HUNGARY

DECISION OF THE UNITED STATES TO RECOGNIZE THAT A STATE OF WAR EXISTED WITH HUNGARY, BULGARIA, AND RUMANIA

Memorandum by President Roosevelt to the Secretary of State and the Under Secretary of State (Welles)

WASHINGTON, December 12, 1941.

I see by tonight's bulletins that the Government of Slovakia has declared the existence of a state of war with the United States. Also, that the Government of Hungary has done so, or is about to do the same thing.

Other puppet governments may join.

It is my present thought that the United States should pay no attention to any of these declarations of war against us by puppet governments.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Memorandum by Mr. Carlton Savage, Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State (Long)

WASHINGTON, December 16, 1941.

Mr. Gray informed me on December 13 that the Secretary had just been informed of the President's desire that there be no declara-

1 On December 12, 1941, in the case of Rumania, and December 13, 1941, in the case of Hungary and Bulgaria, the Governments of Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria notified the United States Government that a state of war existed between them and the United States. For previous correspondence regarding the declarations of a state of war between the Axis countries and the United States, see Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. 1, pp. 587 ff.

2 A memorandum dated December 13, 1941, from Under Secretary of State Welles to the Acting Chief of the Division of European Affairs, Ray Atherton, read as follows: "This memorandum from the President is self-explanatory. I fully and completely agree with the President's views."

The United States had never recognized the existence of the Government of Slovakia. For the statement of United States policy regarding the nonrecognition of Slovakia, see instruction No. 372, August 28, 1939, to the Chargé in Hungary, Foreign Relations, 1939, vol. 1, p. 70.

On December 13, 1941, the Hungarian Government declared that a state of war existed with the United States. See telegram No. 710, December 13, 1941, from the Minister in Hungary, ibid., 1941, vol. 1, p. 592.

Cecil W. Gray, Assistant to the Secretary of State.
tion of war on any of the small European countries, such as Bulgaria, Hungary, and Rumania, who were reported in the press as having declared war against the United States. Mr. Gray said the Secretary desired that this information be given to any one at the Capitol who might be interested.

I gave the information to Senator Connally by telephone on the afternoon of December 13 and he said he agreed absolutely with the President. I could not reach Mr. Rayburn, Mr. McCormack, or Mr. Bloom on December 13, but I gave the information to Mr. Bloom’s secretary on December 15 and to Mr. McCormack on December 16.

CARLTON SAVAGE

740.0011 European War 1939/20647

Memorandum by President Roosevelt to the Secretary of State

WASHINGTON, January 31, 1942.

I think that for the record it would be a rather ingenuous thing to do if you were to send a letter to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Relations telling them that for their information Hungary and Rumania and Bulgaria and Siam have all declared war on the United States, giving the date of the action of each country. Then I would merely add that this is sent for the information of the Committees only and that in your judgment no action is necessary, either by the Congress or by the Executive Branch of the Government!

F[RAMKLIN] D. R[oosevelt]

P. S. If my boy Johnny were doing it he would add as a postscript “So What!”

* Senator Tom Connally, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.
* Representative Sam Rayburn, Speaker of the House of Representatives.
* Representative John W. McCormack, Majority Leader of the House of Representatives.
* Representative Sol Bloom, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.
* The President’s proposal contained in this memorandum had been advanced earlier in a telephone conversation between the President and Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle, Jr.; see memorandum by Mr. Berle, January 28, 1942, vol. 1, p. 914.
* Of the House of Representatives.
* Of the Senate.
* Identical letters of this import were sent to the Committees on February 7, 1942 (not printed). Thailand declared war on the United States on January 25, 1942; for correspondence regarding the decision of the United States not to declare war on Thailand, see vol. 1, pp. 913 ff.
The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey
(Steinhardt)

WASHINGTON, February 28, 1942—1 p. m.

