renegotiate the sugar deal to take advantage of the loss of Philippine production. He told the growers, Messersmith later revealed, that the agreement was "a matter of cooperation, and that the sale would be carried through even if it takes the Army to make sugar deliveries."[63]

Messersmith recommended that Washington reciprocate with trade concessions. The supplementary treaty negotiations were going badly, he wrote bluntly to Welles on 8 December, because of the Department's unrealistic demands on "articles which I had hoped we had forgotten and some of which present real difficulties of the Cubans." In his opinion Cuba had "good and adequate reason" to resent

and reject any tobacco quid pro quo. On yet another new American stipulation, raising duties on Cuban salt, Batista was adamant; he would do nothing that exacerbated the poverty of the salt miners of his native Oriente province, who had cared for him as an orphan. And it was "unreasonable to ask for a concession on an article [rice] which they are practically exclusively importing from us." Persisting in bargaining "purely on a commercial give and take basis" would "introduce an element of uncertainty, distrust, and complete disillusionment in our relationships with Cuba, which I believe will cause us in the end great trouble and more loss than to Cuba."[64]

The State Department came back with a somewhat better offer, and Cuba accepted. Washington agreed not to increase the salt tariff, and withdrew its demand for a rice quota. Yet the final concession was still Cuba's to make. The permanent sugar quota, her precondition for the purchase deal, came under fire on Capitol Hill. Rather than "risk offending members of Congress and perhaps jeopardize Cuba's future position," the Department suggested, in place of the offending provision, an exchange of notes committing Roosevelt to "doing [his] best" to prevent reductions in Cuba's quota. Cortina reluctantly assented. On 23 December he and Messersmith signed the second Cuban-American supplementary trade agreement. This paved the way for conclusion of the purchase of the 1942 crop four weeks later.[65]

It was appropriate that Messersmith now depart for a new post. Roosevelt had called back in November with word of his appointment to

succeed Josephus Daniels as ambassador to Mexico. Messersmith had expressed the usual mixed feelings: pride in a promotion to what "some believe is the most important and most difficult diplomatic post we now have"; regret at leaving Cuba, "where my life has been as happy as life can be anywhere . . . and the work so pleasant."[66]

No such ambivalence was evident among the Cubans, who, as he wrote Hull on 28 November, were "naturally very upset" by the news. "They are quite personal and somewhat temperamental in their dealings, and I think they have become accustomed to me and view with a good deal of concern the change involved." They needed time to adjust, and he did not want to leave in the middle of trade and sugar negotiations. The Department agreed to a delay in his departure because there was "nothing very pressing at the moment" on the Mexican-American calendar.[67]

Ratification of the sugar purchase thus brought Messersmith's Cuban mission to a close. In twenty one fruitful months, he wrote proudly to Welles, "every outstanding and long-pending matter in our relationships with Cuba" had been resolved. It had required "infinite pains and effort, but the results have been more than worthwhile." On every front, Cuban cooperation was "wholehearted and complete." "I do not believe," he assured Spruille Braden, his designated successor, "you could begin your work under more favorable auspices."[68]

Cuba gave him an impressive and heartfelt farewell. When he rose to speak at the 23 January sugar industry dinner, the ovation, reported one guest, "practically shook down the lighthouse tower at Morro Castle." Another highlight was Batista's 5 February banquet. Instead of the expected toast, the Cuban president delivered an emotional fifteen minute tribute to, as Messersmith put it, "our country and me." In their final private talk, Batista expressed "great satisfaction" with the state of bilateral relations, "which he could not conceive as being better." He also "had unusually generous things to say about me . . . --which I will not go into."[69]

Another Cuban politician had Messersmith's measure. Senator Jose Casanova had sparred with him over the public works settlement and collaborated frequently with him since. Casanova's remarks at the sugar dinner noted the evolution of Messersmith's Cuban experience. "When he learned all about us," said Casanova, "he decided to help us." Indeed, the more Messersmith had learned, the better he understood how very troubled Cuba really was. He had come to see her desperate need for economic development, a cause he had championed in Washington. From 1941 on he advised his superiors to adopt "an enlightened and long range view" in dealing with the island. He responded retrospectively to critics of the State Department's illfated Cuban policy by recalling his own efforts to put "the Cuban economy on a sounder basis."[70]

Yet, as he departed for Mexico, Cuba was still more dependent upon sugar and American imports than on the day he arrived. The war-time boom was already underway; the 1942 crop, sold in advance, would total 3.8 million tons, the largest since 1930. Diversification did not stand a chance. The $25 million Eximbank credit, which had incited such high hopes, faced uncertain prospects. Everyone knew that the American defense effort would take precedence over modernization of the Havana water works (one of the contemplated Eximbank projects) for scarce construction materials. By July 1944 the Eximbank had spent only $3 million. According to Batista's enemies, most of that sum wound up in his Swiss accounts.

Messersmith had helped Cuba get the best possible terms in her commercial bargaining with the United States. But the established relationships, which benefitted many Americans and many fewer Cubans, were strengthened during his tenure in Havana. That, he often protested to Washington, was just what he aimed to do. "I am not a special pleader for Cuba," he once wrote in her behalf to Hull. "I am a special pleader for only one country, and that is our own." In 1940 and 1941 the United States had especially high strategic and commercial stake in the Cuban status quo. State Department policies reflected this. The idea was to consolidate American influence, not to withdraw. The $25 million "development" credit, ostensibly to make Cuba more self-sufficient, became a pay-off to Batista, who had proved his worth. The State Department paid lip service to diversification while

demanding tariff concessions designed to inhibit it.[72]

The longer Messersmith knew Cuba, the harder he questioned these policies and the harder he worked to mitigate them. Even so, his notable success was in carrying out the Department's program, not changing it. Welles congratulated him for having "established the authority of the Embassy." But his conscience, which kept him working rather than playing, would not let him savor the praise. He was passing on to Braden a "slate very largely clean of current problems," but also, as he was aware, a slate of grievous social and economic problems still festering. From Washington's standpoint the Cuban situation in February 1942 could hardly be better. Messersmith was not deceived. "We are," he wrote Welles late that year, "sitting on a volcano in Cuba."[73]

Chapter Five

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Chapter Six

Mexico City, 1942-1946

He planned to sail from Havana on 7 February. That morning, however, German submarines were sighted in Cuban waters, and the American naval attache suggested improbably that they were laying in wait for him. With his inflated sense of self-importance to Berlin, Messersmith took the threat seriously. Accordingly, he telephoned the State Department with a change in travel plans. "As public enemy number two or three of the Nazis in the United States," he felt that "some spectacular action" on the high seas could not be ruled out. For himself, he said, he wanted nothing more than another opportunity to upbraid Nazis, even as their prisoner, but there were the other passengers and the crew and his own family to think about. Marion's mother, a spry eighty-two, was accompanying them to Mexico. Rather than exposing everyone to danger, he stayed behind, catching a later flight to Miami. There he joined his women for the rail trip to Laredo, Texas, and connections to Mexico City, Federal District.[1]

The move to Mexico, the Messersmiths' ninth post together, posed no novel logistical problems, but it was unusually hard on them. For the first time they felt their years. He slept badly on the train down. The thin air in Mexico City bothered them for weeks. He found the embassy residence in abject disrepair; renovations ordered in 1938 had not even started. His party moved into

the Hotel Geneva, where the food wreaked havoc with his stomach.

Conditions at the embassy also gave him upset. The genial Daniels had enjoyed far better staff relations than had the neurotic Dodd in Berlin, but the State Department had found him no easier to control. Weak on organizational ethic, he ran a lax ship by Messersmith's standards. With "the best intentions," he complained to Welles, Daniels "did a good deal to impede good administrative practice rather than facilitate it." The sprawling United States establishment of twenty nine consular offices and an embassy staff of 162 fairly cried for Messersmith's strong hand. Good men--he considered counselor and former charge d'affaires Joseph McGurk and commercial attache Thomas Lockett among the very best--were working at cross purposes. He cited slipshod political reporting, duplication of function, inadequate coordination of Americans on government business, and cramped quarters, and pronounced stern verdict: Daniels's, he wrote Raymond Geist, "was the most sadly neglected of any [embassy] I have yet seen."[3]

It almost seemed that Messersmith begrudged his predecessor his success--success where it had counted most. All Daniels had done, in his modest way, was to help steer Mexican-American relations off a collision course onto an historic road of cooperation. Daniels' nine years in command witnessed a resurgent Mexican Revolution. Beginning in 1934 President Lazaro Cardenas attacked the Catholic Church, confiscated and redistributed land, and championed indus-

trial workers, especially the employees of the American-owned oil companies. When the companies ignored a decree on wage and benefit increases, Cardenas on 18 March 1938 nationalized their assets. Mexicans celebrated in the streets. The State Department, Assistant Secretary Messersmith not dissenting, calculated that economic and diplomatic pressure would force Cardenas to relent. The companies organized the boycott of Mexican oil. The new government monopoly, Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex), found itself unable to obtain vital machinery and tanker transportation; the country was soon awash in crude. Lurid oil company propaganda warned away prospective tourists with tales of banditry on Mexican roads and streets. At Hull's insistence, the Treasury Department stopped buying Mexican silver. On 26 March Daniels was ordered to deliver a blunt protest and then return to Washington. A break in relations seemed imminent.[4]

Daniels disregarded his orders, and tempers cooled. On 1 April Roosevelt told reporters that the Good Neighbor policy would not be sacrificed to save the oil men. Daniels' repeated contention that nationalization was irrevocable started sinking in. Pressure tactics could not and did not work: the boycott simply drove Mexico to trade with the Axis. In grudging recognition of a fait accompli, the Department began examining the question of compensation. The companies, however, refused to negotiate seriously. Convinced that the Mexicans were incapable of running the oil fields themselves,

the companies bet that the elections of 1940 would bring more sympathetic chief executives north and south of the border. They were doubly disappointed, for Cardenas' hand-picked successor, General Manuel Avila Camacho, won handily over a more conservative opponent. As a good will gesture, Roosevelt sent Vice President Henry A. Wallace to Camacho's inauguration. In his address Camacho pledged "to make relations between the United States and Mexico better than they have ever been before."[5]

Daniels became his active partner. Oil industry intransigence, Daniels repeatedly warned, was frustrating the rapprochement sought by the new president and his still more fervidly pro-American foreign minister, Ezequiel Padilla. Indeed, by the middle of 1941 Hull and Welles seemed ready to wash their hands of the oil men. Damning facts had come to light, showing, for example, a big discrepancy between what they claimed the expropriated properties were worth and the figures they were using for Federal tax purposes. After three years of utter inflexibility the companies had exhausted their claim to official assistance. It was fence-mending time in the Americas. With Daniels and Roosevelt nudging things along, a comprehensive settlement was reached and signed at the State Department on 19 November 1941. A joint commission would set compensation due th companies. Mexico pledged $40 million fo satisfy other American claimants. The United States in turn extended a $95 million package of economic aid--in effect, as the New York Times observed

sourly, "furnishing Mexico with the funds to pay for the properties it had expropriated." Wall Street winced and the companies shrieked betrayal.[6]

For Mexican-American relations, however, the agreement was gold. The countries officially became friends and, what was more, unofficial allies. Camacho had already begun siding with the United States in the world crisis. In January 1941 Mexico made a major sacrifice in ending oil sales to Japan, a ban soon broadened to embrace other strategic raw materials and the other Axis powers. In a July agreement the United States promised to purchase Mexico's entire exportable mineral output. Mexico impounded some Axis property--including much-needed oil tankers--and dismantled a largely inconsequential Nazi apparatus.

With the cpmprehensive settlement and Pearl Harbor, Mexican-American military cooperation went forward. Padilla's condemnation of the Japanese attack was swift and emphatic, and his paean to Pan Americanism at the Rio Conference in January 1942 was positively inspirational. Mexico broke diplomatic relations with the Axis, and interned some Axis nationals. Preparations to repel an anticipated Japanese invasion of the west coast commenced under now-General Cardenas and American Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt. A Joint Defense Commission (JDC) institutionalized this cooperation. A lend-lease agreement neared completion. The oil property evaluators, Morris L. Cooke for the United States and Manuel J. Zevada for Mexico,

were concluding their deliberations. Every day seemed to bring another cultural or economic mission from Washington. The pace was astonishing. Historically no nation had more reason to hate the United States and side with its enemies. During World War I several thousand troops had been required to hold down the border with a neutral but hostile Mexico. Before this second world war was three months old, Mexico, although not a belligerent, had become a pillar of hemisphertic spolidarity.[7]

This was Daniels' brilliant legacy, and Messersmith appreciated it. Certainly, he wrote Welles, "no one could begin his work under more favorable auspices than I am beginning mine here." He merged smoothly, if lighteheadedly, into official life. Operating out of his hotel suite hindered him somewhat, but his Cuban connections aided in arranging introductions. On the golf course adjoining President Camacho's Cuernavaca retreat they had their first "intimate contact." With Padilla and the interior minister, Miguel Aleman Valdes, they made a convivial foursome. Messersmith remembered "four husky caddies" keeping score on the basis not of strokes, but of political rank: the president, the ambassador, the foreign minister. Everything was simpatico. Messersmith and Padilla quickly warmed to each other. A lawyer trained in Washington, New York, and Paris, Padilla was on common ground with the brisk, punctillious Messersmith, perhaps more so than with Daniels, the self-styled "shirt-sleeve diplomat," who, in string tie and vest, had the ebullient air of the

country politician-publisher he was, Messersmith did not smile nearly as often. He looked the part, and sounded it, too. After nine years Daniels still possessed only the barest rudiments of Spanish; Messersmith's command of the language, unspectacular but improving, impressed Mexicans by comparison. He was to enjoy access to a Mexico that Daniels, for all his good will, could never know.[8]

The contrasts to his popular predecessor went on display on 24 February, Mexican Flag Day, when Messersmith presented his credentials. In remarks aimed in part to calm any Mexican apprehensions about North American career ambassadors, he dedicated himself to tolerance and understanding a la Daniels. Warm words for Mexico's incumbent administration were pro forma, but his praise for former president Cardenas's "program of social betterment" was definitely not the State Department talking. Local editorial writers called approving attention to his concluding pledge to work for a Mexico "strong, happy, and free."[9]

These were ambitious goals, but Mexicans may not have appreciated how seriously he took them. For Messersmith, Pearl Harbor had been a shock and a relief. "Japan could have done us no better service," he wrote a week after the attack, "for nothing could have consolidated opinion more than this." Finally the doubts and debates were behind; the world war Messersmith had foreseen was underway. With American might the criminal scourge would be destroyed, and probably soon. He did not think that "Japanese resistance will last

very long," and saw in Hitler's first Russian winter "the beginning of the disintegration of German power." Sadly misinformed about Axis strength and American readiness, he thought it "at least possible that the war will be ended in a year."[10]

The sickening string of setbacks in the Pacific theater bred doubts about the outcome. Messersmith offered verbal reassurance. The road ahead, he told Mexican newspapermen on 14 February, would be "long and hard," but victory was assured. Although the cost would be great, the democracies, with their superior resources and moral purpose, would prevail in the end. In the United States, he declared, "we are transforming our industries and our social life to create the most powerful war machine in the world." The Axis could never match the forces upholding eternal verities: that, as he told another Mexican audience, "man is essnetially noble; that his soul does possess dignity; that his personality is inviolable; and that man without freedom is more degraded than a slave in the galley."[11]

But the democracies had responsibilities beyond crushing their enemies. As soon as the war was underway Messersmith began to ponder the graver challenges he anticipated when it was over. On 14 April, Pan American day, as Japanese armies raced through Burma and Java, he told a Mexican symposium that "the problems of the peace after the victory is achieved may . . . be even greater than those of the war." The Atlantic Charter promised a richer life for all people, not just those liberated from Axis chains. A new "world

organization" was needed to ensure that "peace and security will not again be threatened." Until the war-shattered world was back on its feet, the United States would have to shoulder the main security burden. Messersmith trusted that his country would be ready to assume the responsibilities of world leadership. 'Everybody realizes that isolationism is dead," he told a gathering of Foreign Service officers, and appeasement would be buried with it. He hated to say it, he told a dinner audience, but "the peoples of the democracies have no one but themselves to blame" for their present tribulations. The losses to date and the sacrifices ahead need not have been, had the warning signs been heeded. The lesson--to confront international evildoers forthrightly--would perhaps be better learned for the wartime ordeal.[13]

There was another likely fruit of this war. Partnership in the anti-Axis crusade was a precedent for partnership in the postwar. This was nowhere more important than in Messersmith's corner of the world. He saw a brilliant opportunity for the United States and Mexico to fulfill their political and economic interdependence, to create and working model of cooperation for the rest of the developing world. Already, he reported to Henry Wallace, who retained a lively interest in Mexican affairs, "the war has enabled us to make more progress in our relationships with this neighbor than fifty years of peace."[14]

But it was only thanks to Mexico's leadership that they were on the same side. Camacho seemed almost too good to be true. "We have in the President of Mexico," Messersmith informed State,

> a man who is thoroughly convinced of the necessity for the closest cooperation during and after the war, and [he repeated for emphasis] he envisages this collaboration continuing in the political and econmic field after the war. He is a man deep and firm in his convictions and he had been a tower of strength for us here. He is a man who in his personal life is clean and honest and fine.

He was also a believer in free enterprise and capitalist development for his country, under whom private investment enjoyed "a freedom which seemed only a short time ago impossible." Although nominally neutral, Mexico was contributing unstintingly to the war effort. Messersmith had "not approached the Mexican Government for cooperation in any manner which we have not received to the degree that could be expected." Padilla, who was "very close" to the president, was carrying out his policies "with courage and clear convictions." It was indeed "a great fortune for Mexico and for all of us in the Americas" that men of their outlook and caliber were at the helm.[15]

But Messersmith was too much of a realist to ignore the flaws in this rosy picture. Foremost was the fact that the government's enthusiasm for collaboration seemed practically limited to itself. Camacho, he observed on 24 March, was "far ahead of the people" in his pro-Americanism, and Padilla had virtually no "strength . . . among the masses." Mexican public opinion was overwhelmingly "apathetic" to the war, "which has not touched them much." Most Mexicans favored neutrality for their country. No matter what Camacho said or did, the ambassador explained to Hull, "there remains the historical background, particularly among the

the masses," where there was, to put it mildly, "no love for us." A century of rancor could not be expunged overnight. Mexicans were confused by the shift away from traditional friends Spain and Italy, toward age-old tormentors Britain and the United States. Leading Mexicans fed public suspicions. Diehard Yankee baiters like labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano were always troublesome. The Catholic Church, though much reduced by the revolution, remained the most potent force in Mexican life, and, Messersmith wrote Henry Wallace, "it is an extraordinary thing how, among the lower clergy and even among the laity . . . there persists this idea that Hitler and his cohorts are the protectors of the Catholic Church and of religion."[16]

And there was General Lazaro Cardenas. A United States Navy intelligence report of 26 March quoted him as assuring his countrymen that Mexico's armed forces stood prepared to "repell any attempt at invasion, whether such enemy forced came from the west . . . or from the north [original italics]." That bespoke the mood of his talks with General De Witt, which were already in deep trouble. In late May he created an incident by intercepting an American military team sent to reconnoiter Baja California for suspected Japanese air fields. Navy intelligence concluded that the former president was "at least as hostile as ever" to the United States. Secretary of War Henry Stimson thought that Cardenas might be "in touch with the Japs."[17]

Cardenas was to remain an enigma to Messersmith. "Strong, obstinate, opinionated," yet--but Messersmith was convinced that he was "no Nazi and no sworn enemy of the United States." What he was was a nationalist who spoke for the masses who snickered at Camacho's contentions that an intimate relationship with the United States could be consistent with Mexican honor and sovereignty; that American power, long Mexico's curse, might now be an asset to her economy and armed forces; that participation in the war would be materially and morally uplifting. Mexicans demanded proof. For them, cooperation with the United States was on trial. Messersmith was acutely conscious of that fact. Four years hence Mexicans would pass judgment by electing Camacho's successor, for Mexican presidents were constitutionally restricted to a single six- year term. So it the war was an opportunity, it was also a test, with a deadline--a test of persistence, understanding, and fortitude; the toughest test yet for Messersmith's diplomacy.[18]

His perception of the precariousness of good relations informed his four years in Mexico. It explains his ambivalence about her 30 May declaration of war. Rather than wasting time kidnapping American diplomats, German U-boats were preying on merchant shipping in the Gulf of Mexico, among other places. On 14 May one of the confiscated Italian tankers, rechristened Portrero del Llano,ferrying oil between Tampico and New York, was sunk off the Florida coast. Few crew members perished. Yet Mexican outrage was surpri-

singly muted. Almost sixty per cent of those polled in the capital on 20 May opposed a declaration of war. Hence the Camacho government limited itself to verbal protests to Berlin.[19]

Even this went too far for many Mexicans, while not going nearly far enough to satisfy opinion north of the border. Americans in 1942 were intolerant of ambiguity: either Mexico was in the war as a friend or out as an enemy. Yet, as Messersmith argued, Mexican belligerency would be pointless. She could contribute no armed forces to combat. Indeed, current cooperation might be jeopardized by the popular opposition that a declaration of war would surely provoke.[20]

The same arguments applied after 14 May, but Messersmith recognized that, for better or worse, belligerency was now inevitable. 'No answer which the Germans can make [to Padilla's protest] cna . . . satisfy the national honor," he observed on 20 May. Germany delivered its answer two days later, a torpedo amidships the Faja de Oro, another tanker, causing seven more deaths. Soldier-at-heart Camacho, who was following the war news from map rooms set up at home, would not be denied. On 28 May an extraordinary session of Congress assembled to hear the president's war message. The legislature approved by a vote of 53-0. The New York Times, stalwart of the oil men, hailed a "new era in Mexican history." Many glasses were lifted to the common cause.[21]

Messersmith put a fast stop to festivities at the embassy. He had stayed out of sight during the crisis, made no public statements, and still the rumormongers ground out plausible lies. One theory making the rounds had the United States sinking the tankers. By another, Camacho was supposed to have declared war when the the United States threatened to occupy the country if he did not. Mexican-American friendship obviously had a long way to go. For four years Messersmith would lecture Americans in Mexico and the United States on the new etiquette. Mexico sought material assistance to be sure, but attitude and deportment could not be bought. More than anything else, he wrote Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson and every top Department official in turn, Mexico "expects and demands respect which she believes due her, as a sovereign state, of her good faith and intentions." Mexicans were understandably touchy about their much trod-upon national honor, especially in dealing with the arch offender. Americans would have to unlearn bad habits and suppress the time-dishonored impulses, officious, missionary, and mercenary, that Mexicans had always found insufferable. Failure to do so, Messersmith promised, would cause a rapid chill. For trusting the United States with so much reason not to, the Mexican government expected implicit trust in return. "We must give faith and credit to her acts . . . and put confidence in her officials," always mindful that "there is a past . . . which people here are trying to forget, which could easily

be pushed into the foreground."[22]

Unfortunately, Messersmith found many interested Americans oblivious to the history, fragility, and ground rules of the new relationship, and, worse, resistant to enlightenment. American military men evinced gross insensitivity. They insulted their counterparts on the Joint Defense Commission and in the field by insisting that American units carry out air and sea patrols from Mexican bases. Mexicans maintained that with the hardware promised by Washington, their newly-reorganized 52,000-man army could and should assume such responsibilities. They would welcome American troops into Mexico in an emergency--but only then. Messersmith thought "we should be more pleased than otherwise that it is their desire to make every effort of their own"; the government had "to actually do something" in order to "awaken full consciousness among the Mexican people of the war and their interests therein."[23]

These considerations carried no weight with a War Department convinced that the defense of Mexico was too important to be entrusted to Mexicans. The Baja mission, which led to the border imbroglio with Cardenas, was typical: "ill-timed, ill-advised, and unnecessary," Messersmith complained; the Mexicans had just completed their own thorough, fruitless search for Japanese airfields that, as the Americans soon concluded sheepishly, did not exist. The Mexican government had pocketed its pride, and did so again when the United States requested bases in the Yucatan for anti-submarine operations. With

reluctance and irritation, Padilla assented, but for a month only, until American aircraft were delivered to enable Mexico to take over the task. Messersmith suggested to Washington that a month might just suffice if Mexicans trained in the air alongside American pilots; the planes could then be turned over to Mexico. On those terms, the army lost interest. Then it ordered the dismissal of key native personnel employed by Pan American Airways on the grounds that they were security risks--a "marked show of lack of confidence," Messersmith sputtered to Welles, "so dangerous that we cannot even think of it." The order was rescinded.[24]

Despite occasional blow-ups and persistent mutual wariness, Mexican and American officers accomplished some things together. A protracted negotiation over the installation and command of radar stations in Baja was finally resolved; by the end of July three posts were operational, manned by Americans in civilian garb. A month later the Mexican army took charge. A similar compromise provided upgraded air-ground communications, long needed by Americans flying the Mexican route, under an earlier agreement, to the Canal Zone. Construction of three military airstrips began when it was agreed to defer consideration of the conditions governing their use. Field relations improved dramatically when Camacho promoted Cardenas to the cabinet as defense minister. Messersmith saw to it that enough lend-lease equipment--armored and other vehicles and especially aircraft--had arrived by 16 September, Mexican Independence

Day. to mount an impressive public display. The heads of the American section of the JDC, General Stanley D. Embick and Admiral Alfred W. Johnson, came for the occasion. A Mexican bellyache felled the general, but Johnson managed to join Messersmith in Camacho's box to view what the ambassador described to Welles the next day as "the finest military spectacle [ever] staged in Mexico."

> One could tell how proud the officers and men were of this equipment, and there was every evidence that they had known how to organize and use it. I think if there has been any doubts as to the justification for such shipments, yesterday's show was amply justification. An army needs tools and without tools it cannot work nor have spirit.

