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**Not Without A Price: Mussolini's Defense of Austria and the Shaping of American
Foreign Policy, 1933-1938**

by

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Abstract

“Not Without A Price” examines American perceptions of the relationship between Italy, Austria, and Germany in the 1930’s. The thesis suggests that members of the Roosevelt administration based their assessments of the European order around the belief that Benito Mussolini was a diplomat concerned with preserving the *status quo* and maintaining Austrian independence against encroachments by Nazi Germany. The belief that Mussolini would continue to guarantee Austrian sovereignty had remarkable longevity and remained a prominent assumption of some American policymakers despite mounting evidence indicating Italy could do little to protect Austria after the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. After the Austro-German *Anschluss* in early 1938, members of the State Department still believed that Mussolini was a moderate statesman. Italy’s strategic position in Europe, however, had been lost the moment German troops crossed the border into Austria, effectively ending Mussolini’s tenure as the United States’ foil to Hitler.

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List of Abbreviations

BLP	Breckinridge Long Papers
DBFP	Documents on British Foreign Policy
<i>DDF</i>	<i>Documents Diplomatiques Français</i>
DGFP	Documents on German Foreign Policy
FO	Foreign Office Records
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GSM	George S. Messersmith Papers
RG	Record Group

Introduction

"The period between 1933, when Franklin D. Roosevelt entered the White House, and 1939, when World War II began in Europe," writes Akira Iriye, "has not been as extensively studied by historians in the recent decades".¹ Professor Iriye's remarks seem to be a vast understatement upon consideration of scholarly inquiries into America's interwar relationship with Austria. Quite simply, there is no significant body of secondary literature on U.S.-Austrian relations between 1933-1938. There are a few essays and one full-length biography about the importance of George S. Messersmith, the American ambassador to Austria (1934-1937), but none systematically details the relations between the two countries.² Historians have concentrated their energies on developing the relationship between the United States and the major powers, most notably Germany and Great Britain. In the last decade, this body of work has been expanded to include other European countries and the monographs that deal with specific policy and security issues.

The present study relies heavily on original American documents. Fortunately, there is substantial material available to reconstruct American foreign policy in the 1930's. Quite simply, any inquiry into American policy must begin with the Department of State's Foreign Relations of the United States. Most British, French and German diplomatic correspondence can be found in Documents on British Foreign Policy, Documents Diplomatiques Français,

and Documents on German Foreign Policy, respectively. However, constructing the Italian side of the equation is more difficult. In the early 1980's the Italian Government undertook a massive project designed to publish the entire record of Italian diplomatic correspondence from before the outbreak of the First World War to the end of the Second World War in one documentary collection entitled *I documenti diplomatici italiani*. The project began in 1946 with the intention of publishing the history of Italian foreign policy between 1861-1943 in nine chronological series. Since each series has its own set of editors, the rate of publication varies greatly. The net result is that current volumes deal with events from 1861 sporadically until 1932 where completed volumes end. The series is then resumed with events in 1939. It is entirely conceivable that approximately 120 volumes will be needed to complete the series and it is a vast understatement to conclude that the series will probably not be completed in the twentieth century.³

Nevertheless, it is possible to at least fill in the outlines of Italian policymaking during this period with the use of memoirs from various Italian policymakers and the extensive use of documents made by Renzo DeFelice in his multi-volume biography of Mussolini. In the Italian sources used in this thesis, no two subjects are given as much attention as Austria and the war in Ethiopia. Both Dino Grandi, who was the Italian Ambassador to England when the Abyssinian war began, and Fulvio Suvich, who was the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs (1933-1936), condemn Mussolini for his decision to launch the invasion of Ethiopia.⁴ Both diplomats are united in their belief that Mussolini's actions were not motivated by concern for Italian strategic interests or even self-interests. Rather, the war in Ethiopia was a fundamentally flawed decision that reflected Mussolini's desire for personal glory. In

abandoning Austria for Ethiopia, Italy sacrificed her standing in Europe for the panacea of colonial empire.

Additional material was collected at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and College Park, Maryland. The personal papers of certain members of the State Department were also used in the preparation of this study. The papers of Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Breckinridge Long, the American ambassador to Italy (1934-1936) are at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. By and large, the Hull papers are disappointing and do not contain a great deal of specific material on American relations either with Austria or Italy. Long's papers contain some decent information, but the most revealing document in the collection, Long's diary, has some serious gaps. Perhaps the most complete, and thorough, collection of documents can be found in the papers of George S. Messersmith, the American Ambassador to Austria (1934-1937), at the University of Delaware.

At first glance, it is tempting to say that the United States did not have an Austrian policy worth writing about between 1933 and the *Anschluss* in 1938. No significant international trade treaties were negotiated between Vienna and Washington and no pledges of military support were issued by the State Department to preserve Austrian independence. American policymakers, though sympathetic to Austria's economic struggle in the early 1930's, decided not to invest in Austria because of her internal instability. Only when the domestic situation improved, said the State Department, would American investment dollars find their way to Vienna. Perhaps most importantly for events after 1937, America did not have a military presence in Europe that could stop Hitler's various attempts at undermining Austrian independence. Therefore, from 1933-1938, the United States could not directly

influence the European balance and remained a passive, but nonetheless interested, observer of Austria's struggles.

Nevertheless, Austria's strategic importance to the maintenance of peace and stability in central Europe could not be ignored. Bordering both Italy and Germany, Austria represented the key to central Europe and would be the battleground for the conflicting ambitions of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler. Realising that failure to protect Austria would mean the demise of Italian influence in the European balance of power, American diplomats believed that Mussolini would do whatever it took to preserve Austrian independence against the German onslaught. Italy, therefore, became by proxy the instrument that the United States would use to influence events in central Europe.

Perhaps no other question has challenged American diplomatic historians about the early-to-mid-1930's as much as the effect of domestic isolationism on Roosevelt's foreign policy.⁵ By the same token, historians have also debated whether Roosevelt was a staunch isolationist or a pragmatic politician who understood the liability of being labelled an "internationalist" during the 1930's. Some, like Robert Devine⁶, have argued that Roosevelt was a sincere isolationist as a result of his experiences from the First World War. Though Roosevelt abhorred war and detested the aggressive actions of Germany, Italy and Japan in the 1930's, Devine writes that the president's personal revulsion for armed conflict precluded the notion of direct American participation. On the other hand, Robert Dallek⁷ writes that the president was not an isolationist. Instead, Dallek argues that Roosevelt was a frustrated internationalist who was constrained by isolationists.

There is no question that the President was limited by isolationist sentiment, but

whether this meant that the United States completely accepted a passive role as a result is questionable. As more documents were released demonstrating the Roosevelt administration's attempts at policymaking, historians focused on what is broadly termed America's appeasement policy. Most historians agree that American appeasement differed from the British policy of the same name.⁸ The United States believed that economic concerns played a vital role in dealing with Italy and Germany. Indeed, Cordell Hull thought that the maintenance of peace was intrinsically linked to liberalised trade and disarmament.⁹ Britain, on the other hand, followed a policy that sought piecemeal adjustments, particularly political and territorial, to the Versailles treaty as the basis for peace. The economic appeasement of Italy, therefore, seemed to offer the Roosevelt administration the means to indirectly influence events in Europe.

One of the first assessments of the United States' appeasement policy is found in Arnold Offner's American Appeasement. Offner deals specifically with U.S.-German relations from 1933-1938 and argues that appeasement was initially adopted by American policymakers as a response to German complaints about the unjust nature of the Versailles treaty.¹⁰ In a subsequent essay, Offner specifically writes that an improvement in economic conditions, combined with a reduction in international tensions through arms limitation agreements, would lead to the appeasement of Germany.¹¹ In the end, Offner concludes that appeasement was a short-sighted policy advocated by policymakers who did not fully understand the threat posed by Nazi Germany. Subsequent histories have attempted to fill in the details of American appeasement policy, but, perhaps, the most useful study for the present thesis is David Schmitz's The United States and Fascist Italy, 1920-1940.¹²

In many ways, Schmitz's work represents the evolution of the same argument presented earlier by Melvyn Leffler.¹³ Leffler, like Lloyd Gardner, argues that the United States pursued a variant of "dollar diplomacy" in European affairs. That is, it was hoped that peace and stability would result from policies that addressed the underlying economic concerns. Schmitz argues that American policymakers believed Italian foreign and domestic policy could be influenced by investment dollars. Fearing that failure to bolster western Europe at the end of the First World War would lead to Bolshevik revolutions, the United States supported the rise of the Fascists in Italy as a viable alternative to Communism. In the process, Schmitz's study also takes issue with earlier works which argue that the State Department did not distinguish between Italian Fascism and German Nazism.¹⁴ Not only did American policymakers support Mussolini, but Schmitz argues that in the 1930's policymakers also believed Mussolini could be used to temper the more belligerent demands of Adolf Hitler in Germany. In order to evaluate the wisdom of American policy, it is, therefore, equally important to try to place Italian foreign policy in some kind of context, and in particular, to attempt to understand the role played by Benito Mussolini in the policymaking process.

Alan Cassels¹⁵ writes that the early years of fascist rule in Italy demonstrated the "dual nature" of Italian foreign policy and Mussolini's inherent dilemma of trying to both overthrow and preserve the Peace of Paris. Perhaps it should not, therefore, be surprising to find that, in Cassels' opinion, Mussolini was willing to use conventional as well as unorthodox measures, making it difficult sometimes to see a coherent policy emerging from Rome. Renzo De Felice, however, argues throughout his multivolume biography that Mussolini deliberately

pursued many policies simultaneously.¹⁶ According to De Felice, Mussolini's suspicions about Hitler's motives prevented the Italian leader from completely trusting the leader in Berlin. De Felice also argues that as a result of the vacillating attitude of the Western Powers towards Italy in the mid-1930's, Mussolini was more inclined to follow a policy designed to keep all of Italy's options open. MacGregor Knox sharply, and directly, refutes De Felice's image of Mussolini as the work of an Italian apologist.¹⁷ While it is true that Mussolini was not nearly as bloodthirsty as his counterpart in Germany, Knox does not believe this warrants the conclusion that Mussolini was as benign as De Felice would lead readers to believe. Ultimately, Knox argues that Mussolini was more prone to fits of vanity than Hitler and that the Italian leader pursued a policy of expansion to satisfy personal, rather than national, ambitions.

The relationships among Italy, Austria, and Germany, therefore, represent somewhat of a puzzle for historians. On numerous occasions, Mussolini pledged Italy to the defense of Austria despite the tension that such promises would create in Berlin. Indeed, while it is possible to conclude that there was a "convergence of interests" between Germany and Italy in other aspects of their relationship, their differences over Austria appeared to be monumental. Although evaluations of Italian military effectiveness in the 1930's and 1940's have not been favourable,¹⁸ it is clear that Austrian politicians believed such guarantees were necessary for Austria's survival after 1933. Therefore, the thesis herein attempts to do two things. First, the thesis is an attempt to redress the serious paucity of material on U.S. policy toward Austria in the interwar years. Second, the thesis attempts to build on the growing body of literature about U.S.-Italian relations during the interwar years and to establish the

extent to which Mussolini's defense of his Austrian neighbour influenced American policymakers.

To be certain, there are other reasons that the United States supported Mussolini's Fascists, but the importance of Austria's independence to the future and stability of Italian foreign policy cannot be understated. Thus, it is one of the peculiarities of inter-war diplomacy that American diplomats understood Italian strategic interests better than Mussolini. Indeed, American policymakers based their relationship with Italy on the assumption that Mussolini understood and acknowledged the restraints imposed on him by the European balance. If so, Italy could be used indirectly by the Americans to foil Hitler's ambitions in Europe. Toward this end, it is possible to detect two distinct phases in the United States' approach to Mussolini. In the first phase, which lasted from 1933 until roughly the spring and summer of 1935, the United States hoped that emotional support and positive public statements about Mussolini would persuade the Italian leader to behave in a manner that would reflect American interests on the Continent. It must be stressed however, that Mussolini's policy had little or nothing to do with American investment dollars or desires. Nonetheless, State Department officials simply chose to believe they could influence the Italian leader. The second phase of American relations with Mussolini begins with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the fall of 1935. Fearing that the conflict in Africa would undermine efforts to preserve peace in Europe, the United States attempted to satisfy Italian claims through a policy of appeasement that lasted until the *Anschluss* in 1938.

The assassination of Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss in 1934, was the single-most important event of the 1930's years that contributed to Mussolini's image as a diplomat concerned with

the maintenance of the European *status quo*. By responding quickly and decisively to Hitler's provocations in Austria, Mussolini seemed to justify the faith of American diplomats. Even when it appeared as though Mussolini's actions would bring heightened tensions in Central Europe, American officials remained steadfast in their support of the Italian leader and believed that London and Paris would soon realize what was truly important and would join with Mussolini to remove Hitler from power.

Ironically, just as Mussolini appeared to Washington to be firmly committed to the defense of the European *status quo*, the Italian leader turned his attention to his long-standing goal of colonial acquisition in Africa. Indeed, until the actual outbreak of hostilities in October 1935, some American diplomatic personnel did not believe that Mussolini would sacrifice his position in Europe to establish a colony in Africa. Needless to say, both the President and the State Department were profoundly disturbed and upset by Italy's colonial war because of its potential impact on European stability. Although Roosevelt and Cordell Hull were prepared to take some action to demonstrate their displeasure with Mussolini, they also believed that European concerns took precedence over events in Africa and framed their response accordingly. Consequently, instead of abandoning Mussolini after the outbreak of the war in Ethiopia, the United States increasingly turned to the appeasement of Italy.

America's appeasement policy rested on three distinct, but interrelated, beliefs. First was the belief that European instability was due to the gradual closing of European trade routes and the strangling of economic opportunity. Certain State Department officials, like Secretary of State Cordell Hull, were convinced that only by addressing economic concerns and raising the financial standards of European countries would tensions be alleviated. A

second belief was that Fascist governments were composed of moderates and extremists. In the eyes of most American diplomats, Mussolini was a moderate politician who could be reasoned with and who would not deliberately seek to destroy the *status quo*. The State Department's experience in dealing with Mussolini through the mid-1920's was enough to convince policymakers that the same assumptions could be made when dealing with Hitler's Germany. Accordingly, when confronting Hitler after 1933, many assumed that like Mussolini, Hitler was a moderate politician with limited goals and ambitions. Finally, State Department officials thought that the underlying tensions between Hitler and Mussolini over the future of Austrian independence would preclude the possibility of an alliance between Germany and Italy.

Therefore, when Italy's invasion of Abyssinia resulted in the diplomatic isolation of Rome, Mussolini increasingly turned to Hitler. American observers thought that the Rome-Berlin Axis was merely a temporary alliance of convenience for the two "outlaw" states and that conflicting ambitions over Austria would prevent any serious *rapprochement* from taking place. Unfortunately for Austrians, Washington could not save Mussolini from himself. Ultimately, the Italian leader's attempts to "blackmail" the Western Powers would backfire and result in the successful *Anschluss* in 1938. Increasingly isolated from the Western Powers and overextended in Spain, Mussolini could no longer afford to oppose the union of Germany and Austria. Despite mounting evidence that Italy could no longer guarantee Austrian independence, American policymakers still hoped the Italian leader would be able to prevent Hitler from absorbing his southern neighbour. When German soldiers marched into Austria on March 12, the State Department expressed shock and regret, but could do nothing to

reverse Hitler's *fait accompli*. In the end, the State Department's fundamental assumptions about the European balance and Italian strategic interests were sound. Where policymakers erred - if this can even be considered a mistake - was in assuming that Mussolini would act to preserve Italian self-interest.

Chapter One

Perhaps more than any other European state in the 1930's, Austria's fate became intrinsically linked to the maintenance of peace. Locked in the middle of Europe and sharing borders with six other countries, Austria remained at the centre of many European tensions throughout the interwar period. Indeed, for Benito Mussolini and many of the statesmen in the 1920's and 1930's, the cornerstone to European peace and stability rested on the ability of the Great Powers to preserve and maintain Austrian independence against growing pan-German nationalism. The task faced by European governments was not an easy one, for Austria emerged from the First World War a broken and destitute state with slim chances for survival. Removed from its traditional markets and sources of raw materials by newly-created states, Austrians considered their country to be nothing more than a foreign-imposed creation that had to be tolerated for the time being. For most Austrians the question asked was *when*, and not if, *Anschluss* (union) with Germany would take place.

Nevertheless, the 1920's and 1930's brought a concerted effort by the European powers to promote Austrian independence in name as well as spirit, and in no other country was this effort taken more seriously than in Italy. Indeed, Italy had a vested interest in maintaining Austria as an independent state. To fail in this mission meant that Italian aspirations to establish a foreign empire and to become a Great Power would wither on the

vine. Therefore, Italy helped to arrange League of Nations loans to support the fledgling Austrian economy and, in later years, Mussolini would issue military guarantees designed to protect Austria from foreign invasion. The rise of Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists in 1933 merely meant that the desire of Mussolini and the Fascists to prevent the growth and development of pan-German aspirations in Central Europe took on a greater sense of urgency.