68. With the approval of the President the Department requests you to approach the Turkish Foreign Office in the following matter:

On December 12 in the case of Rumania and December 13 in the case of Hungary and Bulgaria the Governments of Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria notified this Government that a state of war exists between Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, respectively, and the United States. It was the view of this Government that the Governments of Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria had been obliged to take this action under duress and at the instigation of other powers at war with the United States, and further that this action was contrary to the will of the majority of the peoples of the countries in question. Accordingly, the Congress of the United States has not made corresponding declarations of war against them, nor has the President issued proclamations in the matter.

This Government has viewed with increasing concern the aid given by Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria to the enemies of the United States and is constrained to assume that agreement has been given by them to the continuance of this participation in the war against the United States and the other United Nations. This Government has, therefore, the intention of declaring a state of war between the United States and the Governments of Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, respectively, unless in some definite form these Governments severally give prompt evidence that they will not engage in military aid or operations of assistance to the Axis powers.

In consulting with the Turkish Government in this matter the President and the Government of the United States have had very much in mind the complete and long standing identity of views of our two Governments regarding questions involving the peaceful relations among European nations, and the restriction of hostilities to areas which unhappily are already engaged. This Government feels that it should make known to the Turkish Government its intentions as outlined above, for such comment as the Turkish Government may care to make, and at the same time inquires whether the Turkish Government would be disposed to undertake some informal action through which these views may become known to the Governments of Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria.

You may communicate the foregoing textually but informally to the Turkish Foreign Office, expressing this Government’s appreciation of whatever consideration the Turkish Government may find that it
can appropriately give to the matter. You may add that further communications of a formal nature would be transmitted through the Government representing the interests of the United States in the respective countries.

Welles

740.0011 European War 1939/19838: Telegram
The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State

ANKARA, March 13, 1942—5 p. m.
[Received March 14—11:22 a.m.]
158. In the course of a visit this morning to Numan Bey\footnote{Numan Menemencioğlu, Secretary General of the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.} he handed me a note containing the Foreign Minister’s\footnote{Şükrü Saracoğlu, Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs.} reply to the inquiry contained in the Department’s telegram under reference.\footnote{Apparantly reference is to telegram No. 72, March 6, 9 p. m., to the Ambassador in Turkey, requesting a report as soon as possible regarding the reaction of the Turkish Government to the proposal set forth in telegram No. 68, supra (740.0011 European War 1939/19838a Suppl.).} The substance of the reply is as follows: The Foreign Minister has given careful consideration to the communication received and thanks the President and the Government of the United States for the friendly confidence which they have evidenced towards the Turkish Government in consulting it on a question of undeniable importance. His opinion on the subject is as follows: The Bulgarian, Hungarian and Rumanian Governments having already manifested their complete solidarity with the Axis by their declarations of war against the United States it would be difficult to assume that these same Governments out of fear of a formal declaration of war by the United States could retract their position. It is certain that in taking so grave a step these Governments must have considered similar action by the United States as one of the most inevitable consequences of their declaration of war. In making this objective exposé of the situation the Foreign Minister hopes to have replied in the most friendly spirit to the question raised by the Government of the United States. He feels that he should add that the position of Turkey does not permit it to intervene in a question, the gravity of which requires that the directly interested countries should be the sole judges of the consequences of their position.

Steinhardt
Memorandum by the Acting Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Atherton) to the Acting Secretary of State

[WASHINGTON,] March 17, 1942.

Mr. Welles. I have redrafted the telegram concerning the declaration of war against Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria in order that the message may be conveyed through the Swiss Government. This draft is attached hereto for your approval.

The objection to utilizing the Swiss authorities in the beginning was that a communication of this kind through the representing power seems almost automatically to take the character of an ultimatum. I am not sure that the Swiss, any more than would the Turks, will be willing to act along the informal lines suggested.

It was, as you know, my view that the advantages of our present status should be exploited, as a psychological warfare measure, before making the declarations which would irrevocably range the three countries as active enemies. After the meeting held in your office on February 26, and the sending of the telegram to Ankara, various plans were discussed for utilizing the interval for intensive press or radio work, to determine whether this weapon may in fact have value in promoting actual resistance to the Axis in the countries concerned. This program, in the form of directives based on an official statement, has been worked out in considerable detail by Mr. Hoskins (A-B/H), in consultation with this Division and with Mr. Berle. It will be ready for presentation to you today for your approval, if Mr. Hoskins obtains some expected technical information from the Coordinator’s office.