Mexican generals were "very voluble in their expressions" of gratitude.[25]

Privately, however, bickering and bad blood still predominated. Messersmith played social director for the American mission, hoping through contact with Mexico and her people to promote understanding of her negotiating position. He brought the top military men together socially at the embassy on 18 September, and Cardenas even dropped his customary scowl, becoming "very affable and cordial." The president of the republic arrived, uninvited but welcome, and Johnson and Embick took Camacho aside after dinner for chitchat on strategy, to the latter's delight. Messersmith felt that "if the only result we got out of this mission . . . was to have had this dinner, it was well worthwhile."[26]

In other words, the mission had been a failure. Embick and Johnson came expecting liberalization of base-use restrictions and other concessions, and returned home empty handed and angry. In a

12 December letter to Messersmith, Johnson called Mexico the least cooperative of the American republics aside from still-neutral Argentina and Chile. He could not forgive Mexican "unwilling[ness] to permit United States forces to operate" on her territory. The Mexicans, he suggested, were primarily interested in what they could get for themselves in American weaponry, and quick to assail American "lack of confidence in Mexican valor" when their materiel demands went unsatisfied. Thus, Johnson concluded, Mexican-American military collaboration "cannot be said to be entirely satisfactory."[27]

As Messersmith pointed out in response, Johnson ignored the whole "history of controversy" between the two nations. Mexico, he reminded him, was "the only American Republic from which we have taken territory and with which, in fact, we have been at war." The continued "occasional" maltreatment of Mexicans in the United States rubbed salt into century-old wounds. Mexico was not Brazil. That she was cooperating as much as she was was "extraordinary." All Latin nations were seeking American arms; Mexico "should be commended for trying to build up her armed forces, to aid in hemispheric defense." And she was "entirely justified" in rejecting American troops on her soil until her own were found wanting. The notion that "it is our troops that have the sole responsibility and are solely capable of defending Mexican territory," he observed brutally, was "our own complex . . . to overcome."[28]

He could not do whatmonths of intimate contact had failed to do. Friction persisted between Mexican and American officers. Military relations grew no worse only because the strategic situation by 1943 made Mexican assistance increasingly superfluous. The Japanese invasion of Baja looked increasingly like a figment of overwrought imaginations. JDC meetings now concerned the abandonment of the very projects that the United States had fought tooth-and-nail to obtain.[29]

On the civilian side, Messersmith finally took charge. But the struggle nearly claimed him as a casualty. The war brought forth a bevy of new United States government agencies with business abroad. Indeed, no sooner had he departed Washington in 1940 than the rationalized foreign service he had achieved there began breaking down. In August 1940 an independent Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) was created over State Department opposition. With a first year's budget of $3.5 million (to $60 million by 1943), Coordinator Nelson A. Rockefeller flooded the Americas with news and information and his own people. Soon OCIAA agents calling themselves "cultural attaches" or "special assistants to the ambassador" were setting up shop throughout the hemisphere.[30]

From Cuba Messersmith rallied American diplomats to resist. Accept Rockefeller's emissaries, he warned prophetically, and "there will be no limit to the number of men who will be sent out on these special details." He was writing as one of Rockefeller's "media ex-

perts" was in Havana supposedly reporting on public opinion, but "the poor fellow is . . . utterly incompetent to begin with," and so was pestering the embassy to do his research. Washington had asked for an evaluation of his performance, and Messersmith intended to tell all and demand a veto over new assignments of personnel. He hoped that his colleagues would be equally frank.[31]

Harassed in Havana and in other American capitals with strong U.S. ambassadors, Rockefeller availed himself of Daniels' hospitality and the ambassadorial interregnum to entrench himself in Mexico. Messersmith discovered to his dismay that the OCIAA had "succeeded in going further here than I believe anywhere else in the Americas." He would go no further. "Our friend Mr. Rockefeller means well," he wrote a likeminded Spruille Braden in Havana, but his people were bunglers, even when it came to worthwhile activities, like artistic exchanges. Most of Rockefeller's undertakings were elaborate and costly publicity stunts that insulted Latin intelligence and converted not a single soul to the Allied cause. On the bright side, Messersmith saw "a hell of a time" awaiting Rockefeller the next time he had to go before Congress to defend himself. Until then, "we must see to it that these projects are kept in line . . . The Coordinator's Office is here today and maybe gone tomorrow." The damage it caused would fall to State to repair.[32]

Messersmith's "absolutely determined stand" won him no popularity contests in Mexico or in Washington. At an April consular

convention he reportedly "blew off in a two-hour harangue against the Coordinator's Office." Rockefeller's men complained to their chief. Duggan, the liaison man, directed Messersmith to desist and to "lend his full cooperation" in the future.[33]

Instead, Messersmith continued trying to take over the coordinator's programs and get rid of his field agents. He smoothly assured Washington that the embassy press officer had established relations with Mexican journalists that "could not be better or more effective"; he did not need Rockefeller's help. In July he announced that resident Americans, who "know the situation better than anyone," had formed a committee to monitor local opinion; some of Rockefeller's agents, he informed Duggan, could not be spared for service elsewhere. He had one wing of the ground floor of the embassy residence converted into "a little theater with a bar and comfortable seats," where his committee scrutinized the coordinator's films to confirm their suitability. By 1943 the embassy was distributing all of the coordinator's publicity materials--and withholding materials deemed inappropriate.[34]

Organization and reorganization preoccupied Messersmith his first year in Mexico because, as he wrote Geist, the embassy had to meet "not a theoretical or a future proble, but an actual emergency situation." Messersmith worried, perhaps excessively, about an invasion--not of Germans or Japanese, but of clumsy American bureaucrats like Rockefeller's men whom he distrusted with the "delicate flower"

of Mexican-American relations. He complained about Daniels' inattention to administration not from fussiness or prejudice, but from conviction that by permitting the erosion of the State Department's authority in Mexico, Daniels had placed his real accomplishments in real jeopardy.[35]

Messersmith vowed to regain the lost ground, and this required restructuring and revitalizing the State Department's Mexican operations. No one entered the embassy compound without being instantly reminded that a war was in progress. The embassy, the Christian Science Monitor told its readers, was "the busiest spot in Mexico." Workmen scurried about, enlarging and spruicing up the physical plant. Inside, Messersmith drilled his troops. He insisted upon "complete unity of action, coordination, and exchange. I said that I would not tolerate anything less, and if any officer stationed here was not willing to conform he would have to go home. Some did. But it seemed that two bodies replaced every one lost. By 1943 the staff exceeded 250, making it the largest American embassy in the world.[36]

In July Messersmith's reorganization was implemented, and it too was geared to ongoing bureaucratic battles. Expanded cultural and information sections optimistically anticipated the coordinator's demise. But the core of the new configuration was an economic unit of eight separate sections and a staff of sixty housed in their own six story building. It reflected the economic thrust of Mexican-

American relations during the war. Mexico's assigned role was that of supplier of vital raw materials. Rubber, fibres, oils (fuel and edible), chemicals, and especially minerals were the things that Americans were in the country on official or private business to get. The myriad contacts and contracts they would form in the process were the crucible of Mexican-American relations.

Messersmith endeavored to interpose his authority over these activities. At first, this posed no problem for him. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was in charge of procurement, and its representatives in Mexico passed his scrutiny and worked with him effectively. Dr. Alan Bateman, a Canadian-born Yale professor of minerology, had arrived in January 1942 representing the Metals Reserve Company, an RFC subsidiary, to negotiate a new master contract for the purchase of Mexican ores. Messersmith, always leery of specialists, was lavish in his praise of Bateman. The scientist's "competence, discretion, and judgment," and close ties to the embassy, paid off. On 29 April he signed an agreement with the Mexican interior and labor ministries that was a monument to a formidable diplomatic, as well as technical, talent. The United States agreed to pay liberally for all the lead, zinc, copper, feldspar, antimony, mercury, manganese, and tungsten that Mexico could produce; the miners' union, a party to the agreement, made concessions on working conditions and job tenure. The Camacho government pledged not to raise producer or export taxes. The RFC promised to assist in securing vital machinery, raw

materials, and consumer goods to absorb the expected avalanche of dollars and so hold down inflation. Bateman, Messersmith wrote admiringly, has "done a very fine job in a very fine way."[37]

His colleague Floyd D. Ransom represented the Rubber Reserve Company, another RFC satellite. A longtime resident businessman, Ransom was everything Messersmith considered important: "upright [and] constructive . . . speaks Spanish like a native . . . skillful, tactful, and understanding." In March, and in close touch with the embassy, he commenced rubber negotiations parallel to Bateman's. Mexico's acceptance of limits on domestic consumption presaged early agreement.[38]

Meanwhile the State Department was busy promoting economic cooperation. In late March Padilla visited Washington, got an audience with Roosevelt, and signed an agreement with Welles supple menting the November general settlement. The United States promised to underwrite two industrial projects--a steel mill and a refinery tp process high-octane aviation fuel--"as soon as the needed equipment becomes available." Negotiations for a reciprocal trade agreement got underway. On 19 April the two countries exchanged notes accepting the Cooke-Zevada compensation recommendations.[39]

Messersmith cheered Washington's efforts to rehabilitate capitalism in Mexico and assert its authority over foreign economic policy. He objected, however, to makng supply commitments that could not be kept. Indeed, Welles informed him confidentially that equipment shortages meant a delay of at least two years, "possibly even

longer," in getting the high octane plant underway. Padilla had been told as much, but had insisted on a commitment for public consumption at home. Messersmith regretted this. Other projects still more vital to Mexico and the war effort were more deserving of scarce resources. With the shipping shortage, the whole procurement program moved on Mexico's sagging roads and rails. Equally important to Messersmith, so did Mexico's hopes for economic development. Bateman's report concluded flatly that the Mexican national railways were "inadequate to handle the expected ore and metals transportation." A third of the locomotives were laid up for lack of spare parts, mechanics, and repair facilities; crumbling track caused an average of one accident per hour. In April Messersmith welcomed an OCIAA railroad mission. He was pleased to report his daily meetings with Major Howard G. Hill, the chief engineer.[40]

This tidy arrangement soon faced a mortal threat. An executive order dated 13 April 1942 transferred responsibility for foreign procurement and preclusive buying to the Board of Economic Warfare (BEW), headed by Vice President Wallace. The BEW was authorized to engage in direct negotiations with foreign governments to meet its mandate.[41]

Cordell Hull and Commerce Secretary Jesse Jones were obvious losers. For them, a Hull subordinate recalled, the order of 13 April "was a painful, bitter, and humiliating defeat." For himself, Messersmith was "sick at the stomach." The president that had brought the commercial attaches into the State Department had signed an order,

he wrote in exaggerated excitement, "practically put[ting] it out of business." Messersmith assumed that "the President had not been informed of the full implications and extent of this Executive Order when it had been presented to him." Hull had in fact been vacationing in Florida, but he returned with a vengeance on 20 April. At a 1 May press conference, with Hull at his side, Roosevelt reaffirmed the State Department's "complete charge of the nation's foreign relations," and promised further clarification of the BEW's role.[42]

A relieved Messersmith was "infinitely happy." He had been spared a painful duty. "I had definitely made up my mind," he wrote Geist, "that if this order was carried through . . . I would go home and tell the President and Hull and Welles that I could not continue to assume the responsibility of a post in the field." Roosevelt's pronouncement and the "Clarification and Interpretation" issued on 21 May withdrew the BEW's authority to conduct government-to-government negotiations and placed BEW personnel in the field under the supervision of the chiefs of mission.[43]

Messersmith intended to enforce his jurisdiction. The BEW's "wings have been clipped," he noted, "but if not able to fly, [it] will be able to peck and annoy." It retained its province over procurement, and Wallace's executive director, Milo Perkins, moved aggressively into the field. Resource-rich Mexico commanded commensurate attention. A tide of BEW newcomers tried Messersmith's patience. By June the BEW had six men in Mexico assigned to rubber

production alone, all supposedly doing "work which has already been done or which is underway in [Ransom's] competent hands." The result was "utter confusion" at best and, at worst, fantastic or fraudulent development projects, which would bear no rubber for years, if ever. To duplicate Bateman's work, a new BEW minerals mission was on its way under a Colonel McCoy, a former military attache who Messersmith knew "never took his duties very seriously" and was personally interested in some of the mines he was scheduled to inspect. Messersmith demanded surcease. In negotiating procurement contracts, the Mexicans want to "deal with one man and one organization here, and with the Embassy." He proposed that Ransom be that man, that all technical people report to him. Ransom was summoned home for talks, and apparently won the BEW's confidence. In late June Messersmith was notfied that procurement unification had been accepted.[44]

This arrangement, coupled with the embassy reorganization, produced what Messersmith thought was "probably as ideal a set-up as we can have." Ransom met daily with Messersmith and Economic Counselor Lockett. The result was a busy and productive summer and autumn 1942 for Mexican-American economic relations. Procurement contracts with individual producers were signed almost daily, stimulating Mexico's economy. With administrative unity the embassy was able to police these activities, stopping McCoy and fellow carpetbaggers from selfishly exploiting BEW's ardor and naivete. "The crooks and the 'coyotes,'" Messersmith wrote triumphantly to the

State Department's Phillip Bonsal, "have been routed." Although some money went into exploration and experimentation, operating mines and closed marginal mines, which could guarantee quick delivery, got the lion's share of Washington's business.[45]

Interest in other Mexican resources created new complications. As the oil expropriation controversy wound down, the United States, at the worst possible moment, began paying the piper. The State Department and the oil companies had failed to cripple Pemex, but substantial damage had been done while Mexicans taught themselves how to run, and how not to run, the oil industry. Desperately short of capital, vexed by labor troubles and corruption, Pemex in its first four years barely kept pumping. Exploration virtually stopped. In 1942 crude production hit bottom at under thirty five million barrels, compared to 193 million in 1921. Only the payroll grew. Maintenance had slipped so badly that there was real danger of "complete failure or disastrous accidents."[46]

In July 1942 the formidable American wartime petroleum bureaucracy swung into action. A half dozen concerned agencies were represented on the Foreign Petroleum Policy Committee (FPPC), but the driving force was the Petroleum Administrator for War (PAW), Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. In its preliminary report, FPPC declared a state of emergency in Mexican oil. Pemex officials were invited to Washington to arrange for urgently needed repair materials and replacement parts. FPPC also proposed to dispatch a team of experts to conduct a "rapid field survey," to deter-

mine how most expeditiously to increase Mexican output. On 23 August a PAW mission headed by the eminent petroleum geologist Everette L. DeGolyer arrived in the Mexican capital, with instructions to work through the embassy.[47]

DeGolyer confirmed the urgent need for American equipment. The future of Mexican oil, however, was moot and very much on American minds. Much more than for strategic metals, postwar considerations determined wartime petroleum policy. In the United States, concern over dwindling domestic reserves and increasing dependence on foreign suppliers had been voiced as early as 1919. Soaring consumption since 1940 converted the skeptics. By mid 1942 negotiations had begun around the world to ensure long term American access to foreign oil. With Mexico's propinquity and vast potential reserves, she naturally figured prominently in Washington's plans. The question became one of means. Mexico had no credit and so no imminent prospect of developing her reserves by herself. The necessary sums--at least $150 million to start, it was thought--would have to come from the United States.[48]

Here the consensus broke down. One of wartime Washington's hottest internecine quarrels erupted over the issue of private versus government development of foreign petroleum. Bull Moose Progressive Ickes stood foursquare against the oil barons. He had privately evinced satisfaction at Cardenas's nationalization, and the ensuing crisis in bilateral relations convinced him that the

American companies were irresponsible and all to influential at the State Department. Attempting to circumvent both, he went so far in February 1942 as to propose that Roosevelt try to purchase the nationalized Mexican oil lands. This harebrained scheme, which earned a swift presidential rebuff, betrayed Ickes' blissful blindness to Mexican realities.[49]

His hostility to private development made allowances for cronies. Edwin W. Pauley, president of the Fortuna Petroleum Corporation of California, was the administration's oil man, treasurer of the Democratic national committee, bearer of the impressive title "special representative of the president on petroleum." He showed up in Mexico in March 1942 with a contract calling for construction by his own syndicate of the high octane plant agreed to by Padilla and Welles in Washington. He propsoed to supplement an Eximbank loan with $20 to $30 million of his own, and to use his influence to arrange priority shipment of machinery. This munificence carried a heavy price tag. The Pauley syndicate would have the first option on the refinery's entire exportable output in perpetuity, plus ten per cent off the top for himself. Pauley annual profit would be in the range of $1,5 million. These numbers made the Mexicans balk. When they did, Pauley threatened to pull strings to cut off critical American exports unless they signed.

Unaware of Pauley's blackmail and without actually having read his contract, Ickes supported the project. He correctly suspected the State Department of engaging in its own blackmail over the

refinery. Hull and Welles intended to use wartime aid to Pemex as a lever to bring back private capital. This was consistent with the State Department's whole global emphasis on free enterprise and free trade. But the singlemindedness with which those objectives were pursued in connection with Mexican petroleum suggests that the oil companies' cries of anguish and charges of sell-out in November 1941 had found their mark. Hull and Welles now saw a chance to recover lost face, taking advantage of Mexico's desire for assistance to pry open the door slammed shut in 1938. [51]

August 1942, with the Pemex mission in Washington and De Golyet headed south, was deemed a "singularly propitious moment" for Messersmith to seek "clarifications" from Camacho on Mexican petroleum policy. He was instructed to make clear that wartime aid to Pemex would be tied to a "comprehensive program" providing for long term development as well as increased emergency output.[52]

Messersmith delivered the message unenthusiastically. He was deeply concerned about Mexican oil, but more from Mexico's perspective. He objected to the nationalistic thrust of American petroleum policy, a policy that considered South American reserves, as one Ickes aide put it, "more important to the United States than to the countries that have them." Messersmith consistently took a longer view. He cared about access to Latin oil, but, with rare insight, understood that true hemispheric security required economic development of the southern nations. For Mexico, petroleum

was a potential salvation; it may yet prove to be. Messersmith wanted the Eximbank to finance the necessary hardware. But Mexico would have to raise exploration capital privately. American taxpayers could not become partners in Mexican wildcatting. Cardenas's petroleum law would therefore have to see "sound changes," especially in the provision that barred foreigners from contracting with Pemex. Mexico, he held, should then negotiate long term exploration and operating contracts--not concessions--with American companies--not necessarily the expelled companies--on "equitable" terms.[53]

Camacho agreed in principle. His message to Roosevelt upon the Cooke-Zevada agreement had stressed his government's "desire to grant ample guarantees to the participation of private capital, national or foreign, in the exploitation and development of the material resources of this Republic." Camacho was losing patience with Pemex. But, as Messersmith knew, he was unfree to act against it. It may have been a "singularly propitious moment" for Hull and Welles, but their initiative put the Mexican leader on an uncomfortable spot. The symbolic importance of the oil expropriation--18 March had become a national holiday--had failed to register upon Washington. Camacho was already suspect for his pro-Americanism, and he not had Cardenas to contend with in the cabinet, standing guard over his presidential legacy. Messersmith pointed to "a very decided change" for the better in Mexican public opinion, but felt it was too soon to subject that opinion to the emotional stress of the petro-

leum issue. Camach, "wise, prudent, and cautious," thought so too.[54]

In effect, then, Messersmith shared Hull's and Welles' objective but disagreed with their timing and tactics. As their insistence he continued to press for "clarification," which finally arrived the first week of 1943. State was almost sorry it had asked. Speaking for the government, Padilla said that "they did not see the possibility of the participation of foreign, and of course American capital, except in the foreign marketing of Mexican oil." He indicated, however, that this verdict might not be irrevocable, andexpressed the hope that emergency aid to Pemex not be delayed.[55]

Messersmith hoped so too, but he joined the Mexicans and the State Department in disowning the Pauley plan. The "crooks and coyotes" had apparently not been routed after all. Upset by Pauley's threats, Camacho sent his contract to Messersmith, who remembered reading "the most one-sided contract that I have ever seen." He advised Camacho not to sign "under any circumstances," and not to fear for Mexico's vital imports.[56]

In January 1943 Pauley stalked into Messersmith's office to inform him that the contract was going to be signed. Messersmith disagreed. Pauley insisted. The ambassador said no. "No voice was raised." "Well," the oil man rejoined, "perhaps the next time I come in here and sit in this chair, there will be someone else sitting in your chair." Messersmith "smiled, and said, 'Mr. Pauley, I am equally convinced that [if that happens] that someone else will say

exactly what I have said.'" They rose, shook hands, and Pauley left, "completely sure of himself."[57]

Pauley had smugly outsmarted himself. He had failed to secure Commerce Department approval for an Eximbank or RFC loan. Roosevelt did not care who built the refinery, just that someone did. Ickes had embraced Pauley principally from frustration with State Department obstructionism. The State Department attacked Pauley because he was Ickes' man; because, as Hull had written the president on 27 November, his scheme "suggested a type of exploitation which might invite a repetition of earlier difficulties"; and, not least, because Mexico had not yet offered the right "clarifications" on the readmission of private capital. In February 1943 Roosevelt ruled out State's quid pro quo. He could not "see the relationship between this immediate need [for high-octane fuel] and 'the clarification of general petroleum policy.'" Under White House pressure, State seems to have found a graceful retreat in Pauley. The refinery went forward without him. On 19 March 1943 a Pemex team arrived in Washington, where the financial details were arranged. A reputable American consulting firm was hired to do the designs. Roosevelt stepped in to speed clearance of the machinery. Even so the project was not completed until 1945, too late for the war effort.[58]

Interests meshed better in tapping Mexico's human resources. Even during the depression 1930s western American farmers clamored for more braceros and fewer immigration restrictions. With Pearl

Harbor and the accelerated manpower drain, these calls became more insistent and more credible. In April 1942 another interdepartmental committee formed in Washington to study an urgent request from sugar beet growers for 8,000 Mexican farm workers. By June the committee had prepared a farm labor master plan for presentation to Mexico, which Messersmith was directed to do.[59]

The Mexicans were cool to the idea. Padilla's undersecretary, Jaime Torres Bodet, observed gently that "Mexican labor had gone to the United States before and the results had not been too good." During World War I thousands of braceros had been recruited directly by American farmers and then dumped into the depressed postwar farm economy to fend for themselves. Their plight created a scandal for the Mexican government, which was ultimately forced to underwrite their repatriation. Shocking accounts of exploitation and discrimination had come to light, prompting passage of protective legislation to which Washington's new proposal would have to conform, Moreover, Mexico wanted confirmation that the American labor shortage existed in fact, not solely in the imaginations of farmers intent upon holding down wages. Such studies would involve many departments of the Mexican government and take time, but, Padilla told Messersmith, the workers' welfare came first.[60]

He got no argument from the ambassador, who shared Mexican misgivings about the bracero business. Personally he suspected that "the alleged labor shortage" flowed more from greed than need. "Some

of our people at home," he wrote farmer Henry Wallace, "still think that Mexican labor can be brought in like cattle and exploited." Washington's proposal included various safeguards he was sure would prove unenforceable. Many of the migrants would encounter a side of the United States to which it was dangerous to expose them needlessly. Where Jim Crow laws were in effect, they applied to Mexicans as well as Negroes. He did not want to furnish additional ammunition to the professional anti Americans, who were already warning darkly of North American plots to waylay Mexicans for cannon fodder. From Messersmith's perspective, the American labor initiative posed more risk than it was worth.[61]

There was always the possibility, of course, that Camacho would politely refuse to go along. But he took Mexican belligerency seriously, even if his people seemed not to, a state of affairs he thought a labor program might help remedy. Besides, there were farm skills to be acquired and wages to be remitted home. Negotiators for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who arrived in July, yielded to Mexican demands for tougher protective guarantees. The agreement signed on 4 August stipulated the the United States government, not individual farmers, contract for the workers' services; certification of need and farmers' compliance with the established standards for wages and working conditions fell to Washington to enforce.[62]

Under close embassy supervision, officers of the Farm Security Administration began signing on braceros. In late September the first

contingent crossed the border, waving American flags, chanting "Viva la Roosevelt," searching in vain for the expected welcoming party. Instead they were hustled along by stone-faced American immigration and customs agents. This slight was brought to Roosevelt's attention, however, and he sent a warm greeting to the Mexican "soldiers in the battle of production," promising them "a more just compensation as well as a higher standard of living than you have enjoyed before."[63]

Indeed, the cash inducements--a thirty cent per hour minimum wage and three dollars a day subsistence in the event of unemployment--attracted moreMexicans to the capital than could initially be processed or transported. By 1943 the backlog exceeded 4,000, a small army for the Camacho government to house and feed and control. Suspending the need-certification requirement speeded up recruitment, throwing the burden onto the already overtaxed Mexican railways. A critical shortage of day coaches elicited suggestions that braceros be moved north in boxcars--political dynamite. Messersmith did "not want the suggestion to come from any source within our Government."[64]

The bottleneck pointed up the failure to follow up the recommendations of the American railroad mission. Major Hill's report blamed the decrepitude of the Mexican national lines largely on mismanagement. Seizing upon this, the BEW and OCIAA insisted that American-supervised managerial reforms accompany any aid program.