The United States was not alone in recognizing the underlying tensions between Italy and Germany and in attempting to exploit the situation to protect the European *status quo*. Italy, under the direction of Benito Mussolini, firmly committed itself to safeguarding Austrian independence at the risk of war with Germany. The dilemma for American policymakers was how to influence events in Europe without appearing to domestic isolationists as becoming actively involved in foreign affairs. However, the problem presented by isolationist sentiment simply made it difficult, not impossible, for the United States to exert a measure of influence in world affairs. Throughout the 1920's and early 1930's, American policymakers consistently sought out like-minded nations and hoped that a combination of nations, embodying the weight of moral suasion, would be enough to dampen the ardour of powers bent on destroying the *status quo*. Indeed, in the face of growing Japanese aggression in the Pacific during the early 1930's, the United States consistently sought to remove itself from potential areas of conflict with the Japanese. Quite simply, America lacked the ability to project power into the region and could not, therefore, force the Imperial Japanese government to acquiesce to its demands. The inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President in 1933 marked a new beginning for American foreign policy, and the United States

began to employ a much more *realpolitik*-based approach to problems in the Far East. Certain members of the Roosevelt administration believed that recognition of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent cooperation between the two nations that would inevitably result, could temper Japan's imperialistic ambitions.¹ Perhaps if a similar situation presented itself in Europe, and if the United States could find a suitable partner, the same policy could be pursued toward Germany. For a variety of reasons, Italy was identified by members of the State Department and the Roosevelt administration as the country that was best suited to confront Hitler's growing strength.

Therefore, it is not nearly as important to ask *what* the United States could have done to affect the European balance of power as it is to ask what Americans *believed* could be done to preserve peace. In the short term, this would mean that the United States would frame its European policy on the assumption that Italy would act to preserve the *status quo* and would block Hitler's attempts at *Anschluss* in Central Europe. Therefore, the Italian Government under the direction of Benito Mussolini seemed the perfect foil to Hitler's belligerence. Although no instructions passed from Washington to Rome on the best way to handle Hitler with regard to the "Austrian situation", it is clear that the United States consistently approved of Italian policy and hoped that Mussolini would act as a mitigating force on the German leader. Increasingly suspicious of Hitler's motives, American diplomats placed Mussolini's actions within the moral framework of the United States' inter-war policy and hoped that concerted action by the Great Powers, and Italy in particular, would spell the ultimate demise of the Nazi regime's ambitions in Central Europe.

Certainly, there was much to suggest in America's relations with fascist Italy that such

an approach to foreign policy was viable. Melvyn Leffler and David F. Schmitz have convincingly argued that throughout the 1920's and early 1930's, American policymakers assumed that the direction of French and Italian policy, respectively, could be "controlled" by virtue of "dollar diplomacy".² According to this policy, there could not be lasting international peace if individual countries within the system did not enjoy domestic financial security. Thus, as long as a majority of countries had a stake in preserving the prevailing international system, stability would be the expected result. In the Italian case, this attitude was reinforced by prevailing perceptions of Fascism and State Department perceptions of what Mussolini's fascists were trying to accomplish. Schmitz presents a compelling case to argue that prominent members of the Roosevelt administration, including Sumner Welles, J. Pierrepont Moffat, Norman Davis, William Phillips, Adolf A. Berle, William Bullitt and Breckinridge Long, distinguished between the ideology of Fascism and its ultimate embodiment in Mussolini. Indeed, in the aftermath of the First World War, the prime concern in the State Department was to arrest the spread of Bolshevism throughout Europe. It was believed in the Italian case that the Fascist movement would encourage nascent Italian nationalism and bolster internal resistance to the spread of Communism.³

Indeed, to understand the nature of the relationship between Italy and Austria during the inter-war years and why the United States placed its trust in Mussolini, it is necessary to briefly examine how the end of the First World War affected the states of Central Europe and to outline the genesis of the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. In retrospect, it is possible to see the influences that would shape Mussolini's approach to foreign policy and the governing of Italy in the ashes of the First World War. Philip Morgan points out that Italy's

gradual road to unification throughout the nineteenth century ensured that participation in the First World War would serve as the first national collective experience for millions of Italians. Moreover, Italian politicians, like their counterparts in other European capitals, believed it was possible to engage in a "short war" with limited objectives. As a result, Italy entered the First World War a divided and unprepared nation.

The divisive nature of Italian domestic politics meant that the conflict actually accentuated class and political divisions in the body politic, heightening the social crisis that boiled beneath the surface. Losses by Italian troops were blamed not on poor fighting units but rather on the inability of the country as a whole to unite behind the war effort. In turn, these losses resulted in the implementation of greater controls and restrictions by the government.⁴ When the Cabinet lost confidence in their Commander-in-Chief, Luigi Cadorna, they did nothing to replace him, in part because they were overawed by Cadorna's infallible image but also because they could not think of a suitable successor.⁵ By early 1918, the Government realized that in order to maintain public support for the war effort, changes would have to be made in the way that the war was presented to citizens. "The liberty of tomorrow is the discipline of today," said the founder of the army's propaganda and information units, reflecting the promise that the post-war world held for Italian citizens.⁶

The promise for the immediate postwar years, however, remained largely unfulfilled and Italian society teetered on the brink of revolution. It would be this combination of nationalist and revolutionary forces that would form the core of Italy's post-war political culture. Indeed, in the early 1920's, Mussolini was brought to power riding the back of nationalist dissatisfaction and a desire to right the wrongs of the "mutilated victory" of the

First World War. Italy, it was argued, "lost" the peace because of internal weaknesses and Machiavellian allies that combined to force Italian diplomats to adopt a more timid policy at the negotiating table in Paris. Others were much more blunt in their assessment of the Paris peace settlement. "The rulers of Italy were not up to their task," writes Giorgio Pini in his unabashedly biased pre-1940's biography of Mussolini.

They failed to exploit the Italian victory in the international conferences for peace and were beaten at Versailles, almost as though they represented a vanquished nation instead of the first of the Allied nations to have achieved victory. Wilson's bogus idealism, Lloyd George's cunning, Clemenceau's uncompromising intolerance formed a *bloc* against Orlando and Sonnino, and aroused among the Italians who were expecting the rewards of their great sacrifices, a sense of deep delusion.⁷

This is, perhaps, one of the greatest consequences of the First World War for the Italian body politic, because disillusionment with the peace settlement mobilized entire sectors of Italian society that had previously been excluded from politics. By and large, this group consisted of the mass of Italy's armed forces from the First World War who, after being mobilized to fight, did not want to return home and remain excluded from political power. It was as if the cream of Italian society had been identified by virtue of its participation in, and survival of, the war and was now staking a claim to political power through the Fascist revolution. Fascism was the political response of this emerging class who wanted to transform Italian society from a relative position of strength. Therefore, Fascism as a *movement*, argues Renzo De Felice, must be seen as "the idealization, the desire of an emerging middle class ... who, having become an important social force, attempted to participate and to acquire political power."⁸

It is precisely Fascism's attempt to mobilize the mass of Italians and to create a new

kind of individual, argues De Felice, that makes Italian Fascism a *revolution*, and which, in turn, distinguishes Mussolini from his National Socialist counterparts in Germany. For the Nazis, the ultimate goal was to restore traditional values, not to create new ones. Indeed, in the German case, it might be said that the German man of the future already existed, all National Socialism would have to do is "liberate" him from the shackles of modernism. However, in the Italian case, the objective was to create an individual who had never existed in the past; to "create something that constitutes a new phase in the history of civilization."⁹ Liberalism, argued Mussolini, diffused the power of the state and gave rise to irrelevant parliamentary debate and encouraged class disputes by reducing the state to the status of a mere tax collector designed to serve the interests of a particular segment of society.¹⁰ What Fascism required from the individual was the willingness to subordinate individual, or class, goals in order to advance those of the state. This was a direct response to the desire of Italians to remake their society at the end of the First World War and lent a nationalist slant to Fascist ideology. It was the state, and the state alone, argued the Fascists, that had the power and vision to remake Italian society.

Despite the nationalist forces that Mussolini appealed to, Italian foreign policy showed little significant change during the early phases of the Fascist period as the Italian leader attempted to ingratiate himself with Britain and France, the very authors of the "mutilated victory" that Italian nationalists railed against. Nevertheless, as Andrew Cassels points out, Mussolini's initial approach to foreign affairs can best be described as "a policy of conciliation tinged with only verbal threats and of traditional cooperation" and would indicate that the Italian leader was, with a few notable differences, prepared to follow the policies laid out by

London and Paris.¹¹ For Mussolini, this was a policy dictated by sheer necessity. The nation as a whole would have to be reformed before any significant change could be made to the content of its foreign policy. The real or perceived injustices done to Italy by her erstwhile allies would not be forgotten, but this did not mean that Italy should actively attempt to undermine the prevailing order. Instead, Fascist foreign policy would attempt to reach a state of psychological parity with the other Great Powers. That is to say, Mussolini would attempt to create a situation where the other powers would regard Italy as an equal partner in the international balance. The second objective was to begin the gradual revision of treaties from the First World War that were negotiated with the Great Powers from a position of relative weakness.¹² Much like the Great Power diplomats of the nineteenth century, Mussolini was concerned not only with the actual balance of power but also with the *perceived* balance. From this point of view, had Italy not actually achieved Great Power status, it would be enough if other countries regarded it as one for the time being.

Indeed, Mussolini's rise to office coincided with the resolution of the war reparations question, and he quickly sought to capitalize on this opportunity to stake an Italian claim to Great Power status. It was becoming clear that the London schedule of payments was simply not working. Indeed, by 1921 it was decided that a one year moratorium should be placed on all German currency payments. However, by 1922, the German economy was in decline along with German willingness to make debt payments. The question that faced the Great Powers seemed simple. Either they could substantially relax Germany's terms of payment or they could vigorously enforce the London schedule of payments. For the British, the issue was quite straightforward. A prosperous German economy was necessary for Europe to

recover. If Europe was prosperous, this in turn meant that the British economy would benefit. Therefore, the British were more inclined to be flexible on the issue of the repayments schedule. The French, on the other hand, saw the issue of reparations as more of a political and strategic weapon. A substantial bill for reparations would keep Germany's military expansion in check and would, therefore, ensure French security.

Before the March on Rome and Mussolini's rise to power, the Fascists were more inclined to adopt a rigid position on the issue of war reparations. Such a policy was relatively easy to advance given the prevailing anti-German sentiment and was easier for the public to understand when compared against British calls for economic internationalism. Once in power, though, either Mussolini's economic advisers convinced him that a harsh policy would be futile or the Italian leader saw the political advantages that could be won by moving toward the British position because Mussolini soon adopted the middle ground between the British and French positions. While there is considerable doubt about the ultimate success of Mussolini's reparations policy, the fact remains that the Italian leader presented himself as an individual able to arbitrate between the Great Powers.¹³ The overriding concern of Italian foreign policy during the early 1920's was to change perceptions of the other Great Powers and not necessarily to win an absolute diplomatic victory.

The wisdom of Mussolini's policy can be seen by the effect that perception held on American policymakers in the State Department. According to State Department analysts, Mussolini represented the "moderate" forces in Italian politics who consistently sought to undermine the influence of the "radicals" on Italian policy. In order to keep Mussolini in power, the State Department therefore believed it had to maintain the stability of the Italian

economy. As a result, American investment in Italy increased sharply during the 1920's, rising from next to nothing in 1925 to \$460 million in 1930.¹⁴ By 1930, it appeared to the State Department as though the strength of American capital had consolidated Mussolini's hold on power and American policymakers believed they could influence the direction of Italy's internal and external policy by virtue of their investment dollars. Indeed, Schmitz concludes that as long as the United States could afford to throw money to Mussolini, the perception in the State Department was that the Italian leader would advance policies that reflected the wishes of the United States.¹⁵

However, to say that Mussolini's foreign policy remained conciliatory toward the Western Powers would be patently false. Indeed, Mussolini's rise to power was made possible by the conservatives who believed that they would be able to act as intermediaries between the King and Mussolini. Not surprisingly, it would take Mussolini some time to place his fingerprints on the foreign ministry and find an effective way to deal with the long-standing civil servants who seemed merely to tolerate the fascist regime. "I've inherited a leaky vessel and a bunch of amazingly unbusinesslike civil servants," Mussolini told his wife, "especially among the higher ranks."¹⁶ In July 1923, Mussolini began a series of more daring diplomatic initiatives, all of which were designed served notice that Italian foreign policy had entered a new phase. Confrontations with the Great Powers and the League of Nations over the Greek island of Corfu in August 1923 and the seizure of Fiume one month later indicated that Italy's imperial ambitions had not been sacrificed in order to placate the world community. Gradually, the more conservative elements in the foreign office found themselves without influence over the Fascist Government and resigned in frustration. Thus, by 1926,

Cassels concludes that the Italian foreign ministry reflected the influence and ambitions of the Fascist Government. Not only would Italy follow a "mixed" approach to foreign policy that combined traditional and radical methods, but Mussolini had already demonstrated the expansionist character of Fascist foreign policy.¹⁷

Mussolini's early diplomacy can therefore be seen as a combination of nationalist and revisionist programs. Admittedly, the two programs were so intertwined as to be almost the same, but making a distinction is helpful in understanding the nature of Italian foreign policy. As a nationalist, Mussolini was attempting to enhance Italy's international prestige, sometimes within the international system by conventional means and at other times by going outside the acceptable boundaries. As a revisionist, Mussolini's was determined to alter the settlement from the First World War in ways to maximize Italy's position in the Europe. Toward this end, the Italian leader did not always pursue coherent policies, nor is a pattern readily discernable when analyzing Fascism's early attempts at diplomacy. What is clear, however, is that Mussolini's conception of the diplomatic world seems to have been arrested sometime around the end of the nineteenth century. At that time, by unstated agreement, European leaders refused to allow colonial entanglements to translate themselves into a general European war. Whatever conflicts occurred in colonial territories remained in the colonies. Moreover, peace on the continent was ensured by granting the majority of the Great Powers a stake in preserving the system. Not every country would receive exactly what it wanted, but all realized that upsetting the system could cost them much more than they could hope to recover at a later date.

Mussolini's goal, however, was not to raise the levels of satisfaction of other European

leaders. Instead, the Italian leader played on French fears of a resurgent Germany to draw attention away from his own revisionist plans. Indeed, one of Mussolini's objectives in the early-to-mid-1920's was to encourage German nationalism. Not only was Germany a revisionist power like Italy, but Mussolini hoped that by sustaining tensions between the French and Germans, Italy would be free to pursue a more adventurous policy in the Adriatic. As long as the French feared a German resurgence along the Rhine, any government in Paris would be forced to react cautiously to Italian actions. Furthermore, by attempting to channel German nationalism toward the West and the Rhine in particular, Mussolini hoped to defuse German nationalist calls for *Anschluss* with Austria and to divert international attention away from Italy's conduct in the Alto Adige.

In some very significant ways, the question of Austro-German *Anschluss* and Italy's policy toward the Alto Adige are fundamentally linked. Both issues took root in the aftermath of the First World War and both pitted Mussolini's policies against the claims and aspirations of German nationalists. The Alto Adige, known as the South Tyrol to Germans, was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire given to Italy at the end of the First World War and brought 1.5 million new citizens and 250,000 square kilometres to Italy.¹⁸ Distinct from its symbolic value for Italian expansion, the Alto Adige brought with it the advantages of an easily defensible frontier that could also serve as a strategic launching point for a forward looking policy in Europe.

There were, however, some problems with which the Italian Government would have to cope before the Alto Adige would be able to serve their strategic needs. Undoubtedly, Mussolini's most acute problem was the large German majority living in the region that

staunchly resisted attempts to make them Italian. Therefore, the Alto Adige, which held the vital Brenner Pass, was far from being Italy's most secure frontier because it became the focus for German nationalism. However, as long as Austria continued to exist as a buffer between Italy and Germany the threat to Italy would remain a potential, rather than an actual, danger. The weakened condition of the regime in Vienna ensured that Austrian protests about the treatment of its former citizens would remain relatively muted. Indeed, Italy controlled the purse strings that held the Austrian Republic together and Mussolini was not above reminding Vienna of this fact when he felt the Austrians were behaving ungraciously toward their Italian benefactors.

Austria's position in international affairs after the First World War exerted significant influence on the stability of the European order. Indeed, at the end of the First World War, the Treaty of St. Germain carved the third largest power in Europe, the Hapsburg Empire, into no less than seven successor states. For Austria, a country that had served as the centre for a vast economic and military network between the Empire's many different ethnic communities, the psychological impact of the post-war settlement was devastating. In one fell swoop, Austria was reduced from a major diplomatic player to a second-rate country seemingly unable to provide for itself. Indeed, the ability to sustain a viable economy in Austria would prove to be the most vexing issue to confront successive governments in Vienna and the world's diplomats in the interwar years. No foreign power would consider aiding the Austrian Republic unless the internal situation stabilized. Unfortunately, without the influx of foreign investment capital to sustain economic growth, internal stability proved elusive.

