

Memorandum

Interview with the Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull
on May 16, 1939.

The interview took place from 3 to 3.45 p.m. Present
were:

The Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull,

Dr. Feis, *Economic adviser*

Mr. Somary, and the undersigned.

Mr. Somary explained the political, military, and economic situation of our country. He tried to persuade the Secretary of State that he needs more precise assurance from the American Government that in case of War the export of the goods, which he and Mr. Liechti are about to obtain through optional contracts, will not be prohibited by legislation or any other measures of the United States Government. He also asked Mr. Hull for written assurance that the chartered ships would be permitted in case of war to bring over these goods to a neutralized French port which would be put at the disposal of Switzerland by the French Government.

The Secretary of State explained the reason why he cannot go further than what he has set forth in the draft answer to the Minister's note of May 11. He explained that ~~he has declared that~~ he cannot give any written assurance of the kind Mr. Somary would like to have. He said that the U.S. Government do not know at the present time what would be the situation in time of war and that it is impossible for the



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State Department to make any secret commitments. He assured Mr. Somary and me, however, that the United States will help Switzerland in case of war as much as they can, but they cannot make any commitments at the present time. He feared that a secret arrangement with the Swiss Government would raise the opposition of Congress and would have just the opposite effect of what our delegation wishes. If such a commitment would become known to Congress, he fears that it may pass legislation to forbid/^{the} exports of goods and the sending of American ships into the war zone. Furthermore, he said that the whole problem to assist neutral powers in case of war and how far such assistance should go, is now under consideration in connection with the passing of a new neutrality act.

Mr. Feis pointed out that there is no chance whatsoever that the export of such goods as the Swiss are about to contract would be forbidden for export to neutrals in case of war. The real problem is, he thinks, how to bring such goods over to Europe through the war zone. He made it clear that nothing further than this verbal assurance by the Secretary of State can be obtained at the present time.

Mr. Somary then asked for the arrangement of an interview with the President of the United States. I suggested that this interview should take place when the Minister is again able to attend the conferences and

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should not be set at least before next week. The Secretary of State and Mr. Feis believe that the President could not go any further than what they have said and also are uncertain as to whether the President could receive the Swiss delegation. Mr. Feis, however, promised to get in touch with the Office of the President and to find out what the President's schedule ~~is~~ for next week will be. He said that in his opinion the only time such an interview could take place would be next week because of the visit of the King and Queen of England.

R/ss

Fritz Real
May 17. 1939