The State Department equivocated, despite Messersmith's warnings of impending "breakdown" and disastrous consequences for the war effort. Messersmith cared less about the program's scope--another source of controversy and delay--than that it got started and that the United States footed all or nearly all of the bills. After all, Washington had a "selfish interest" in keeping the Mexican rails running, and the Mexicans had their hands full financially with the petroleum obligations and vital public works.[65]

The railroad plan finally agreed to in November was a war measure, prompted less by concern for Mexico's present or future economic health than by fear of the dire consequences of inaction lovingly detailed by Messersmith. Seven and a half million dollars was to be drawn against the OCIAA and the White House. A team of crack American railway executives and technicians was assembled to oversee the program. Repairs began at once and continued around the clock. The key Mexico City to Laredo line, 802 milles long, was tackled first, torn up and rebuilt piece by piece. The rest of the system received attention in turn.[66]

As the threat of collapse receded, Messersmith began to discuss the rail situation in terms of Mexico's future. As he told reporters in March 1943, the two were inextricably related. "From an efficient railroad system," he forecast, "Mexico will obtain her industrial and economic impetus, not only in the present war period, but also after the war." Beyond the mission's patchwork,

an efficient system required attention to the chronic organizational and administrative probelms besetting the Mexican lines. The National Railways, like Pemex, suffered from too much government and politics. They were run not only as a public utility, but also as a rest home for politicos and their relatives. Featherbedding was rampant among the workers, who took orders from union leaders, not their supervisors. Such practices were not within the power of the American mission to change, as they found out. But with time they succeeded in bringing about major improvements, especially in maintenance and worker training.[67]

In November 1942, just after the exchange of notes covering the railroad program, Messersmith moved to head off a resurgent BEW. Its first offensive stymied, that agency now seemed to him to be trying to "take over the control of our foreign relations . . . via the backdoor." Lately, procurement chief Floyd Ransom had received a number of BEW "assistant, so termed," in a transpartent BEW ploy "to undermine and isolate him" and so regain BEW's procurement independence.[68]

What was worse, BEW field agents had begun to carry out their superiors' social philosphy. Wallace and Milo Perkins decided that money spent to increase the production of strategic materials should go in part to improving the workers' standard of living. Unhealthy, malnutritioned workers, they reasoned, were unproductive workers. Latins doing business with BEW were thus compelled to meet

elaborate codes for workers' housing, sanitation, health care, job safety, accident compensation, union representation, and more. Although BEW pledged to obey "all laws of the country of origin, so far as they affect labor relations," its standards held "regardless of the actual provisions" of local labor law. Wallace and Perkins refused to permit employers to hide behind the repressive laws in force in many American republics.[69]

But Mexico was different. Although Wallace and his associates liked to portray themselves as embattled keepers of the progressive flame, BEW had no monopoly on American idealism abroad. Happiness and plenty for the many fired Messersmith too. So did respect for others' institutions, a precept apparently lost on the well-intentioned Wallace and Perkins. Their insensitivity astonished him. With "the most advanced social legislation . . . of any country of Latin America," Mexico would not be preached to. The BEW was indifferent to the headaches its standards caused Camacho, who had to contend with demands for equality from the majority of Mexican workers not covered by BEW contracts.[70]

Messersmith's protests to Wallace were calm and reasoned. Mexico, he explained, was on its way to becoming America's number one supplier of strategic materials. It had "not been an easy task" woth so "many enemies of the United States here" and "a government very jealous of its sovereign rights." He had succeeded only by dealing with Mexico "on the basis of full equality and complete under-

standing." Unfortunately "some of our people at home . . . sometimes feel that we can do things in other countries just as we do them at home." That was a fallacy with unlimited potential to disrupt the procurement program that Wallace was responsible for promoting.[71]

He took an entirely different tone with the State Department. Either new BEW assignments stopped, he warned Duggan, or "I would have to resign. We are in a war and I am willing to do my part, but no agency of our Government . . . can destroy our position . . . This is strong language, but I mean it." He denied being "desperate or disturbed," a thought that must have occured to Duggan. He was tired, as usual driving himself too hard, as others noted and he freely admitted. His defiant streak definitely became more pronounced under stress.[72]

But there was nothing unbalanced in his trying to stiffen what he sensed was weakening resolve at State to stop the BEW's encroachments. Caffery in Rio and Braden in Havana were doing no less. Sensible or not, Messersmith's ultimatum failed. In fact, he soon learned that the Department had agreed to the appointment of additional "special assistants" to handle the embassy's economic work. Messersmith sounded off over the telephone to the State Department, but did not renew his threat. Instead he invited the BEW to come and survey Mexican procurement and to decided for itself was a "special assistant" was really necessary. December brought BEW

assistant director Hector Lazo. Lazo and his aides, a relieved Messersmith wrote Braden, "found our arrangement working so well here that they agreed that the appointment of a 'special assistant' in Mexico City was not necessary."[73]

On 15 January 1943 Messersmith left for Washington, with confrontation on his mind. He met Wallace on the 27th. Wallace's problem was that the embassy had largely usurped the BEW's functions in Mexico and was performing them all satisfactorily. Thinking of Mexico, Wallace admitted privately that "some of our men had not fully understood how to go about the job of working in a foreign country." Although he accused Messersmith of "thinking more about bureaucratic rights than . . . of getting the job done," statistics on present and projected Mexican production showed that the job was getting done nevertheless. During their conversation, Messersmith unkindly pointed out what Wallace already knew, that problem areas like the rubber program were precisely the areas in which the BEW had been most active. He went on to attack the labor clauses, as "interference in the internal affairs of the country," arguing that "we had no mandate whatever . . . to establish certain social or labor standards in other countries through the operation of our procurement and development program." Messersmith left both contemporaneous and retrospective accounts of their encounter, according to which, respectively, Wallace either "showed keen interest and understanding" or was "cold and difficult."[74]

The vice president, for his part, considered their talk "very satisfactory." They had agreed on procurement priorities for the coming year. Those priorities were achieved, on Messersmith's terms. When he returned to Mexico he saw to it that the BEW labor clauses were replaced by a provision stating unqualifiedly that "buyer and seller will agree to abide by all pertinent provisions of the Mexican labor and social laws."[75]

In July 1943 Wallace's ongoing feud with Jesse Jones and the RFC, the BEW's reluctant banker, spilled into the open. An irritated Roosevelt abolished Wallace's agency, transferring its responsibilities to a new Office of Economic Warfare. By that time, however, the BEW had ceased to play an important independent role in Mexico. Wallace neither forgave nor gorgot Messersmith's contribution to his downfall. A voluminous correspondence between them came to an abrupt halt. Messersmith asserted in his memoirs that Wallace "undertook a really definite effort to get me removed"; he was proud of having foiled a "fanatic," a "danger" to his country. Wallace may have delivered the cruelest cut. Writing in his diary in August 1945, he recalled his admiration for Messersmith's stand against Nazism in the 1930s. Now Wallace was convinced that "he is spiritually a Nazi himself, or at any rate a narrow-minded martinet with a 19th century outlook . . . " The irony was that these two willful men were fighting for like ideals.[76]

After the showdown with Wallace, Messersmith's 2 February 1943 conference at the White House was almost anticlimactic. From it, how-

ever, emerged plans full of symbolic and tangible importance for Mexican-American relations. Camacho had often expressed his admiration and affection for Roosevelt in Messersmith's presence. The two presidents, of course, had never met. So, when Roosevelt now happened to mention an upcoming presidential inspection tour of military installations in the south and southwest, Messersmith proposed adding on an exchange of visits with his Mexican counterpart. Roosevelt was enthusiastic, but on one condition: "George," he remembered him saying, "the big boy will have to go to see the smaller boy first"; their introduction should take place on Mexican soil. That would be a first for an American president, indeed, the first meeting between United States and Mexican heads of state since William H. Taft met Porfirio Diaz in 1909. Messersmith suggested they meet at Monterrey, site of a new $1 mi-lion industrial complex. Camacho could then return the visit in Texas.[77]

When Messersmith so informed the Mexican president, "his face was really luminous." Messersmith and Padilla tackled the details. A Secret Service agent was spirited in to make security arrangements. Not until 15 April, five days before Roosevelt's scheduled arrival, did speculation about a visit start flying. On the 17th, still in secrecy, Camacho and his entourage boarded the train that took them to a siding five miles outside Monterrey. Messersmith and Padilla continued on, meeting Roosevelt's train at the border. At three minutes past four PM, 20 April, as scheduled, the Mexican president and

Senora Camacho climbed into Roosevelt's car. So far, so good. Roosevelt struggled to his feet to greet them, revealing as he did the current Time magazine on the seat of his chair, cover up. By uncanny coincidence that cover bore the portrait of Manuel Avila Camacho. Messersmith gasped. So did the Mexican president. But he kept any hurt to himself, to Messersmith's eternal relief.[78]

Nothing more marred the occasion. Mrs. Roosevelt annoyed Messersmith by harping on the Negro problem in America over dinner, but otherwise the mood was festive. Thousands turned out at the last minute for a glimpse of the two presidents waving from open cars. Girls in native constumes showed the procession with flowers and confetti. A military parade followed, featuring infantry "in perfect order" and motorized units on their new American trucks. At the state banquet that evening Roosevelt and Camacho saluted the war effort, the Good Neighbor policy, and each other in prepared addresses broadcast to their people. The next day, the 107th anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto, the two presidents left for Corpus Christi, where they held brief private talks before bidding each other goodbye.[79]

Camacho's train hurtled back to Mexico City short two of its original occupants. Messersmith and Padilla opted for a more leisurely return trip. The two day drive south together gave them time to sample the provinces, which Messersmith had not had much chance to do, and to discuss what was already being hailed by friends

of both nations as a landmark in their history. Josephus Daniels considered the visits "a consummation of the Good Neighbor policy." "The general reaction," an ecstatic Messersmith wrote Welles on 30 April, "was magnificent . . . no event in Mexican history has made so profound an impression on so great a mass of the Mexican people."[80]

The timing had been perfect. The exchange of visits coincided with a crescendo of anti-Americanism, the subject of that embarrassing Time cover story. The enemies of collaboration were making disturbing headway agitating Mexico's wartime economic woes, all of which were blamed on the United States. Inflation in 1943 was a near-universal affliction that struck Mexico particularly hard due to the volume of her exports and the inadequacy of her price controls and anti-hoarding laws. Food prices went through the roof as farmers abandoned their corn and beans to fill lucrative procurement contracts for oilseed. In early 1943 inflation was running thirteen per cent per month. Mexicans found themselves with swollen profits and pay envelopes and frustratingly few manufactures to buy. Between 1942 and 1943 the Mexican money supply swelled by $220 million, a staggering forty per cent increase. The government expressed fear of social disorder or at least lagging production. The day before Messersmith departed for Monterrey, Finance Minister Eduardo Suarez had come begging relief. Messersmith explained Washington's policy of allocation equality, pointed out the privations all Americans were enduring, and urged Mexico to

tighten controls, raise taxes, and sell bonds to relieve the inflationary pressures.[81]

The two presidents had taken up these concerns. Camacho sought increased capital, as well as consumer, products. He showed Roosevelt what amounted to a master plan for Mexican development: a long list of industrial, agricultural, and social welfare projects requiring American materials and machinery. The upshot, announced simultaneously in Washington and Mexico City on 29 April, was the formation of a joint economic commission to study Mexico's problems and establish a framework for intergovernmental cooperation.[82]

Messersmith invested the commission with his aspirations for Mexican-American relations. "In the economic field," he told an audience in August 1943, "there are no two countries in the Americas whose industry and agriculture can be so closely and intimately helpful to each other, and so thoroughly complement each other, with almost a complete lack of any clash of interest." The United States needed Mexico now and, contrary to some thinking, he believed it would need her more in the future. Two years of bloody combat still lay ahead, but Messersmith fixed ever more intently on the peace. Would the world, and especially the United States, revert to the depression conditions that had begat this war, conditions that, as he well knew, even the New Deal had failed to cure? The thought haunted him. But there was an obvious solution, at least to him: develop and distribute the vast wealth of countries like Mexico,

provide the means to satisfy the crying needs of her twenty one million souls, and American farms and factories would thrive."Mexico," he wrote Welles on 3 June, "will never be a completely satisfactory neighbor until . . . the present wide gap between our standards of living is reduced." The joint commission could be a signal step in that direction. Its report proposed a forty-one project agenda and a new Mexican-American industrial commission to oversee the program. To Messersmith's intense satisfaction, the two countries were now committed to joint development of Mexico's resources and industrial base.[83]

Unfortunately, as he soon found, the commission's work and, for that matter, relations with Mexico generally, were inadequately appreciated in Washington. Roosevelt had promised Camacho an investigation of the allocations situation. Coordinator Rockefeller arrived in late May bearing a report showing how well Mexico was faring under the current system. He supplied, as the New York Times put it, a "much-needed explanation" why no additional exports were possible. To soften the blow, Rockefeller offered a $2.5 million public health program. Commendable on its face, the coordinator's gift was a relative insult. Brazil was the recent recipient of a $5 million grant, as was Chile, which had not broken with the Axis until January 1943.[84]

Messersmith protested. If the OCIAA could not scrape together at least as much for Mexico's health program as for Chile's, he snapped, "we had better forget about the whole thing." He acknowledged that "we have done . . . quite well by Mexico in the way of materials"--

almost twice as much per capita as Brazil--but statistics had no impact on Mexican discontent. "We cannot approach the question of materials," he admonished Welles, "with the idea that we have been prodigal with Mexico and that therefore she should be very happy." American policy proved that the squeaky wheel got the grease. Camacho's critics were muttering that Mexico would be treated more generously, like Chile, were she less cooperative. Allocations equality, Messersmith argued, was a nice phrase, but limited resources had to go where they meant most. He was "not making a case for Mexico. I am making a case for ourselves." Preferential treatment for the southern neighbor, he promised, would be amply repaid later on.[85]

His entreaties produced no modification of American allocation policy, no infusion of consumer goods, no new money for public health. By September the corn shortage had grown to crisis proportions, and again Mexico and Messersmith met frustration at the hands of Washington's wartime bureaucracy. The Department of Agriculture rejected Mexico's urgent request for 25,000 tons of corn on grounds that none was to be had, either from government warehouses or the free market. Starving Mexicans were gratuitously advised to tighten their belts.[86]

Messersmith appealed directly to Roosevelt. As we have seen, that was a habit he had never developed, despite, or perhaps because of, his reverence for the president and his loyalty to Hull.

But the situation changed in 1943. Mexico apparently meant more to Roosevelt since his visit. Messersmith's bold vision of a model partnership seems to have touched his imagination. There had been, moreover, easy rapport with Camacho, and Roosevelt, as he later wrote his ambassador, had "developed a high regard for [Camacho's] sound statesmanship [and] progressive and practical policies." This encouraged Messersmith to call upon the White House in order to help friend Camacho avert famine among his people.[87]

Second, the person Messersmith would have turned to at the State Department was no longer there. In September 1943 Sumner Welles was forced to resign to prevent a public scandal from breaking loose over certain homosexual entanglements he was alleged to have had. His loss was a grievous one for Latin America and Messersmith. He had relied upon Welles' informed and sympathetic advocacy of hemispheric unity. AS Irwin F. Gellman has noted, it was Welles who turned Roosevelt's and Hull's good neighborly pronouncements into concrete policies. Now he had the direction he had provided were gone. His successor, Edward R. Stettinius Jr., a former executive at General Motors and United States Steel, was a lovely person and not much more.[88]

So Messersmith increasingly looked to Roosevelt as an ally against his own intractable bureaucracy. The concerned agencies, he wrote the president on 23 Septemberm were insensitive to how "really serious" the Mexican corn shortage was.

> If Mexico cannot get some corn, it will have serious repercussions in the economic and political life of this country where, fortunately, there is more order than had prevailed here for many years. . . The whole program of the Mexican Government will be endangered . . . if corn cannot be got to meet the needs of the great mass of the Mexican people.

Camacho's government, indeed, Mexico's whole constitutional system might be jeopardized. "You know what can happen when people get hungry and you know that such things can happen more easily in Mexico than in some other places." The United States and the war effort could not afford food riots south of the border.[89]

Messersmith's appeal worked wonders. Roosevelt ordered an investigation and emergency food shipments. A complex deal was worked out between the concerned agencies and the Mexican government under which corn was exchanged for vegetable meal (oilseed residue), a tolerable animal feed. On 13 October Assistant Secretary Berle informed Mexico City that 5,000 tons of corn, first of five installments, was moving south.[90]

With this impressive display of presidential muscle behind him, Messersmith redoubled his efforts on behalf of his and Roosevelt's Mexican program. Again the obstacle was in Washington. On 25 October he was notified that Donald Nelson's War Production Board was about to rule unfavorably on the industrial commission's agenda. Materials for its projects would be subtracted from Mexico's ordinary allocation. The commission would be reduced to competing for export priorities against critical immediate needs.

This decision secretly pleased the State Department. People like Duggan tended to view the hemisphere as a monolithic whole rather than as the sum of its variegated parts. It was fine and good, in this view, to treat Mexico preferentially until the nineteen other Central and South American clients woke up and complained. From this perspective, the joint commission looked more like a threat to American unity than anything else.[91]

Messersmith, on the other hand, was openly outraged by Nelson's decision, which contradicted the understanding he had witnessed between the two presidents at Monterrey that "something special" was to be done during the war to materially aid Mexican development. The present commission and its predecessor had operated on that assupmtion. Was he now, he asked State pointedly, to tell the Mexicans that it had all been a big mistake? He appreciated that, as Nelson had explained, the "armed forces must come first," but what was he or Camacho supposed to make of reports that supplies were being diverted to rebuild reconquered Europe, southern Italy, for instance. "Our first duty," he reminded Stettinius, "is to our friends and not to our enemies."[92]

If for whatever reason the United States declined to assist Mexican development, others would do so. He was alluding to the Soviet Union. The Russians had become busier all over Latin America. In 1943 they sent Constantin Oumansky to Mexico City as ambassador to Mexico and the Central American republics. Messersmith knew him well. Oumansky had come to Washington as embassy counselor in 1938,

and immediately set to undermine his superior, Ambassador Alexander Troyanovsky. Within six months Troyanovsky had been recalled and Oumansky named to replace him. In record time he managed to alienate official Washington. Hull considered him "one of the most difficult foreign diplomats with whom he ever had to deal . . . insulting in his manner and his speech." Dean Acheson decided that Oumansky and his ilk "cultivated boorishness as a method of showing their contempt for the capitalist world . . . " Whatever his motives, Hull and Welles soon refused to receive him. The disagreeable duty fell to Assistant Secretary Messersmith, yet another one dumped into his lap. He put the Russian on notice: "I don't think you can go any lower"; Oumansky had better mind his manners. And he did--less perhaps because of Messersmith's admonition than because Messersmith had a little courtesy coming to him (unlike his superiors) as a true friend of Soviet-American cooperation.[93]

That Oumansky was on a trouble-making mission to Mexico to stir up anti-Americanism and establish a base for Soviet operations in the hemisphere was widely suspected in Washington. Indeed, he made quick contact with local leftists, like Lombardo Toledano, and disparaging comments about the United States. He cultivated Lazaro Cardenas with wondrous accounts of Soviet heroism and productivity. Russia, he promised the Mexican, would take care of its friends in the postwar; all the machinery and equipment Mexico needed would be available as soon as the Red Army finished mopping up Europe. Perhaps some farm machinery could be spared for Mexico at once.[94]

In his own conversations with Cardenas, Messersmith pointed out that western Russia was at present scorched earth, that the mammoth rebuilding job would require every scrap of steel and mortar the Russians could lay hands on. Not for years would Russia have materials to export. When those Soviet tractors arrived, Messersmith asked to be informed so that he could inform Washington, where the Soviets were pleading for just such machinery under lend lease. Only the United States, he maintained, would be capable of fulfilling Mexico's postwar needs, and, he added, "I was not saying this egotistically or as an American, but that it seemed sound judgment."[95]

To Washington he was a lot less certain. Oumansky would have to be watched because, like Messersmith's old nemeisis von Papen, skulduggery was in his blood. But Oumansky took orders from Moscow and, Messersmith held, anti Americanism and subversion were not Soviet policy any more, and probably less, than they were during the 'thirties. The Comintern, export central of the radical left, had even been disbanded in May 1943. After fifteen years of Stalin, Messersmith believed, "Communism in the full sense did not really exist any longer in Russia." He noted the nationalistic flavor of the Soviet leader's appeals to his people. Whatever they were fighting so valiently for, Messersmith concluded, "it was not for the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky." Rather than fomenting confrontation or revolution, the Russians "will be more and more inclined to work with us" to preserve the peace. Messersmith looked forward to expanded Soviet-American "understanding and collaboration" in the political

sphere.[96]

Pragmatic Russian nationalism told him--or so he told Washington--that she would become an economic competitor a lot sooner than he suggested to Cardenas. If the Soviets approached their rebuilding with "the same zeal which is now being put into the war effort," Russian industry and agriculture would soon be back on their feet. There would be help from friends and enemies. "As surely as the sun will rise tomorrow," he wrote Phillip Bonsal, the Russians will "use everything they can pull out of Germany in the way of technical assistance and material to help them in the reconstruction." With Russia as "a friendly competitor" for hemispheric markets, it was imperative that the United States "build up the economies of our friends." That was why Messersmith was "so interested in the Joint Mexican-American [Com]mission for Economic Cooperation."[97]

If he was playing a Russian card for effect, the gambit succeeded. Presenting his case personally in Washington and securing Roosevelt's support did not hurt either. After a White House conference on 27 January 1944, Messersmith met with Nelson, Hull, and other officials, and delivered the president's directive that materials for commission projects fall outside normal allocations. Roosevelt also asked Messersmith to emphasize "the importance which he had laid to the work of this Commission and [to] . . . other agencies of our Government collaborating with it. . . " Nelson promised "the most favorable treatment" consistent with "the exigencies of war" for commission projects. Fortunately war production

was finally meeting demand. The commission hastened to prepare detailed materials estimates for the War Production Board to work into his planning. In a 31 March cover letter to Nelson, Hull urged adoption of the commission's twenty one project 1944 program, with one major reservation. The State Department, he explained, had not completed its evaluation of the program's economic impact. He was endorsing the program because "failure to make substantial progress during 1944 towards the realization of this program might have unfor tunate political consequences . . . [for] Mexican-American relations." Necessary modifications could come later.[98]

Fear of Soviet penetration, gratitude to Camacho, obeisance to Roosevelt, and Messersmith's usual relentlessness do not entirely explain the Department's sudden burst of friendship for the commission. The "unfortunate consequences" Hull cited bore directly upon an obscure Mexican decree of 18 December 1943, a decree that hit Hull and his commercial advisers like a brick, reminiscent of the petroleum nationalization. The decree provided for "sweeping upward revisions" in tariffs on some 700 items. Perceiving a precedent-setting challenge to postwar free trade, the Department set grimly to its annullment. To Mexican ambassador Francisco Castillo Najera it expressed its "deep concern." On 15 January Lockett, on orders from Washington, confronted Eduardo Suarez, who tried to pass off the tariff hikes as revenue-raising, anti-inflation measures. When Lockett presented a personal appeal for time from Messersmith,

still in Washington, Suarez agreed to thirty days before the decree would take effect.[99]

This was not enough. The Department demanded that Mexico drop the dastardly decree altogether. Hull furnished embassy charge d' affaires Herbert Bursley with debating points to puncture Suarez's defense and force him to admit and recant his protectionism. Bursley was, however, also authorized to promise reinvigorated support for increased allocations if Mexico did Washington's wishes. Messersmith who returned to the capital on 10 February, got Mexico's answer the next day. He reported that Padilla "was as muc disturbed [by the decree] as we were . . . [and] was of the opinion that there should be no increase in rates whatever, and that the decree as a whole should be made ineffective." On 17 February Camacho did just that, over Suarez's bitter protests. Then Hull, quid pro quo, interceded with Nelson on the commission's behalf.[100]

As noted, this support was qualified. The basic contradiction in American policy toward the developing world that had surfaced during Messersmith's stay in Cuba now intruded itself into the Mexican picture. Washington professed to favor balanced growth but remained implacably hostile to the tariffs infant industry needed to weather American competition. Thus, in evaluating the commission's projects from an economic perspective, Hull and his advisers rejected those that "conflicted with our commercial policy"--that is, projects that would require tariff protection.[101]

Messersmith spotlighted the inconsistency. "We are living in a changing world," he observed, and from a front-row seat; for Mexico was in the forefront of southern nations poised to leap into the twentieth century. Having achieved political stability, "the country is going to settle down to developing her resources . . . and her internal life in general." The United States had a chance through the commission to play the instrumental role in both countries' interests. But Messersmith was convinced that "the industrialization of Mexico will go forward whether we help it or not," and not always along complementary lines. The fact was that "industries of a competitive character . . . have already been established in Mexico and will be established in the future and quite rapidly. They will need some tariff protection"--protection no Mexican government, not even one as friendly as Camacho's, could fail to provide.[102]

This prophesy was shortly borne out. A new Mexican decree dated 15 April 1944 authorized imposition of import controls. State Department free traders yelped, invoking the trade agreement, threatening reprisals and representations. Upon Messersmith's protest, Suarez agreed to notify Washington before the decree was implemented, but would go no further. That the Mexicans were about "to protect some phases of their national economy," Messersmith warned, was a reality to which Washington had better adjust. "If we are not prepared to do this," he added, "then our efforts in aiding these weaker economies are largely in vain." [103]

In Washington there were proposals to retaliate by withdrawing from the joint economic commission, which the State Department had only reluctantly supported all along. Rumors of an American pull-out persisted even as the sanitized 1944 program got underway. Finding the idea of withdrawal "incredible [and] astounding," Messersmith vowed to fight. "I may be getting older," he roared to trade division chief Harry Hawkins, a likely suspect, "but I am not getting tired and there are some things for which I will struggle to the last ditch when I know that they are in the interests of my country." The commission, child of Monterrey and Corpus Christi, could not "be sabotaged by narrow thinking in the Department." For himself, "there is no one more convinced of the soundness of [Hull's] trade policies," but "we must keep in account the legitimate aspirations of other sovereign countries . . . to improve their own well-being and standards of living" through industrialization.[104]

Hull assured him that there was "no serious discussion in the Department with reference to withdrawal from the Commission." It carried on until January 1945. By then all the equipment required for the 1944 program had been licensed and much of it delivered. The first project, a tomato-canning plant near Sonora, neared completion. With the relaxation of American export controls, materials were more available on the open market. So, by an exchange of letters between the two presidents, the commission adjourned sine die.[105]

In its final report, the commission congratulated itself for having "contributed substantially to the economic development of Mexico." This was true. But the commission's record and subsequent American policies showed that the realities Messersmith hammered home had not all sunk in. The commission's projects, however laudable, were mainly of the non-competitive variety, with heavy emphasis on tourism, export agriculture, and domestic aviation. The State Department never ceased combating Mexico's attempts to protect its industries. The Mexicans did what they had to do. By the end of 1945 restrictions had been imposed on almost a hundred imports, and the list was growing. Time and again, Washington ordered formal protests. Messersmith steadfastly resisted, arguing for accomodation and quiet discussions with Suarez. And he won a significant temporary rollback in restrictions, even though, or perhaps because, he had "the most complete sympathy" for Mexican protectionism.[106]

Nor had the State Department abandoned its efforts to bring back the American oil companies. In November 1943 Messersmith was instructed to find out whether the Mexicans had reconsidered their opposition to private participation and, if not, to talk them into it. Perhaps recalling his earlier reluctance, the Department appealed to his patriotism, expressing its "confiden[ce] that the personal attention which it knows you will give this matter will produce the results so necessary to the future welfare of this country."[107]

But Messersmith had always envisioned a cooperative relationship between the American oil industry and the Mexican government. He despaired of Pemex ineptitude, which deprived Mexico of revenues critical to her development. "Until 1945," one student agrees, "Pemex would have been judged a failure by almost any test." But the Mexican political climate remained inhospitable to change. The shadow of Cardenas loomed large over Camacho and Padilla. The rapid bureaucratization of Pemex had created a powerful vested interest from which they shrank. It was becoming increasingly clear that the Mexican petroleum law was sacrosanct, even if it held back Mexican development.[108]

Messersmith was therefore surprised, to put it mildly, when, during their conversation early in January 1944, Cardenas announced his receptivity to constructive changes in the law. It seemed to be the State Department's break. With Camacho's blessings, Messersmith flew home to help formulate a response. He arrived in Washington on 10 January. A car and driver from the Mexican embassy were waiting for him at the airport, an unprecedented courtesy. He was driven directly to the embassy, to be handed a message from Camacho, regretfully withdrawing Mexico's assent.[109]

What happened? When Messersmith returned to Mexico, a "visibly embarrassed" Camacho explained that Cardenas had resumed his opposition. Messages from Ambassador Castillo Najera in Washington had given him good reason to change his mind. Petroleum administrator Ickes was reportedly suggesting that the Roosevelt government

was prepared to finance Pemex's exploration and production program. There would be no need for the private companies. Naturally the Mexicans chose to investigate the possibility. Until they had, no agreement to the contrary was possible.[110]

An opportunity to move matters back on track presented itself in July. Padilla was preparing for an official visit to Washington, a trip arranged at Messersmith's initiative. The idea was to celebrate hemispheric unity and relations with Mexico, exigencies increasingly overshadowed by the climactic battle for Hitler's Europe. Padilla's stock as a statesman and a Mexican presidential candidate in 1946 also promised to improve. Discussions with Roosevelt, Hull, and other officials were scheduled, in the course of which Messersmith trusted that the petroleum loan rumors would be laid to rest once and for all.[111]

Pomp and Hull and the red carpet greeted Padilla in Washington 6 July. His ten days were a whirl of receptions and excursions, highlighted by tea and talks at the White House. He returned to Mexico overflowing with gratitude. Messersmith concluded that the trip had "deepened the bonds of friendship which he already has had for us and for this reason alone [it] has been worthwhile for our two countries."[112]

These platitudes were all he could muster. The Department had already notified him of a "fly in the ointment" on Padilla's visit. The oil loan had indeed come up on conversation with Roose-

velt. Unfortunately Padilla emerged more convinced than ever that a big loan was in the offing. Roosevelt directed him to Ickes, who naturally did nothing to discourage him. Hull was so informed by Padilla on 12 July.[113]