The problems confronted by any government in Vienna were numerous. First, Austria was physically separated from its traditional markets and raw materials by newly-created governments and international borders. Policymakers and business leaders alike believed that, given its new geographic position, Austria's chances for economic survival were slim. Second, Austria had no access to the sea and found itself surrounded by six other countries, making the need for effective military defense both a necessity and a conundrum. If government monies were spent developing the economy, Austria would face a multitude of external security threats. If, however, the government chose to develop Austria's defenses, the result would be greater economic dislocation. Finally, while Germany and Hungary were able to retain their national identities, Austria found itself struggling to find itself in a new world.

For years, the Hapsburgs had attempted to curtail the growth and development of nationalist thought in their empire. Now, the very nation that had served as the bastion of conservatism and reactionism for nearly a century was forced to embrace the principles of nationalism that had once threatened its survival. Future Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss remarked at the time that "in the great confusion of the collapse of the Monarchy one fixed pole remains firm - that we are no longer 'Austrians' but 'German-Austrians', with the accent on 'German'."¹⁹ The critical question that frustrated Austrian nationalists through the 1920's and 1930's was to define the distinguishing characteristics of an *Austrian*. Even upon cursory examination, the problems seem readily apparent. If an Austrian could be defined by his German characteristics, why could only 6 million of the 10 million German-speaking members of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire be found within Austria's frontiers?

Furthermore, if an Austrian was defined by his German characteristics, what distinguished an Austrian from a German?

Dollfuss' comment underscores the fundamental problem that confronted Austrian nationalists in the post-war world, the attempt to define the limits of the "German" in "German-Austrian". If one could no longer be Hapsburg yellow-black, did this mean one automatically became German black-red-gold? Indeed, many Austrians did not seem to embrace the notion that theirs was an independent country. To some, "Austria" was nothing more than a foreign construct, designed to be a temporary structure until a union with another larger country could be arranged. Indeed, two unofficial plebiscites in the aftermath of the First World War aptly demonstrated that many Austrians favoured an *Anschluss* of one kind or another, something forbidden by the terms of the Treaty of St. Germain. From this point of view, Kindermann concludes that the Treaty of St. Germain had the paradoxical effect of strengthening Austrian independence on the surface, but also creating a significant internal body of opposition and resentment toward the foreign powers who had placed limits on Austria's freedom of action.²⁰

Clearly, there were many troubling, but nonetheless basic, questions for the fledgling new Republic to face in the years ahead. The belief that *Anschluss* was not only desirable but inevitable persisted into the 1930's and became a panacea, of sorts, for disenchanted Austrians who believed that all of Austria's economic problems would be solved once union with Germany took place. As a direct result, Martin Kitchen argues that economic considerations were dealt with in a half-hearted manner. Successive governments adopted deflationary policies, intensifying the unemployment situation and doing little else to restructure the

economy. Wild stock speculation became the most common economic activity of the republic and along with currency speculation, drained the Republic of much needed investment capital. Indeed, although the lands of the Hapsburg realm had been dissolved, the Austrian Republic was obligated to pay the reparations of the former empire with the exception of those presented to Hungary. The result was that Austria became increasingly reliant on League of Nations loans to survive and, therefore, became indebted to members of the international community, and Italy in particular, who arranged those loans.²¹ While Austria needed the help of other nations to survive, the potential benefit of international aid had to outweigh the inevitable public bitterness that would occur. Indeed, as was mentioned earlier, many Austrians were resentful that the Treaty of St. Germain had placed so many constraints on Austria's diplomacy *vis-à-vis* Germany, constraints which now appeared to be designed to do little more than keep Austria in a position of international subservience.

Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss was thrust into this chaotic environment when he became Chancellor in 1933. There were three ways in which Dollfuss could combat Nazi encroachments on Austrian sovereignty and it was clear that all three approaches would have to be investigated concurrently if Austria were to survive. The first was to encourage the development of a patriotic/nationalist spirit in Austria that would not wax and wane in response to current events. By building a solid political base at home, it was hoped that external attempts to undermine the government could be crushed before they really began. A second approach would be to find some form of diplomatic and political accommodation with Germany. By removing a hostile Germany from the mix, it was hoped that an economic recovery would result with the influx of foreign capital. Finally, Dollfuss realized that Austria

would also have to seek a foreign protector in the event that the second option never materialized.²²

Internally, Dollfuss was waging an increasingly pitched battle to maintain Austrian independence and the Chancellor would be forced to choose between accepting Italian assistance in resisting the German onslaught or co-opting the Social Democrats. The problem, however, was that the two major political parties in Austria, the Christian Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party, saw themselves as being engaged in a life-and-death class struggle against one another. As Kindermann points out, this meant that there was an "absence of two vital areas of consensus between the two major political parties". Not only was there no supra-party commitment to furthering the interest of the state, there was no belief that pluralist democracy superseded party interests. Rather, democracy was seen as a temporary vehicle imposed on Austria that could serve self-centred interests. The result was an increasing polarization between the two parties that prevented the formation of a "common front" to face policy issues, a problem that would have terrible consequences for Austrian independence after the rise of Adolf Hitler in 1933. The Austro-Marxists "continued to insist upon a policy of *Anschluss* with Germany" in stark contrast to the Dollfuss Government's desire to maintain and nurture a distinctly Austrian identity. Granted, the Social Democrats did issue the proviso that *Anschluss* would have to come "after Hitler", but the fact remains that the two major political parties held widely divergent, and irreconcilable, views on the important question of Austrian independence at the critical time of Hitler's attempt to subvert Austria from within.²³

In the meantime, relations between the United States and Italy continued to progress

along an amicable course. The early phases of the Roosevelt administration witnessed a great deal of accord between Mussolini and the President, with each expressing great admiration for the other. "I am much interested and deeply impressed by what he [Mussolini] has accomplished," wrote Roosevelt to the American Ambassador in Italy, Breckinridge Long, "and by evidenced honest purpose of restoring Italy and seeking to prevent general European trouble."²⁴ Meanwhile, during his first meeting with Ambassador Long, Mussolini told the American that "I will cooperate [with the United States], I want to cooperate. You can count upon me."²⁵

No other series of events would influence the President as much as Mussolini's efforts at maintaining European stability. For example, during attempts to broker peace in Europe during the world disarmament conference at Geneva in 1933, it was clear that the United States was placing special emphasis on the ability of Benito Mussolini to bring the Germans on side. Roosevelt believed that the main stumbling block to any agreement would be the animosity between Germany and France. Perhaps, if Davis, the American Consul in Geneva, could arrange a meeting between Hitler, Daladier, MacDonald, and Mussolini, progress could be made toward the "only answer" available, controlled disarmament and international supervision.²⁶ From the President's point of view, calling upon Mussolini to help advance the cause of world peace was a low-risk venture. As FDR wrote to Ambassador Long in Rome, "there seems no question by that [Mussolini] is really interested and deeply impressed by what we are doing and I am much interested and deeply impressed by what he has accomplished and by his evidenced honest purpose of restoring Italy and seeking to prevent general European trouble."²⁷ Even when the conference was on the verge of collapse and it became

apparent that the Italians were going to take a more realist approach to their security concerns, the tone in Washington was of one of general approval. "Italy has adopted a policy to build her European relations upon the basis of the Four Power Pact," wrote Breckinridge Long, "to pursue her plan to *bring about a situation of peaceful relationship between herself and the other three great European powers.*"²⁸

In essence, the Four Power Pact of 1933 was designed to supplement both the League of Nations Covenant and the Kellogg-Briand Pact by providing a mechanism for the four major powers of Europe (Britain, France, Italy, and Germany) to meet and resolve some of the outstanding issues between them.²⁹ Mussolini went to great lengths to assure the United States that this was not "intended as a common front against any nation and was merely an effort to ensure peace along the lines of similar efforts which had been successful in calming disturbed conditions in Europe previously." While it was intimated by the Italians that American participation in the Pact in any capacity would be welcome, Davis replied that the United States would be willing to "sit down" with the signatories "to discuss how far the result of the Four Power Agreement might be expected to bring about more rapid and more far reaching steps to disarmament."³⁰

Although the Four Power Pact was not ratified by the governments of all the signatories, what remains significant about the Pact was that it solidified Italy's position as an important consideration in the European balance for members of the Roosevelt administration, like Norman Davis and Breckinridge Long. Furthermore, the Pact suggested that an interested Italian government could exert significant influence in maintaining the *status quo* on the continent. With the disarmament conference in shambles and serious questions

abounding about the outcome of the London Economic Conference, Italy's Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Fulvio Suvich, made it clear that "there would be no real sense of security in Europe" unless the governments of the major powers became interested in preserving the peace. Certainly, this is how the pact was viewed in Washington, where it won favourable mention from the President in a statement that "welcome[d] every effort toward replacing conflicting national aims by international cooperation for the greater advantage of all."³¹

Every diplomatic indicator pointed to the fact that the Italians were the only reliable force to be reckoned with on the continent, and a quick evaluation of the European balance supports the wisdom of an American policy that focused on Italy. France had been placed in a difficult position by virtue of her long-standing suspicion and hatred of Germany, and any alliance with France would have to be balanced against the antagonism that would cause in Germany. Indeed, the French Ambassador to Berlin told William E. Dodd, that "I would not be surprised [at] any time to be shot on the streets of Berlin. Because of this my wife remains in Paris. The Germans hate us so and their leadership is so crazy."³² Meanwhile, the British, were more inclined to remain distanced from continental affairs altogether, preferring to lend the weight of their diplomatic support when it could be used decisively. The Russians, while strong and powerful in the East, were still largely excluded from international relations in the mid-1930's.³³

Compounding the problems faced by American diplomats in formulating a coherent strategy to deal with European problems was the lack of an official intelligence gathering and assessment agency. As if the battle with domestic isolationists and dealing with a fragmented and volatile European balance were not enough, the United States found itself relying on

informal methods of intelligence gathering to piece together bits of information from across Europe. It is equally clear, however, that even if the Americans had operated an official intelligence agency in Europe during the 1930's there were very tangible limits to the kind of information such an agency could have furnished to the State Department. Indeed, in Germany, the Nazis were using the Enigma code machine to send all their military traffic which remained unreadable by codebreakers until 1940. Meanwhile, the German foreign ministry was using one-time pads (pads which contain a code to be used only once by encrypter and decipherer) and a code known as Floradora to disguise their transmissions. The British would eventually succeed in reconstructing the basic Floradora code during the 1930's but would only be successful in decrypting messages in 1942. In any case, information sent by the German Foreign Office contained little of importance since the bulk of important decisions regarding the direction of German foreign policy lay with Hitler himself.³⁴

To assume, however, that there was not any intelligence being gathered in Europe simply because there was not an official gathering agency synthesizing and interpreting information would be patently false. Significantly, the bulk of reliable intelligence information reaching the United States and circulating amongst the diplomatic corps about European affairs was done informally between embassies and would reach the White House via Roosevelt's personal contacts in the foreign service. Furthermore, when one post gleaned information that was useful to another, it was generally sent to other ambassadors through the diplomatic pouch and distributed to the appropriate personnel within the embassy. Although Roosevelt would occasionally send personal representatives on intelligence gathering missions, for the most part the President received letters containing intelligence

information directly from foreign ambassadors.³⁵

One of the results of this rudimentary intelligence-sharing system was that it relied more on the individual relations between ambassadors and was subject to the peculiarities of their respective countries. Therefore, in order for the State Department to accurately assess information about the future of Austrian independence, it would be necessary for diplomatic personnel in four locations, Vienna, Rome, Berlin, and Washington, to exchange information quickly and efficiently. It is clear, however, that such an informal system would be logistically impossible to implement. For example, Ambassador Breckinridge Long in Rome seemed to be less preoccupied with security than did Ambassador William E. Dodd in Berlin. Indeed, Dodd recounts in his diary a memorable phone conversation that took place earlier in the day with Ambassador Breckinridge Long from Rome. Apparently, Long was eager to know the state of affairs in Germany and was pressing Dodd for the public's reaction to a recent speech by Vice Chancellor Franz von Papen that criticized Adolf Hitler. "I was surprised at his indiscretion," writes Dodd, "but talked as freely as the eavesdropping of the German Secret Police would allow." After assuring Long that all was quiet in Berlin and delicately trying to side-step Long's questions about who approved of von Papen's speech and who did not, Dodd hung up the phone "a little annoyed and uneasy." "No wires in Europe, England excepted, are ever free of eavesdroppers when such talk is indulged in," writes Dodd. "I hope no ill results of this may come."³⁶

Although Dodd does not indicate whether any "ill results" did occur as a result of Long's questioning, it is clear that the American Ambassador to Berlin was aware of German espionage activities directed against the embassy and that the state of American counter-

intelligence operations was comparatively low. Indeed, given the position that Dodd occupied in Berlin as one of the most active, and vocal, foreign critics of Hitler's regime, the ambassador's concern about the security arrangements for the embassy seem to be well-founded. Effectively removed from significant contact with their host governments - the American would serve as Ambassador to Berlin until 1937 but had his final private interview with Hitler in April 1934 - both the American ambassador to Austria, George S. Messersmith, and Dodd believed that their primary responsibility was to continue to warn Washington about the growing threat posed by the Nazi regime. According to Robert Dallek, German "scholars of distinction" were relieved to find that they could voice their complaints and concerns about Hitler's regime to the American ambassador. Moreover, Dodd arranged for prominent political opponents, like Dr. Carl Goerdeler, the former mayor of Leipzig who would later become a leader of the civilian resistance during the war, and Dr. Hugo Eckner, an authority on Zeppelins, to meet with members of the Roosevelt administration.³⁷

Therefore, it is possible to make a few important observations about American intelligence gathering and assessment leading up to the Dollfuss assassination. Not only was the American embassy in Germany an important potential target for German police forces, but also the inability to implement effective counter-intelligence measures resulted in Dodd's attempts to limit the amount of intelligence traffic flowing into the Berlin embassy from external sources, and other diplomatic posts in particular. If intelligence sources were going to be compromised simply by sending relevant information to Berlin, it is clear that Dodd preferred not to have that information in his possession at all.

Furthermore, intelligence is only useful if incoming information can be placed in its

proper context, correctly evaluated, and sent to the right place in time. One incident aptly illustrates this particular dilemma for American diplomatic personnel. The American Ambassador to Germany, William E. Dodd, noted in his diary entry for July 26, 1934 that "after repeated bombings in Austria by Nazis, a boat loaded with explosives was seized on Lake Constance by the Swiss police." While the seizure of such a cache of material sent from German armaments factories directly to Austria appeared ominous, Dodd recalled that he did not include this information in his report to Washington because "events of the kind had been so common".³⁸ Thus, while American diplomats knew that the Nazis were sending explosives and other military equipment to Austria, they could not have known that the assassination of Chancellor Dollfuss was imminent.

Nevertheless, it is clear that throughout the 1930's, State Department officials understood the strategic considerations that shaped Italian foreign policy in Europe. Italy, meanwhile, both wanted and needed to maintain Austria's independence as a cornerstone of its European policy, but Austria could not be made so strong as to no longer require Italian guarantees. Underlying this concern was the danger that an Austro-German *Anschluss* would take place and would place Germany right at Austria's frontiers. While this was precisely the arrangement desired and argued for by many in Austria throughout the 1920's as the means to arrest Austria's financial decline, the Americans knew such a policy was viewed with increasing trepidation by Mussolini's Government. To encourage German nationalism in Austria would cause grave security concerns for the Italian state at what was the most acute and sensitive of its frontiers to the influence of German nationalism, the Brenner Pass. Therefore, because of the precarious nature of Austrian independence, Washington believed

that Mussolini would be forced by sheer necessity and common sense to adopt a policy that would reinforce the European *status quo*.

Determined to crush the Austrian Nazis and to gain international economic support for his regime, Dollfuss turned to the other countries of Europe for help. There were, however, many problems encountered by the Dollfuss regime in mounting international support against Nazi-sponsored terrorism and the possible subjugation of Austrian independence to another power. While most foreign governments were prepared to issue silent assurances about the need to maintain Austrian independence state, few apart from Italy, were willing to forward any tangible support for the Dollfuss regime once it was challenged by the Nazis after 1933. The Western powers understood all too well what Italy had at stake in Central Europe and chose instead to watch as Mussolini and Hitler manoeuvred closer and closer to a direct confrontation.

Chapter Two

The future of Austrian independence could not have been more bleak than it was in mid-1933. The rise of Adolf Hitler's National Socialists in Germany meant that the Government of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss now had to face a substantial external threat to his regime in addition to considerable domestic problems. Not only would the Austrian economy have to recover sufficiently in order to make a democratic regime viable, but the internal political struggle between Austria's two largest political parties, the Christian Socialists and the Social Democrats, would have to be set aside to meet the growing challenge posed by the Austrian National Socialist party. Uncertain of his internal political position, Dollfuss would turn to the other countries of Europe to support Austrian independence. Even the United States, more or less insulated from the vicissitudes of European affairs, found itself the object of Austrian entreaties. Requests from Vienna for financial or moral support from Washington were met with polite, but firm, rejection.