I therefore suggest that we delay the telegram to the Swiss Government until you will have had an opportunity to look over this project.

Meanwhile, I think it is worth noting that the best information we can get from Bulgaria and Rumania indicates a stiffer attitude toward Germany, and recent developments in Hungary are especially significant. The new Hungarian Premier is so notoriously anti-German that his appointment, following closely on the flouting of German ideas in the matter of the vice-regency, must be taken to mean that Hungary no longer feels that Germany is now in a position to exact complete subservience. If this is correct, there would seem to be an

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17 Not attached to file copy; for the telegram as sent, see infra.
18 Harold B. Hoskins, Executive Assistant to Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle, Jr.
19 Presumably the reference here is to the Coordinator of Information, whose foreign information activities were transferred to the Office of War Information on June 13, 1942, and whose other activities were transferred on the same date to the Office of Strategic Services.
20 Miklós Kállay, Hungarian Premier from March 9, 1942.
advantage in delaying the formal declarations until we can see how effectively the propaganda elements can work.

RAY ATHERTON

740.0011 European War 1939/20585a: Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Switzerland
(Harrison)

WASHINGTON, March 24, 1942—4 p. m.

769. With the approval of the President, the Department requests you to approach the Federal Political Department and inquire whether it would be disposed to convey informally a message to the representatives of Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria accredited to Bern, in the sense of the following text, or to undertake some other informal action through which the views outlined below may become known to the Governments of Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

"On December 12 in the case of Rumania and December 13 in the case of Hungary and Bulgaria the Governments of Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria notified this Government that a state of war exists between Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, respectively, and the United States. It was the view of this Government that the Governments of Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria had been obliged to take this action under duress and at the instigation of other powers at war with the United States, and further that this action was contrary to the will of the majority of the peoples of the countries in question. Accordingly, the Congress of the United States has not made corresponding declarations of war against them, nor has the President issued proclamations in the matter.

"This Government has viewed with increasing concern the apparent intention of Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria to furnish material assistance to the enemies of the United States, and is constrained to assume that agreement has been given by them to participate actively and on a large scale in the war against the United States and the other United Nations. The President has, therefore, the intention of recommending to the Congress that it declare that a state of war exists between the United States and the Governments of Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, respectively, unless in some definite form these Governments severally give prompt evidence that they will not engage in military aid or operations of assistance to the Axis powers.

"The deep friendship of the people of the United States for the peoples of Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria prompts this Government to endeavor to make known its views to the respective Governments, without at this time specifying the terms, or a time limit therefor, on which the further action of this Government would be conditioned."

You may communicate the foregoing textually but informally to the Federal Political Department, expressing this Government's appreciation of whatever consideration the Swiss Government may find that it can appropriately give to the matter.

Welles
The Minister in Switzerland (Harrison) to the Secretary of State

BERN, March 28, 1942—5 p. m.
[Received March 28—3:42 p. m.]

1260. Text of message, your 769, March 24, 4 p. m., was handed in the form of an aide-mémoire to Mr. Bonna.\(^1\) Wednesday March 25. He assured me that he would consult with Federal Council or Pilet-Golaz\(^2\) as soon as possible. Pilet who had been absent from Bern asked me to call today. He explained that as the channel of communication between the American and the three Governments concerned, he felt free and was most ready to convey the message "officially", but if this were not in accordance with your wishes he would have to consult his colleagues of the Federal Council. He was convinced he said that as soon as the message reached the Governments concerned, no matter in what form it should be delivered, they would immediately inform the German and Italian Governments thereof. He preferred not to approach the representatives of the three Governments in Bern and he did not feel that any attempt to convey the views outlined in the message through other channels would prove satisfactory. He proposed therefore provided you should be in agreement to transmit the message textually to the Swiss representatives in Bucharest, Budapest, and Sofia directing them to transmit the message to the Governments to which they are accredited respectively on the same day with, if you should so desire, a statement to the effect that "the American Government desires that the communication in question be considered as of an informal (officieuse) character".