The news made for "one of [Messersmith's] few sleepless nights" so far in Mexico. Thanks to Pemex's dismal performance, Mexico, for the first time in her history, was a net importer of petroleum in 1944, and would remain so until 1949. The misunderstanding in Washington, Messersmith feared, "will merely . . . delay any progress"toward Mexican regeneration. As to the source of the confusion, Messersmith recalled Roosevelt speaking about joint development of a Mexican oil field as an American military reserve. Under that scheme, the United States would pay all costs--estimated at $3-$4 million--build storage facilities and fill them, and then turn a proven, producing field over to Mexico. Messersmith suspected that the president, "who has so much on his mind these days may . . . have confused this limited idea with the broad question."[114]

That was just what had happened, as Messersmith made plain in a 19 July memorandum to Hull. Although Messersmith explained the misunderstanding, Padilla was ordered to lodge a formal request for negotiations based on his Washington discussions. As Ickes continued to promote the idea, a presidential ruling was needed. The pressures of the war and the campaign for the fourth term and his three week post-election holiday at Warm Springs delayed the matter until Decem-

ber 1944. Messersmith flew home for what proved to be his last face-to-face encounter with Roosevelt. They had not seen each other since January, and Messersmith recalled being "shocked beyond measure by the change in his appearance." His judgment and phenomenal master of detail seemed unimpaired, however. Messersmith was vastly relieved when he said that a large loan for exploration "was out of the question and not to be considered and that he would not consider it"; Messersmith should continue working toward the strategic reserve and "equitable arrangements" between the Mexican government and the American companies. Roosevelt ordered him to inform Ickes, who subjected him to an hour-long harangue on pol company evils. Padilla, whom Messersmith saw on 3 January 1945, was much more understanding.[115]

After clarifying his Mexican oil policy, Roosevelt turned to a topic also much on his visiting envoy's mind. Messersmith's stars all pointed to an imminent change of posts. His sixtieth birthday back in October 1943 had passed almost unnoticed, but not so his thirtieth anniversary in the foreign service, 27 July 1944. It was "a day filled with a good deal of emotion" for him. "You know I am not a sentimental person," he wrote Hull, who had sent a nice note; still, the tributes touched him. Camacho called him in to congratulate him, and Padilla, whom Messersmith admired as much as any foreign statesman, scaled new heights of eloquence. Joe Gray, himself going on ten years as Hull's assistant, one of those who knew Messer-

smith longest, also knew him best. "I don't know of anyone," he wrote his former chief, "who has labored so hard and earnestly in season and out for the establishment and maintenance of high principles, sound progressive ideas, and the inculcation of a spirit of sober endeavor. . . To me you will always remain the symbol of the finest tradition in the Service."[116]

He was not even remotely ready for retirement, however. His old surgical stomach needed minor repairs, but otherwise his physique, carefully monitored and maintained, gave no complaint. His zest was undiminished, his passion for justice as strong as ever. As the war entered its final year, Messersmith looked forward to "at least several more opportunities for usefulness" in putting the world back together. "I am hoping," he wrote Hull, "that at the appropriate time my background in the European picture may be utilized."[117]

Rumors to that very effect, or at least that he was not long for Mexico, had already cropped up. One report he heard had the current ambassador to Chile, Claude Bowers, replacing him in Mexico City when he moved on to Europe. Messersmith thoughtfully passed the report on to Hull, with the opinion that Bowers would make an unhappy choice. The workload in Mexico, he explained, was such that the historian-diplomat would find no time for his scholarship.[118]

While he prepared to close out this phase of his personal and professional life, major changes were going on at Roosevelt's State Department. Messersmith was Hull's last scheduled appointment on what he learned was to be the secretary's last day on the job, 2 October 1944. Roosevelt had urged him to stay on, but Hull, sick and tired, would only wait until after election day. Though forewarned, Messersmith seemed no less distraught when on 27 November the resignation was announced. "Words fail me today," he wrote Hull. It marked the end of a record twelve years as secretary of state, a period that coincided with Messersmith's professional prominence. He was to serve under the next three secretaries in rapid succession, and Hull remained the only one for whom he had any respect.[119]

The resignation led to the thoroughest State Department housecleaning since 1937. This time Harry Hopkins filled the Welles role. The first question, of course, concerned Hull's successor. Messersmith later heard that his name had been offered up. According to his source, Judge John J. Burns of Massachusetts, who certainly had it no better than second hand, Roosevelt had blithely dismissed the idea on ethnic grounds: 'Well, what with Messersmith and Eisenhower, people would wonder whom we were at war with!'"[120]

That was the least of it. No career diplomat had ever served as secretary, but then again no president had ever served a third term either. So it was not simply for lack of precedent that Roose-

velt ruled him out. Determined to succeed where Woodrow Wilson had failed in 1919, Roosevelt needed someone at the State Department to sell his peace arrangements. When Hull refused, Roosevelt sought the next best thing. Even in absentia, Hull figured prominently in the choice of a replacement. Henry Wallace, one supposed frontrunner, and Sumner Welles, probably the president's personal choice, were disqualified out of concern for Hull's tender feelings and still formidable influence with congress. Undersecretary Stettinius finally got the job because he was acceptable to Hull, because in important respects he was the nearest thing Roosevelt had to Hull. Like his predecessor, Stettinius was cast from the Harding mold, at least to the eye. Without Hull's connections, Stettinius nevertheless made friends fast, as attested by his fast Senate confirmation. His specialty was public relations, not foreign relations, but that fitted the bill. In Stettinius Roosevelt got exactly what he wanted: a handsome figurehead and a "good clerk."[121]

That was not Messersmith. He figured in Roosevelt's plans in the way he had always dreamed. He would get his chance to upbraid Germans again, as the United States' top civilian official after the Reich fell, which looked imminent in November 1944. He had all the right ideas as far as Roosevelt was concerned, ideas that, as in the 'thirties, put him at odds with orthodoxy at the State Department. Tracing Hitlerism to the punitive features of

Versailles, the Department's German planner envisaged a lenient peace, one that would hasten recovery, foster democratic institutions, and, again, serve as a bulwark against possible Soviet expansion.[122]

Messersmith's thinking on the Hitler phenomenon had not changed either. Since 1933 he had called Nazism a disease, and blamed each and every German for incubating it. He had waited for Germans to do their moral duty. Instead they had cravenly submitted. It had been among his "most disillusioning experiences." A normal people, he insisted, could not have been converted into criminal accomplices and worse, as they had been. Hitler's movement could only be products of a warped national character requiring thoroughgoing long term rehabilitation--"six months or more" of military government, followed by "perhaps two generations" of civilian controls and reeducation before Germany would be ready to rejoin the family of nations. "We must be hard and stern and definite," he counselled, " . . . if we wish to avoid another war."[123]

Roosevelt was using much the same language. "We have got to be tough with Germany," he declared in August 1944, "and I mean the German people, not just the Nazis." At his September conference with British Prime Minister Churchill at Quebec, Roosevelt advanced Morgenthau's plan to partition and deindustrialize Germany, reducing her to a loose confederation of agrarian states inacapable of ever again making war. Though he later disowned the Morgenthau plan, Roosevelt

continued to plan a harsh peace.[124]

The likeminded and experienced Messersmith looked just right to head up the occupation. In reorganizing the Department, Hopkins and Stettinius apparently proceeded on the plan that Messersmith would quit Mexico early in 1945 in preparation for Germany. Hopkins offered Mexico to Breck Long, who was being swept out with the rest of Hull's assistant secretaries. But Long declined, citing the altitude and his lack of Spanish, and retired instead. Stettinius looked into the possibility of moving Spruille Braden from Cuba to Mexico.[125]

The successor's identity seemed to be the only question mark when Messersmith departed Mexico for his December 1944 petroleum talk with Roosevelt. The New York Times reported approvingly that he was coming home primarily to discuss the German assignment. "He speaks German and knows the genesis of the Nazi movement and the psychology and problems of the German people. In addition to his diplomatic experience, he is considered an able organizer and administrator," vital skills in setting up a government.[126]

Roosevelt did not disappoint him. On "his own initiative," Messersmith later stressed, he confirmed that he would eventually be going to Germany. But the Germans were not cooperating. Three days earlier, on 16 December, the optimistic forecasts and the four American divisions guarding a seventy-five mile stretch of woods east of Bastogne in Belgium, buckled under a massive German counter-offensive. Americans stopped planning their victory celebrations and returned to the grind of combat and production. Bringing Messersmith

home to work on the occupation details when Allied lines were in danger of being breached was surely putting the cart before the horse. The president therefore instructed him to return to Mexico "to clear things up before it would be necessary for me to go to Europe."[127]

Never content to leave a job unfinished, Messersmith was not upset by the delay. Several unresolved matters awaited him. Foremost was the upcoming Mexico City meeting of American foreign ministers, the first since Rio in 1942 and long overdue. The Latins needed to be reassured. They were upset by signs of slackening solicitude north of the border. They resented being shut out of the big power skull sessions on the new world organization held between August and October 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks. Dwindling demand for their raw materials, postwar availability of capital goods, and renewed foreign competition for their budding industries also worried them.[128]

It was ironic that the single issue most responsible for the conference being called was not on the official agenda. Only reluctantly did the United States agree that the Argentine question might be addressed at the end. By 1945, however, the futility of Washington's wartime policy toward the hemispheric maverick was too glaring to be ignored, even by his makers. After almost three years of economic and diplomatic sanctions, the nationalists in Buenos Aires were stronger than ever. When in January 1944 President General Pedro Ramirez bowed to the extent of breaking relations with Germany and Japan, he was himself overthrown by General Edelmiro Farrell and

Colonel Juan Domingo Peron. Personalizing the issue, Hull had denounced the new regime and called on the American republics to fall in step. The response profoundly disheartened him. The thought of intervention in the internal affairs of a sister state, no less powerful Argentina, did not sit well, especially not with her neighbors. Instead Hull recieved offers to mediate "the Argentine-U.S. dispute." Hull spurned mediation, and, to make his point, recalled Ambassador Norman Armour from Buenos Aires.[129]

It was to break this impasse before it irreparably damaged hemispheric unity that Ezequiel Padilla proposed a conference, so that the republics could discuss their economic problems and thresh out the conditions under which Argentina might be readmitted to the inter American fold. Messersmith urged Washington to avail itself of the chance to extricate itself from an increasingly untenable position. Few people, he wrote Joseph McGurk, now at the Department's Mexican desk, least of all Padilla, approved of Argentine conduct, but regardless of "how badly the Argentine regime is behaving . . . [the Latins] do not like to see the Argentine lambasted too much and they do not like us to do it." The unilateral hard line, he cabled Hull courageously, was creating sympathy for the Argentine underdog and undermining confidence in the Good Neighbor policy.[130]

But the secretary could not bring himself to admit the failure of his Argentine policy, a policy maligned at home for, if anything, not being tough enough. Wounded by accusations of having kowtowed to

Nazism in the 'thirties, Hull in his few remaining weeks was determined to erase that stigma at the expense of the Argentine "fascists." He was playing to posterity, which also partly explains his intense interest in the planned United Nations organization. Hull and his closest advisers feared that the new organization would be impaired, perhaps fatally, by such regional arrangements as might come of Padilla's initiative. It was therefore received with thanks and filed away.[131]

Argentina forced a shift in American tactics. Aiming to relieve its isolation, the Farrell government appealed to the Pan American Union for a hearing on its status. Padilla renewed his call for a general conference. Backed into a corner, Washington finally assented on condition that Buenos Aires be excluded. After intensive negotiations between Padilla and Messersmith, invitations to the Inter-American Conference on Problems of Peace and War, scheduled for February 1945, went out to all the republics save Argentina. It was agreed that the Farrell government might speak its piece at the end, when the conferees took up the last item on the agenda, reworded at American insistence (and over Messersmith's objections) to read "Other Matters of General and Immediate Concern" instead of "Argentina."[132]

Messersmith's concern was that American participation under duress might be unconstructive and reluctant. Indeed, many State Department officials wished to play down a conference likely to find the Latins boisterous and importunate. The European-oriented economic

planners prepared to combat Latin protectionism and to finesse the expected demands for loans and export priorities.. The political planners, like Leo Pasvolsky and Harley Notter, who had shaped Hull's outlook, also had Stettinius's ear, and they warned the new secretary against furnishing the British and the Russians further pretext to establish exclusive regional blocs of their own. The internationalists anticipated embarrassing proposals at Mexico City for a hemispheric defense pact independent of the projected U.N. security council, as well as demands for modifications in the Dumbarton Oaks formula to give more power to small nations. There were suggestions that Stettinius beg off Mexico City altogether--he could cite his prior commitment to accompany Roosevelt to the Big Three conclave at Yalta, which was expected to run well into February--or to limit his attendance at Mexico to one of the projected two weeks.[133]

Messersmith provided a healthy dose of realism. He already had serious doubts about the future of the Grand Alliance and the peace after victory. Russia and England were openly flouting the Atlantic Charter principles of free trade and democracy. Eastern Europe was rapidly being reduced to a Soviet vassal. The British clung tenaciously to the empire. Churchill's policies in reconquered Italy and Greece portended reaction. As the war against Hitlerism drew to a close, Messersmith was saddened to think that a new chapter in the bloody struggle for freedom might only be beginning.[134]

British and Soviet agents were also at work in the western hemisphere. By mid 1944 Messersmith noticed a "definite increase" in leftist agitation in Mexico. Padilla, always closely identified with the United States, was vilified as Washington's stooge. Behind it all Messersmith saw the hand of Oumansky, operating through Lombardo Toledano and his Mexican Workers Confederation. Although it was still unclear as to whether the Soviet ambassador was acting independently or on order from Moscow, evidence of the latter piled up. The clincher for Messersmith came early in 1945. Oumansky demanded that Mexico provide him with a private flight to Costa Rica, where he was to present his credentials. One of Mexico's best American-trained pilots was assigned to him. On the morning of 25 January the plane crashed on takeoff from Mexico City, killing all aboard. From the wreckage was recovered Oumansky's briefcase, which turned out to contain nearly $200,000 in U.S. $1000 bills--money Messersmith believed was earmarked "to suborn Government officials or labor leaders in Costa Rica or some of these other Central American countries"[135]

At the same time, British imperialism was entrenching itself in Argentina. While paying lip service to Hull's policies, London was privately exploiting the Washington-Buenos Aires rift. Arms and markets and consumer products withheld by the United States were furnished by the British, together with assurances that Argentine neutrality toward Britain's enemies need not prejudice bilateral relations. As a result, under American sanctions, Argentina boasted South Ameri-

ca's best stocked shops, while loyal allies like Mexico went without. London claimed to want only Argentine hides and beef for the cold, hungry British people, but the Royal Air Force bases quietly being planned suggested otherwise.[136]

Messersmith, still burning over the way Sir John Simon crawled to Berlin in March 1935, echoed Hull's outrage at Whitehall's latest duplicity. If the British thought they could carve out a South American sphere of influence under Argentine cover, "they are utterly wrong. Nothing could be more stupid." It struck him as Munich again, as London courted an iniquitous regime for selfish advantage. "One would think," he seethed, "that people learn, but it seems that they do not. [The British] really think that they can keep the Argentine as a spear head for their trade and to maintain their investments . . ." Messersmith trusted that Roosevelt would "put the screws" to Churchill at Yalta.[137]

If the United States intended to uphold its principles, the inter-American system embodying them would have to be strengthened against it enemies, and, Messersmith maintained, Mexico City was the place to do it. He urged Stettinius to attend the entire conference. "I know that you have these major problems in the world picture which are requiring your attention every day, but . . . we have got to have this American picture in shape or our hand in the world picture will be immensely weakened." A united hemisphere committed to political

and economic liberalism would be essential to counter British and Russian blocs at the United Nations. Those two powers would evidently be promoting quite different principles. Unlike them, he wrote "Ed," "we are not interested in establishing a closed economy in this hemisphere."

> We are planning an American picture in which certain political principles and ideals and certain economic practices will control because all of these states believe in them and that is something to which Great Britain and Russia cannot object. We are planning to keep the markets of this hemisphere open to all. Russia and Great Britain are planning economies which will be open only to those whom they choose to admit. The Latins are deeply conscious of this. For this reason the atmosphere for establishing real American unity and cooperation is better than it has been at any time.[138]

Whether Mexico City actually fulfilled this promise depended, in his view, on Washington's posture on the economic issues. "We can secure the reaffirmation of liberal trade policies at the coming conference," he wrote on 13 February, "but if nothing further is offered by way of a program, it will cause the keenest disillusionment." Once they liquidated their war-swollen dollar balances, the Latins would need loans, "just as much as we needed them some sixty to seventy years back and when we got them from Europe." They would need technical assistance. Finally, although prepared to pledge allegience to the State Department's trade principles, the Latins hoped for pragmatism in their application. Unless Washington could offer an alternative route to stability, Messersmith held, it should not condemn preferences and protectionism categorically. "Hence our thinking must be less adamant" to show the Latins that Washington valued their well-

being more than ideological purity.[139]

Messersmith had ample opportunity to urge these views upon members of the American delegation. Altogether they were an impressively high ranking group. First to arrive, on 19 February, was his new immediate superior. He had predicted and worked toward the abolition of the OCIAA, but who could have guessed that Nelson Rockefeller would move over to become assistant secretary for Latin American affairs? Messersmith did not seem discomfited at the reversal of their positions, and Rockefeller was too much the gentleman and diplomat to lord it over him Besides, they saw eye to eye on the importance of regional unity and the conference's importance to that end. Now ambassador to Brazil Adolf Berle, who was also on hand, shared that view. Stettinius and his retinue arrived on the afternoon of 20 February, to stay for the duration. The Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Tom Connally of Texas, and the ranking Republican, Warren Austin of Vermont, were delayed until the conference was already underway.[140]

Padilla's rousing welcoming address marked the end of months of preparations for Messersmith and his staff. He was to remain largely in the background while the delegates deliberated. He saw inconspicuously to the Americans' comfort, putting up a number of them at the embassy residence. He arranged Stettinius's afternoon press briefings at the embassy theater, where he got his first chance to watch the new secretary in action. To Roosevelt he praised Stettinius's

"extraordinarily constructive leadership." For himself he decided that Stettinius was "completely beyond his depth."[141]

Luckily the secretary's forte was delegating authority, so that his presence lent the affair prestige, without his "cheerful ignorance," as Berle put it, much affecting the outcome. The Chapultepec conference (after the historic castle where the plenary sessions took place) adjourned on 8 March to, according to the American communique, "a general feeling of alleviation and good will among the delegations, who unanimously regard the Conference as successful in its major objectives." Messersmith considered it "the most important and most fruitful and most constructive" of all the hemispheric gatherings to date.[142]

He had a case. Under its severest strains in years, the inter-American system emerged immeasurably strengthened, confounding prognosticators and, presumably, disappointing the British and the Russians. A spirit of unity and compromise prevailed. Resolutions were passed calling for continued wartime cooperation and, soon to become a major issue, the removal of Axis influence. The Pan American Union's mandate was enlarged. Regional autonomy received recognition at the expense of United Nations supremacy, not to the extent that the Latins wished, but enough to cause Pasvolsky and other internationalists considerable anguish. The United States promised to commend to its allies at the upcoming San Francisco conference a set of seven "comments and suggestions" for modifications in the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, which the Latins endorsed in advance. The delegates unanimously approved

the so-called Act of Chapultepec laying the groundwork for a postwar hemispheric defense pact. This helped ease southern fears of Argentine aggression. The abandonment of Washington's attempts to isolate Buenos Aires, its most noteworthy concession, helped, too, for the Latins were convinced that the best antidote to Argentine imperialism was to draw Argentina into the American system. Resolution 59 called upon the Farrell-Peron government to subscribe to the Final Act and to declare war on the Axis. On 27 March Argentina complied. Two weeks later the American republics simultaneously extended recognition. Spruille Braden was named Washington's ambassador to Buenos Aires. The hemisphere was again of a piece.[143]

Judging by the results, Stettinius and company apparently heeded Messersmith's preconference pleas for flexibility on the economic issues. The Final Act included a number of resolutions embodying a decidedly non-doctrinaire brand of economic liberalism. One called for reductions in tariff barriers, but not at the expense of "high levels of living and sound development of [national] economies." Domestic and foreign capital were to be treated equally, "except when the investment of the latter would be contrary to the . . . public interest." Industrial development was given special emphasis. That state enterprise and controls, also anathema to the State Department, might be necessary for stability was also acknowledged.[144]

The road to these resolutions, however, had been tortuous. The positions initially staked out by the American delegation represented another rebuff to Messersmith and Latin aspirations. The 27 February speech by Will Clayton, assistant secretary of state for economic affairs, had set an incompromising and unpromising tone. He had delivered a ringing attack on economic nationalism in all its varieties, in effect asking the Latins to temporarily forego industrialization. He warned of continuing shortages of capital goods until Europe had been rebuilt, and asked the Latins to support a Europe-first policy as the best way of restoring their market for raw materials. From the Latin standpoint, the single encouraging aspect of Clayton's speech was the announcement that the Eximbank was again ready to consider loans for sound (i.e., non-competitive) development projects.[145]

Although Stettinius thought the speech made "an excellent impression," he admitted that it evoked "some disappointment" from the Latins. Indignation was more like it. One commentator suggested that Clayton had plagiarized "a good speech made by Theodore Roosevelt before 1910." Fearing open rebellion, the American delegates on the economic committees agreed to drop some of the resolutions incorporating Clayton's points and to modify others to satisfy Latin concerns.[146]

Gratified by the Chapultepec economic resolutions but mindful of the pressures that shaped them, Messersmith was justifyably concerned about their implementation. Stettinius and Clayton, he wrote John Willard Carrigan, as the Mexican desk since McGurk moved to the

Dominican Republic as ambassador, were men of their word; the danger came from lower-level saboteurs "who [sit] on papers indefinitely and would not take action in accordance with their policy directives." He refused to let that happen to Mexico's latest Eximbank loan request. Camacho had broached a large loan for highway construction, railroad improvements, and rural electrification back in December, and Messersmith took it up with Roosevelt and the State Department and Eximbank officials in Washington. Warren Pierson attended Chapultepec as an adviser, at which time he discussed the matter with Eduardo Suarez. Coaxed by Messersmith, the Eximbank on 29 March tentatively approved a $45 million loan, making over $90 million in credits outstanding in total. Notwithstanding the Chapultepec resolutions, Washington continued to battle economic nationalism wherever it reared its head in Latin America, and Messersmith continued to argue for understanding. If he could not get Mexico understanding, he would settle for credits.[147]

With the conclusion of Chapultepec, Messersmith reached the final item on his Mexican checklist, one whose resolution, he promised Stettinius, would deliver "the last blow to all of the Doubting Thomases here." A treaty signed on 3 February 1944 had closed out nearly a century of diplomacy between the United States and Mexico on the apportionment and control of three international rivers: the Colorado, the Tijuana, and the Rio Grande. The seven states of the Colorado basin had long fought ferociously to retain unencumbered access to its waters, which were reduced to a veritable trickle by the time

the Colorado crossed the border into Baja. The Hoover Dam system completed in 1940 diverted vast amounts of water to irrigate California's Imperial Valley and to feed growing cities like San Diego. Water that Mexico vitally needed to sustain farm production in Baja, water to which she was entitled under international law, instead had to be purchased at exorbitant prices from California interests.[148]

The California bonanza contained the kernal of a solution for Mexico. The other basin states grew jealous of California's windfall and increasingly sympathetic to a treaty including Federal supervision of facilities currently operated by Sacramento. With this support and Roosevelt's, American and Mexican negotiators, who had resumed talking in early 1942, made rapid progress. The resulting treaty called for 1.5 million acre-feet of Colorado water annually for Mexico, with lesser amounts of Rio Grande and Tijuana water going to the United States. Administrative machinery was set up. A State Department officer who had helped draft the treaty modestly described it as "the most important of its kind in the history of the world." Both sides appeared satisfied.[149]

The treaty immediately ran into trouble on Capitol Hill, however. The entire state of California, it seemed, rose in well-organized wrath. On the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, seventy eight year-old Hiram W. Johnson vowed to defeat the treaty as his "swan song in public life," the White House congressional liaison reported. California Governor Earl Warren and former President Hoover were

scheduled to testify against it. Republicans had already seized on the issue for the coming elections. On 26 April the Democratic leadership, on orders from Roosevelt, moved to postpone hearings until after November.[150]

Prospects looked much brighter in the 79th Congress. Johnson was back, but, afflicted by advancing senility and a throat condition that made speaking difficult, he was a shell of the old irreconcilable of 1919. Roosevelt pledged to Camacho to do "all I can" to see the treaty through. Messersmith urged State to give it the "positive publicity" it deserved and to expose the "entirely selfish" character of the opposition. So much rode on the issue, he wrote Nelson Rockefeller. The treaty was "a test of the degree to which we are able to conduct our foreign relations in a way that is effective in the interests of our country as a whole." Ratification would be "an important event in the history of the Americas," "an outstanding example of how a long-standing and difficult problem can be solved in an equitable manner when there is a spirit of understanding." Failure to ratify would "play into the hands of those who are not our friends in Mexico."[151]

Taking his own advice, Messersmith wrote Eugene Meyer, editor-publisher of the Washington Post, requesting "one of your excellent editorials" on the water treaty. He summarized Mexico's magnificent contribution to the Allied cause. She had furnished nearly a billion dollars worth of strategic minerals alone; and, "although

[it] was a seller's market, it is to the eternal credit of Mexico that she did not attempt to use this advantage to get prices for these materials which were not entirely fair . . . " Under the bracero program, which had expanded in April 1943 to provide industrial as well as agricultural workers, 200,000 Mexicans had already seen service in the United States. And her most glorious contribution was still to come. Eighteen months in the formation and training, the Mexican 201st Fighter Squadron, 300 of her best pilots and support personnel, was about to embark for combat in the skies over the Philippines. Surely Meyer agreed that the United States could not deny simple justice to so staunch an ally.[152]

Yet for Messersmith the water treaty was more than a matter of diplomatic credibility, more than a gratuity for wartime cooperation, more than a gesture of support for Camacho and Padilla. Mexico needed the water to grow and prosper. She needed it because, as he wrote Meyer, "twelve of her twenty-one million people live on a desperately low standard of living which has got to be improved" for them and the American way of life. When they joined the war Mexicans ate the fewest calories per capita of any American peoples, fewer even than the Chinese. With the 100 per cent increase in the cost of living since 1941 and the food shortages Messersmith had fought to alleviate, the situation had become even more explosive. The Camacho government was in the midst of an extensive and expensive irrigation program "to bring about greater production . . . in order to improve

the people's nutritional standard," a program that required Colorado water.[153]

Messersmith got his editorial. The nation's newspapers were overwhelmingly spportive. The State Department did its part, too. Assistant Secretary Acheson testified before a much friendlier Foreign Relations committee. The Californians continued the fight, but admitted themselves it was lost. The sparsely-attended floor debate was winding down on 12 April 1945. Shortly before 5 PM, Vice President Harry S. Truman adjourned the body for the day, and headed back to his office. There was an urgent message waiting for him, summoning him to the White House.[154]

Hull telephoned the embassy in Mexico with word of Roosevelt's death. Messersmith was "simply overwhelmed," as he wrote Stettinius the next morning.