The relationship between Italy, Austria and Germany in the 1930's is a complex web that involves the power perceptions and ambitions of much of continental Europe, and the role of the United States within this network during the early 1930's is sometimes difficult to establish or is altogether nonexistent. Isolationist sentiment in the United States made it difficult for policymakers to advance a policy that could be interpreted as playing an active

part in European affairs. Despite the "hands-off" approach taken by the State Department, American representatives in Europe continued to do their best to encourage a more proactive European policy with Italy as its centrepiece.

Effectively removed from the day-to-day events in Europe in deed, and sometimes in thought, the State Department advocated a cautious policy that was predicated on stability in Central Europe. Stability in Central Europe meant that an Austro-German *Anschluss* could not be tolerated. Therefore, on July 25, 1934, when Austrian Nazis attempted to overthrow the Austrian Government and murdered the Chancellor, Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss, American diplomats took notice of Benito Mussolini's spirited defense of his Austrian neighbour. Although it was possible to conclude that the Italian leader's actions were inspired by less than altruistic motives - the stability of Mussolini's Government and the future of Italian foreign policy depended on Italy's ability to maintain Austrian independence - policymakers in the United States and Europe chose to see the Italian intervention in a more positive light. Not only did Mussolini's actions preserve the European *status quo* but they offered the United States an effective way to indirectly influence European affairs without bringing the wrath of the isolationists down on the Roosevelt administration.

In early 1933, the American Minister George Earle III, wrote to Pierrepont Moffat of the Western European Division. "I believe the following absolutely," he said, "first, that the peace of Europe depends on Austria's independence. Second, that Austria's independence depends entirely on an improvement in economic conditions here."¹ In this regard, Earle had identified the important destinations for Austrian exports as Italy, France and England in an earlier dispatch and expressed the determination to attempt to increase Austria's trade with

the United States. "Words of sympathy are all right," concluded Earle, "but only improvement in trade is going to save Austria."²

Earle's comments about the necessity of improving economic conditions in Europe echoed those of Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Hull believed that economic instability begot political instability and that the only way to secure world peace would be to improve the economic conditions of the world's countries.³ Some State Department officials, however, believed improvement of economic conditions in Austria merely presented a temporary solution to a more complex problem. Undersecretary of State Phillips, for one, concluded that the ultimate fate of Austrian independence would have to be decided by more stringent measures. Indeed, the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1933 brought with it many concerns for European and American statesmen. Not only was Hitler an unknown political and diplomatic commodity, but the new German leader was the head of a government founded on equal parts of militarism and German nationalism. "German-Austria," wrote Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*,

must return to the great German mother country, and not because of any economic considerations. No, and again no: even if such a union were unimportant from an economic point of view; yes, even if it were harmful, it must nevertheless take place. One blood demands one Reich. Never will the German nation possess the moral right to engage in colonial politics until, at least, it embraces its own sons within a single state.⁴

The German foreign ministry, however, urged the new leader to be cautious in proceeding with *Anschluss* plans. In the considered opinion of the foreign ministry, there were too many intangible factors preventing an Austro-German union. "It is not conceivable that in the future any Austrian Government opposed to the National Socialist movement would be

prepared for *Anschluss*. Any such government," concluded *Ministerialdirektor* Gerhard Köpke, would rather "be forced to seek support from those elements inside and outside Austria which are hostile to *Anschluss*." Furthermore, Köpke warned that Germany should not expect Italy and France to allow their mutual mistrust to keep them divided should the possibility of an Austro-German union become a tangible reality. Not only did the *Ministerialdirektor* predict that the governments in Rome and Paris would oppose such a policy, but also that it would not take Mussolini and his French counterpart long to realize that "the struggle against the National Socialist movement in Austria will require other means than the financial and economic baits and threats customary hitherto." Köpke clearly suggested that if the Nazis intended to proceed with plans to annex their Austrian neighbours, a military solution to the problem might have to be employed by Hitler.⁵ With a wary eye on Germany's ambitions, Italy was more than willing to furnish troops for the Austrian cause and, with encouragement from the British, promptly entered negotiations with the Austrian Government to secure some kind of arrangement.⁶

Indeed, shortly after Dollfuss' ascension to power, Prince Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, the leader of the Austrian *Heimwehr*, the paramilitary "Home Guard" in Austria dedicated to fighting Communists, visited Mussolini and told the Italian leader that Austria had entered "a decisive phase". Starhemberg stated that the next few months would determine whether Austria could survive as an independent state or whether the Government would succumb to the German onslaught. Mussolini rolled his eyes and flatly denied that *Anschluss* would happen. "The Prussians on the Brenner would mean war," Mussolini told his Austrian visitor. "But let the war come rather than that Austria should become part of Greater

Germany."⁷ Certain members of the Italian foreign office believed that Italy had no alternative but to support the Dollfuss regime or risk "losing" the country altogether. Paolo Cortese wrote that the political situation in Austria was grim. Hitler was on the offensive, the socialists were on the defensive and the Government, with the support of the *Heimwehr*, was attempting to launch a counter-offensive. In the opinion of the Italian analyst, the National Socialists had made great progress towards an *Anschluss* with Austria due in large part to the propaganda efforts of the Nazis. Furthermore, the Italian noted that the popularity of the Austrian National-Socialist party was on the rise. Children too young to have lived under the dual monarchy were embracing Nazism and Germanism and the middle-classes, especially those that lived in cities, considered the National-Socialists as the only group that could alleviate their economic suffering. Confronted with these realities, Cortese suggested that Italy must engage in a three-pronged attempt to maintain the viability of an independent Austrian state. Not only would Italians have to support the Dollfuss regime and sustain the *Heimwehr's* efforts to reclaim its former standing, but Cortese emphatically stated that Italy must arrange for a complete and sincere understanding between Chancellor Dollfuss and Prince Starhemberg and to "not lose one day in carrying out any of the preceding points."⁸

According to Prince Starhemberg, Mussolini made arrangements to furnish armaments and equipment to the *Heimwehr* and the Duce assured Starhemberg that the Italians would "let it be known in Berlin that Austria is to be left alone."⁹ However, Mussolini would not underwrite Austrian security without obtaining some concessions from Dollfuss. The Austrian leader would have to launch a series of internal "reforms" designed to make Austria

the mirror image of Italy. The Austrian Parliament was dissolved and the *Schutzbund*, the paramilitary wing of the Social Democratic Party, was outlawed. Somewhat concerned by the *quid pro quo* nature of Italian guarantees, some of the western powers expressed concern to Dollfuss that he was relying too heavily upon Italian guarantees to protect Austrian independence. However, the Austrian chancellor somewhat bitterly replied that at least Italy could be relied upon to furnish tangible support for his regime.¹⁰

Breckinridge Long, the newly-appointed American Ambassador to Italy wrote to Roosevelt that the collaboration between Dollfuss and Mussolini would mean greater independence for the Austrian state as the Ambassador's comments to Roosevelt reveal. "[Mussolini] has used the idea of Fascism to wean Austria from German domination and to inculcate the competent authorities of that government with the thought that the Fascist doctrine of Italy is preferable to that system now dominant in Germany and which might be characterized as the product of an erring disciple of Fascism."¹¹ The wisdom of Mussolini's policy is evident in Long's comment, for not only was the Italian leader trying to support the Austrian Government, but he was also trying to demonstrate the differences between Italian and German fascism, a distinction that would become increasingly blurred in the years ahead.

Italy's relatively minor diplomatic victories of the past decade and increased international stature contributed to the perception of Mussolini either as a statesman of importance, or, at the very least, as a diplomat whose interests the Great Powers should attempt to satisfy in order to make their actions more palatable to the rest of Europe. Indeed, Italy's self-imposed status as a "have-not" power allowed Mussolini to alter the post-war settlement in Italy's favour. But, this is precisely where the traditional and more

unconventional policies advanced by Mussolini in the field of foreign policy became increasingly problematic. While other statesmen understood that Mussolini had expansionist goals, they also knew that Italian self-interest in Europe dictated that the *status quo* must be preserved. The question that remained was whether or not the Italian leader understood and would acknowledge these realities as well. Granted, while all of Europe had a stake in preserving the peace on the continent, *realpolitik* dictated that Italy alone had a vested interest in preserving Austrian independence, particularly if the Alto Adige was to be used as a starting point for Italian expansion rather than a tenuously held outpost against pan-German encroachments.

The Italian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Fulvio Suvich, understood Italy's strategic position *vis-à-vis* Germany and argued strongly against any Italian policy that might encourage German aggression against Austria. However, Suvich was not an intimate advisor to Mussolini, and the Undersecretary was often ignored by the Duce. In later years, Suvich would bitterly complain that Mussolini hardly gave serious thought to the defense of Austria and that the Italian leader treated Dollfuss like a "vassal" despite the fact that Suvich believed Mussolini had respect and sympathy for the Austrian leader. Nevertheless, where the Austrian was inclined to be cautious, Mussolini demanded boldness, and Suvich concluded that Dollfuss' task was made much more difficult because of Mussolini's impatience. Not only did the Austrian leader have to contend with an unstable internal political situation but he had to balance Mussolini's requests for action against what could realistically be accomplished.¹²

By the end of 1933, the situation in Austria had not stabilized significantly. An assassination attempt on Dollfuss' life in October failed but left the Chancellor with a wound

to his arm and served as a tangible reminder of his precarious situation. Nevertheless, aid from the Americans and other European powers was not forthcoming. This was due in no small part to assessments of German intentions by observers in foreign countries. John Cudahy, the American Ambassador to Poland, reported to Roosevelt after a conference of all the major states of west and central Europe that most European observers believed that Hitler had no intentions of beginning a war. In offering his assessment of the situation, Cudahy reviewed the internal situation in Germany. While he acknowledged that "allegiance to Hitler borders on fanaticism", the ambassador concluded that the marching Brownshirts in the streets were "merely an expression of the unique German gregarious instinct, accountable on the same grounds that our Elks, Eagles, Woodmen, etc., are accountable." Although he failed to explain exactly *how* the Brownshirts were accountable, it is clear that Ambassador Cudahy found it impossible to conclude that Germany was preparing for war. Nevertheless, Cudahy acknowledged that the assassination or removal of Dollfuss in Austria, while unsettling, was a definite possibility but not one that he viewed as potentially damaging to the European balance. Such an aggressive action by the Nazis, he argued, would merely "clarify the alignment against Germany by bringing Italy definitely on the side of the nations opposed to further relaxation of the Versailles Treaty." Even if an *Anschluss* were to take place, it was argued that the absorption of 6 million Austrians with no capital resources for war would weaken rather than strengthen Germany. It is interesting to note that months earlier, Breckinridge Long had advanced the same argument, but added the caveat that if Germany continued to expand to the point where its population reached between 70 and 100 million people, she would naturally become "a factor for trouble" by virtue of sheer

numbers.¹³

Meanwhile, the interests of Italy and Germany continued to come into conflict. In early December, Suvich visited Germany and engaged in a series of meetings with high-ranking members of both the Nazi Party and the German foreign ministry to discuss, among other matters, the situation in Austria. Hitler attempted to convince Suvich that he had no immediate ambitions to annex Austria. Quite the opposite was true, argued Hitler, stating that it was up to both Italy and Germany to serve as protectors to their embattled neighbour. Germany and Italy, summarized the German Foreign Minister von Neurath in a memorandum, must come to an understanding "if only for the reason that neither Germany nor Italy could, for instance, want Austria to form a bridge between the Poles, Czechs, and Yugoslavs."¹⁴

At the conclusion of Suvich's visit to Germany, individual members of the German foreign ministry engaged in a spirited debate about the "true" nature of Italian foreign policy. In the considered opinion of Theo Habicht, the leader of the National Socialist Party in Austria, both Fulvio Suvich and Mussolini were "totally misinformed about the real situation in Austria". Habicht believed that the fear in Rome was that the complete or partial seizure of power in Austria by the National Socialist Party would be tantamount to *Anschluss* and that the Italians believed they could prevent the union from taking place only by supporting the Dollfuss Government. The German Ambassador to Italy, Ulrich von Hassell responded to Habicht's letter by stating that the Italian understanding about the political realities surrounding *Anschluss* were not quite so simplistic. Italians, argued Hassell, understood that the union between Austria and Germany was inevitable but felt that this eventuality must be delayed for as long as possible.¹⁵ Interestingly enough, at no time in these messages did

German diplomats engage in a systematic discussion of *why* Italy should be opposed to an *Anschluss* or even if the world community would oppose such a union. Instead, it is assumed in the correspondence that Mussolini's objections to an Austro-German union stem more from his misunderstanding and jealousy of National Socialism than from the threat posed to Italian interests by Nazi Germany.

A more systematic terror campaign against the Dollfuss regime was launched by the Nazis in early 1934, and was marked by coordinated and well-financed attacks on public targets, most notably against tourist facilities and at a time when there was already great dissension within the Dollfuss government. "No less than 140 bomb incidents were admitted by the Government up to January 9th, and there has been perhaps an equal number since that date".¹⁶ As the American military *attaché* to Vienna noted, while these acts amounted to little more than terrorism, they nevertheless managed to create a great deal of public tension and anxiety about the stability of the Dollfuss regime. This, in turn, meant that the Austrian Government would respond to terrorist activities with a show of force in order to demonstrate its ability to govern effectively. Indeed, the Dollfuss government reacted sharply to the attacks, and police forces began arresting Nazi leaders and sending them to "detention camps". "The customary action of the government now is," writes Shallenberger, "to arbitrarily seize several of the Nazi leaders in the locality and send them to the detention camp on the ground that they have undoubtedly encouraged those acts. Following this line, at least 100 Nazi leaders have been sent to the detention camp since the first of the year."¹⁷

By the end of the month, one camp was full, and another was being opened by the Government to accommodate the arrested Nazis. Moreover, hefty fines were levied against

the Austrian Nazi party for terrorist attacks by the Austrian Government, and the monies collected by the Government were then used to finance *Heimwehr* units to protect against further attacks. Furthermore, Government employees were warned that any public servant who failed to fulfil his duty to "protect the authority of the state" would not only lose his job, but also would be unable to claim a pension or any other privilege that one would normally be able to claim. On university campuses in the Tyrol region, the director for safety declared that two students were to be sent to a detention camp for each cracker bomb thrown on university premises.¹⁸

In the aftermath of the new Nazi terror campaign in January, Italy was quick to demonstrate its support for the Dollfuss regime. The Italian Undersecretary of State, Suvich, made an official visit to the Austrian capital and was given "the highest diplomatic and official character possible by the Austrian Government." "The impression prevails," reports Shallenberger, "that Mussolini permitted this visit at this time to give such an impression to the German Government. It is well known that he attempted last fall to negotiate with Hitler for a settlement of the Austro-German conflict and having failed to obtain such a settlement he shows by this move that his sympathies are with Austria in the controversy."¹⁹ While the Italian leader was prepared to acknowledge that Austria was more likely to be found in the German sphere of influence, he was not willing to stomach a wholesale German invasion of the country.

Meanwhile, the situation had grown so desperate that Austrian representatives were again actively seeking public declarations of support for the Dollfuss regime from the American government. "Such declarations," wrote Gilbert, were believed by the Austrian

Government to be "amply sufficient against further German attacks inasmuch as German public opinion has been led to believe that world opinion was hostile to the Dollfuss government."²⁰ Indeed, by late January the Dollfuss Government was preparing to go before the League of Nations to protest Germany's actions and to have its complaints heard by the world community. When the Germans learned that Austria was contemplating placing a formal complaint before the League the official German news agency angrily declared that "*political developments within a country do not fall under the competence of Geneva*", essentially arguing that *Anschluss* was a matter of *internal* German politics and was, therefore, not subject to international scrutiny.²¹ While the British and Italians tacitly supported the notion of involving the world community, they made no secret of the fact that they would prefer to see the matter solved by the interposition of the Great Powers between Austria and Germany. As a direct result, on February 17, the governments in Paris, London and Rome agreed to issue a joint statement that declared their interest in preserving the independence of Austria.

The joint statement by the three Great Powers did a great deal to stabilize the internal situation in Austria, for Dollfuss used the opportunity to declare war on Austria's socialists. By the end of February, George Earle was receiving numerous requests from the Austrian press for an interview. In part to "help heal the wounds" created by the recent uprisings in Austria and to also encourage the Dollfuss Government's relatively moderate policy, the American Minister consented, subject to the approval of the State Department. The proposed statement would have commended "the magnificent courage displayed by every Austrian engaged in the actual conflict" and the compassion demonstrated by Government forces in

putting down the uprisings earlier that month. Then, in a thinly-veiled warning to Hitler, Earle painted a grim picture of Europe's future if economic recovery was subverted in the name of militarism.