The Federal Council will meet Tuesday for the last time before the Easter holidays. I shall, therefore, appreciate your instructions by Monday\(^3\) if possible in the event that Mr. Pilet's proposal as outlined above should not meet with your concurrence.\(^4\)

HARRISON

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\(^1\) Division Chief in the Swiss Federal Political Department.

\(^2\) Marcel Pilet-Golaz, Chief of the Swiss Federal Political Department.

\(^3\) March 30.

\(^4\) Department's telegram No. 817, March 30, noon, instructed Minister Harrison to request the Swiss Government to communicate the text in question through the Swiss representatives in Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria in accordance with Pilet-Golaz's friendly suggestion.
The Minister in Switzerland (Harrison) to the Secretary of State

BERN, April 8, 1942—8 p.m.
[Received April 8—5:09 a.m.]

1418. In further reference your telegram No. 769, March 24, this morning Federal Political Department received word without comment from Swiss Legation, Sofia, that message had been communicated to Bulgarian Foreign Office as directed yesterday at 11 a.m.

This afternoon I was furnished with text in French of telegraphic message from Swiss Minister, Bucharest, reading in translation as follows:

"The message of the Government of United States was handed this morning at 11 o'clock to Mihai Antonescu, Acting President of Council of Ministers, who took due note of it and who authorized me to inform the Government of United States that Rumania has not yet decided upon its program of cooperation in the current campaigns. He led me to expect a written reply in the near future."

HARRISON

[The records of the Department reveal no further correspondence from Bucharest or from Sofia regarding the American communication.]

The Minister in Switzerland (Harrison) to the Secretary of State

BERN, April 22, 1942—3 p.m.
[Received April 22—2:33 p.m.]

1655. My telegram no. 1436, April 10. Swiss Foreign Office has today advised me that the Swiss Minister in Budapest has reported by telegraph the receipt of a note verbale dated April 17 from Hungarian Foreign Office stating that in taking note of our communication Foreign Office recalls the attack by Soviet Air Forces on Kassa June 26 last causing enormous losses in lives and property. Accordingly Hungary considers that she is carrying on a defensive war against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

HARRISON

25 Not printed; it reported that the American communication to the Hungarian Government had been delivered by the Swiss Legation in Budapest at 11 a.m. on April 7; the Hungarian authorities had made no comment (740.0011 European War 1939/20921).

26 City in that portion of Slovakia annexed by Hungary from Czechoslovakia as a result of the arbitral award by the Italian-German Commission made at Vienna, November 2, 1938. In Slovak, the name was Košice.
WASHINGTON, June 1, 1942—4 p.m.

265. Reference Moscow’s 174 May 27, 8 p.m.27 In reply to inquiries at press conference on April 13 the Under Secretary explained that a declaration of war against Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria had not been made because of general recognition that their respective declarations had been made under pressure and against the desires of their peoples. He added that he believed the President would be inclined to recommend to Congress that declarations of war be made if material and effective assistance is given to Germany by the respective countries. On May 12 the Secretary again referred to the matter and on May 15 he stated that the Department is examining the situation from day to day. He did not mention the Rumanian forces on the Russian front but observed that a large part of the army within Rumania was near the Hungarian frontier.

It has been observed that German propaganda has ostentatiously reported the participation of Rumanian troops in recent operations, doubtless in connection with German negotiations at the three capitals for more active assistance.

HULL

WASHINGTON, June 5, 1942.

You are instructed to notify the Government to which you are accredited that the Government of the United States, by unanimous resolutions of Congress signed today by the President, has declared that a state of war exists between the United States and Bulgaria, and Hungary and Rumania.28

27 Not printed; it reported information that the Russians were much concerned over Soviet press reports of the Secretary of State’s alleged explanation as to why the United States had not declared war upon Rumania. The Secretary was alleged to have stated that most of the Rumanian army was on the Hungarian frontier and very few Rumanians were actually fighting the Russians.
The texts of the three resolutions are identical *mutatis mutandis* with the declaration of war on Germany.²⁹ See Department's circular telegram of December 11, 1941.³⁰


³⁰ Not printed.