> There is no way in which I can express my feelings and my grief. The President had honored me with his friendship and his confidence since 1933. I knew that the burden of the work which fell on him was increasingly taking its toll. I knew that he was not so well but had the feeling that he had been getting somewhat better. The news came as a shock from which I have not been able to recover.

He and Roosevelt had never collaborated more closely than during the Mexican years. His death deprived Messersmith of the power to move otherwise immovable obstacles to the special relationship he was working towards.[156]

It was a grievous loss, as Mexicans understood. Roosevelt's passing, the embassy reported, "has caused greater grief in Mexico than that of the passing of any Mexican in generations." A three-

day period of mourning was declared, unprecedented for a foreigner. Camacho "frequently had to brush away a tear" when he and Messersmith spoke. "The world," he declared, "had lost the greatest man it had produced in centuries."[156]

When he composed himself, Messersmith undertook to calm Mexicans about the future. In a radio address on the 14th, he assured them of what he only hoped was true, that "there will be no change" in American hemispheric policy; that President Truman was "a man of sound, considered judgment, of wisdom and great industry." Mexicans and Latins generally were comforted by the new president's early declaration that "to the Good Neighbor Policy of which [Roosevelt] was the author, I wholeheartedly subscribe." [157]

Messersmith was as worried about his own future now that Roosevelt was gone. He was not alone in that regard. But he made the mistake of calling attention to himself. "It is not improbable," he wrote Truman clumsily on 17 April, "that the late President Roosevelt may have discussed with you the plans which he had for utilizing my services in Europe as our principal civilian representative when the first stages of the purely military government in the defeated countries is over." If he really thought that Roosevelt tutored his heir-to-be so painstakingly, it shows how little he understood Roosevelt's methods. In any case, his ostensible purpose for writing was to advise that he remain in Mexico "a little longer"; the loss of his honorable self on the heels of the loss of Truman's beloved pre-

decessor might be too much for the Mexicans to bear.[158]

We have no evidence of Truman's response to this transparent piece of self interest. But, arriving as it did a week after he took office, with the weight of the whole world on his shoulders, Messersmith's plea could not have been appreciated. Their relationship was off to a bad start. It would get worse, without Messersmith knowing it. Truman came in with a low opinion of the career diplomats and left thinking even less of them. In good democratic fashion he skewered the striped-pants "smart boys" hopelessly out of touch with grassroots America. Messersmith was not as smart as some, but he certainly had supreme confidence in his own opinions. He came off as a decided know-it-all to Truman, who, in his one candid reference to him, on one of those usually pungent daily appointment sheets (29 September 1945) of his, noted that Messersmith had called at 11:45 AM "to tell me how to run the govt."[159]

Messersmith's inquiry about Germany must have irritated him, but Truman responded encouragingly. Messersmith was to become a victim of the president's penchant for stringing people along. The water treaty passed the Senate on 18 April, and Messersmith flew home for those stomach repairs at the Bethesda naval hospital. He checked in first at the White House, for his first meeting with Truman. It was 10 AM, 5 May. His recollection of the encounter is disappointingly self-centered, as well as farfetched. Messersmith recalled his saying that "our good friend [Roosevelt] has frequently spoken to me about

you. I know how much he appreciated your work . . . and valued your judgment." Someone was not telling the truth. Truman went on to request Messersmith's assistance in his "difficult task," and another chance to talk after he left the hospital. Messersmith "gathered, though [Truman] did not specifically say so, that he intends to discuss some phases of the Central European situation."[160]

Eight days at Bethesda left him feeling "very much better than I have for years" physically, and refreshed in spirit from contact with fellow patient Cordell Hull. After completing his recuperation in the country, he returned expectantly to the White House on 1 June. Sure enough, Truman said that "he was thinking very much in the same terms as the late President Roosevelt . . . that when we switch over from purely Allied military control [Germany had surrendered on 8 May] to Allied civilian control . . . he might have to use me there in a very responsible capacity." When this transition might take place, however, Truman could not predict. So he wanted Messersmith to continue on in Mexico, as "he did not know of any one who could do the job [there] better for the present than I." That was as close as he came to the German assignment, which did not materialize until 1949. In the interim, disagreement over the future of the former Reich had helped to precipitate and inflame the Cold War. By the time John J. McCloy was named American High Commissioner to oversee the new Bonn government, Messersmith was two years a private citizen.[161]

He returned to Mexico on 6 June to one of the bitterest disappointments of his life. That day Miguel Aleman Valdes resigned as interior minister and declared his candidacy for the July 1946 presidential election. With the support of the official Mexican Revolutionary Party and the blessings of Camacho, Cardenas, and Lombardo Toledano, Aleman was virtually assured of victory. Padilla, who had been quietly testing the waters and organizing his supporters, found himself all but out of the running before the campaigning had begun. Taking Camacho's decision as a vote of no confidence, Padilla on 9 July resigned his portfolio, ordered his workers to stop, and retired to his Cuernavaca home.[162]

"It is all a great tragedy," Messersmith wrote Hull on 31 July. "We have lost [in Padilla] the strongest champion for the principles for which we stand, not only in the Americas, but in the world." There was nothing more Messersmith could do; he may have done too much already. Their intimate friendship and the near-perfect correlation of their views became fatal liabilities for Padilla, who, to his everlasting credit, refused to resort to anti-Yankee polemics to dispell the charges of subservience to Washington.

Now there was Aleman, intelligent enough, but "a rather weak man" with "very little knowledge of . . . international relationships," who "has promised everything to everybody and he will owe his election in a large degree to elements which are not friendly to us." For three years Messersmith had given his all to vindicate the policy of colla-

boration with the United States. He feared he had failed, for, he concluded disconsolately, "all the circumstances seem to point to a step backward for Mexico rather than accelerated, steady, and continued progress in her social and political development . . . "[163]

With no illusions about the outcome, Padilla changed his mind and made it a race, offering himself as a sacrificial lamb in the name of democracy and a choice for Mexican voters come election day. The campaign got underway in earnest in December. By Mexican standards it was a model of decorum. Although the candidates eschewed mudslinging, their supporters were not all so scrupulous. In a 16 December speech, Toledano claimed that American firms were smuggling arms to various right-wing groups in preparation for a coup that would place a "pro-United States Quisling"--Padilla--in power. Ominously, Radio Moscow broadcast the charges, which Toledano, when called to account, could not substantiate. This did not stop him from issuing new charges, accusing Messersmith of "campaigning" for Padilla, and demanding his recall and replacement "by a proven partisan of democracy and of the Good Neighbor policy."[164]

Messersmith turned the other cheek. Because of his relationship with Padilla, he was keeping a low profile even for him. The Mexican press and government came to his defense. Camacho announced that "Mexico has never had a more sincere friend in the American Embassy." The capital's La Prensa, second in circulation, called Toledano's arms smuggling charge "political blackmail." On 22 Decem-

ber the government formally dismissed all allegations of American interference. Local opinion was that Toledano's prestige had taken "a serious blow."[165]

But he meant nothing himself. As was acknowledged by Mexicans from Aleman down, Toledano spoke for Moscow--Oumansky's sucessor, as it were--and therein lay in tragedy. His machinations reflected the sorry state of big power politics. In the spring of 1946 Messersmith observed totalitarian expansionism again on the march. With confrontation in Iran, the failure to hold promised elections in Eastern Europe, Russian vetoes in the United Nations, and the collapse of negotiations over Germany, a sickening chill had settled over East-West relations. Talk of World War III filtered through the world's capitals even as the toll of recent combat was still being tallied.[166]

"It is a sorry spectacle that we have to witness today," Messersmith wrote Claude Bowers in February, "and if I were not so profoundly convinced of the necessity for struggling for the good, and its inevitable triumph, I would be a very disillusioned man indeed." Having viewed Hitler and Stalin as fraternal twins all along, he was not surprised when the Soviet turned aggressive. He had hoped that Russia's extraordnary ordeal, her friendly contact with the democracies, and Hitler's ignominious failure would have cured Stalin of his imperial pretensions. But humane and rational consderations had meant nothing to Hitler, either. Messersmith experienced a rush of deja vu; the confrontation calendar he had set

in 1936--Germany first, then Russia--seemed ready to be played out. But the German analogy was blessedly flawed. In the 'thirties Hitler faced a weak-kneed and divided world. In 1946 war-ravaged Russia faced the United States at the pinnacle of its military and economic power, with overwhelming conventional superiority, a nuclear monopoly, and the apparent will to use it all to consolidate "the triumph of good."[167]

For the showdown Messersmith now considered inevitable, and, increasingly, necessary, hemispheric solidarity would have to be consolidated first. That meant, among other things, getting on with the American foreign ministers meeting to draw up the hemispheric defense pact conceived at Chapultepec. Originally scheduled for October 1945 at Rio, the meeting had been indefinitely postponed while Washington sorted out its feelings toward Argentina. Over bitter Soviet opposition and their own ambivalence, the American delegates to San Francisco had, in accordance with the Chapultepec formula, secured a United Nations seat for Argentina. The military rulers in Buenos Aires did little to make that chore less onerous. Ambassador Spruille Braden had arrived in May to discover what he reported was a police state in which Axis interests operated unmolested. On the one hand, Braden undertook to induce the Farrell-Peron regime to expell its Nazis, while he openly incited the regime's overthrow on the other. These objectives proved quite incompatible.[168]

Most North Americans, however, applauded Braden's crusade. Messersmith was among them. The Argentine failure to respond in good faith to the olive branch proferred at Mexico City angered him. Seating the Farrell clique in the UN when consitutional guarantees were still suspended and Axis agents reportedly had the run of the country was "damnable," he wrote Braden, who of course could not have agreed more. "There can be no temporizing with Governments of this kind." Braden's and Washington's assumption that a cowed Argentine majority needed and welcomed outside assistance in toppling a hated regime seemed plausible. Writing in September to Hull, who was well pleased by the return to the hard line he had pursued in office, Messersmith expressed confidence that "this [Argentine] regime cannot last for more than a few months longer."[169]

Messersmith could no more will away Juan Peron than Adolf Hitler. On 14 December 1945 Peron resigned his posts in the government and declared himself a candidate for the presidency in elections to take place 24 February. The army promised a clean contest. Washington was skeptical, but foresaw such a resounding victory for the opposition candidate, Dr. Jose Tamborini, that the military would not dare try to steal it. Braden, inevitably persona non grata, kept up the pressure from a new post, assistant secretary for Latin affairs, replacing the accomodationist Rockefeller. Twelve days before the election, Braden released the Blue Book, documents hastily compiled to prove "Argentine-Nazi complicity" supposedly masterminded by Peron.

Intended to discredit him in Argentine eyes, the Blue Book made him a hero instead. Even the ant-Peronists were aghast at this thinly-veiled intervention. Peron, whose domestic support exceeded the State Department's original estimates by a wide margin, was quick to capitalize on its blunder. "The question of the hour is this," he bellowed to an excited crowd on 13 February: "Braden or Peron." In what the American embassy conceded was "unquestionably [the] fairest [election] in Argentine history," Peron and his ticket swept to victory.[170]

Though mortified by the turn of events, Braden and the State Department were publicly defiant. The United States promptly proclaimed its refusal to enter into a hemispheric defense pact with "fascist" Peron. But American unity and world tensions argued for accomodation. Argentines had voted freely; the Latins were becoming impatient with the Rio delay; an isolated Argentina might be driven into Russian arms. So Camacho argued in a 14 March talk with Messersmith. Although he duly restated his government's position, Messersmith had been converted by the Mexican's logic, as he told Braden. The security of the Americas, he now decided, required that some basis for rapprochement with popular-choice Peron be found.[171]

He had no inkling of how prominently he was to figure in the search. Spring was in the Mexico City air on the morning of 1 April 1946. Messersmith walked briskly across the flowered courtyard sepa-

rating the embassy residence from the chancery, just as he had done every morning, day in and day out, for four years. Despite international tensions and local electoral ferment

> I felt very much at peace with the world and very happy. I was very busy, I was working too hard, [and] I was injuring my health, but I had an interesting task, and I was enjoying it, and felt that I was doing something worthwhile.

The war's end had brought some change in his duties, but no more rest. In October 1945 he had become doyen of the diplomatic corps, with all the attendant responsibilities. He settled old scores. Robert Jackson, chief American prosecutor at the Nuremburg war crimes trials, invited him to come to testify. Messersmith declined--"not due to any personal considerations," he explained to Hull, "for I did not hesitate to stand up to these people when they were in power, so I would certainly not have any personal reserves to appear against them now when they are on trial." He contented himself with a thirty page affadavit recounting his conversations with top Nazis in Berlin and Papen's exploits in Austria.[172]

But always Mexico came first. He had by no means accomplished in four years all he set out to do. He was no magician. He had insisted that the negotiations to readmit private capital to the petroleum industry be called off when the presidential campaigning began. He had done his best just to prevent erosion of the Mexican standard of living in wartime. The European orientation of Washington's evolving postwar policies underscored his failure to win Mexico the prio-

rity treatment he believed due his country's most important neighbor. Nor had he secured more than grudging tolerance for Mexican industrialization, which nonetheless surged ahead. Yet great strides had been made in cementing Mexican-American friendship, and observers agreed that he deserved much credit. Bilateral relations had not only survived the stresses of war, but had emerged the stronger. Aleman was not Padilla, but it was also clear that Messersmith, going by the candidate's early pronouncements, had been unduly pessimistic. The pro-American policies Aleman was to pursue as president bespoke Messersmith's success.[173]

So he could well be content on that beautiful 1 April morning. With no European post in sight, he had resigned himself quite happily to concluding his career with a few more years in his Mexico. As he approached his office, he heard the telephone ring. "All at once," he wrote later, "it came over me that every time I had this feeling of self-satisfaction, that something usually happened." He was suddenly filled with "foreboding that [the phone call] was not something good." At the other end was Truman's secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, asking him to go to Buenos Aires as ambassador "to bring the Argentine government and Peron into line. It had been suggested that I was the only person to do it." He had many good reasons to refuse, and he cited them all in the course of their hour-long conversation: he abhored the limelight, dreaded having to move, and wanted to finish up in Mexico. Byrnes was insistent. Messer-

smith promised to get back to him after discussing it with his wife.

He returned home. "What a difference between my feelings when I came over to the office just an hour before and when I crossed the garden again to the house!" He woke up Marion and told her. A decade later her response still burned in his memory. "What is the use of talking about it," he has her saying bitterly.

> You know that you will go. The chances are that it will ruin you. They will tell you that they are going to support you on a given policy and then they will pull the rug from under you. It will be the biggest mistake you ever made . . . But you have made up your mind to go because I know how you feel about the situation in Latin America and . . . the Argentine and how necessary it is to bring her into the picture. . . I will go and help you, but I think it is all wrong.

So encouraged, he phoned Byrnes with his conditional acceptance. The secretary promised to appoint a career man as his successor in Mexico; to try to arrange some financial aid to help with the expense of Buenos Aires; and to have him home for consultation. Finally, Byrnes agreed that "when there had been a settlement of the differences . . . between [the United States and Argentina], he should be assigned to some other post."[174]

The announcement evoked great relief throughout Latin America. Coupled with the easing of export restrictions and Byrnes' 8 April expression of conditional readiness to proceed with Rio, it was clear that "a major reorientation of [American] policy [toward Argentina] is in progress." The apparent decision to reverse the Hull-Braden hard line, said Mexico City's Manana, "merits the loud and enthu-

siastic response of the whole continent." Excelsior regretted losing Messersmith,

> but we are glad that he has been named to the Argentine Government, because we are sure, beforehand, that the skill and diplomatic tact of Mr. Messersmith will accomplish in Argentina what they did in Cuba and Mexico, the creation and strengthening of ties of friendship and reciprocity . . . [and] may scatter the last clouds that might darken [hemispheric] relations.[175]

Messersmith and Mexico sadly parted company for the larger good, a theme repeated in "literally hundreds" of notes and telegrams. Camacho handed him an official letter of appreciation, an "historic document" never before given a foreign diplomat. As usual, Messersmith kept his head amidst the encomiums. "All that concerns your country," he wrote in response to Padilla's tearful goodbye, "has interested me tremendously because I see so many forces at work which can do so much for the benefit of the great number of the Mexican people." He was, a local radio commentator told his listeners, "the true diplomat of democracy."[176]

Chapter Six

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Chapter Seven

Buenos Aires, 1946-1947

Anyone who compared the Latin response to his appointment to Argentina with that in the United States could have predicted the trouble ahead. Indeed, the tone of the North American press suggested that Messersmith was going south not to befriend, but rather to lay down the law to president-elect Juan Peron. The Philadelphia Inquirer, for example, praised the Truman administration's initiative as a "realistic step toward solidarity in the Americas," but hastened to condemn "the Argentine Government's brand of totalitarianism" and to place the burden on Peron "to make plain to the world his friendship for the United States . . . " The Christian Science Monitor envisaged no relaxation of the Hull-Braden hard line, which, in its view, had "helped to put heart into democratic forces in Argentina" and forced concessions out of Peron. U.S. News bade the new ambassador godspeed on his "mission against fascism," noting his peculiar qualifications for the job.

> He knows and hates Nazism from deep and intimate study, and is quick to recognize its manifestations . . . Argentines who congratulate themselves that American policy toward their country has softened apparently have not taken into consideration the characteristics of the instruments of that policy, Mr. Messersmith.

Time too endeavored to dampen any jubilation in Buenos Aires. It observed that Messersmith was blessed with "an uncanny nose that can smell an s.o.b. as far as the wind can carry the scent." Maintaining

that "there has been no basic change in U.S. policy," Luce's mouthpiece warned that "Messersmith is Braden's man. And Peron might remember Messersmith's 'uncanny nose.'"[1]

Messersmith's anti-Nazi credentials were thus an asset to the Truman adminstration, which needed all the help it could get to satisfy anti-Argentine public opinion on the one hand, and calls for reconciliation, the Rio conference, and Braden's scalp from congressional and military leaders on the other. The armed services had decided that hemispheric unity was vital to postwar security. In April 1946, after two years of interagency and bilateral talks, the administration submitted a bill authorizing it to train, arm, and integrate Latin military establishments--that is, to implement a Rio defense pact. The trouble was, thanks to the Argentine standoff, there was no Rio pact to implement. American officers feared that the Latins, and particularly the eager Argentines, would take their hard currency to the arms marts of England or Sweden or Czechoslovakia. To the Pentagon, a singular opportunity to standardize forces and consolidate United States leadership of the hemisphere was slipping away.[2]

Other priorities held sway on Capitol Hill. Senators Vandenberg and Connally led a parpartisan consensus that demanded Argentina's speedy integration into the inter American system in preparation for the confrontation with Soviet Russia they considered imminent. They made themselves quite clear on this score at Braden's

October 1945 confirmation hearings, which were unusually acrimonious. Once confirmed, however, Braden went about his busybody business, to mounting exasperation on the Hill. On 7 April Senate leaders met secretly with Byrnes at Blair House. They demanded detente with Peron and threatened "some vigorous statements in the Senate" were in not forthcoming. Drew Pearson revealed wryly that the senators had "paid tribute" to Braden--"only the tribute was not of a kind he would appreciate. They kicked him verbally all over the lot." The next day, 8 April, Byrnes issued the ambiguous public statement that became the definitive formulation of American policy toward Argentina. The "road would be open to . . . the negotiation and signature of a [Rio] mutual defense pact," the secretary seclared, upon "unequivocal and sustained performance" by Buenos Aires in rooting out "Axis influences." Washington, he emphasized, would be looking for "deeds and not merely promises."[3]

No matter how Byrnes conditioned it, no matter what construction was placed on Messersmith's appointment, the administration had clearly moved toward modus vivendi with Peron. Braden's absence from the 11 April White House conference between "his man" Messersmith and Truman and Byrnes seemed to confirm his eclipse. But, cautioned Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in Fortune (August 1946), "it is impossible to write him off the books." That was only too true; Spruille Braden was not to be trifled with. He was one of the most compelling characters in all American diplomacy. Born in Elkhorn, Montana in 1894,

Braden followed in the footsteps of his illustrious father, a mining engineer who developed Chile's famed copper lode, El Teniente. After grduation from Yale, young Braden set off for Latin America to make himself a millionaire. In his travels he acquired an aristocratic Chilean wife, fluency in Spanish, and a reputation for bulldog tenacity. The Wall Street crash broke his finances, but not his spirit. Although he quickly recouped, "things were completely dead in the business world," so Braden decided to move on. Never politically active, he qualified for a diplomatic post as a Latin expert. Denied the embassy in Santiago, he joined the American delegation to the Mentevideo conference in 1933. He then became chief American negotiator at the talks that ultimately settled the bloody Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia. Ambassadorships in Bogota, Havana, and Buenos Aires followed.[4]

Aside from his father, Braden's model was Roosevelt--Theodore, not Franklin. Braden, all 300 well-distributed pounds of him, led the vigorous life on the job and off. An All-American in water polo at Yale, an eager amateur boxer, he was openly contemptuous of the soft New Deal intellectuals and hated their policies. He never forgave himself for the speech he gave at Montevideo defending Roosevelt's renunciation of the gold standard. Luckily for his conscience and his career, he was not often called upon to pass judgment on New Deal economics.[5]

Braden withheld even this lip service from the administration's foreign policies. The Good Neighbor, he decided early on, depreived the Latins of vital American moral and political tutelage. Stability and American-style capitalism were his objectives, but he rejected the new-fangled proposition that the United States must lead by passive example alone. For Braden the end always justified the means. Hence Ambassador Braden brandished the big stick with anachronistic abandon. In Colombia, in what even a sympathetic scholar called "Yankee imperialism," Braden pressured American firms into withdrawing advertizing and threatening to cut off newsprint from papers critical of pro-American president Eduardo Santos, In Cuba he publicly attacked Batista for corruption and incompetence, imperiling wartime cooperation. In late 1943 the Cuban government unsuccessfully sought his recall. An uneasy truce prevailed until his transfer to Buenos Aires in 1945.[6]

To his Argentine mission Braden brought his usual thirst for combat and, as British Ambassador Sir David Kelly put it, "the fixed idea that he had been elected by Providence to overthrow the Farrell-Peron regime." Ultimately Braden's failing in Argentina was less his mixing in the country's domestic politics, egregious and counterproductive though it was, than his hotheaded misreading of the Peronist phenomenon in the context of Argentine history. To Braden, Peron was simply another jackbooted Hitler-worshipper preparing to regiment his country for aggression against its neighbors. The idea of

Washington supplying Peron with the arms he needed naturally sat badly with Braden, who argued that Peron's signature on a Rio pact would be equivalent to Hitler's at Munich.[7]

But Peron was hardly the "megalomaniac fascist" of Braden's fantasies. It was clear to a few keen observers at the time, and to most scholars today, that the Argentine was an ambitious pragmatist leading a mass movement inspired by, if anything, the Labor-socialist revolution in Britain rather than continental fascism. Beginning in October 1943, when he made himself secretary of labor in the Ramirez government, Peron tapped the long-smoldering discontent of industrial and craft workers against their employers and the landowning oligarchy that had dominated the nation politically since independence. By the end of 1945, Argentina, which had been perhaps the most socially backward of the American republics, had become perhaps the most advanced, courtesy of Peron, "Argentina's Number One Worker." Old age and disability insurance, low cost housing, health benefits, paid vacations, and wage increases went on the books. Labor's share of the national income shot up. Unions were established where they had never been. It was one of the most rapid and thoroughgoing upheavals in hemispheric history.[8]

Like Roosevelt's New Deal, to which Peronists liked to compare their movement, it aroused violent opposition from the elite it displaced. Much has been made of Peron's manipulation

of Braden and the Blue Book during the 1946 presidential race, but the beleaguered oligarchs may have used the bull headed ambassador as dexterously to combat the Peronist-labor insurgency. Of course, it is entirely possible that Braden was not used at all; a leading John Bircher in later years, he may have grasped the populist dynamics of Peronism all too well by himself. If so, he deliberately deceived Washington, for he consistently depicted Peron as a ruthless tyrant despised by the masses.[9]

The February election results should have set Braden straight. But no electoral majority could soften his view of Peron. Twice they had nearly come to blows; Peron, a former army boxing instructor, and Braden would have made an interesting match. Braden's hatred had become obsessive and flagrant. At a news conference a week before his departure for Washington, he urged Argentines to armed resistance and sabotage, hinting that the United States would aid and recognize "any revolutionary government" that surfaced to challenge Peron. If "the light and power [were] crippled enough," he mused out loud to reporters, "that might turn the trick and get rid of that guy."[10]

Once in Washington, five thousand miles from the front, Braden could no longer lead the anti-Peron forces. His crusade, as historian David Green has noted, "quickly degenerated into a simple propaganda offensive" culminating in the Blue Book. Americans were as much its target as Argentines. Grassroots hostility toward Argentina

at home was job insurance for Braden. Argentina's reputation in the United States was almost as low as if she had been an active member of the Axis. Since 1942 the American press corps in Buenos Aires had waged an extraordinary campaign of misinformation to the effect that Argentina's military government was as Nazi as Hitler's. Arnaldo Cortesi of the New York Times, Joseph Newman of the New York Herald-Tribune, Ray Joseph of PM (author of the 1944 bestseller Argentine Diary: The Inside Story of the Coming of Fascism), and Virginia Prewett of the Chicago Sun syndicate cranked out especially lurid accounts. Their motives varied. Collegial ties to their counterparts at the great Buenos Aires dailies, which were viscerally anti Peron, undoubtedly mattered. The "Nazis-in-our-midst" theme brought bylines, sold papers, and did not strain the reporters intellectually. It was far easier to play up Peron's wartime admiration for Mussolini, whom American readers knew, than the differences that made Peron sui generis. In any case, the reporters found an avid audience at home. In the flush of victory over Hitler, Americans were not feeling kindly toward those they were told were his protegees.[11]

The reporters and Braden had teamed up to torment Peron. The ambassador took generous credit for shielding them from Peronist censorship that hardly affected them. Once back in the states he established excellent relations with their grateful editors. There were, to be sure, a few editorial expressions of doubt in the United States as to whether the press at large was not misreading Argentine devel-

opments, a possibility to which Peron's election lent credence. Braden answered with an extraordinary article, which appeared in the April 1946 Atlantic. The piece bore every indication that its author was speaking in his official capacity. Far from regretting his Blue Book intervention, Braden intimated that even tougher sanctions might lie ahead; for, as he described it, Argentina under Peron represented an immediate threat to American security.