If Europe is not able to accompany America back on the road to happiness and prosperity let the burden and blame for this rest squarely upon that nation or nations who constantly rattles the sword in the scabbard and by direct or implied threat keeps all Europe in uncertainty and suspense of an offensive war that will engulf the Continent. ²²

The State Department, however, was less than enthusiastic with the efforts of the American Ambassador. In a reply dated the same day as Earle's message, Secretary of State Hull stated that the proposed message should not be delivered as it "would be misunderstood (a) in Europe, where it might be read as implying American aid against an aggressor, and (b) in this country where it would be considered an intervention in European political affairs." Rather than entering a discussion on European matters, Hull suggested that Earle limit his discussion with the press "to an analysis of economic conditions in the United States."²³

While Hull's comments might imply that the United States was adopting an isolationist approach to European affairs, they can also be seen as those of a cautious politician and statesman. Far from being uninterested in European affairs, Hull made it clear that the influence of the isolationist lobby on the American policymaking apparatus was quite strong. Regardless of the pressures placed on the State Department by other countries, the policy of the United States would be to wait for an unstable situation in Europe to play itself out. When that occurred, America would resume normal relations with European nations.²⁴ In the meantime, it is clear that the Secretary of State and many in the State Department believed America had taken the necessary steps to safeguard her interests in Europe by virtue of her

relations with Italy. American observers concluded that the Italian leader was *the* deciding factor in power relations in Europe. "It is claimed in the press" noted the American *Chargé D'Affaires* to Germany, J.C. White, "that the European constellation is admitted to be shifting, and a note of fear is in evidence lest Germany be left out of the Duce's plans..."²⁵

Gradually, the efforts of the Austrian Government to put down terrorist attacks were bearing fruit, and the strength of the Dollfuss regime was increasing. By March 12, Shallenberger wrote that "[the Dollfuss Government] is firmly establish[ed] and well intrenched [sic] and no longer in fear of collapse from day to day," adding somewhat acridly that this latter status "was never really true" and was the product of "foreign correspondents [sic]".²⁶ About two weeks later, the American Ambassador to Italy agreed with Shallenberger's assessment of the situation. "Irrespective of the opinion held in other countries of the so-called brutality of his methods," concludes Long, "it appears from Rome that [Dollfuss] is stronger in Austria than he was before, and that he can now face the Nazis in their single capacity without the complication of the extreme socialists and further that he probably will have the support of a large element of the extreme socialists in his efforts to maintain an independent state in Austria."²⁷

However, each successive victory against the Nazis brought with it another public relations setback for the Austrian Government. Dollfuss was still being pictured as a harsh and reactionary leader with the blood of his victims covering his fingers. Instead of seeing the Nazi terrorists that Long and Shallenberger claimed were being defeated, reporters only saw the government's war against the Socialists. "Street fighting during a night of terror transformed this gay, good-natured and happy-go-lucky capital tonight into a city of darkness

and death," began on Associated Press story.²⁸ In another story, the *New York Times* correspondent wrote of witnessing "an old man wheeling a barrow [falling] dead, a bullet in his head." Another man, fearing for his life hailed a taxicab and got in, hoping to avoid the slaughter around him. "Within a few yards the taxi stopped suddenly and the man reeled out, holding his head. A bullet had grazed his face from left to right, hitting his eyes."²⁹

Shallenberger was alarmed by the tenor of news reports filed by correspondents from Vienna, particularly their tendency to focus on the sensational or particularly graphic aspects of stories. After the February attempt by the Dollfuss Government to strengthen its internal position, Shallenberger reported that "the wildest kind of exaggerations as to numbers killed and wounded were indulged in freely" by correspondents. The *attaché's* reports make it clear that the American believed that the bulk of correspondents posted to Austria were actually Nazi sympathizers attempting to influence public opinion around the world and in America in particular. "The representative of *The New York Times*," writes Shallenberger, "is a radical Socialist, the A[ssociated] P[ress] man an ardent Nazi sympathizer who sees the fall of the government in everything, the U[nited] P[ress] and *Chicago Daily News* men are both radical lefts. Our representative of the Jewish Telegraph Agency was so wild that he was arrested and will be deported." Indeed, it must be noted that reports by American correspondents so angered the Austrian Foreign Office that an official protest was filed with the American *chargé* in the middle of February.³⁰ As a result, the military *attaché* spent much of his time in official reports trying to correct what he believed to be the excesses of correspondents.

Regardless of the explanation offered by Shallenberger about the personal convictions of individual reporters assigned to Vienna, observers in foreign capitals concluded that the

Nazi program of aggression against Austria would be successful sooner or later. "The feeling persists in Prague" writes J. Webb Benton, the American *Chargé D'Affaires ad interim* in Czechoslovakia, "that National Socialism must sooner or later be successful in Austria. It is pointed out that [since] the disbanding of the Austrian Social Democrat party, many of the members are joining the ranks of the National Socialists." Benton also opined that there was serious cause for concern about the loyalty of the *Heimwehr* who were "only waiting for the opportune moment to align themselves with [the Nazi] cause."³¹

It was clear to the Americans that Mussolini held the key to Austrian independence. "Italy considers an independent Austria as indispensable," wrote Breckinridge Long, the American Ambassador to Italy, "not only to serve as a buffer state between her and Germany and prevent German impingement upon her actual northern frontiers, but as the *sine qua non* of peace in Central Europe." According to Long, the Italians were the chief sponsors of the Rome conference between the Hungarians, the Austrians and Italians that was designed to improve the political integrity of the first two states while increasing the generally economic prosperity of all. "The Italians feel that if they [Austria and Hungary] are happily occupied and are profitably engaged in their natural occupations," summarizes Long, "there will be less inducement to them to yield their sovereign rights to another state with the hope that that other state might conduce to a greater happiness and prosperity". The American Ambassador concluded that "the only thing of which I am actually certain is that the efforts of Mussolini are to establish an independent Austria and to do his part to maintain it as an independent state."³² In the meantime, the State Department would adopt a "wait and see" approach to Austrian affairs, acknowledging on the one hand that an improvement in economic conditions

and American investment dollars would greatly improve the internal stability of the Dollfuss regime but arguing on the other that the United States could not afford to invest in the Austrian economy until Dollfuss' internal standing stabilized.

Thus, Italy's status as an important player in the European constellation hinged on her ability to maintain Austrian independence, a fact understood all too well in Paris and London. The clash of interests between Mussolini and Hitler on this point alone was assumed to be enough to prevent any alliance between the two states. In addition, terrorist activities in Austria varied in their intensity and frequency throughout the first half of 1934 and by early May amounted to little more than bothersome nuisances. It seemed as though the attacks were designed more to destabilize the Dollfuss government and create public uncertainty than they were part of a genuine attempt to seize political power. Nevertheless, the Italian and German leaders agreed to a meeting in Venice on June 14 and 15, 1934 to resolve some of the outstanding problems between them, including the question of Austrian independence. Felix Frankfurter summarized the situation most accurately a few months earlier when he noted that "Austria is really the football between the rivalries of Hitler and Mussolini. And that's where the matter now stands."³³

On the first day of meetings, Hitler and Mussolini focused exclusively on the Austrian situation and talked for two and a half hours. Hitler was prepared to concede that an Austro-German *Anschluss* was not politically feasible for the time being, but insisted that fundamental changes would have to be made to make the regime in Vienna more tolerable to the Third Reich. This included the provision that a "personage of independent outlook" be placed at the head of the Austrian Government and that this newly imposed leader should then

hold an election to accurately determine the attitudes of the Austrian people. After this election, Hitler declared that "National Socialists would have to be taken into the Government" and that "all economic questions in Austria" should be handled jointly between Germany and Italy. In case Mussolini did not understand what Hitler was trying to achieve, the German leader then "conveyed to Mussolini his wish that [Mussolini] should withdraw the protecting hand he had hitherto held over Austria."³⁴ Hitler could not have been more specific about his intentions. Not only did the German want Italy to withdraw its support for the Dollfuss regime, but Hitler also wanted a government in Austria that would be sympathetic to National Socialism.

At the conclusion of their meetings, Mussolini publicly stated that he and Hitler had met "not to retrace or to modify the political map of Europe ... We have met to try to dissipate the clouds which obscure the horizon of the political life of Europe."³⁵ Privately, the Duce referred to the meetings with the German Chancellor as a "collision". In Mussolini's eyes, Hitler was nothing more than a slightly insane buffoon. "He was a gramophone with just seven tunes," said the Italian leader. "Once he had finished playing them he started all over again."³⁶ To his wife, Mussolini expressed the belief that the meetings were a failure. Hitler, said Mussolini, "is a violent man with no self-control, and nothing positive came out of our talks."³⁷

American officials were encouraged by the apparent results of the conference. "As regards Austria," reported Ambassador Long, "each seemed to recede a bit from their former positions and to concede the advisability of Austrian independence, Germany accepting that fact and Italy the possible eventuality of a Nazi government in the coming elections scheduled

for October."³⁸ Meanwhile, Messersmith reported from Vienna that, as far as the Austrians had been told by the French Ambassador, the Italian, French and British Governments "would 'continue to guarantee the independence of Austria'" and that this was "in harmony with what transpired at Stra".³⁹ The likelihood that an alliance between Germany and Italy could be forged, added the American Minister to Hungary, now seemed "improbable".⁴⁰

Indeed, the tensions which prevented an arrangement between the two powers seemed monumental. Mussolini had a number of reasons to object to the German *Anschluss* of Austria, none of which had anything to do with an altruistic concern for peace. Indeed, a Nazi invasion of Austria would place the Germans on Italy's northern-most borders, removing the Austrian "buffer-zone" between Mussolini and Hitler's Reich. Furthermore, if Hitler were allowed to claim Austria's Germans as members of the Reich, what would become of the large German population residing in the Alto Adige? This was a contingency that Mussolini had hoped to avoid altogether by encouraging German expansion toward the West at France's expense. By promoting the animosities between the Germans and the French, Mussolini believed that Italy would be able to mediate between the two powers and clear a path for further expansion in the Mediterranean. However, as Hitler focused his attention on Austria, the threat posed by Germany to France diminished when compared to the danger Italy would find herself in with having the Third Reich as her northern neighbour. "We can march together with Germany along the Rhine," acknowledged Mussolini in 1933, "but not along the Danube."⁴¹

Increasingly, the ambitions of Italy and Germany were coming into conflict over Austria, and it was clear that one power would have to give way. But in late June events in

Germany took an interesting turn as Hitler eliminated the bulk of his remaining domestic opposition and the only other source of power in the Nazi state, the S.A., in what can only be described as an orgy of killing that would become known as the Night of the Long Knives.⁴² The Night of the Long Knives is important for a number of reasons. Not only did Hitler's attack against his internal opposition raise serious questions about the stability of the Nazi regime, but the attack coincided with another wave of terroristic activities in Austria, and many European leaders were shocked by the brutality and violence of the Nazi regime. The Italian undersecretary for foreign affairs, Fulvio Suvich, believed that when placed together, these two events would mean the ultimate demise of the Nazi movement in Austria and Germany. Suvich told Ambassador Long that "the Nazis in Germany are in a very serious situation and that Germany itself is in a very precarious condition." Public opinion in Austria, said Suvich, would place the Nazis in a politically untenable position, and the Italian believed that this meant Austrians would rally behind Dollfuss while public indignation in Germany itself against the Nazi program would spell the ultimate demise of the Hitler "at a not far distant date."⁴³ Meanwhile, while reading press accounts of events in Germany, Mussolini held the newspapers up for his wife and said "look at this. [Hitler] makes me think of Attila the Hun. Those men he killed were his closest supporters, who raised him to power." Clearly, the Italian leader was upset by Hitler's actions, and his wife reports that after the Night of the Long Knives Mussolini was prepared to take any available pretext to force Hitler from power.⁴⁴

Given the state of domestic turmoil in Germany at the beginning of July, Austria appeared to be safe for the time being and many of the foreign diplomats posted to Vienna

returned home. On July 25, George Messersmith was one of two foreign emissaries^{*} still at their posts when a *putsch* attempt by the Austrian Nazis was launched against the Dollfuss Government. Word of an attempted coup leaked to members of Dollfuss' Cabinet earlier that day as they were preparing for a meeting, and the bulk of government officials were not in the *Ballhausplatz* when the Nazis stormed the building. The Nazis found the chancellor and a few members of his Cabinet still in the building, and Dollfuss was shot twice in the neck and throat and left to bleed to death after being denied proper medical treatment. Meanwhile, an announcement was made by the insurgents from a captured radio station that Dollfuss had resigned as chancellor and that a new government was being formed under the direction of the erstwhile Austrian ambassador to Rome, Dr. Anton Rintelen. The plot to overthrow the Government quickly unravelled as the police and forces loyal to Dollfuss put down the rebellion by early evening. Although the insurgents had failed to gain control of the Government, they succeeded in murdering the one person they believed was preventing the *Anschluss* with Germany from taking place, Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss.⁴⁵

Thus, with the assassination of Dollfuss, the spectre of German expansion into Austria became a reality, and the Italian leader wasted no time to take quick and decisive action, deploying Italian soldiers into the Brenner Pass along the Austro-Italian border before telling Dollfuss' widow of her husband's murder.^{**} In telegraphing his sympathies to Prince

^{*}The other was Germany's Kurt Reith who was implicated in the plot to overthrow the Dollfuss government.

^{**}Englebert Dollfuss and his family were to have spent the week-end with Mussolini and the Austrian Chancellor's wife and children were already in Italy at the time of the assassination.

Starhemberg, Mussolini stated that Austrian independence "has been defended in the past and will be defended by Italy in these exceptionally difficult times with even more determination."⁴⁶ Indeed the prevailing public perception was that Mussolini single-handedly prevented German expansion into Austria. "The fight of the Nazis in Austria was lost," declared the magazine *The Nation*, "the moment when Mussolini mobilized his troops for a possible Austrian invasion."⁴⁷ "With these two spontaneous and immediate actions," wrote the French *Chargé D'Affaires*, "the Italian government fulfilled both its responsibilities to the declaration on Austrian independence of February 17 and a moral obligation to Austria by reminding Germany of the dangers of playing such a risky game."⁴⁸

After the assassination of Dollfuss, Birginio Gayda wrote what Breckinridge Long would classify as "the strongest expression of Italy's Austrian policy to appear to date" in the editorial section of the *Giornale D'Italia*. "It is useless to depend upon the usual diplomatic expedients more or less collective or on verbal or written protests," began Gayda.

In such international situations danger of serious conditions can be averted only by meeting them directly with clear-cut attitudes and resolute action. We hope therefore that the united European front necessary for the defense of Austria and the rendering harmless of the threats that beset her, as constituted in the agreement between Rome, London, and Paris in regard to Germany, will take concrete aspects and not evaporate in transcendental episodes.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the Americans watched the unfolding situation with more than a measure of interest. George Messersmith filed four detailed reports from Vienna on the day of the assassination and went to see the slain Chancellor's body. After witnessing the final results of the Nazi's attempted coup and the mobilization of Italian troops to prevent a perceived German invasion, Messersmith composed his thoughts about events in Austria a week after

Dollfuss' murder. Placing Italian soldiers in the Brenner, wrote Messersmith, "and Mussolini's telegram to Starhemberg undoubtedly did more to have Hitler take energetic action to stop any invasion by the Austrian Legion than the fear of a triple *démarche*." Grudgingly, Messersmith acknowledged Italy's importance in maintaining the peace. "I hold no brief for Mussolini, but I am confident that had he not taken the decisive action which he did," noted the Ambassador, "the fat would have been in the fire." Nevertheless, Messersmith believed the death of Dollfuss created a great deal of political instability in Europe generally, and in Austria in particular. Given the current political climate in Austria, Messersmith concluded that any type of election would sound the death knell of independence until a new regime was in place in Germany. Hitler, he assessed, has wanted an election in Austria "because he knew that elections would give rise to expression of internal political differences here, which would lead to such confusion that the Nazis ... could seize the Government." Despite the expressions of popular support for the continuation of independence, Austria would remain "helpless without the support of England, France and Italy." Therefore, he concluded that "while we should abstain from interference in this or in any European problem, *we should have a sympathetic attitude towards any efforts made by these three powers to bring moral pressure to bear on Berlin.*" Messersmith believed that Hitler's regime was "on its last legs" and that "a concerted action now would ... have the result of unequivocal declarations being secured from Berlin with regard to Austria".⁵⁰

What is significant about Messersmith's comments in both the official despatches he sent back to Washington as well as those included in his personal letters to William Phillips is that he framed European events through the moral prism of inter-war American diplomacy.

German culpability in the Dollfuss assassination was beyond question and it seemed likely that the remaining powers of Europe would take decisive action to punish a wayward Germany, and, perhaps, remove Hitler from power in the process. The Italians had mobilized troops along their borders with Austria and the French were seemingly on the verge of doing the same. Messersmith understood that American policymakers could not actively support or encourage their European counterparts in any action which could lead to armed conflict between two or more powers, but he suggested that the United States simply stand back and indirectly facilitate the removal of Hitler by force or the pressure of public opinion.