> With the defeat of Germany Argentina remains under the bare dictatorship of uniformed men who drink at the same fountain where drank Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. As long as the people of Argentina live under the heel of this dictatorship . . . none of us can sleep soundly nights. Either the idea of the rights of man triumphed or it was defeated. Either the Hemisphere is united or it is broken. There is no room anywhere for middle ground.[12]

This was the government to which Messersmith was appointed to come to terms. While the American press raged at Peron, the ambassador was home quietly clearing off Mexican leftovers and planning his Argentine approach. He was impressed by the new mood of the executive establishment. The bureaucratic rivalries and backbiting of the Roosevelt years seemed to have given way to good fellowship and agreeableness under Truman. All the officials Messersmith dealt with, from the president down, evinced a heartening desire to oblige. His wife's apprehensions looked downright silly. Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson approved restoration of 200,000 bushels of wheat cut earlier from Mexico's monthly allocation. Truman approved Messersmith's and Braden's joint recommendation that the current ambassador to Bolivia, Walter Thurston, replaced him in Mexico City--

no small achievement considering the line of politicos hankering after the post. Messersmith saw General Eisenhower, who promised an army plane for the move to Argentina. Byrnes and Truman assured him that he would "come out whole" financially, though, with compensation set by law, they could not yet say how. And they pledged "complete and unqualified support" and"complete freedom in the way I would proceed to get the right things done" in Argentina. The "right things," he told them, were to resist pressure from the Pentagon and Capitol Hill for Rio at any price, and to insist upon good faith compliance with Chapultepec from Peron. Byrnes promised to "speak definitely and concretely to Braden as to what had been decided upon."[13]

That conversation never took place. Byrnes shrank from an unnecessary confrontation with Braden. The "deeds not promises" pronouncement and Messersmith's appointment had pacified Vandenberg and Connally; and Byrnes feared that the well-connected Braden, who had threatened to resign over the Blair House meeting with the senators, would carry out that threat now if pressed. That Byrnes could not afford. His always awkward relationship with Truman, who held the office Byrnes thought should be his, was increasingly strained these days, and the secretary was under fire for "babying" the Soviets. In the spring of 1946 Byrnes needed any support that Braden's continued presence provided.[14]

But Braden's resignation threat was probably bluff. Under the circumstances he would have been foolish to resign, and, whatever else he was, Spruille Braden was no fool. Although Peron's electoral victory had dealt a sharp blow to his credibility, Braden held a strong hand in Washington. With Byrnes almost continually abroad negotiating the European peace treaties and Truman preoccupied with the reconversion economy and domestic politics, Braden retained effective control over hemispheric policy. From Buenos Aires Messersmith was to address his communications to Truman and Byrnes, but their involvement in his mission proved sporadic. It soon sank in that he was dealing with Braden and his chief lieutenants, Dr. Carl Spaeth, Ellis Briggs, and Thomas C. Mann, heading the Argentine desk, who were unalterably opposed to normalization of relations with Peron's Argentina and the Rio pact--the very things Messersmith was sent to accomplish.

The one official in a position to rein in Braden was the undersecretary, Acheson. He later regretted not having done so. Though his "disillusion" with Braden was "well advanced" by this time, Acheson consistentl sided with him against Messersmith. One could deplore Braden's methods and still share his misgivings, as Acheson did, about supplying Peron with arms. An old grudge against Messersmith also affected Acheson. Their troubles dated to 1942, when they clashed over BEW personnel assignments to Mexico. In 1946 it had fallen to Acheson to convey the news of the cut in Mexico's

wheat quota. Embassy economic counselor Merwin L. Bohan, who happened to be in the ambassador's office at the time, overheard one end of a violent argument, with Messersmith finally shouting, "Now listen, Dean, you know a lot of things about a lot of things, but you don't know a damn thing about wheat," and slamming down the receiver. Such scenes ensured that, all things being equal, Acheson would be found on the opposite side of any issue.[15]

It was only the president's confidence that Messersmith cared about, support he believed he had when he departed Washington for three final weeks in Mexico City before proceeding to Buenos Aires. That the same people who were so forthcoming to him in Washington seemed to forget him once he was safely abroad was an annoyance, but nothing new. It took several blunt, even insulting missives home to budge the bureaucracy to arrange the promised Mexican food deliveries. His personal financial aid turned out to be a waiver of the weight limits on the shipment of his baggage--something, but a far cry from the $20,000 subsidy that, no doubt unbeknownst to him, Braden had gotten in 1945. Then the army decided that it could not fly him and his party to Buenos Aires after all--regulations, it explained. Messersmith seethed. He was relegated to commercial airliner via Miami and Rio, without Marion or their faithful servants, who arrived later by boat.[16]

The last leg of his odyssey was harrowing. The late autumn downpour that soaked the runways of Buenos Aires's Moron airfield

had required the rerouting of all incoming flights, with one exception. After a nerve-wracking six hours aloft, Messersmith's plane from Rio skidded down shortly before midnight, 22 May 1946. Awaiting him were two Peron aides to convey his greetings. "Tell the Colonel," Messersmith rasped, "that I appreciate his saludos and hope to see him soon."[17]

Thus began what the new New York Times correspondent, Frank L. Kluckhohn--himself a hopeful symbol of change, Messersmith to Cortesi's Braden--pronounced "perhaps the most difficult Latin American mission . . . since Dwight W. Morrow was sent to Mexico by President Coolidge to find a way out of an impasse as stubborn as this one." The analogy was apt. In both cases new envoys were supposed to undo a predecessor's mischief. Both missions were saddled by hostile public opinion at home. Morrow and Messersmith both walked into a furnace of defiant anti-Yankee nationalism. The Argentines had publicly rejected Byrnes 8 April formula; in their view, their Chapultepec commitments had been met already. Farrell's lame duck foreign minister, Juan I. Cooke, demanded that Washington drop the noncompliance charge. The arrival of a Soviet trade delegation suggested that Peron was hedging his bets in case negotiations with the United States fell through.[18]

At the same time the Argentine president-elect was signalling his willingness to meet Washington at least halfway. With his electoral triumph over American opposition, Peron, accordint to Argen-

tine scholars Paz and Ferrari, now aimed to consolidate his position as "the champion of anti-Yankeeism in the continent." He needed to end his isolation. If "deeds" Byrnes and Braden wanted, deeds they would get. The state of siege in effect almost continuously since Pearl Harbor was lifted, and civil liberties restored. April saw the latest in a series of well-publicized "humanitarian" gestures to alleviate the European food shortage: increases in the wheat subsidy to spur production, Sunday shutdown of food markets, and a voluntary rationing plan. Argentina issued a stamp bearing Roosevelt's portrait on the first anniversary of his death. With the cooperation of the British and American embassies, Axis remnants were being rooted out. U.S. charge d'affaires John Moors Cabot certified that "more or less adequate action" had been taken against all but nine of 122 identified German agents, that "there are no Axis periodicals in Argentina at present," and that "all dangerous German institutions, other than schools, are believed to be closed and inoperative at the present time."[19]

Messersmith's welcome also argued for optimism. The Stars and Stripes flew conspicuously over many buildings along the route from the embassy residence on the Avenida Alvear to the Casa Rosada downtown, where he presented his credentials the morning after his arrival, 23 May. The unusual haste, he explained to Byrnes, was the Argentine's wish, undoubtedly "an expression of interest . . . in my mission and at least a friendly gesture which you may be sure did not

go unnoticed here. . . ."[20]

That night, also at Peron's initiative, their intimate conversations began at the home of a mutual friend. Peron, who had obviously done his homework, gave a stellar performance. He was full of admiration for the United States and regret for Argentina's past errors, and determined to set things aright, to compose the family quarrel that had, he said, too long disrupted the harmony of the Americas. With his inauguration less than a fortnight away, he shared his dreams for his country, for uplifting the descamisados, the "shirtless ones" whom he and Senora Eva Duarte Peron had adopted as their own. But, he emphasized, fiscal and constitutional scruples would be observed at all times. He said that his heart went out to Europe's hungry, that he would do more for them but for Washington's freeze on $644 million in Argentine assets that prevented the purchase of vehicles and spare parts needed to move food from the interior. And, especially gratifying to Messersmith, Peron kept relating these imperatives--hemispheric unity, social justice, and European recovery--to the intensifying cold war with Russia, which Peron said he feared would otherwise soon turn hot. He insisted that Argentina would be on the "right side" if it did. He hinted that diplomatic relations with Moscow, broken since November 1918, would be restored but noted that Argentina was almost alone among her American sisters, including, of course, the United States, in not having done so already. At no time, the ambassador stressed in his report, did Peron

"endeavor [to] use the Russian efforts here as [an] indirect means [of] applying pressure on us."[21]

It was all almost enough to sweep a new envoy off his feet. There were heartwarming reunions with friends the Messersmiths had not seen since 1930. The city was alive with Peron's impending inauguration. Marion was happily in her element. The embassy staff, accustomed to Braden's state of war, marvelled at the government's sudden solicitude for their comfort and convenience.

The glow lingered. On 15 June Messersmith presented his preliminary findings in a rambling, excited, ten thousand word letter to Byrnes (copies to Truman, Acheson, and Braden). Conditions were ripe to break the current logjam and to unite the hemisphere more solidly than ever before, and to do so "with decorum and without sacrifice of principles." "Mistakes," he had decided, "have been made on both sides." Another letter of the same date marked "Personal for the Secretary Only," expressed his disbelief at the extent of Braden's ambassadorial indiscretions. In any case, although Braden "did make mistakes . . . they were all made in good faith and he was acting with the approval of the Department," whose Argentine policy was floundering long before Braden's advent. The key now was "to forget the past" and work for the cooperative future presenting itself. Long oriented to Europe, the Argentines impressed him as determined to become loyal members of the American community, more ready to give their "wholehearted and loyal collaboration . . .

in the political, economic, social and defense field[s] . . . than they have been at any time in a century." With his sense of the moment, Messersmith perceived an historic and timely opportunity to make Pan Americanism complete.[22]

But this was jumping the gun. "A major agreement on pending matters of compliance" must come first. Argentina, he concluded, had already surpassed countries like Uruguay and Brazil in eliminating enemy remnants, but the "unequivocal and sustained performance" "very properly" demanded by Byrnes was still lacking. It was not all Peron's fault, though. The accused Axis persons and property were finding refuge in the anti-Peronist courts, which were vacating deportation and expropriation orders on the grounds that the Argentine congress, suspended with the state of siege, had obviously not ratified the Chapultepec and San Francisco pacts as prescribed by the constitution. Congress was soon to convene, and Foreign Minister Juan Atilio Bramuglia assured him that the pacts would be taken up at once and passed by the end of June. That would give the government clear authority to act. If all went according to plan, Messersmith thought the Rio meeting might take place as early as "October or November of this year."

That would not be a moment too soon, in view of the "dismal" world situation. The Americas might be fighting for its very life before long, and an isolated Argentina, he feared, left an "exposed flank" to Soviet aggression. Peron's neighbors were more worried

about the Argentine threat, concerns that Messersmith did not entirely discount. The dream of an Argentine-led southern bloc, he found, still inflamed the national imagination. He doubted whether Peron himself had "abandoned . . . [his] thoughts in that direction," despite his emphatic denials. How that squared with Peron's supposedly sincere desire to be one among many Messersmith did not say. But he belittled the Argentine threat. Peron, he felt, would "have too much to do in the next few years" to promote the country's manifest destiny. He was very eager for what Messersmith considered very modest amounts of American weaponry--too little to overwhelm his neighbors, but enough to keep his generals happy and narrow the gap with traditional rival Brazil, a major recipient of arms under lend-lease. But in case Messersmith proved wrong--if Peron had aggression on his agenda--the Rio pact would stop him. That, he explained, was why neighboring countries like Bolivia and Paraguay were clamoring for the conference to begin.

There was another consideration arguing for accomodation. Peron struck Messersmith as an earnest, impressionable amateur with few fixed ideas and untested advisers. His first months in office would shape his political personality. One thing was certain: "if Peron cannot have good friends, he will have bad ones," and that was as true internationally as domestically. A rebuff from Washington would only play further into the hands of Peron's intimates who wished to keep the Argentine-American feud alive.[23]

No one gainsaid this analysis, not to his face. He recommended that the freeze on Argentine assets be lifted, and it was done. Despite recalcitrant jurists and inexperienced administrators, the government reported anti-fascist progress with gratifying regularity. All but two of fifty five German and Japanese schools were shut down. Messersmith met at length with Bramuglia, "an honest and very intelligent man," to go over a list of targeted Axis firms and persons. The stumbling block, again, was the law, under which forty aliens had just been released from detention. Messersmith praised the government's "admirable" devotion to due process. In their 24 June talk Peron pledged "constant personal attention" to compliance matters. Two days later, in his opening address to congress, he outlined a foreign policy based on "peace and fulfillment of international promises." As to the first objective, he proposed cuts in the military budget. As for the second, he submitted the acts of Chapultepec and San Francisco for action. Congress took time out from its deliberations on 4 July to pass a resolution congratulating the United States on its independence day.[24]

That afternoon Messersmith delivered his maiden speech as ambassador to the American Society of the River Plate. In remarks cleared with the State Department, he expressed his happiness "again to serve in this great country and to labor in strengthening the bonds which must unite the Argentine and the United States as they unite every one of the American Republics." He then collapsed quietly into

his chair. Fortunately the newly appointed ambassador to Washington, Dr. Oscar Ivanissevich, perhaps the country's leading diagnostician, was also on the dais and noticed him suffering. He rushed him home and began treatment for the gastritis that was to keep Messersmith bedridden for three weeks.[25]

The experience was "most unpleasant," he wrote a colleague later, but perhaps the inevitable "result of over-tension and over-application to the main objectives of my mission here."[26]

A telegram from the State Department had supplied the main jolt to his system. The message, dated 2 July, was the opening salvo in Braden's counterattack, fired off over Acheson's signature. It too had been brewing for weeks, since Messersmith's April stay in Washington, when he and Braden met for the first time. They were hardly strangers, however. Since 1941 theirs had been a typical relationship between fellow regional specialists, who had never met face-to-face but who watched each other's activities with considerable interest. Messersmith admired Braden's success in cleaning Nazis out of Colombia and, he later claimed, endorsed Braden to succeed him in Havana. Braden's poisonous memoirs assail Messersmith's Cuban record, but he sang a different tune at the time. "So great is my admiration for you," he wrote in October 1942,

> both as my predecessor here and in general, so closely do our views seem to coincide . . . [that] I am emboldened to suggest that we drop the more formal means of address. I would consider it a great honor if you would call me by my first name and were I able to reciprocate in kind.

They would be calling each other other names before long.[27]

In these early years they had a friendly contest to see who could best handcuff the BEW and the Rockefeller office in the field. "George is one up on me," Braden noted in the margin of a Messersmith letter exulting over the cancellation of the "special economic assistant" in Mexico City. But Braden did not disgrace himself. He was "impossible to work with," recalled the BEW's Morris Rosenthal; at least Messersmith could be reasonable.[28]

Braden's run-in with Batista and his intervention in the Cuban presidential election of 1944 first gave Messersmith pause, which bloomed into major misgivings over Braden's run-in with Peron. With his professional penchant for anonymity, Messersmith winced at Braden's public diplomacy, while, as we have seen, initially supporting his objectives in Argentina.[29]

That support ended with Peron's election, and he told Braden so. Later Braden claimed to have gone along with Messersmith for Buenos Aires because "he had always professed agreement with my Argentine policies," suggested that Messersmith had been two-faced all along. But the appointment of an ambassador to Argentina of any persuasion was a bitter defeat for Braden. Messersmith, who had watched Hugh Wilson set off to appease Hitler in 1938, would have appreciated his feelings.[30]

The tension was evident between them in Washington. In their talk, Messersmith apparently confined himself to generalities, and made no mention of his White House discussions. When Acheson fi-

nally did inform him, Braden's suspicions were reinforced.[21]

Shortly after Messersmith got back to Mexico, he and Braden again locked horns. At issue were 327 prime Brazilian Zebu breeding bulls, second of two shiploads en route to Mexico. The bulls were one of Brazil's great export hopes, and former president Vargas's great personal investment hopes. Unfortunately his Rio Grande do Sul was on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's list of suspected hotbeds of the dread hoof-and-mouth disease. According to their 1930 sanitary treaty, the United States and Mexico were obliged to quarantine livestock imported from any such region on pain of embargo. Mexico, however, lacked approved quarantine facilities. Camacho's agriculture ministry proposed adoption of the expedient used for the first shipment back in October 1945. A temporary quarantine station had been set up on Sacrificios Island, eleven miles off Vera Cruz. After sixty days the cattle had come ashore with no ill effects. Messersmith recommended that Washington acceed again, emphasizing that Mexico would be expected to have permanent facilities the next time.[32]

The U.S.D.A. refused. Messersmith was ordered to tell Mexico to turn back the bulls or suffer a ruinous border closing. Nor was Brazil cooperative. Stung by the North American proscription, she vowed to slaughter the cattle and dump them overboard, filming the whole bloody spectacle for exhibition back home. Relations among three major American powers would be harmed.[33]

On the morning of 7 May, with the Brazilian freighter and her bovine cargo riding anchor in stormy seas off Vera Cruz, low on food and water, Messersmith telephoned Braden in Washington, asking him to appeal. But, Braden cabled back, Agriculture was "adamant that [the] risk involved [is] too great to waive strict adherence [to] treaty terms."[34]

Messersmith should have stopped here. Instead he lashed back with the peremptoriness he reserved for the State Department when he decided it was permitting other agencies to make foreign policy. In letters and despatches virtually guaranteed to offend their readers, Messersmith attacked the USDA decision and everyone associated with it, and threatened to resign unless it were rescinded. He had written in this vein before to Duggan and Welles and Acheson, but never to Braden, who, judging from his marginalia, did a slow burn.[35]

Meanwhile the Mexican government was landing the bulls on Sacrificios anyway. Washington drew the fair conclusion that Messersmith had presented its objections with insufficient emphasis. On 28 May, with Messersmith six days in Buenos Aires, a quarantine on cattle imports--not the threatened border closing--was imposed. The United States-Mexican Agricultural Commission met in July to address the question. American veterinarians arrived on the island to inspect the herds, and pronounced them fit for transfer to the mainland. In October, with the domestic meat shortage and upcoming congressional elections in mind, Truman lifted the quarantine.[36]

Other than as an irritant in the already strained Messersmith-Braden relationship, none of this would have mattered much, except the cattle were infected, and the contagion soon overspread Mexico. The border was sealed off on 27 December. With American financial and technical aid, the disease was finally brought under control, but, Braden chortled libelously in his memoirs, "not before Messersmith's insubordination had cost American taxpayers considerably more than one hundred million dollars."[37]

That Messersmith was openminded toward Peron was soon plain, as well. In an 11 June letter to Claude Bowers that somehow fell into Braden's hands, Messersmith argued that Argentina should be given "a chance to perform." "Good God," Braden blurted into the margin. "What have we been doing since 1942." Obviously, "performance" meant different things to them. What it boiled down to was whether Argentina would be judged by the same standards as her Latin sisters, who had had the good sense to declare war on the Axis when there still was an Axis. Braden was thinking in terms of the Peron government humbling itself and doing prolonged penance for Argentina's recent and historic transgressions. Messersmith was falling for Peron's smooth talk and token compliance. Braden determined to stop him.[38]

The telegram that helped land Messersmith in bed was a clipped diatribe against Argentine "excuses" for noncompliance. It categorically rejected the possibility that Peron was sincere. It emphasized that Washington would accept nothing less than full

and complete "performance."[39]

Messersmith was still reeling when a ten page "Dear George" letter arrived, expanding on these themes. Braden regretted to say that Messersmith was wrong: all the mistakes, he insisted, were on the Argentine side, mistakes both too grievous to be forgotten and germane to the current debate. He reminded Messersmith of Argentine obstructionism at the last Rio conference, in 1942. "We would do well to remember--not out of malice, but because history has a way of repeating itself--that these were our darkest hours." Peron would obey the imperatives that had "always conditioned Argentine foreign policy": bringing "adjacent states into its orbit" and challenging North American leadership. Argentine hubris was too ingrained for a quick fix. "An enduring solution," Braden maintained, "can only come slowly with the development of democracy and a sense of international responsibility." In the meantime, the Monroe Doctrine and the United Nations charter were all the security the Americas needed. Rio could wait.[40]

Braden was writing with a confidence born of as much claim to the president's support as Messersmith. Braden had run down the case against Argentina at the White House on 10 July, and Truman, according to columnists Robert S. Allen and William V. Shannon (who could only have gotten it from Braden), gave him a ringing vote of confidence. "Spruille, I want you to know that I'm one hundred per cent behind you. I'll back you all the way." Braden recalled being "shocked" when

Acheson later suggested that he take Truman's assurances with a grain of salt. But this was feigned innocence. After months of signals that his policy toward Argentina was being repudiated, Braden had to have been pleasantly surprised by Truman's agreeableness. Certainly Braden was aware that the president's support might be withdrawn as suddenly as it had been bestowed.[41]

The memorandum Braden submitted to the president on 12 July was artfully designed to firm up Truman's backing. The first twenty seven pages were basically Braden's brief against Peron. There followed three "Alternatives of Procedure." "A" and "B" amounted to dropping everything to embrace Peron. Choice "C," Braden's recommendation, called for "strict adherence to Secretary Byrnes' statement of April 8 that there must be deeds and not merely promises before we will sign a military treaty and deliver arms to the Argentine." Truman circled "C" and affixed his initials. Braden then sent the whole damning memorandum to Messersmith with a cover letter saying pointedly how "delighted [he was] by this splendid support from the very top."[42]

That was not all. While Messersmith was down, leading American newspapers sudddenly opened fire on Argentina. Frank Kluckhohn in the Times contrasted American "concessions" with recent Argentine actions, like the court-ordered release of accused Nazis, "undesirable from the U.S. point of view," and questioned whether Argentina was serious about "obtaining agreement on any but its own terms."

Two days after Peron issued his "strongest pro-U.S. statement yet," pledging to fight at her side in the "next war," the Washington Post informed him editorially that the United States would not be his "sucker. Our dignity, let alone out interests and the interests of the hemisphere, forbid any such truckling to President Peron or anybody else." Reports of Peron's 10 July visit to Messersmith's sickbed identified the American doing the truckling. Quoting an unnamed "State Department official," the Post aasured its readers that Argentina would be forced to "quash Nazism" in advance of a deal. And the Times chimed in, applauding State for refusing "to sacrifice principles on the altar of expediency."[43]

Then, on 7 August, Messersmith got what he took to be hard evidence of Braden's deviousness. Embassy counselor Charles R. Burrows returned from home leave with a message from Dr. Spaeth, Braden's special assistant. Burrows said he had been directed to remind Messersmith that when Nelson Rockefeller tried to "appease" Argentina in 1945, the "openly and strongly expressed disapproval" of the New York Times and the Washington Post had "blown him through the roof" of the State Department. Burrows continued.

> Mr. Spaeth then described in some detail the happy relations which Mr. Braden enjoys with the press in general and with the more important radio commentators in the United States. According to Mr. Spaeth, Mr. Braden sees regularly, at least once a week, some seven or eight of these commentators.

Spaeth left no doubt that Braden would use these connections to combat reconciliation with Peron. "He said that Mr. Braden feels so strongly

that the issue is a basic one to American foreign policy that he will never resign quietly but that he will carry the fight to the press and the radio." That would be "extremely unfortunate" for all concerned.

> Mr. Spaeth said he does not know what ambitions Ambassador Messersmith has, but believes that perhaps the Ambassador would like to be "Civil Governor" of Germany. In this connection he stated his opinion to the effect that it would be very unfortunate if the Ambassador, justly or not, should become labelled in the public eye as an "appeaser." So endeth the message.[44]

Assuming, as Messersmith did, that Spaeth had delivered a message from his boss, Braden's motives can only be surmised. If he or anyone else expected Messersmith to yield to rank blackmail, they did not know him. Of course, Byrnes had promised him that there would be a future after Argentina, and Truman had indeed intimated that it would be in Germany. But, as he wrote scornfully to Byrnes, when

> threats are made that unless I do this or that thing, my career may be ruined and future usefulness destroyed, or a particular post may not come to me, it leaves me cold, and Dr. Spaeth and whoever else may be behind this conversation which Spaeth had with Burrows, know little about me and the springs of action which I have been, I believe, guided by in my service for our Government.

It does Braden more credit to assume that he aimed to do what he finally accomplished, which was to provoke a still unwell Messersmith into a series of increasingly intemperate responses, personalizing the issue and sending it into the public area, where Braden held the advantage.[45]

Braden's underhandedness merely infuriated him, but Braden's unreconstructed hostility to Argentina worried Messersmith sicker still, especially when it dawned on him that Braden might be in a position to hold up reconciliation indefinitely. "Strict compliance" could be construed to require every last person cited in the Blue Book to be rounded up and deported before Rio could go forward. By mid August Messersmith was convinced that this was precisely Braden's game. After the embassy dinner for departing Ambassador Ivanisevich on the ninth, Peron held forth against North American hostility. For himself, he said, he could shrug off the insults, but they were complicating his efforts to gain ratification of Chapultepec and San Francisco, which had run into unexpected resistance from extreme nationalists and logrollers in his senate. Some of the legislators, he said, were now arguing that "even if the Argentine ratified these acts . . . that we would continue to bring up new requirements for compliance."

Messersmith brushed this aside. "I said to the President that we must not pay any attention to these newspaper articles and that the important thing was to get ahead with the matter of ratification." Argentina's UN seat would not truly be hers until she had. It was useless, he said, to discuss how much action against enemy firms and persons would be sufficient before the government even had the legal authority to act. But Messersmith was prepared to say that when "most" of the identified firms and persons had been dealt with, "I was sure

that my Government would consider this as adequate compliance."[46]

His government disagreed. He was admonished by telegram to refrain from further discussion on the "measure of performance which would be regarded as satisfactory." The next day, 16 August, a furious Messersmith sent dossiers to Truman, Byrnes, and Acheson, including a lengthy critique of Braden's 12 July memorandum to the president, Burrows' account of the Spaeth conversation, and the evidence to date that "Braden is opposed to any reasonable solution of the Argentine problem and that he wishes to impose conditions of compliance on the Argentine which go far beyond the action taken by the other American Republics." Braden was placing a personal vendetta ahead of the national interest, and this could not be countenanced. "My own feeling is that Mr Braden has so permitted his passions to continue to control his attitudes and he has never been able to see this Argentine picture in all of its proper perspective." Certainly his conduct as ambassador had left a residue of bitterness toward the United States that was a "tremendous handicap" for Messersmith to overcome. He was sacrificing his stomach to do it, and the atmosphere was beginning to improve. That apparently distressed Braden, and so he or "some sources in the State Department" were inspiring "tendentious articles in the press at home which are unduly critical or skeptical with regard to the intentions of the Argentine Government," defaming Peron in order to nip the budding rapprochement. As for himself, he wrote rather more snappishly to Acheson than to Truman or

Byrnes,

> I am pretty much fed up with some of this stuff that is being given out that I am "selling out," etc. I am just as much attached to principle as I think any of us are, and I think I have shown it over a long period of years and by the personal sacrifices which I have made.

Messersmith vowed to "immediately resign this mission" and go "home to the Mayo Clinic for observation and treatment" unless the sniping stopped.[47]

His timing was bad. His broadside found Byrnes in Paris with the foreign ministers, and Truman cruising the Potomac on his first presidential vacation. Acheson was about to leave for vacation as well when Messersmith's letters came to his attention. Irritation was written all over his reply. He said he would tell Braden that there was suspicion of attacks emanating from his office, but was convinced in advance that "Braden is a wholly honorable man and would not be capable of participating in or permitting such conduct." Acheson agreed that Spaeth's remarks had been "both foolish and wrong," but could not accept "that Braden either authorized or knew about such a conversation." In any case, Spaeth had just resigned to return to teaching at Stanford. As far as Acheson was concerned, it was just "borrowing trouble" to dwell on the apparent divergence over what constituted compliance when everyone agreed that Argentina was nowhere near that point. At the proper time a decision would be made, and not "by Braden or me but by theSecretary and the President." In the meantime

Messersmith could count on "our full support" and rest assured that neither "Braden [n]or anyone else in the Department is undermining you publicly or privately."[48]

That was 29 August. The day before, Henry Wallace, last of the cabinet New Dealers, soon to be ex-secretary of commerce for his public criticism of Truman's Russian policies, a long time hard liner on Argentina and, of course, no friend of Messersmith's, reported having "a very interesting lunch with Spruille Braden." Braden contributed a tall order of character assassination. As an appetizer he told Wallace "the story of why Messersmith had been shifted from Mexico to Argentina."

> It seems [Wallace recorded in his diary] that Messersmith had had a very close personal relationship with Padilla, and had refused to see Aleman. Messersmith, in fact, had more or less backed Padilla in the election. After Aleman was elected it was more or less necessary, therefore, to shift Messersmith.[49]

This was more or less a lie, one that Braden later embellished and which gained considerable currency. It originated with one William Prescott Allen, publisher of the Laredo (Texas) Times, whose brother-in-law, one Phillip Kazen, never forgave Messersmith for killing his appointment as BEW "special economic assistant" in 1942. Kazen had ties to Lombardo Toledano, who in January 1946, it will be recalled, publicly accused Messersmith of campaigning for Padilla, a charge disowned by Camacho, who of course was backing Aleman. The Laredo Times crusade against Messersmith culminated in a 23 January editor-

rial claiming that he had snubbed Aleman once in 1942, and so had "jeopardized the feeling between Aleman and our government." Denouncing 'Messersmith imperialism," Allen telegraphed Truman demanding his recall. Answering for the president, Braden expressed full confidence in his ambassador. But he did not forget the charge.[50]

Wallace was now hungry for more, and Braden was happy to oblige. Four days before Messersmith left Mexico for Argentina, he had delivered a farewell speech at an American colony banquet in his honor. Then,saying he was speaking off the record, he offered extemporanous remarks on the world situation. The next day, on page twnety eight of the New York Times, there appeared the headline, 'Messersmith Sees Soviet Aggression; Retiring Envoy to Mexico Holds Russian Policy Similar to Hitler's of 1933-1938." Actually, as Times correspondent Camille Cianfarra admitted, he "did not specifically name the Soviet Union" in characterizing the situation as an "armed truce." But his import was clear.[51]

Two days before Braden's lunch with Wallace, another article appeared. The 27 August Communist Daily Worker ran the banner headline, "U.S. Envoy Woos Argentina for Anti-Soviet War," flanked by portraits of Peron and Messersmith. Noting that Byrnes was just then in Paris "hotly denying . . . that responsible Americans were speaking of the inevitability of war between the U.S. and the USSR," the Worker's copyrighted story had Messersmith doing just that three weeks earlier

before the American Legion post in Buenos Aires. Bringing the article to Wallace's attention, Braden vouched for its veracity, citing Messersmith's Mexican speech in the same vein. Wallace fervently agreed that such talk was "criminal."[52]

The Worker story sparked recriminations of the sort depressingly routine in mid 1946. Pravda excoriated Messersmith for a speech "worthy of a political gangster." Messersmith strenuously disowned the remarks, and his Legionaire audience backed him up. Acting Secretary of State Clayton so informed the press on 3 September.[53]

Whether or not Messersmith said what he was quoted as saying at the time and place he was supposed to have spoken, the views were his. He freely admitted to them in a 3 September letter to Braden. If anything, his thinking was more belligerent and, to his mind, more realistic. By this time, State Department officials had mostly given up on peaceful coexistence with Russia. But few of them had the temerity to take this worldview to its logical, if explosive, conclusion. To meet the perceived threat of Soviet global expansionism, backed (according to their own experts) by an atomic bomb within five years, they embraced what would be called containment--an essentially static concept, notwithstanding the implied promise of long term "mellowing of Soviet power."[54]

The State Department people who had urged appeasement during the 'thirties professed to have learned from their mistakes. Because they had been mistaken then, they approached the postwar vaguely conscious of their own fallibility. Perhaps this made them uneasy with irrevocable solutions to the Soviet menace. Messersmith was also drawing lessons from recent history. He concluded that he had been absolutely right from the first--right about the similarity of Germany and Russia, right to attack public and official complacency, right to speak his mind, however unpopular, in government councils. If, he reasoned, Soviet Russia was the threat Nazi Germany had been--indeed, the career diplomats insisted Russia was far worse--then it was as irresponsible to let her live to regain her strength. A preventive war in 1933 would have spared the world six years of anguish. A preemptive strike against Stalin in 1946, given the current imbalance of power, promised similar dividends. But, as Messersmith assured Braden, "whatever my personal views" on the subject, "I would certainly not express them in a speech. . . . I have too great a sense of responsibility for that."[55]

Why he expressed those views to Braden, one person most likely to use them against him, is unclear. Perhaps he was trying to establish some common ground from which to reconcile their Argentine differences. Considering Braden's record, Messersmith had every reason to think him as dedicated an anticommunist as himself. Conversing with Wallace in November 1945, Braden was so full of

Soviet machinations that Wallace had second thoughts about his fitness as assistant secretary. But hostility to Peron conditioned Braden's whole world outlook; and his case against Rio required minimization of the Soviet threat. So he could blandly assure Wallace over lunch in August 1946 that he did not "look on Russia as the same kind of menace as Germany," that the Soviets were behaving erratically because they were "scared to death" by rhetoric like Messersmith's.[56]

Braden's desperate conspiracies could only buy time. In the larger picture, Messersmith and their developing feud were irrelevant. However Truman hedged and backtracked, Braden's fate had been decided in April, when the focus shifted from Peron's person to his "deeds." It was now for Peron to decide how far to go to secure Washington's armaments and good graces. Indeed, by early 1947 haughty Argentina had fulfilled her inter-American obligations to the surprise and satisfaction of all save Braden and his followers. In the end, the State Department's pretext for coninued postponement of Rio narrowed to a handful of supposed Nazis who had eluded capture and fled incognito into the vast Argentine hinterland. In Latin eyes, Peron won points for effort; Washington lost them for pettiness.

A critical break came on 30 August 1946. The struggle for ratification of the Acts of Chapultepec and San Francisco witnessed noisy nationalistic street demonstrations, threats against Peron's life, demands for "reservations" to safeguard sovereignty, and much

political maneuvering and attempted horsetrading. Messersmith contributed his persuasive powers. lobbying the likes of Senator Diego Molinari, "the Argentine Henry Cabot Lodge." But it was Peron's fight, and, in Messersmith's view, one he carried off brilliantly. Final approval looked like a triumph of leadership and good faith. Messersmith was jubilant. There could be no doubt now about Argentina's "determination . . . to collaborate more closely in the American picture and with us." Ratification cleared the way for action against enemy firms, and by the end of September the sixty nine "most important" were in the process of liquidation. The residency law, which protected aliens from arbitrary deportation, still obstructed the government in that area, but vigorous prosecution had begun to bear fruit: thrity five enemy aliens already deported, with papers against forty-three others, "really the principal ones," being drawn up.[57]

Peron's enemies in Washington were unimpressed. He deserved no praise, shot back Thomas Mann, for validating Argentina's signature on the two pacts whose benefits she had been enjoying for over a year. Although new instructions to the embassy dated 25 September conceded that "perfect performance should not . . . be expected or required," attached was a long list of Blue Book persons and firms against which unspecified action would be required. The Department ground out intransigent policy statements. Messersmith was angered no end when Braden's 12 July memorandum, the one innocently approved by Truman, was sent out unedited to all mission chiefs in the hemisphere. Messersmith's critique and Argentine ratification seemed to

have made no impression on Washington whatsoever.[58]

Now certain that Braden would stop at nothing to undermine him, Messersmith raised the ante. He put Washington on constant notice that while it was dictating terms and finding fault, its economic, military, and political rivals were gaining ground in Argentina. He reported that the Russians were making a "tremendous effort" to sow internal discord and anti-Americanism through the local party apparatus and their new diplomatic mission. They had little chance of success, because Peron "wants nothing whatever to do with Communism." But, Messersmith warned, he could not remain isolated, indifferent to American attitudes or the entreaties of his armed forces for weapons. In fact, a number of foreign arms producers were jockeying for Argentina's business. Agents of the Swedish Bofors and the Czech Skoda firms were on the scene and active, as Messersmith carefully reported. British nationals had broached the sale of military aircraft, in defiance of their government's just-concluded Gentleman's Agreement with Washington. The risks were clear. The instant the first contract was signed, Messersmith warned, the administration's standardization plan was finished. A ruinous and uncontrollable hemispheric arms race would certainly ensue.[59]

The British were also making commercial inroads. Not only that, Messersmith was assisting them. In July a trade delegation headed by Sir Wilfred Eady arrived in Buenos Aires to negotiate the necessary adjustments in Anglo-Argentine economic relations. For her

food shipments since 1939 Argentina had accumulated credits totalling £150 million now blocked in British accounts. She demanded their release with compound commercial interest, with a view to their conversion into dollars for the purchase of manufactures only the United States could presently supply. "Argentinization" of the economy was a key Peronist theme, and there were proposals that some of the frozen sterling go to repatriate the British-owned railroads. The Argentines also sought higher prices--100 per cent higher--and fixed quotas for their beef.[60]

Within a month the Eady mission was near collapse. The chief Argentine negotiator, Miguel Miranda, president of the just-nationalized Central Bank, was a "rude and crude" businessman (Messersmith's words) with an equal aversion to Britons and Americans. Grabbing every opportunity to rub Eady's nose in Britain's economic plight, he insisted that the assets be freed up first; then the talks could proceed. Fearing a run on their reserves by a long line of creditors, the British refused. Mission members packed their bags.[61]

Messersmith stepped in. It was Sunday dinner with Peron at the Casa Rosada, 1 September. When the Argentine leader had finished dilating on his favorite theme, the communist threat, Messersmith observed that Peron could do something constructive about it. Emphasizing that he was speaking unofficially, he urged Peron to start negotiating with Britain, for Argentina's sake and the free world's. He said he appreciated the preoccupation with the immobilized sterling,

but they were after all talking about British recovery, to which mercantile Argentina could hardly be indifferent. He reminded Peron of all of Washington's sacrifices to see Britain through hard times, most recently a $3.75 billion credit. He appealed finally to Argentine magnanimity and international responsibility. Peron, he reported, seemed responsive.[62]

The next day Peron issued new instructions to Miranda and ordered Bramuglia into the talks. The British ambassador, Sir Reginald Leeper, secured concessions from his government. On the 17th, in a dramatic turnaround, agreement was reached. All but a fraction of the assets were to remain frozen, except for purposes of redeeming British investments. The railroads were to come under a mixed company, with total capital equal to the lines' market value--about £90 million--plus a £32 million contribution from the Argentine government for improvements. The British stockholders--the former owners--were guaranteed a ninimum four per cent return, Argentina reserving the right to acquire their shares at par. Britain agreed to purchase eighty per cent of the country's exportable beef, at only seven per cent above the 1945 price. Negotiations for a new trade agreement were planned. Peron sealed the bargain with a "Christmas gift": three shiploads of sorely-needed beef.[63]

Both sides had yielded enough to be vulnerable to charges of having yielded too much. But because Argentina's bargaining position was so much the stronger to begin with, Peron's critics probably had

the better case. A Washington Post editorial called the Miranda-Eady agreement a "blow to Britain." It was. Although the railroad plan dealt gently with her investors, their days were clearly numbered. Another outpost of the informal Empire was about to fall. But Britain's vital interests, if not her ego, emerged safe. In a world of shortages, the British had secured their meat supplies, as well as a "decisive victory" on price. A revival of British exports looked possible. And the majority of the sterling balances were preserved, at least for the short term.[64]

So the mission's sense of accomplishment was real. So was Messersmith's. Bramuglia told him, and then the British, that his intercession with Peron had been decisive. On 21 September the British government thanked him formally for saving the negotiation.[65]

These laurels called embarrassing attention to Messersmith's connection with an agreement that predictably disconcerted Washington, just as Messersmith had intended. His appeal to Peron was prompted by the feud with Braden. He had offered Peron a chance, unencumbered by the courts or congress, to prove good faith and to undercut Braden in Washington. With Miranda-Eady, Messersmith trusted that "some of the pin pricking and calling of names with respect to Peron will abate in our own press." Opinion at home was uppermost in his mind when he intervened. If, as Joyce and Gabriel Kolko maintain, 'Messersmith saw the Anglo-American rivalry as perhaps the central diplomatic issue in Latin America," he proved willing to abet the

enemy to force the Argentine issue with Braden. The possibility of British exporters gaining "undue advantage" in the Argentine market under Miranda-Eady would presumably throw a sufficient scare into American businessmen to force rapprochement and Braden's ouster. "There is plenty of room for both [England and ourselves]," Meesersmith counselled Acheson coolly on 2 October, "but a proper equilibrium must be maintained," and that required normal relations.[66]

As it turned out, Washington did object to the Anglo-Argentine agreement and ultimately nullified it. But it did so not for Messersmith's reasons. Eagle-eyes Treasury Department officials spotted a clause in apparent contravention of the $3.75 billion loan agreement, which, among other things, obliged Britain to establish the free convertibility of pounds into dollars. Miranda-Eady stipulated that an additional portion of- Argentina's sterling balance might be freed up to cover any deficit in her current sterling balance of payments--a not-so-subtle incentive for British exports. When the Americans pointed this out, theBritish argued that because Argentina was and would undoubtedly remain a net sterling creditor, the provision was unlikely to become operative. But this begged the point, and Britain finally relented. Miranda-Eady never came into practice.[67]

Messersmith was going to inexcusable lengths to make his point: American interests in Argentina were in jeopardy--partly his own deliberate doing--and would remain so as long as a refractory Braden remained in office poisoning relations. Braden, he sorrowfully in-

formed Truman on 12 October, "will never . . . collaborate fully in this American picture and isn't inclined to collaborate adequately with you and the Secretary and with me. That, of course," he added charitably, "is an understandable situation." Braden might have accommodated himself to the revised policy in a "broad and statesmanlike way," but he had apparently "utterly forgotten his responsibilities as an Assistant Secretary of State" in order to defend an "impossible" personal position. With breathtaking presumptuousness, Messersmith ventured only "one solution and that is for him to leave."[68]

With the administration at pains to stem projected Republican gains in the upcoming congressional elections, however, Braden was safe. After the dismissal of Wallace, the Democrats could not afford to alienate any more liberals. Sensing his advantage, Braden struck. Throughout October, "persistent reports," probably of his own manufacture, had him resigning "if the current moderate attitude toward Argentina was not stiffened." Byrnes, just back from Paris, was again caught in the middle: Vandenberg and Connally clamoring for Rio; Acheson and Braden and their supporters contending that the United States could not afford to embrace another "reactionary" regime. At his 22 October press conference, the beleaguered Byrnes refused comment on rumors of a pre-election "showdown" on Argentina, taking cover under the "deeds not words" obfuscation. Significantly, though, he did not dispute that some softening of

the official line toward Peron had in fact taken place.[69]

A week later--five days to elections--Byrnes reversed field. He told the press that Braden enjoyed his and Truman's "full confidence," and took potshots at Peron for good measure. It was partly a response to reports of Peron's proposed Five Year Plan, a package of twenty-seven laws that added up to a transformed Argentina, especially in the economic sphere. It committed the government to full employment without inflation. It envisaged investments totalling $1.5 billion to develop the nation's resources, especially energy, and to support industrialization. Large sums were earmarked for public health and transportation projects, applied research, and immigration and settlement.[70]

Cool observers sized up the plan for what it was: a giant step toward a mixed economy, a harbinger of Peron's "third position" between capitalism and socialism. To his enemies in the United States, the Five Year Plan, with its totalitarian connotation, was a declaration of war. The press was quick to seize upon this "Hitler-style" plan as proof of Peron's determination to build "a powerful expanding war machine."[71]

Perhaps too quickly, Messersmith leapt to Peron's defense. He too had been uneasy with the plan's scope, and concerned about its impact on the private sector and on foreign opinion, until Peron reassured him, at least as to the former. This satisfied him that the Five Year Plan was simply a blueprint for a long overdue national

renaissance to promote "greater participation by the Argentine in her own development and a greater measure of social justice." Its inspiration, Messersmith decided, came not from Europe but from the New Deal. He professed to see "considerable similarity" between the proposed legislation and "some of the measures which were put into effect in the United States in the earliest days of the Roosevelt Administration."[72]

Meanwhile, other Argentine developments were undermining his contention that Peron was a misunderstood democrat amenable to American leadership. As the Argentine revolution unfolded, Braden and the journalists were looking more and more prophetic. Numerous abuses of individual liberties came to light. The purge of the universities was underway; by the end of 1946 seventy per cent of the faculty had been replaced. Organized labor made tremendous gains, at the price of its independence. The first blows fell on the free press. Press "holidays" were declared, ostensibly to give the paperboys a holiday. The anti Peronist justices on the Supreme Court were impeached. Argentina's neighbors felt her flexing her economic muscles. There may have indeed been similarities between the AAA and the Five Year Plan, but Peron's Tugwell, the plans reputed mastermind, was Jose Figuerola, adviser to Spanish dictator Primo de Rivera during the 'twenties. Figuerola was in fact one of the less unsavory of Peron's underlings.[73]

"I know something about dictatorships," Messersmith insisted in a forty-three page letter to the New York Times'Arthur Sulzberger, "and this is not [one] in the sense that we understand the term." He was dead right, as Joseph Page's recent biography shows. Even at its worst, Peronism was nothing like the unalloyed totalitarian evil Braden and his newspaper friends made it out to be. After Joe Newman departed Buenos Aires in August, the yellowest American was Virginia Prewett, who saw Nazis lurking everywhere. Frank Kluckhohn turned out to have two weaknesses common to his profession, for alcohol and headlines. His reports were thus lacking in sobriety.[74]

Messersmith's mistake was remonstrating with the offending correspondents and their publishers. He had it out with Miss Prewett, which made wonderful copy for her. Despite the appeal to Sulzberger, the Times continued to skewer Peron editorially. And that was the least of it. After complaining about Kluckhohn, Messersmith went on in his letter to malign Braden in terms only slightly milder than he was using in his letters to Truman and Byrnes. Braden, of course, was almost certainly doing the same to him, but he had the good sense to keep it to himself. For his part, Messersmith innocently sent a copy of his Sulzberger letter to Byrnes. He got back a humiliating rebuke. Byrnes ordered him to

> immediately desist from writing to representatives of the press letters criticizing the Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Braden. The United States cannot operate with one appointee of the President writing to a representative of the press in criticism of another of his appointees.

As far as Byrnes was concerned, Braden was the aggrieved party. Byrnes had never heard Braden less than "enthusiastic in expressing his high opinion of your qualifications and his personal esteem for you," and this was how Messersmith was paying him back. Regarding the "alleged" Spaeth-Burrows conversation, Byrnes noted that "you not only convicted [Spaeth] of making the statement, but you also convicted Mr. Braden of inspiring or approving it without any evidence to justify it." "I want you to understand," Byrnes warned, "that if at any time you have any complaints about Mr. Braden . . . I expect you to advise me"--which of course Messersmith had been doing since August.[75]

Byrnes may have been trying to provoke his resignation, but Messersmith did not bite. Although "deeply distressed" by Byrnes' chastizement, he expressed confidence that it was all a misunderstanding that could be cleared up "in five minutes" face to face. He would confront his accusers and finally expose Braden's conspiracy.[76]

The official announcement, which had him coming north for medical treatment, fooled no one. The Braden-Messersmith feud dominated the Washington cocktail circuit this holiday season. George Messersmith, who only wanted to do a job, found himself on the cover of Time magazine (2 December). Pressed by reporters, Byrnes allowed that some discussion of "South America in general" might take place during the ambassador's stay in the capital. The secretary added helpfully that, contrary to the assertions of Miss Prewett and others, he had "no intention of asking for Mr. Messersmith's resignation,"

which only fueled reports that it would soon be forthcoming.[77]

Byrnes fooled everyone and resigned first, on 7 January. General George C. Marshall was named to succeed him. In talks with another Byrnes ill-wisher, White House chief of staff Admiral William D. Leahy, Messersmith could scarcely contain his joy over the sudden turn of events. He had begun his talks with Byrnes on New Year's Day, and it had rapidly become clear that their rift was irreparable. Marshall, on the other hand, was presumably imbued with the Pentagon's sense of urgency about Rio. In an 11 January speech, Vandenberg, now speaking for a Republican Senate majority, renewed his call for "our indispensable Pan American solidarity," a call Marshall was expected to heed. And there was good news from Buenos Aires: the arrest and deportation of notable Nazis and the final liquidation of all enemy property. Citing these acts of compliance, the British government renounced the Gentleman's Agreement, leaving it free to try selling Argentina arms.[78]

All this and his daily treatments at Bethesda did wonders for Messersmith's stomach. He met with Truman at 12:15 on 15 January, and the president used "some very strong language with regard to Braden." Messersmith agreed that Braden had "done enough harm." The reporters who intercepted him in the White House lobby on the way out, however, only seemed interested in his reaction to reports of his own imminent resignation. Tired of ducking these questions, and with Truman's encouraging words still ringing in his ears, he allowed himself an off-

the-record reply, which, as he should have known after the Cianfarra incident, hardly guaranteed immunity. He attributed the resignation rumors to Miss Prewett, "a very active but very malicious little lady . . . who would be better off in a sanitarium than writing news stories about me." The Chicago Sun printed the "ungallant remark," along with a scathing editorial.

> We have known for a long time that Ambassador Messersmith wanted to get Virginia Prewett, our correspondent in Buenos Aires, out of his hair. Miss Prewett has insisted, in her dispatches to this paper, on telling the truth about Peron's rotten fascist regime. Mr. Messersmith, anxious to appease Peron, wants to soft-pedal the truth.
>
> The Ambassador has now resorted to one of the most despicable tricks of the trade . . . he launched a vicious tirade [and] undertook to make his remarks "off the record," which is a diplomat's way of refusing to assume public responsibility for his remarks. The Sun won't stand for that kind of malevolent irresponsibility. If Mr. Messersmith wants to blow his top about Miss Prewett's reporting in a way calculated to injure her reputation as a newspaperwoman, he can do it publicly and take the consequences.

His abdomen flared up again.[79]

More was to come. Truman was still playing both ends against the middle. On the morning of 21 January Marshall was sworn into office. After the White House ceremony, the president drew Braden aside to assure him that "that s.o.b. Messersmith" would shortly be fired. Acheson agreed to stay on as undersecretary. Buoyed, Braden yielded nothing in a frigid conversation with Messersmith that afternoon. A few days later Braden and Acheson briefed Marshall on Argentina. When, just before returning to his post, Messersmith called to plead for rapprochement, Marshall was noncomittal, except to admonish him

about airing his grievances in the press.[80]

Argentina had an elaborate welcome ready for him. Luckily for him, Messersmith, who stopped over in Rio the night of 31 January, was alerted to the plans and prevailed upon the Argentines to call it off. As it was, Juan and Eva Peron greeted him at the airport, and a photograph of him grinning in Peron's embrace appeared in a number of American newspapers.[81]

By that time, he was immersed in discussions with Peron and his subordinates and officers at the embassy to assay the progress toward compliance during his absence. From opposite perspectives, he and Braden both missed the irony: American conditions were being met partly because Peron had largely crushed the opposition to his so doing. Messersmith hoped for an acknowledgment from Marshall before the secretary left for the Moscow foreign ministers meeting in March. But Braden convinced Acheson that Argentine action was incomplete and insincere. Because a number of accused Nazis remained on the loose, Argentina had "not yet met the test." And Marshall, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, promised a review of the administration's hemispheric policy, which would be "neither a Braden policy nor a Messersmith policy," as soon as he returned from Moscow.[82]

A waiting game began. Of the outcome Messersmith was openly confident. When Marshall finally sat down and reviewed the facts, he assured Sumner Welles, whose syndicated column had begun speaking up in his defense, he would be "completely disgusted and exceedingly dis-

turbed" by Braden's machinations. But what in the meantime? Messersmith was "fearful we are reaching [the] time limit on Argentina." If Peron continued to be rebuffed, he wrote Arthur Sulzberger--itself a rash act of defiance--he might be toppled in favor of "a very radical government" that would take weapons from the many countries, including Britain, eager to sell.[83]

The issue, however, was out of his hands, and he knew it. Tired and frustrated, he could scarcely eat without distress. Then he fell down a long flight of stairs at a friend's country home, bruising his ribs. Bound in bandages, he hurt with every breath.[84]

In Wahsington pressures were building toward a climax. Vandenberg and his committee refused to await Mershall's return before settling up in the hemisphere. The Cold War was on in earnest. On 12 March Truman asked congress to authorize a massive aid program to fight communism in Greece and Turkey and wherever else it threatened free people. Catching Nazis in Argentina plunged on the foreign policy agenda. On the House floor Braden was denounced as a "muddling jug head," doing Moscow's work in holding up the Rio pact.[85]

Vandenberg, Connally, and Acheson--but, significantly, not Braden--were at Truman's side on 31 March when Ambassador Ivanissevich came to call at the White House by secret invitation. The ambassador, who was about to return to his country, was asked to convey the administration's desire for the "most friendly relations with the Argentine people and government." All that remained, Truman

continued, was the deportation of "some 20 to 30 dangerous Nazis" still at large. Ivanissevich stiffened. He declared that there were no Nazis in Argentina and "that it was calumny to say there were." He would nonetheless deliver the president's message to Peron.[86]

Messersmith was "grateful" for this initiative. Unfortunately, he wrote Acheson, the Argentine ambassador was "completely uninformed on the alien question and what Peron is doing about it," and had therefore inadequately presented his government's case. Messersmith filled in the details. "Special squads" were out "scouring the country" for the fugitives, who had had a critical head start. Many had undoubtedly fled the country; the border with Chile alone was nearly 2500 miles long, and impossible to police. He questioned whether those still at large could be considered "dangerous," as they would be apprehended the moment they "show their heads." Surely when "the President spoke of these '20 or 30 aliens left' . . . he had in mind the adequate efforts of the Argentine Government and not that we would insist that every one must be found before we take appropriate action." Peron was doing all that could be done, and no more could reasonably be expected.[87]

But his opinion no longer counted. Undone by his own too avid advocacy, he was being written off as an apologist for Peron. Marshall's response (he had returned to Washington on 26 April) took Argentine bad faith for granted: despite the "highly conciliatory" approach to Ivanissevich, he complained, those "dangerous agents"

were still not in custody. It was all faintly ludicrous in view of what a later generation would learn about real Nazi war criminals like Klaus Barbie being smuggled out of Europe around this time with official connivance. Wearily, Messersmith tried again to explain Peron's problems. The point was that his government was doing its best, a point "I do not seem to have been able to make clear to the Department." It was as close to an admission of defeat as he ever had to make.[88]