After it had become clear that the coup attempt in Austria had failed, the Germans attempted to disavow the entire operation; Hitler went so far as to claim that he had no interest in Austria, a claim Messersmith had a hard time believing. "I have no confidence whatever in Hitler's protestations that he is for the time being disinterested in Austria," wrote Messersmith from Vienna.

I remember my conversations with Schmidt and other Ministers in Germany and know from what Neurath has said to the Ambassador that there are two questions which it is impossible to discuss with Hitler. I have heard Keppler, who is one of Hitler's really most intimate and trusted, and perhaps most sensible, advisors, say that even he could not talk with Hitler on the question of Austria and that of the Jews.⁵¹

A few weeks later, Messersmith was emphasising the same theme, saying that "by being wise and firm I think we can still save ourselves from this catastrophe...If we do that the system will crack and a prostrated Germany may learn humility and try to begin to live as a good neighbour. Any weakening on the part of Europe would, I believe, be fatal."⁵²

Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the assassination, it appeared as though

concerted action by the Great Powers of Europe was imminent. German sources in the Italian foreign office, however, were reporting that Italy had already decided on a diplomatic protest and that the movement of troops into the Brenner was merely precautionary. It still remained to be seen if Italy could get Paris, London, and Washington to join them in taking concerted military action against Germany.⁵³ On July 27, the British ambassador to Rome, John Murray, reported that Suvich had approached him and suggested that "England France and Italy might go beyond their February declaration and declare that interference with the independence of Austria would be regarded as a *casus belli*." While Suvich acknowledged that the British would probably be unable to support the Italian proposal because of public opinion, the Italian was confident that France would be more than willing to support such an initiative.⁵⁴ The Benes Government informed Paris that while they would not volunteer to join a multinational force, Czechoslovakia would supply troops if asked.⁵⁵ The Yugoslav Government, however, was deeply suspicious of Italian military manoeuvres and was intimating that if the Italian army acted unilaterally and entered Austria, the Yugoslav army would be forced to invade Carinthia.⁵⁶ Sensing that they were rapidly approaching a diplomatic stalemate and that public attempts at coalition-building by the Italians might undermine efforts by the Great Powers to preserve the European balance, the British urged caution and attempted to rein in Mussolini.

Paris soon joined London in attempts to restrain Italy, as Mussolini appeared to be preparing to launch a pre-emptive strike against the Germans. On July 31, M. Barthou, the French minister of foreign affairs sent a circular to London, Vienna, Prague, and Belgrade outlining France's official position. Given the fact that the rhetorical tone of Italian newspapers was increasing daily and the fact that it no longer appeared as though any Italian

officials could guarantee what policy Mussolini would follow, the French and British were becoming gravely concerned. "The Italian embassy," noted Barthou,

is without instructions and, apparently, without information as well....We should not exclude the possibility that there will be an isolated incident and that the repercussions in Belgrade could be serious if Italian forces enter Carinthia.

In this situation, and without wanting to use language with Rome that could be misunderstood, it is the responsibility of the French government to ensure that no opportunity is missed to restrain the Italian government from taking any action, without consulting London and Paris, that might have consequences that go much further than the Italians intended.

The concern now, continued the French Minister, was to ensure that Mussolini could win a minor prestige victory but also to make sure that the interests of all the European states with a stake in the preservation of Austrian independence were protected. This could be best accomplished, argued Barthou, by acting under the auspices of the British-French-Italian declaration of February 17th regarding Austrian sovereignty. By invoking this agreement, Barthou hoped that London and Paris would gain a measure of control over future Italian actions.⁵⁷

Clearly, in the following weeks and months nothing was more important to the Great Powers than to control Mussolini and his army. European governments were genuinely concerned that the Italian leader was going to act unilaterally against Germany, and attempts were made to engage the good offices of the United States to restore order. Messersmith reported to William Phillips that tentative feelers had been sent by the British to see if the United States would be willing to become more actively involved in the Austrian situation. "I said," reported Messersmith, "speaking entirely unofficially and expressing a purely personal opinion, that I was quite sure that our Government would always look with

sympathy on any efforts which England made together with Italy and France and other European countries to maintain peace on this continent." The only hope for Europe, concluded Messersmith, "lies in the elimination of the present German Government," and the American was confident that the governments in London, Paris, and Rome understood what had to be accomplished.⁵⁸

However, while Messersmith and other analysts were correct to see the Dollfuss assassination as a political setback to Hitler's ambitions, what they could not have anticipated was the way events would unfold to enable the *Führer* to simultaneously survive one of his worst political setbacks and to consolidate his hold over the German state. With the death of Chancellor Paul von Hindenberg in early August, Hitler was able to consolidate the offices of President and Chancellor. As Hans Buchheim points out, by designating himself "*Führer* and Reich Chancellor", Hitler was appealing to an authority which transcended that of the nation state.⁵⁹ Taken with the Night of the Long Knives that had succeeded in eliminating the bulk of Hitler's domestic opposition, the subsequent consolidation of political power made it extremely unlikely that Hitler would be removed via internal politics.

Despite the best attempts of American diplomatic personnel to gather and assess intelligence information while maintaining official consular positions, they increasingly found that their piecemeal approach to intelligence gathering was subject to its own peculiar series of limitations. After the Night of the Long Knives, Ambassador Dodd noted that the number of diplomatic functions had rapidly dwindled because of the fear amongst German Foreign Service officers at being seen at a foreign embassy or even being in the company of a representative of a foreign government.⁶⁰ By eliminating the frequency and occurrence of

informal meetings between diplomats, the possibility of information about German intentions being leaked to a foreign power was radically reduced, effectively eliminating the one reliable intelligence source available to the Americans. Meanwhile, in the aftermath of the assassination, the same situation prevailed in Austria but for vastly different reasons. The German ambassador to Austria implicated in the plot to kill Dollfuss, Kurt Reith, was recalled and Hitler sent a new ambassador to Vienna, Franz von Papen, who immediately began work undermining the new Austrian Government. George Messersmith's aversion to the Nazis meant that after initial "courtesy" visits with the new German Ambassador, the American refused all contact with Germany's representative to Vienna, severing another intelligence source about Nazi Germany.⁶¹

Nevertheless, other American representatives in Europe predicted that Hitler's day of reckoning over the Austrian affair was not too far in the future. "Von Papen will fail in his mission," predicted Raymond Geist in a letter to Pierrepont Moffat, "if he does not succeed in freeing Austria from the domination of Italian influence." More importantly, Geist concluded that "if the international situation, particularly the attitude of Italy, becomes threatening, a temporary lull will undoubtedly ensue in order to give the Germans more time to perfect their armaments."⁶² Clearly, the Dollfuss assassination was nothing more than the opening salvo in the battle for control of Austria, and the road ahead looked grim. "I can think of no country where the psychology is so abnormal as that which prevails here now," confided William E. Dodd, the American Ambassador to Germany, to his diary in a moment of despair.

My task here is to work for peace and better relations. I do not see how

anything can be done so long as Hitler, Goering and Göebbels are the directing heads of the country. Never have I heard or read of three more unfit men in high place. Ought I to resign?⁶³

Needless to say, Dodd did not resign his post, but it is clear that the Americans were somewhat frustrated by the deteriorating situation. Hitler's attempted expansion into Austria had been stopped and Mussolini emerged as a powerful force on the continent. In the process, however, the Duce succeeded in raising some serious doubts about the stability of Italian foreign policy. At critical moments, officials in foreign posts were left without instructions and could not ease concerns about Italian intentions in Central Europe. Rather than presenting the image of a smooth and efficient machine, more than ever Italian policy appeared to be the product of a mercurial and vindictive leader. In his enthusiasm to underline the differences between himself and Hitler, Mussolini increasingly appeared to pose the most serious threat to the European order. The Yugoslav government, for one, regarded Italy as a greater threat than the Germans and made its beliefs known to the French in no uncertain terms.⁶⁴ In all fairness, though, the actions of the Nazis in Austria amply demonstrated to Mussolini Hitler's duplicitous nature and reinforced the need to remind the other western allies of the fundamental differences between Fascism and National Socialism, and the "civilized" nature of Fascism in particular. Perhaps more importantly, De Felice argues that the Duce began to prepare Italians psychologically for the possibility of a Franco-Italian alliance in the near future, demonstrating that Mussolini was genuinely concerned about German expansion to the point where he was willing to entertain the possibility of an alliance with his long-time nemesis.⁶⁵

It was clear that a genuine threat to European stability had emerged, however the question of what America could do to help Europe help itself remained unanswered. American representatives in Vienna and Berlin repeated claims that Hitler's regime was on the verge of collapse and emphatically stated that the dismantling of Hitler's regime was the first step to restoring order in Europe. The main stumbling block to the inauguration of any overt American support for European countries remained the need for the Roosevelt administration to concentrate on domestic policy but it is clear that members of the Roosevelt Administration had a measure of sympathy for European efforts to contain Hitler. "I too am downhearted about Europe," wrote Roosevelt in a letter to Ambassador Dodd, "but I watch for any ray of hope or opening to give me an opportunity to lend a helping hand. There is nothing in sight at present."⁶⁶

The Dollfuss assassination clearly marked a change in international relations and the manner in which the Western powers hoped to maintain Austrian independence. While leaders in London and Paris publicly claimed that the question of Austrian independence was a matter of international concern throughout 1933 and early 1934, it was assumed that Italy, and Italy alone, would be responsible for keeping the Germans out of Austria. As the events of June and July 1934 aptly demonstrated, however, it was no longer viable for countries to limit themselves to rhetorical arguments to check aggressor states. Firm guarantees and a deterrent force were much more effective, and Mussolini heightened the stakes in his showdown with Hitler accordingly. "Nobody in present-day Europe deliberately seeks war," began Mussolini. "None the less, war is a possibility and may break out unexpectedly from one minute to the next ... It is, therefore, necessary to be prepared for war not tomorrow, but

today."⁶⁷

Although the United States could not offer any visible support to the Italians in their efforts against German expansion, it is clear that Roosevelt was anxious to prop up Mussolini's regime and to give the Italian leader whatever support they could. Economic conditions in Italy had been declining since the onset of the Depression, and it appeared as though matters were reaching the critical stage.⁶⁸ The solution, therefore, was to remain firm and to support Mussolini's government. In an attempt to ease the deteriorating situation, and also as a vote of confidence in the Mussolini regime, the Assistant Secretary of State, Francis Sayre, notified the Italian government that the United States was "prepared to enter upon reciprocal tariff negotiations with Italy within the near future."⁶⁹

In the final analysis, the Nazi plot to gain control of the Austrian Government was a botched attempt. By disregarding the needs and ambitions of Italy, Hitler himself ensured a strong Italian backlash against his attempted *Putsch* in 1934. American representatives in Europe, however, did not believe that Hitler had completely abandoned his ambitions to annex Austria, by either military or peaceful means. Therefore, what remains significant about the Dollfuss assassination from the point of view of the United States was the fact that it consolidated the view of American policymakers that Mussolini was a European statesman who intended to preserve the *status quo*. While Mussolini may have been overly enthusiastic in his attempts to launch a military response against Germany, it was difficult for Americans to conclude that the Italian leader was attempting to subvert the European balance. After all, no other European country had done as much to restrain Hitler as Italy had after the Dollfuss assassination. Although the United States was glad that German expansion had been halted,

they were concerned about the relative indifference of London and Paris, but this was a situation that in American eyes had appeared to remedy itself by early September.⁷⁰ With the beginning of trade negotiations in the fall of 1934, it is possible to conclude that the United States had cast its lot in favour of Mussolini and wanted to reinforce his domestic political position. America had found a country in Europe that appeared to represent stability on the continent and, potentially, a political lever to use against Hitler.

The lessons learned in the summer of 1934 would have remarkable longevity in the minds of American diplomatic personnel and the image of Mussolini as a *status quo* diplomat would not be easily forgotten. The Dollfuss assassination therefore paradoxically represents both the inauguration and the apex of American attempts to use Mussolini to foil Hitler's ambitions in Central Europe. Clearly, the main assumption of policymakers both in America and Europe was that the differences between Mussolini and Hitler would preclude an alliance between the two Fascist states.⁷¹ As Mussolini would make clear in the months ahead, however, Italian cooperation in preserving the peace of the continent would come with a steep price.

Chapter Three

Pierrepont Moffat wrote in early 1936 that the worst outcome of the Italo-Ethiopian war was a complete Italian victory. The second worst result, unfortunately, was an Italian defeat because it would bring with it the possibility of a communist-style revolution to Italy and would encourage German aggression in Central Europe. A month later, Moffat would write a letter to William Castle and would point out that "a strong Italy would seem to be essential in the eventual solution of the far more serious German problem."¹ Italy's war in Ethiopia was not opposed by American policymakers because it threatened the subjugation of the African state to a foreign power. Rather, the war in Ethiopia was opposed because it was feared that a war in Africa might, somehow, transform itself into a general European conflict. The assumption of American policymakers was that instability spawned instability and that a conflagration in Africa could encourage Germany to take more aggressive action in Europe. Therefore, as long as a war raged in Africa, the danger of it spreading to Europe was enough to convince the State Department and the President to make policy designed to bring about peace. After the threat from Abyssinia receded, the Spanish Civil War erupted and once again threatened to bring about a general European war. This time, however, the threat to European peace and stability came, not because of colonial ambition, but because of the underlying ideological tension between fascism and communism.

Significantly, it is important to note that while the Abyssinian war brought with it a change in American *public* opinion toward Mussolini's regime, the invasion did not permanently alter the perceptions of many officials in the State Department. Indeed, the State Department was aware of Italian military preparations for the Abyssinian invasion since late 1934 and remained informed about ongoing political developments in the early months of 1935. Throughout the invasion and its aftermath, Mussolini was still regarded in Washington as "moderate" politician concerned with maintaining the European balance. The Italian leader helped to reinforce this perception at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 when the State Department concluded that Italy's actions were designed to arrest the spread of Soviet influence in Western Europe. As David Schmitz points out, Washington's views about the Spanish Civil War can best be understood as an attempt to maintain stability, prevent the spread of Communist/Soviet influence in Europe, and to prevent the outbreak of another European war.²

Coming off his personal diplomatic success of the summer of 1934, Mussolini and the Italian army enjoyed the reputation of being the ultimate arbiter in determining the balance of European power. Heady with his success, it is clear that Mussolini's approach to both internal Italian politics and foreign policy were changing in very substantial ways. With the ascension of Kurt von Schuschnigg to power in Austria after the murder of Dollfuss, Italy began to reassess her Austrian policy. Distinct from Dollfuss, Schuschnigg was more inclined to support a Habsburg restoration and had stronger pan-German leanings than his predecessor. Moreover, Schuschnigg believed that he was in a stronger position than Dollfuss had been with regard to the Nazis. Since the assassination, the Austrian believed that

the "radical" element of the Austrian Nazis had been eliminated, clearing the path to better relations between Austria and Germany. In any case, Schuschnigg made it clear that the new Austrian Government did not want, nor did it intend, to rely on Italian military guarantees. "We are most grateful for the Italian assistance as it was offered to us," Schuschnigg told Mussolini during their first meeting in 1934. But "the presence of Italian troops on our soil," warned the Austrian Chancellor, would make "the position of the Austrian government untenable."³ After the meeting, Mussolini told the Italian representative to the League of Nations, Pompeo Aloisi, that "it is no longer necessary to discuss the independence of Austria, she must fend for herself."⁴

In the meantime, Mussolini was building what Denis Mack Smith calls a cult of personality around the infallible image of the Duce. In his own eyes, Mussolini was the worldly-wise statesman and politician who guided Italy from the depths of despair and chaos to a position of relative supremacy in Europe. Subordinates were ordered to never publicly disagree with Mussolini with the result that junior government officials often refused to make even the most basic of decisions, deferring instead to the closely-knit cadre that surrounded Mussolini. Increasingly, political power was becoming concentrated in Mussolini's hands and favourable comparisons between the Duce and Napoleon were becoming commonplace as courtiers sought to curry favour with the Italian leader. Dissenting, or critical, voices about the direction of Italian policy were being muted and replaced by those who would encourage the Duce's ambitions. As Smith concludes, "to a wider international audience [Mussolini] continued to insist that all his energies were directed towards keeping the peace, inwardly he was becoming fascinated and almost obsessed with the prospect of leading his country in a

victorious war".⁵

Mussolini's long-standing colonial ambitions⁶ were well known to American diplomatic personnel in Europe as military *attachés* in both Rome and Addis Abba reported the build-up of Italian military forces well beyond the needs of Italian defense. When William Bullitt reported to the Department on September 22, 1934 "that agreement had been reached between France and Italy with regard to Abyssinia," it appeared as though the long-awaited moment of invasion was near.⁷ But Mussolini would have to face two distinct, but interrelated, challenges before he would be able to seriously contemplate an invasion of Africa. First, he would have to find an effective way to silence the protests of the British and French Governments before they could be made. Second, despite his claim to Aloisi, the Italian leader realized he would have to neutralize the strategic threat posed to Italy by the potential German invasion of Austria.⁸ Quite simply, Italy had too much at stake in Austria to leave the matter entirely to Schuschnigg's Government.