Expediency won the day. The compliance question, the focal issue in Argentine-United States relations for almost two years, had been a false issue all along. A few deportations more or less were immaterial. Meeting even Braden's exacting standards said next to nothing about Peron's motives or fitness to participate in Rio. Even as Marshall was denouncing him for non-performance, plans to proceed with the meeting and to ease Braden out of the picture were going forward. The secretary's Moscow experience had convinced him of Soviet intransigence and the need to arm the hemisphere. When he returned, he stripped Braden of responsibility for the stalled Latin American arms program and gave it to General John H. Hildring, whom he named assistant secretary of state. On 1 May, the bill, the State Department and the Pentagon now united in warm support, was resubmitted to Congress.[89]

Braden finally saw the handwriting on the wall. What happened next depends upon which version of his one believes. According to his

memoirs, when he learned that that he had lost the arms program he stalked in to tell Marshall and Acheson that he was "resigning forthwith," but they "begged" him to wait until they could fire the "insubordinate" Messersmith. In a 1967 interview with historian David Green, Braden recalled being "quietly informed that his services would no longer be needed. He agreed to resign 'voluntarily'"--that is, without raising a public fuss--"on condition that Messersmith also be recalled."[90]

It was all the same to Messersmith. He was being sacrificed to spare the administration the political embarrassment that Braden, with his press connections, definitely had the power to cause. But the execution was badly botched. On 3 June Truman announced that Rio could go forward. The next day came Braden's resignation, "reluctantly" accepted. Messersmith's mission was declared accomplished. What this meant he discovered early in the morning of the fifth: from his Buenos Aires office, he heard a paperboy hawking the headline of his "resignation." An hour later this was confirmed by telegram from Marshall: "your resignation is accepted." He was instructed to notify the Argentine foreign office at once, preparatory to a Truman press conference the next day.[91]

This outcome surprised no one, probably not even Messersmith. Since the feud with Braden went public, even their partisans conceded that both protagonists would undoubtedly have to go. Marshall had hinted as much during his February testimony to congress. As early as

May, James Bruce, a fifty four year old corporate executive, was correctly identified as the next ambassador to Buenos Aires. The suddenness of it all took Messersmith aback, but he was by now fairly inured to the indignities of foreign service, and so accepted the news with good grace--that is, without fully understanding its implications for his career. He did not agree, he wrote Marshall calmly, that his mission was completed; he had hoped it "would continue several months longer in order to consolidate . . . [the] very great progress [that] . . . has been made." Still, he had been on the verge of writing Truman that he was almost ready "to accept another suitable post in the field." His only concern was that "nothing may interfere with the course of [improved] relations so happily begun."[92]

His equability was short lived. First, there were signs to which he called attention that his withdrawal might indeed harm relations with Argentina. He broke the news to Peron over lunch on the fifth, and, despite Messersmith's own reported efforts to soothe him, the Argentine president was all indignation and outrage. That afternoon, after getting off the phone with Buenos Aires, Ambassador Ivanissevich went to the State Department, where he expressed Peron's wish that the decision be cancelled and that Messersmith, "champion of the great cause of panamericanism and brilliant exponent of the democratic spirit," stay on. The Peronist press denounced the "dis-

missal" of the envoy who had "performed a miracle" in improving relations as an "unfriendly act."[93]

While Messersmith and Peron were commiserating with each other over lunch, Truman was facing reporters in Washington. The president raised more questions about Messersmith's status than he answered. No, the ambassador had not resigned, nor had he been recalled. He had gone to Argentina with the understanding that he would return once his specific mission--repairing relations with Peron--had been accomplished. It now was. The president "professed no knowledge of Mr. Messersmith's future plans." That evening the State Department further muddied the waters with the announcement that his "resignation had been accepted."[94]

Messersmith's anxiety was now palpable. "I am completely in the dark as to what has been happening and the reasons therefor," he cabled Marshall the following afternoon- "As I have not submitted my resignation to the President, has my 'resignation' been accepted by him?" The national interest and inter-American relations still came first, but he was "sure that the President and you will wish to see that I receive that consideration which is decent and proper . . . " After all, the understanding under which he had agreed to leave Mexico and that he had had the foresight to have Byrnes put in writing during their January talks called for reassignment when the Argentine job was finished. Perhaps, he told himself, Truman had simply not yet decided what his new post would be.[95]

At the Department's insistence, he and Marion made haste to sail. They had half a lifetime of practice at it together. And there were those ad hoc overtones to the Argentine assignment that eased their departure. As always there was social relief from the disorderly drudgery of moving on. The 18 June gala at the Casa Rosada brought together 200 eminent Argentines in moving tribute. "Farewells, like obituaries, are suspect," an historian observes, "because at such times one speeds even an enemy on his way with appropriate expressions of sadness and praise." But Buenos Aires overflowed with sincere emotion. The Argentine congress voted him the $4000 Grand Cross of San Martin, the highest honor available to a foreigner. Lured by posters describing him as a "great friend of all Argentines," more than 10,000 turned out at dockside on 21 June, joining their president and, it seemed, half his government, who came on board and delayed the sailing for over an hour. Peron was last to leave the ship. A roar went up from the crowd as he and Messersmith embraced at the railing. The chant "Peron! Messersmith!,Peron! Messersmith!" resounded until Del Sud was out of sight.[96]

Chapter Seven

1. Baltimore Sun, 11 Apr. 1946, p. 14. Philadelphia Inquirer, 10 Apr. 1946, p. 22. Christian Science Monitor, 10 Apr. 1946, p. 16. U.S. News, 19 Apr. 1946, pp. 78-80. Time, 15 Apr. 1946, p. 21.

2. Pach, Jr., "The Containment of U.S. Military Aid," !!/ 225-35/ Green, "The Cold War Comes to Latin America," pp. 166-67.

3. Vandenberg, Jr., Vandenberg Papers, pp. 186-89. New York Times, 18 Oct. 1945, p. 4; 23 Oct. 1945, p. 10; 9 Apr. 1946, p. 1. "Washington Merry Go-Round," 23 Apr. 1946 (in San Francisco Chronicle, p. 12).

4. New York Times, 12 Apr. 1946, p. 16. President's Appointments, 11 Apr. 1946, Truman Papers. Schlesinger, Jr., "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors," p. 165. Braden, Diplomats, pp. 1-91, 99-100, 116-17.

5. Ibid., pp. 11, 24-25, 77-80. 99-100. 116-117.

6. For an Latin indictment, Pepper, I Accuse Braden. Bushnell, Santos, pp. 24-29, 39, 46-48. Gellman, Roosevelt, pp. 198-220. An interesting analysis of the "Braden corollary" to the Good Neighbor policy is in Dozer, Good Neighbors?, pp. 211-20.

7. Braden, Diplomats, pp. 316-17. Kelly, Ruling Few, p. 307.

8. Ibid., p. 310. Ferns, Argentina, p. 185. Alexander, Peron, p. 15, 36-39. Page, Peron, p. 70. Braden to GSM, 18 Aug. 1945, Braden Papers. Hodges, Argentina 1943-1976, pp. 14-16. Alexander, Peron Era, pp. 20-32. Vanucci, "U.S.-Argentine Relations," pp. 97-109.

9. Ibid., pp. 103-07. Frank, Peron vs Braden, p. 77. Braden, Diplomats, p. 376. See, for example, his tel. 1498, 11 July 1945, FRUS 1945, 9: 391-93; tel. 2066, 4 Sept. 1945, ibid., pp. 406-08.

10. Page, Peron, pp. 24-25. "Notes of Braden Press Conference by Collins of United Press, 18 Sept. 1945," I 1730.

11. Green, Containment, p. 252. Kelly, Ruling Few, pp. 288, 295. Vanucci, "U.S.-Argentine Relations," pp. 299-318. Blanksten, Peron's Argentina, pp. 199-211. Entry for 15 Oct. 1946, Leahy Diary.

12. Tel. 1387, 30 June 1945, FRUS 1945, 9: 508-10. Tel. 1388, 30 June 1945, ibid., pp. 511. Page, Peron, p. 98. Emmet, "Our Argentine Blunder," pp. 422-26. Braden, "The Germans in Argentina," pp. 37-43. Frank, Peron vs Braden, p. 69.

13. GSM to Clayton, 27 Apr. 1946, 812.5018/4-2746. GSM to Russell, 11 May 1946, PF. Braden oral history interview, p. 744. GSM to Braden, 23 Apr. 1946, Braden Papers. "Harry S. Truman," I 2007, GSMM. A former consul who had made his reputation protecting Americans in Spain during the civil war, Thurston had followed Messersmith's career path closely. "The U.S. Foreign Service," p. 84.

14. Braden, Diplomats, pp. 358-59. May, The 'Bureaucratic Politics' Approach," pp. 151-53. Messer, End of an Alliance, pp. 181-94. Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, p. 61. Welles, Where Are We Heading?

15. Acheson, Present at the Creation, pp. 254-56. "Procurement Activities," I 1999, GSMM. "Developing Events which Led to the Termination of my Work in Buenos Aires," I 1946, GSMM. Merwin L. Bohan oral history interview, pp. 33-34.

16. GSM tel. 381 (Mexico City), 15 May 1946, FRUS 1946, 11: 1051-52. GSM to Clayton, 27 Apr. 1946, 812.5018/4-2746. Clayton to Stillwell, 3 May 1946, ibid. Instr. 69, 11 July 1946, PF. Braden oral history interview, pp. 890-91. GSM to Braden, 23 Apr. 1946, Braden Papers.

17. Time, 3 June 1946, p. 40.

18. New York Times, 23 May 1946, p. 10. Christian Science Monitor, 10 Apr. 1946, p. 14.

19. San Francisco Chronicle, 21 Apr. 1946, p. 5. Time, 3 June 1946, p. 40. Paz and Ferrari, Argentina's Foreign Policy, pp. 137-143. "Profiles: Ambassador John Moors Cabot," pp. 39-90. Cabot #2483, 10 Apr. 1946, FRUS 1946, 11: 241-44.

20. New York Times, 24 May 1946, p. 20; 25 May 1946, p. 8. GSM to Byrnes, 6 June 1946, PSF 170, Truman Papers. Cf. Braden to Connelly, 20 June 1946, 711.35/6-646.

21. "Conversations with Peron--Buenos Aires," I 2008, GSMM. GSM to Byrnes, 29 May 1946, I 1780.

22. GSM to Byrnes, "Personal for the Secretary," 15 June 1946, PSF 170, Truman Papers. GSM to Byrnes, 15 June 1946, I 1781.

23. Ibid.

24. New York Times, 26 June 1946, p. 1; 5 July 1946, p. 1. Irigoyen to GSM, 15 June 1946, I 1782. GSM #219, 24 June 1946, I 1784. GSM memo, 24 June 1946, I 1783. GSM #230, 25 June 1946, I 1786. GSM memo, 24 June 1946, I 1785. Washington Post, 27 June 1946, p. 9.

25. Ibid. GSM #256, 28 June 1946, PF. GSM to Pawley, 6 Aug. 1946, I 1793.

26. GSM to Flack, 5 Aug. 1946, I 1792.

27. Acheson to GSM, 2 July 1946, FRUS 1946, 11: 268-69. GSM to Byrnes, 26 July 1946, ibid., pp. 285-89. "Harry S. Truman," I 2007, GSMM. Braden, Diplomats, pp. 255, 261, 305, 309. Braden to GSM, 7 Oct. 1942, Braden Papers.

28. GSM to Braden, 6 Jan. 1943, ibid. Rosenthal oral history interview, pp. 258-59/

29. GSM to Hull, 5 Sept. 1945, Hull Papers. GSM to Braden, 6 Jan. 1946, Braden Papers.

30. GSM to Braden, 16 Mar. 1946, I 1775, detailing his conversion to detente with Argentina was "a difficult letter for me to write." Braden, Diplomats, p. 359.

31. Ibid. "Harry S. Truman," I 2007, GSMM.

32. GSM #26949, 21 Oct. 1945, 612.325/10-2145. GSM #29,023, 30 Mar. 1946, 612.325/3-3046. Anderson to Byrnes, 23 Apr. 1946, 612.325/4-2346. GSM to Braden, 25 Apr. 1946, 612.325/4-2546.

33. Instr. 8608, 29 Apr. 1946, 612.325/4-846. GSM #29,357, 612.325/5-846.

34. Division of Mexican Affairs memo, 7 May 1946, 612.325/5-746. Acheson to GSM, 7 May 1946, 612.325/5-746.

35. GSM #29,357, 8 May 1946, 612.325/5-846. GSM to Braden, 8 May 1946, Braden Papers. GSM to Acheson, 8 May 1946, ibid.

36. "History of Importation of Zebu Cattle into Mexico," 17 Jan. 1947, FRUS 1946, 11: 1048-51. Relating the episode in his 1969 memoirs, Acheson wrote that "the bulls were landed with--it was charged--Messersmith's collusion, if not consent" (p. 257). This was one of many factual errors in the passage that moved Merwin Bohan to a heated complaint to the author. Acheson wrote back explaining that the cattle question "was one of the very few incidents that were written of solely from memory," and pleaded nolo contendere, promising to try to have the errors corrected. In the second printing, the chronology, which had had Messersmith moving from Argentina to Mexico, was straightened out, but the charge of collusion remained. See the Bohan correspondence, I 2058 a-h, Messersmith Papers. Entry for 14 Oct. 1946, Leahy Diary.

37. "History of Zebu Imports," 17 Jan. 1947, FRUS 1946, 11: 1048-51. On the control effort, Machado, Jr., Aftosa. Braden, Diplomats, p. 359.

38. GSM to Bowers, 11 June 1946, PF.

39. Acheson to GSM, 2 July 1946, FRUS 1946, 11: 268-69.

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Epilogue

He and Marion had "a delightful trip north." "For the first time in months," he recalled, "I was able to eat normally." They mulled over their future. He was sure that Truman would offer another post, but, "disgusted" by his recent treatment, "I felt that I could accept nothing from him." Messersmith was sixty five; he was ready for retirement. He had several writing projects in mind: memoirs, perhaps, and a volume on foreign service administration. They landed in New Orleans on 9 July, and someone delivered a message from Truman, asking him to withhold comment on Argentina, promising that "an important European post" would soon be his. But Messersmith had made up his mind. He cabled the Department requesting retirement. In Washington he decided not to call on the president, in order to "avoid recriminations." After all, Truman was "on the whole a man of many decencies. He had made a political bargain in which I became impersonally involved." There was no point pressing the matter.[1]

That was not quite what happened. Messersmith expected to be rewarded from bringing Peron into camp, and intended to accept his prize. He was not so obtuse, however, not to recognize that Truman might have different plans. When he got to Washington, his fears were confirmed. Meeting with Assistant Secretary of State Norman Armour on 17 July, Messersmith learned that he was finished.

"I told him," Armour reported to Marshall, "that you, the Department, and many of us felt that he had gone too far in carrying his case to the press, the Hill, and elsewhere." His letters, which had gotten him into trouble before, aided his downfall. His almost reflexive decision to go public had embarrassed the administration just enough to ensure his expendability. When he saw Marshall the next day (18 July), the secretary confined their conversation to European affairs--not a word about Latin America, Argentina, or his recent mission. His request, notwithstanding his memoirs, for a White House appointment was denied; in late August, Treasury Secretary John Snyder, who had befriended him in Mexico, interceded to get him a routine ten minutes with Truman. Braden was also so favored. "The topic of conversation," he recalled bitterly, "was a gabardine suit I was wearing."[2]

Messersmith and Braden, a scholar has noted, "both lost the battle; Messersmith won the war." This was plain enough at the time. Even those newspapers that had openly backed Braden, like the New York Herald-Tribune, heaved a sigh of relief that "the long, maladroit, and unhappy history of the U.S. policy toward Argentina has at last reached a climax . . ." The result was "a substantial defeat for Mr. Braden's views." The Washington Post donned sackcloth and ashes, admitting that thecompliance controversy had really been an effort gone awry to influence "the character and composition of the Argentine government." Peron had emerged still stronger, demonstrating that "we do not know the sentiments of the Argentine people." The New York Times

reserved its fears that the Peron regime was "still potentially a seedbed of Fascism in this continent," but agreed "the course not chosen will restore that hemispheric unity which has been strained by the long impasse between out country and . . . Argentina." Emblematic of the new cordiality, comedian Bob Hope arrived in Buenos Aires. On 15 August the Rio conference got underway, with Bramuglia heading the Argentine delegation, Marshall the American.[3]

Meanwhile the chief architect of this rapprochement was quietly vacating the scene. Announcement of Messersmith's retirement passed almost unnoticed. He did not seem to mind. Whatever small celebrity he had earned, he earned by not caring a whit about it. He had never played to the crowd. Everyone respected him, and many did not especially like him, for his pugnacious commitment to what he believed--mostly justifyably--were humane values. In the admirable summation of the diplomats' house organ,

> [He] has stood by his principles courageously, independently, and inspiringly. His course has often been turbulent and generally hazardous, but he has thrived on the going, his flag (or carnation) nailed to the mast. Uncle George's retirement means much to many Foreign Service officers.[4]

Boredom would not be a problem. The ink was scarcely dry on his retirement papers when the job offers started rolling in. Stettinius approached him about a role in the multinational corporation he was assembling. Other admirers ventured business propositions that, though lucrative, required extensive travel and long hours that would leave him no time to write. Then he heard from Daniel Heineman, a

friend since Antwerp, a major stockholder in the Toronto-based Mexican Light and Power Company, which provided fifty per cent of the country's electrical power. The country's needs were growing, as Messersmith well knew, and the company, whose president had just stepped down, was set to launch a major expansion program. Was Messersmith interested in his job?[5]

He was indeed. Heineman promised it would take up no more than a "few" hours a day. The salary was "attractive" too--$75,000 a year, more than twice his earnings at the end of thirty-three years with the government. On top of his $8100 a year pension, the Messersmiths would want for nothing money could buy. But neither luxury nor leisure were deciding factors, not for him. Mexlight was an opportunity to resume the work interrupted by Byrnes' phone call on 1 April 1946: promoting Latin economic development through private enterprise to raise standards of living and foster democratic stability. These worthy objectives, to which he had dedicated himself since Cuba, had taken on aspects of an emergency with the Cold War. Even as he was paving the way for Rio, he was warning against over-reliance on military or political countermeasures to communist penetration in the hemisphere. When in one of their talks Peron excitedly proposed joint action, presumably armed, to stop communism "before it was too late," Messersmith demurred. He did so for many of the reasons he sympathized with Peronism, which despite its excesses, stressed social and economic reform in a way that other Latin nations,

in his view, might well emulate. Guns could not stop change. The only effective bulwark, he told Peron, "was no hunger and distress in these countries, for hunger and distress were the surest ways of bringing on Communism . . ."[6]

So it was in the not entirely unfamiliar role of capitalist crusader that Messersmith conditionally accepted the Mexlight post, subject, at his suggestion, to the approval of the Mexican government. President Aleman greeted him warmly, welcoming him "home." Indeed their new place was right around the corner from the embassy residence, and was fully as imposing. They also rented a weekend retreat in Cuernavaca, with Camacho and other personages as neighbors.[7]

Time for entertaining proved short, however. Messersmith poured himself unsparingly into his new duties. He--certainly Marion--should have known better than to think that anything he considered worth doing could be done half time. Between the long days and frequent travel, he was "working as hard as ever," "fighting the battle of private enterprise in Latin America." He sprouted another ulcer, but the job got done. By 1954 over $80 million had been invested in new generating capacity, and Mexlight paid its first dividend since 1931.[8]

He was not too busy to stay abreast of world affairs. As a private citizen he was still less inhibited in criticizing American foreign policy, which he considered neglectful of Latin America and overly conciliatory to the Soviet Union. In October 1948 he was in-

vited to lecture at the Army Air War College, and he stunned his audience with a clarion call for preventive war. Recalling his own battles with the appeasers during the 'thirties, he condemned their contemporary counterparts as "sentimentalists" who closed their eyes to the Soviet reality. "The lesson of the last war," he declared, "showed us that there is only one way in which such a force as that generated by Nazi Germany and now by Soviet Russia can be met and that is by the use of greater and overwhelming force to stop it in its tracks before it can involve [us] in an even more devastating conflict." He returned in April 1950 to deliver the same message--only now the Russians had the bomb themselves. "Time is no longer working in our favor," he warned; the United States must use its military advantage while it was still there. He was not invited back a third time.[9]

By then he had begun curtailing his business activities as well. His trips north were increasingly for medical care. In April 1954, six months past his seventieth birthday, he retired again. In line with his much reduced income, they gave up the Mexico City mansion for more modest quarters- The weekends at Cuernavaca got longer. He puttered about his rose garden and contemplated the writing projects long in abeyance. His old friend Owen Sypherd broached the donation of his papers to his Newark, Delaware "alma mater." When he went through them, he discovered daunting disarray. So he let them lie, and decided to do his memoirs from memory instead.

He bought dictaphones, hired secretaries, and, early in 1955, began reliving his diplomatic life. By April he had 800 pages, two-thirds of the projected total. It was all "lots of fun," he reported to Sypherd, and the results pleased him enormously. While in Boston for treatment he showed the transcripts to Harvard Professor William L. Langer, who was impressed. But when he finished dictating he had 1200 pages of random reminiscences and anecdotes. The hardest work, tying these bits and pieces into a coherent whole," lay ahead, and Messersmith, never the wordsmith, had no taste for it. He might have sought the assistance of a professional historian, as people like Stettinius did, but, if this occured to him, his pride, perhaps, militated against it. The memoirs languished, joining the papers he had willed to the University of Delaware.[10]

The years began catching up to him. A string of small ailments made him miserable. He underwent surgery for his sinus and periodontal problems, which weakened him further. Pleurisy sent him to Methodist Hospital in Dallas on January 1960. On the twenty ninth, three months past his seventy sixth birthday, George Strausser Messersmith died. He was buried in Marion's family plot in Lewes, Determined to live more opulently abroad with friends, rather than with family in the states, she eventually returned to Mexico to live out her days.[11]

His death occasioned little more comment than his retirement. What messages of condolence she recevied and memorabilia she possessed were destroyed by her nieces upon her death in 1966. It fell to history to render its verdict, a task facilitated by the opening of the State Department and other archives for the 1930's and '40's, and the Messersmith papers in Delaware in 1961. The judgments of Langer and Gleason and others that had afforded him such pleasure during his last years were developed and confirmed by a new generation of writers on Roosevelt's prewar diplomacy. In his 1969 indictment of American appeasement, Arnold Offner highlighted Messersmith's courageous anti-Nazism, citing the persistence and perspicacity that made him "perhaps his country's most astute diplomatic analyst." Writing in 1967, Robert Dallek endeavored defensively to show that William E. Dodd, despite his low reputation at the State Department, sized up the Nazi menace as acutely as Messersmith, whom the State Department presumably respected. Both diplomats are singled out elsewhere for leading Roosevelt away from isolaton after 1937, but it either is deserving, it cannot be Dodd, who, of course, retired in 1937 just as Messersmith was taking his place "at the president's side" in Washington.[12]

On the weight of his European and Washington service, Messersmith joined that select group of career diplomats who rise above the anonymity inherent in their profession. As I write in this his centennial year, he is still being discovered. In October 1982 the

United Nations Association of Delaware commemorated his anti-Nazism and "splendid contribution to the Conduct of Diplomacy in the Pursuit of Peace." His aged nieces were on hand to accept the group's plaudits and an engraved pewter tray. He is recognized today in textbooks as well as monographs as among the most courageous and farsighted public servants of his era.[13]

At least this is so for the European years. From the fewer pages of Western hemisphere historiography comes another Messersmith: arch reactionary, insensate crusader for Open Doors, befriender of native fascists. The link to Peron, with whom Americans are just beginning to come to grips almost three decades after he was swept from power, obviously hurt. Braden may have lost the war over policy, but he would have taken any popularity contest. In 1947 he got the sympathy for putting up a good fight in a good cause, while Messersmith was cast in the image of the diplomats who had appeased Hitler and Franco.[14]

But he had accumulated an impressive roster of liberal detractors in advance of Buenos Aires. The list included some of his warmest admirers from the 'thirties. Harold Ickes, who had allied with him in 1938 in a futile attempt to block the sale of helium to Nazi Germany, was his enemy in 1944, when they clashed over Mexican oil. We have examined Henry Wallace's conversion. Acheson turned Felix Frankfurter against him. BEW and OCIAA functionaries added their own horror stories. They made the Washington rounds and were

confirmed by Braden and Peron, to be written into history.[15]

In other words, both phases of Messersmith's mature career have been considerably misunderstood. As this study has tried to show, his record during the 'thirties was decidedly mixed. His valor in Nazi Berlin was a wonder and an inspiration. He caught the meaning of Hitlerism with commendable speed and accuracy. But the magnitude of this reality blinded him to others. He never grasped the Hitler mystique, and could never fathom his hold over his people. After two decades of consular work, Messersmith and his traditional liberal economics did not admit of radical alternatives, which he assumed must fail. He misjudged characters like Mussolini. What another student has said is true: Messersmith's reports "were a mixture of reality and illusion . . . [that] sometimes deserved neglect." If anyone is entitled to the "most astute analyst"crown, it is Raymond Geist, who held his revulsion at bay in the line of duty.[16]

For Messersmith the 'thirties were full of frustration, despite the steady progress of his career. In Berlin and Vienna he lacked positive policy objectives as well as the power to achieve any. All he could do was to talk and write, which he did to possibly counterproductive length. Professional diplomacy in America placed great weight on style and form, two of Messersmith's weakest areas. In Washington he was shunted to administration--consuls' work--and effectively sealed off from policy. He flailed, largely ineffectively, against isolation, his country's and his own. The "realists" at the

State Department, who had doubts about his judgment all along, were as glad to see him gone in 1940 as he was glad to leave.

But if the Cuban assignment was exile, after an adjustment period it proved fulfilling. It was as though he had beein in train ing all his life for his Latin American service. In Cuban and in Mexico particularly his inexhaustible energy found the freedom to promote values dear to him, values that had shaped his own life. For Messersmith democracy was no mere abstraction, but the road to human betterment he had walked himself. Convinced by the Weimar tragedy that free governments stood or fell with their ability to provide life's material necessities, he advanced a capitalist model for the developing world. Given the generally inferior performance of socialist economies since 1945, this was probably not bad advice. But Messersmith was no doctrinaire. He had trouble with those who were, in the State Department and in the New Deal. Like Roosevelt, he subordinated means to results. He got results in Latin America because he appreciated the basic drives of national sovereignty that had to be satisfied in their political and economic relationships with the United States. That meant reducing Latin dependence upon U.S. capital and manufactures, and tolerating their deviations from liberal orthodoxy. He repeatedly warned Washington that the alternatives to statism, discrimination, and protectionism would be far worse. His formula--nonintervention, mutual respect, and material prosperity--is as worthy a basis for policy in the 1980's as it was in the 1940's.

Epilogue

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