Indeed, uncertainty about Hitler's intentions in central Europe loomed menacingly in Mussolini's mind and the dilemma faced by the Italian leader was acute. If he attempted to fulfil his long-standing ambition to preside over the creation of an Italian Empire, he risked sacrificing the Great Power status in Europe that had taken years to cultivate. Thus, when Mussolini issued the secret order to prepare for the "destruction of the Abyssinian armed forces and the total conquest of Ethiopia" at the end of December 1934, it is not surprising to note that the Italian also declared that peace in Europe until at least 1937 was an "absolutely essential prerequisite". Italy's colonial operation assumed a sense of urgency when it was realized that German rearmament would soon force Italy to keep the bulk of its

army in Europe and that the Ethiopian army was becoming "Europeanised" with modern weaponry and training. As Pini's account declares, military action against the Ethiopians would have to be taken "if possible with a guarantee of freedom of action as far as concerned the other European Powers."⁹ In this case, "freedom of action" meant that Britain and France would guarantee Italy's northern-most flank against further German encroachments.

In the weeks ahead, Mussolini would make it clear that if he could not obtain such a guarantee by negotiation, he was not above creating the appearance of such an agreement. Indeed, in early January, 1935, Mussolini met with the French Foreign Minister, Pierre Laval, ostensibly to establish a common front against Nazi Germany. At the end of the conference, the Italians began to circulate the story that Laval had also given Mussolini a secret verbal assurance that the invasion of Abyssinia would not be opposed, a charge the French would later emphatically deny.¹⁰

As part of an effort to shore up Italy's European defenses against Germany before embarking on an invasion of Africa, Italy announced the creation of the "Stresa Front" in conjunction with the governments of Britain and France to consult each other in order to maintain Austria's independence. Prior to the conference, Roosevelt considered the possibility of joining the British, French, and Italian governments in restraining Germany, but the results of the conference made it clear that this was not a realistic alternative.

Despite claims by the Italian foreign minister that the Stresa Conference "cleared up" the international situation and had placed a defensive ring around Germany, Ambassador Long was sceptical. "War is the only cure for the malady with which Europe is affected," wrote Long to the President. Rather than clarifying Europe's desire for peace and securing

stability in central Europe, in Long's opinion, the Stresa conference actually brought European tensions into much greater relief. "There are three and a half million men under arms here today," wrote Long.

The national hatreds, jealousies, ambitions, and their racial, religious, and language differences, with the superstructure now of trade barriers, have got Europe cut up to such an extent that there is no way for them to stay together. Once the psychology of this moment has passed they will revert to the same situation as existed a few months ago, and it will gradually work up again to another high pitch.¹¹

Long's pessimism about the apparent results of the conference were echoed by the Italian Ambassador to London, Dino Grandi. The Italian ambassador, however, had more reason to be concerned. As Grandi saw it, the chief reason for bringing the leaders of the three Western Powers together was "to address the problem of creating a united front to control Germany". However, "controlling" Hitler with Italy as a viable military force in Europe was one thing, controlling Hitler with Italy waging a war in Africa was a completely different matter. But the matter of Italy's intentions in Africa were steadfastly avoided by the Western Powers and Mussolini did not volunteer to share his plans with the leaders from Paris and London. In a lucid, and remarkably frank, letter to Grandi after the conference, Mussolini revealed that he had evaluated Austria's chances of maintaining her independence and concluded that the prospects were grim. "Austria," Mussolini told Grandi, "has neither a soldier nor a penny". Soon, the Duce predicted, the Nazi's swastika flag would be flying on the Brenner. While unfortunate, this fact was inevitable, and if one could not kill one's enemies, then one should embrace them. Although he might be vilified for embracing the hated Germans, Mussolini believed that this step was necessary for Italy's well-being.

Nevertheless, the Italian leader had no illusions about the decision he had reached, telling Grandi that "this will not be a pleasant hug." Mussolini was determined to pursue his colonial ambitions and would lend little of substance to subsequent attempts to control Germany. As a result of Mussolini's decision, Grandi writes that Mussolini never paid more than lip service to the so-called "Stresa Front" and concludes that "Germany was alone on the Brenner from 1935." There is no doubt left in Grandi's account that the invasion of Abyssinia was a huge mistake for Italy's European policy from which there would be no recovery.¹²

Despite the pessimism of Mussolini's remarks to Grandi after the Stresa conference, and the bleak picture he painted about the future of Austrian independence, it is clear that the Italian leader was not prepared to simply cede Austria to Germany. *Anschluss* between Austria and Germany might have been inevitable, but Mussolini also believed that Italy should delay the inevitable as long as possible. Yet, there was also a certain amount of ambivalence in Mussolini's dealings with the Schuschnigg Government. Indeed, throughout the spring of 1935, Mussolini's attitude toward Austria would fluctuate periodically. One day, the Duce would issue a promise to defend his northern neighbour and the next, he would issue a statement that would appear to undermine previous Italian commitments. For example, in a speech to the Italian Senate on May 12, Mussolini addressed his critics who suggested that Italy would be unable to honour her European commitments because of her military efforts in Africa. "We may reply to these most solicitous and disinterested advisers who consider our presence in Europe indispensable that we are of the same identical opinion; but it is precisely in order to be fully prepared in Europe that we intend to protect ourselves in the rear in Africa." Although Mussolini failed to explain precisely how waging a colonial war against

Ethiopians would help to defend Italian interests in Europe, one could assume that the Italian leader hoped that a decisive show of force against a lesser opponent would cow Hitler. In any case, Mussolini also indicated that Italy's resources were sufficient to defend her interests both in Africa and in Europe. Approximately 800,000-900,000 troops were being held in reserve in Italy to deal with any hostile developments in Europe. In his more belligerent moments, Mussolini would claim that in a single day he could mobilise ten million men or more to wage the war in Africa and defend Italy against Germany.¹³

A week later, Mussolini was again addressing the potential impact of the Abyssinian invasion on Italy's support of the Austrian Government. This time, however, Mussolini pointed out that Austria was a *European* problem and that Italy could not be expected to bear the burden of confronting Hitler alone. If other European nations, like Britain and France, expected Austrian independence to be maintained they would have to shoulder some of the costs, both politically and militarily, to maintain Austria's sovereignty. Perhaps most importantly for the future of European stability, Mussolini made it clear that European commitments would not keep Italy from fulfilling her mission of colonial acquisition. "Fascist Italy does not intend to circumscribe her historic mission," warned Mussolini, "to any one political problem or to any one military sector such as that of the defense of a frontier even one as important as the Brenner since all frontiers whether metropolitan or colonial are indiscriminately sacred and must be guarded and defended against any potential menace."¹⁴

It appeared as though Mussolini was finally giving public voice to the concerns he had expressed to Grandi about the future of Austrian independence, but the reality was that Mussolini understood Italy's need to defend Austria even if he did not like to acknowledge

that responsibility. Thus, the Duce's public vacillation on the issue reflected the fundamental dilemma that faced Italian policy. Mussolini's personal glory and ambition could only be satisfied through colonial acquisition. Basic survival, however, meant that colonial acquisition was impossible. To attempt to increase Italy's prestige meant risking the stability of Italy's standing in Europe because Italy simply did not have enough men and materiel to accomplish both. Faced with these realities, Mussolini did the only thing that a politician in his position could. The invasion of Africa would proceed as planned and fingers were crossed in the hopes that Germany would not take advantage of Italy's defensive quandary and make *Anschluss* a reality. In any case, the Italian government expected that Abyssinia could be fully conquered in three years and that, in the interim, Hitler would be unable to mount an offensive against Austria. More importantly, Mussolini believed that Italian diplomacy, combined with the spectre of a large Italian military force available for duty on the continent, would be enough to keep Hitler from making a move into Austria.

Other members of the Italian foreign office, however, did not share Mussolini's optimism. Bernardo Attolico, the newly appointed Italian Ambassador to Austria, spoke with William Bullitt in Moscow before assuming his new post in Berlin. Mussolini had told the Ambassador that "you will have the vital Italian diplomatic post, the most difficult task for Italy during the next three years will be to keep Germany from taking possession of Austria." Attolico confided to Bullitt that he was approaching his new mission with a healthy measure of trepidation. Although Attolico was a part of the new members of the Foreign Office who were sympathetic to the Germans, the Italian thought it "would be almost impossible" to keep Germany from attempting some kind of action against Austria in the next three years.

Perhaps more to the point, Attolico was worried that as the Ambassador to Germany, he would become the scapegoat if Hitler accomplished his goal of *Anschluss*. Peace in Europe was temporary, argued the Italian. When a general European war did arrive "it was certain that Austria would side with Germany".¹⁵

Despite all the information that American diplomats were receiving and processing about Italy's intentions in Africa, the belief persisted that Mussolini would not risk Italy's standing in Europe to wage an imperialist war in Africa. From his post in Vienna, Messersmith was prepared to merely concede that rising tensions in Abyssinia had "clouded the atmosphere". According to the American ambassador, Italian actions in Abyssinia were designed to let Europe know that Mussolini "did not intend to be frozen on the Brenner Pass by his Austrian policy." Undoubtedly, the new colonial direction of Italian foreign policy had created some tensions between Rome, London, and Paris, but Messersmith believed that all parties would be willing to step back from the situation in order to realize what was really important in European affairs. In particular, Messersmith predicted that Mussolini would not "abandon Austria or cut himself off from France or England for the sake of Abyssinia". Italy's strategic interests in Europe would not be served by diverting precious resources to the conquest of an African state. Just over a week later, Messersmith reported that Mussolini had sent a personal assurance to the Austrian Government that "Italy would stand by the Stresa program and under no circumstances desert Austria."¹⁶

Significantly, throughout the summer and early fall of 1935, the basic attitude of American diplomats toward the Italian leader did not significantly change. This was aided in no small part by the fact that, initially, the impact of growing tensions in Abyssinia on the

stability of Austria was negligible. Messersmith reported that the Duce had issued several private assurances to the Austrian Government that their independence would be preserved regardless of any colonial military commitment.¹⁷ The State Department received other good news about Austria. American dispatches from Vienna emphasised the strength of the Austrian Government and the declining influence of the Nazi Party in political affairs. After a visit to Austria in the spring, William Bullitt wrote to the President that his sources indicated that there would not be a Nazi *putsch* in Austria in the immediate future or for a "very long time thereafter." All of the Nazi's public leaders were either in jail or currently found themselves outside Austria's borders. Furthermore, the efforts of the Austrian Government to crush Nazi strongholds had yielded very tangible results and Hitler was sending only enough resources to keep together small pockets of Nazis.¹⁸ Messersmith also reported that recent British statements about taking a more active roll in continental affairs "was regarded as evidence that the present political understanding between Great Britain, France and Italy would be turned eventually into a military alliance against Germany unless the latter country changed its politics." Like Bullitt, Messersmith identified the lack of coherent leadership within the Austrian Nazi Party as a major factor in the decline of the Nazis' influence. Although there were indications of an increase in Nazi propaganda activities in the first half of 1935, Messersmith noted that the Nazi's offensive was largely ineffective and had achieved precisely the opposite goals of what had probably been intended.¹⁹ Perhaps it was fortunate that the Nazi's operations in Austria were being directed by the German Ambassador, von Papen. Indeed, two months earlier, Pierrepont Moffat wrote to George Messersmith that "the more I study von Papen's career in its manifold phases ... the more I am impressed with a mal-

adroitness [sic] which probably results from a fundamental stupidity."²⁰

Still, there was a note of caution in American policymaking. Regardless of the effectiveness of Nazi attempts to subvert Austrian independence, the State Department remained concerned about the potential for Italy to resort to force in Africa. Indeed, many believed that no good could come of a colonial war. Not only would it divert Italy's attention away from Europe, it would also undermine the League of Nations, and would establish a dangerous precedent. The First World War proved to diplomats that once countries resort to arms in one region, there is no guarantee that a conflict can be contained. The danger is that conflicts will spread like a disease to other regions. The goals of American diplomats were, therefore, twofold: first, if at all possible, to avoid war in Abyssinia, and a close second was to maintain Italy's standing in the European constellation of powers. If war could not be avoided, then the State Department would try to minimize the war's impact on the European balance of power. Although the United States was upset with Mussolini for making preparations to embark on a war of naked aggression, at no time did the State Department consider revoking its long-term support for the Fascist regime. Like a wayward child who needed to be scolded for acting out of turn, the Americans would try to punish Mussolini while showing him that cooperation with the western democracies was the only realistic policy alternative for Italy to follow.²¹ The Americans were told that the French were cautiously appraising the situation and concluded that a peaceful solution could be found to address Italy's complaints. Critically, though, Chambrun confided to the American *Chargé* in Rome, that France "was profoundly interested in avoiding any war and also in safeguarding the prestige of the League, which [Chambrun] felt should become more and more an entirely

European institution and France and Italy, as well as England, must cooperate to that end."²²

Earlier in the crisis, Suvich told Breckinridge Long that the European situation was "so uncertain that Italy felt it must do something to liquidate the difficulties with which it was confronted in Abyssinia." Presumably, Suvich meant that the war in Abyssinia was being treated by the Italian government purely as a preventative measure. From this point of view, Mussolini was taking a calculated risk that Hitler would not move against Austria while Italy was removing a potential threat on the periphery of its defensive perimeter. By dealing with the potential threat in advance, it could be argued that Italy would be able to deploy more troops and allocate more resources to deal with any future European threat posed by Germany.²³

The State Department was willing to grant Mussolini some latitude on this particular point, and the discussions of American policymakers about the potential solutions to the Abyssinian crisis evaluated the merits of proposed solutions by their impact on European stability. According to William Phillips, it was the State Department's belief that Mussolini's African adventure was "a detail", but that Germany "remained the key to the whole European situation,"²⁴ a sentiment echoed by Breckinridge Long from his post in Rome. Long forwarded his thoughts to Cordell Hull in a dispatch on September 12, 1935, and made it clear that, in his opinion, it was in the best interests of the United States to bring about a solution to the Abyssinian crisis that would not only settle Italy's colonial ambitions but that would also welcome Germany back into the international community. The proposed solution was

predicated, first, on the definite belief that Italy will now need additions to her territory in Africa as a condition precedent and as a happy corollary to any agreement to withhold military operations; second that Germany will have to be brought into any arrangement for further division of African territory but that *any such cession to her might serve as the quid pro quo for a peaceful settlement of the Austrian question*; and third, that an agreement between France, Germany is fundamental to the continued peace on the Continent.

Essentially, the American Ambassador proposed that the United States appease Mussolini. Long's proposal was designed to be a comprehensive solution that would address many of the outstanding sources of tension in European affairs, including the issue of German rearmament, by using Africa as a bargaining chip. The Ambassador to Rome argued that Italy should receive all the territory that she had claimed before the League of Nations assembly while Ethiopia should be limited to the borders of "old Abyssinia". The trade-off was that Mussolini, by having his demands for colonial acquisition satisfied in Africa, would be able to devote his undivided attention to the maintenance of European stability. Moreover, by involving Germany in the settlement, Long hoped that Hitler would abandon his territorial ambitions in Europe for colonies in Africa. "Germany," wrote Long, "would benefit by territory for expansion presumably at the expense of England but would commit herself in the matter of Austrian independence which is so necessary for European tranquility." A few days after receiving Long's proposal, Hull replied that the proposal was "exceedingly interesting", but the Secretary of State had to conclude that "we ourselves could not take any steps along those lines."²⁵

Although Long's proposal was ultimately rejected by Hull as impractical, it is clear that American policymakers considered the maintenance of peace and stability in Europe to be the most important objective of any policy initiative. "A war between Italy and Ethiopia

would be bad enough," said Cordell Hull, "but it is entirely within the range of possibility that it would in due time spread back into more than one part of Europe with its unimaginable, devastating effects."²⁶ The American response to the Italian invasion would, therefore, place greater importance on the European balance of power than it would on the challenges faced by Ethiopia.²⁷

For example, in early September, the American *Chargé* in Addis Abba wrote to the Secretary of State that there was some concern in Ethiopia about reports that the State Department had brought pressure to bear on Standard Vacuum Oil Company which had recently obtained concessions in Ethiopia. The State Department rightly assumed that Sellasie's concession was the product of an attempt to give the United States a greater stake in the preservation of the Ethiopian Empire²⁸ and in order to avoid claims of duplicity, the State Department urged Standard Oil to forgo development in Ethiopia. Needless to say, as a result of State Department pressure, it was now likely that the company would withdraw from Ethiopia. Engert wanted to reassure Sellasie "that the advice given to the interested companies by the Department is no indication of a change [in American policy] but on the contrary is intended to be helpful to Ethiopia." Hull corrected Engert and told him that he was "authorized to include in appropriate language the substance of paragraph 2," but that the message should be "modified to read 'helpful in the cause of peace' instead of 'helpful to Ethiopia.'" To Cordell Hull, this was not a merely a situation that involved Ethiopia alone, but was one that had implications well beyond the African continent. It, therefore, fell to Engert to convince the Emperor that Hull's efforts were motivated solely by a desire to "preserve the peace, to remove impediments to peace" and strengthen international attempts

to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis.²⁹

In part to attempt to address the concerns raised by the Ethiopian Emperor and in part to publicly state America's official policy, Hull issued a lengthy statement on September 12.

"Under the conditions which prevail in the world today," said Hull

a threat of hostilities anywhere cannot but be a threat to the interests--political, economic, legal and social--of all nations. Armed conflict in any part of the world cannot but have undesirable and adverse effects in every part of the world. All nations have the right to ask that any and all issues, between whatsoever nations, be resolved by pacific means. Every nation has the right to ask that no nations subject it and other nations to the hazards and uncertainties that must inevitably accrue to all from resort to arms by any two.³⁰

It is clear that others in the State Department agreed with Hull's assessment that any solution would have to be found under the banner of the League of Nations and the principle of collective security. Moreover, the State Department was also actively supporting British attempts to mediate the crisis.³¹ "There is now only one hope for Europe," wrote Messersmith in a letter to William Phillips, "and that is through the most thoroughgoing Anglo-French cooperation. If this is arrived at, the League can not only be saved, but be given new prestige." The American also wrote that the Abyssinian invasion did not involve Italian prestige as much as it represented Mussolini's personal ambition. That was not the problem. In the past few months, however, the Italian leader had managed to turn the issue of Italian colonies in Africa into a personal attack on British interests in the Mediterranean, and the United States was not prepared to allow Italian actions to negatively effect London. "If [Mussolini] is permitted to satisfy his full ambitions in Abyssinia," warned Messersmith, "British prestige will have suffered a defeat ... and there will be nothing to prevent the same

irresponsible individual from becoming a permanent threat to Europe."³²

As tensions mounted through August and September, the favourable attitude of the Austrian Government gradually began to fade away. As more of Mussolini's troops were taken from the Brenner Pass and put to service in Ethiopia, members of the Austrian Government began asking questions about the state of Austrian defenses and were not pleased with the answers they received.³³ Perhaps more importantly, anti-Italian sentiment that had been simmering since the late 1920's was beginning to find a voice in the Austrian press. In late August, 1935, Messersmith reported that "if Austrian public opinion continues to be disappointed in [the Danubian] pacts through further delays, the Government here will be practically forced to negotiate with Germany."³⁴ A week later, Messersmith offered the Department a more detailed analysis of the situation in Austria and explained that "the unpopularity of Italian influence may become a source of more than embarrassment to the Austrian Government. Should Italy become involved in a long, drawn-out struggle in Abyssinia," he warned, "the anti-Italian sentiment may find expression in popular action in Austria."

Indeed, the Austrian government of Chancellor Schuschnigg found itself in an increasingly untenable position between the government of Italy on the one hand and the combination of Britain and France on the other. Although Italy was the only power that had furnished tangible support for the Austrian government in economic and military terms, it was widely believed by Austrian officials that Italian military guarantees meant nothing if they were not supported by the British. As the crisis in Abyssinia deepened and tensions between London and Rome increased, the concern of the Austrian Government mounted as it appeared

as though Vienna would be forced to choose between Italy or Britain and France. "Austria's economic dependence on Italy has become continuously more important and vital to her," wrote Messersmith, and it was no secret that Mussolini could bring significant pressure to bear on Austria if he so desired. Indeed, if Italy withdrew from the League of Nations in protest against the coming economic sanctions, it was expected in Rome that Austria would follow Italy out the door. Clearly, Schuschnigg and the rest of the Austrian Government were not prepared to blindly follow Italy. The League of Nations still represented a potential avenue of recourse if Hitler made another attempt to incorporate Austria into the Reich. Although Italy had protected Austria in the past, there was a growing belief in Starhemberg's Government that Britain and France were the keys to Austria's future, and that Vienna could ill-afford to alienate those powers. Perhaps the only saving grace for Austria was that it appeared as though the internal situation in Germany would continue to preclude any aggressive action by the Nazis outside of Germany's borders.³⁵

On October 3, 1935, the crisis that all hoped could be avoided was launched as Italian planes bombed Adowa and Adigrat. The Council of the League of Nations was called to order to determine what action, if any, the League should take to respond to the Italian invasion. President Roosevelt was aboard the *U.S.S. Houston* in the Pacific and instructed Cordell Hull to issue the proclamation of neutrality once the State Department could confirm the outbreak of hostilities in Africa. However, with no official declaration of war, Hull did not want to take any action that would recognize a state of war if one did not actually exist. Compounding the problem was the fact that the longer the State Department waited to issue the neutrality proclamation, the more likely the League of Nations would be able to reach a

consensus and announce a policy to protest Italian actions. Nevertheless, both the President and the State Department firmly believed that in order to avoid accusations of allowing the League to dictate the direction of American policy, Washington would have to declare its policy well before League of Nations announced its intentions. Indeed, Hull points out in his memoirs that the State Department had prepared a draft of the neutrality proclamation on September 25, 1935 that was signed, but not dated, by Roosevelt so that the declaration could be made as soon as possible after the outbreak of hostilities.³⁶ Despite the obvious need for quick and decisive action, Hull delayed issuing the proclamation for two days over the increasingly strident calls for action by Roosevelt, citing the need for consultation with other members of the State Department and governments abroad. Finally, after dealing with all of Hull's reservations, the neutrality proclamation was issued on October 5.³⁷

The neutrality proclamation was designed to scold Italy and to placate domestic isolationists, but it is also clear that the United States did not want to antagonize Italy more than necessary and did not include raw materials on the embargo list. Although Roosevelt and other members of his administration were justifiably upset at the Italian invasion, William Phillips, for one, believes that it was clear that the neutrality proclamation was policy enacted by the force of public opinion rather than the convictions of any individual policymaker. Moreover, Phillips believes that the application of the neutrality proclamation against Italy over the conflict with Ethiopia established a dangerous precedent. The American government was abandoning the rights of neutrals on the high seas which meant that any American who continued to trade with the belligerents would do so without the protection of the government of the United States. Although the proclamation ultimately rejected the United States' long

standing attempts to preserve the shipping rights of neutrals in times of war, Phillips later wrote that "in view of the temper of the country, the proclamation presumably conformed to the wishes of the American people."³⁸ Indeed, public demonstrations against the Italian action took place in American cities. In San Francisco, police were called to break up angry crowds outside the Italian consulate and in Chicago, three hundred demonstrators were arrested.³⁹

Before the end of the year, the United States considered steps that would strengthen the message being sent to Mussolini. In December, President Roosevelt was considering implementing an oil embargo on Italy along with the League of Nations to tighten the grip on Mussolini. Prior to arriving at a final decision, both the State Department and the President launched a series of intelligence gathering missions to assess Italy's war-making capacity. Warrington Dawson filed a series of reports with the State Department on the state of the Italian economy. In the months following the outbreak of the war, Dawson came to the conclusion that the financial state of the Italian government was, at best, tenuous. Through private sources, Dawson reported that assurances had to be made by Mussolini to the Pope to assure the latter of the financial security of the Italian government.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in early December 1935, William J. Donovan left the United States to go on a special intelligence gathering mission to assess the Italian Army's effectiveness in Ethiopia. Quite simply, Donovan was the victim of a well-executed deception by his Italian hosts, and the American was left with a suitably favourable opinion about the effectiveness of the Italian Army and its commanders. The Italians were able to manipulate the sights seen by Donovan in a variety of ways. While in Ethiopia, the American was transported between troop encampments by airplane to disguise the difficulty the Italians were having in maintaining ground-based

transportation routes. In another instance, an entire village was constructed to give the impression of cordial relations between Italian soldiers and the native population and evidence was manufactured to conceal the use of mustard gas by Italian soldiers against Ethiopian troops. As a result of Donovan's mission, it is possible to conclude that Roosevelt ultimately decided against imposing an oil embargo on Italy because it was feared that such an action would precipitate war in Europe.⁴¹

Hopes in Rome and Washington that the Ethiopian invasion would not affect the European balance were soon dashed. Public opinion in Austria was making it increasingly difficult for the Government to continue its support of Mussolini. Messersmith noted that the controlled press in Austria "has been continuously more objective" and that "all really critical references to England have disappeared," indicating the emergence of a more independent policy for Vienna.⁴² In the following weeks, Messersmith continued to report the favourable signals about improved relations between the governments of Britain and Austria. "The Government here," wrote Messersmith, "sees the probabilities of strong Anglo-French cooperation continuing, and is more definitely shaping its policy to fit in with this." Although Austria refused to take part in League sanctions on Italy, the American reported that this did not automatically result in an increase in exports to Italy for Austrian businesses. In fact, trade between Italy and Austria declined because the Italians were finding it increasingly difficult to honour their debts. "There is reliable information of large Italian orders having recently been refused by Austrian manufacturers from the conviction that there was no certainty of payment."⁴³

But even as the Austrian Government began to try to move out of Italy's orbit, reality

forced Chancellor Schuschnigg back to Mussolini. Attempts to reach comprehensive agreements with Britain and France regarding Austrian sovereignty met with little success. Indeed, even had the three countries managed to reach some kind of agreement, one has to wonder about the effectiveness that such a treaty would have. Austria's proximity to Germany dictated that a protector against future Nazi aggression would have to have the ability to mobilize troops quickly, just as Mussolini had in the summer of 1934. Both Britain and France lacked the ability to project power quickly and effectively into central Europe. Moreover, the Austrian government was increasingly beset with internal problems. Schuschnigg continued to battle against both the socialists and the Nazis in Austria when simple political survival dictated that he make an alliance with one against the other.⁴⁴

Just as public indignation at the Italian Government was reaching a fevered pitch in many of the world's capitals, Mussolini's response was enough to give many a moment of pause. Perhaps more than any other country beside Germany in the interwar years, Italian foreign policy reflected the changing whims and personality of its leader. Rumours of exchanges between Rome and Berlin were beginning to be reported with increased regularity and among Mussolini's advisors, there was great debate about whether Italy should seek an agreement with Hitler. By early 1936 the tentative approaches between Rome and Berlin were becoming more complete. William Phillips would later write that, among members of the Italian foreign office, there was a growing belief that to continue to regard Hitler with scorn was dangerous. "The German Government has become increasingly sensitive each time that Hitler has made some friendly gesture to other nations and has been repulsed. There is a danger in allowing Germany to continue in the belief that she had no friend in the family of

nations."⁴⁵

Perhaps because of the international indignation caused by the invasion of Ethiopia and the strains it placed on diplomatic relations, or perhaps because of the similarities between the regimes in Germany and Italy, the early months of 1936 witnessed the *rapprochement* of German and Italian interests. In early January, 1936, Mussolini received the German Ambassador, Ulrich von Hassell, and said that "it would now be possible to achieve a fundamental improvement in German-Italian relations and to dispose of the only dispute, namely, the Austrian problem."⁴⁶ Although Mussolini's proposal was ultimately rejected by the Germans⁴⁷, it is clear that the Italian leader had begun the process of reorienting Italian policy away from the Western powers toward Germany.

In what can only be considered a puzzling series of decisions after Germany's reoccupation of the Rhineland, Mussolini pledged Italy's continued support of Austrian independence to Prince Starhemberg regardless of the consequences.⁴⁸ The problem was that Mussolini had no idea how he could accomplish this task. Germany under Hitler was adamantly opposed to entering into any multilateral agreements and seriously doubted Mussolini's ability to act as an "honest broker" in finding a settlement to the Austrian question.⁴⁹ But, the Italian leader was not prepared to simply abandon his status as a major player in European affairs. If Mussolini could follow a risky policy that employed equal parts of bluff and pressure, perhaps Italy would be able to tread a fine line between the Western Powers on the one hand and Germany on the other. The recent overtures to Germany, however, granted an almost surreal, and comical, nature to Mussolini's policy. Whether or not it was intended, the ultimate result of Mussolini's approach made it appear as though the

Italian leader would abandon Austria unless London and Paris would do his bidding. This is, indeed, an interesting approach to blackmail that promised to do more damage to Italian interests than to those of the Western Powers.⁵⁰

Perhaps distracted by the war in Abyssinia and the declaration of an Empire, or blinded by his own ambition, Mussolini believed that the Western Powers had more to lose than he did by an Italian *rapprochement* with Germany. Certainly, the Mussolini that met with Starhemberg left the Austrian with the impression that the Duce fundamentally misunderstood the effect that the Abyssinian invasion had on public opinion in foreign capitals. Despite pessimistic reports from Starhemberg about Italy's standing in the rest of Europe, Mussolini expressed supreme confidence in Italy's ability to reach an agreement with the Western Powers. "Short-sighted people," argued Mussolini, "have not yet realised the part of Italy on the Continent. If Italy grows weak, Germany will grow strong. Only a strong Italy can keep Germany in check."⁵¹ Quite simply, it was inconceivable to Mussolini that the Western Powers might abandon him to lie in the bed that he had made for himself. Thus, under Mussolini's guidance, the Schuschnigg Government entered into negotiations with the Nazis and signed an agreement on July 11 that was designed, among other things, to protect Austrian sovereignty from further German encroachments. To the German Ambassador, Mussolini "expressed lively satisfaction" over the signing of the treaty and offered the opinion that the agreement would "bring to an end the unhappy situation of Austria as a football of foreign interests and, above all, would finally remove the last and only mortgage on German-Italian relations."⁵²

American reaction to the agreement was subdued. The military *attaché* in Vienna

reported suspicions that the Germans would sign the agreement "with their fingers crossed".⁵³ Nevertheless, what remains significant about the July agreement between Austria and Germany is the number of factors, both domestic and international, that brought about its creation. Perhaps most important was the Abyssinian war. Mussolini had always maintained that Italy could not prevent the *Anschluss* between Austria and Germany indefinitely, but that Italy should seek to delay the union for as long as possible. Clearly, the war in Ethiopia strained Italy's relations with Paris and London to a degree and significantly limited the ability of Mussolini to effectively guarantee Austrian independence. The result was a gradual shift in Italian policy away from the Western Powers and toward Germany. Indeed, the Italian foreign office reflected this shift with the resignation of Fulvio Suvich as the Italian Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs. In Suvich's place, the Duce appointed his son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano, to the post. Where Suvich had been more inclined to be suspicious of German motives with regard to Austria, Ciano was more sympathetic to German policies. Finally, the 1936 agreement also represented the preeminence of those in the German Foreign Office who advocated the "evolutionary" approach to the "Austrian problem". After the failed coup against Dollfuss two years before, Hitler abandoned the application of military force as a viable tool for the subversion of Austria. Instead, the German leader directed that future Nazi efforts should embrace the principle of "indirect penetration". Not only did this represent better opportunities for success, but it also lent the desired appearance of legality to the *Führer's* actions. Indeed, as Schwarz points out, the 1936 agreement was interpreted so liberally by the Nazis that Hitler was able to claim that Germany was operating within the terms of the agreement while simultaneously accusing the Austrians of minor violations of the

exact same treaty.⁵⁴

Regardless of the actual motives behind the 1936 agreement, American policymakers were simply gratified that the outbreak and ultimate resolution of Italy's colonial venture would pass without bringing with it a general European war. Although there were questions in the minds of many State Department officials about the longevity of any agreement signed by Hitler regarding Austria, American diplomats believed that Mussolini could once again be counted on to preserve the *status quo* in Europe despite Italy's weakened strategic position. "The mutual mistrust between the two dictators remains as great as ever," wrote Messersmith to Cordell Hull in September, "and the fundamental clash between their objectives in Southeastern Europe just as clear." According to American observers, the truce between Hitler and Mussolini was based on political expediency rather than any ideological confluence. Indeed, the Germans had confided to the British a rather pessimistic view of the Italians. "Italians, [the Germans] think, are not a serious military race, nor can their assurances ever be relied on."⁵⁵

Undoubtedly, relations between the United States and Italy had been strained by Mussolini's colonial war, but Roosevelt was anxious to demonstrate to the Italian leader that the United States was still favourably inclined to his regime. With Breckinridge Long scheduled to return to Washington to help the President with his re-election campaign, Roosevelt had the opportunity to appoint a new Ambassador to Rome. The president appointed a personal friend, William Phillips, to the post, sending a signal to the Italians that both the State Department and the President did not intend to let the events of the past year cloud their opinion of Mussolini.⁵⁶

In the meantime, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War once again raised the question of general European conflict. It also raised questions about the spread of Communism and the possible reemergence of Soviet influence in European affairs. From this point of view, American neutrality during the Spanish Civil War can be seen as a policy designed to aid Britain and France in their efforts to prevent the spread of the conflict. But policymakers also understood the Civil War to be a manifestation of the underlying ideological conflict between Fascism and Communism. Italy's policy was, therefore, predictable. Mussolini was determined that there should not be a Communist government in Spain or in the Mediterranean.⁵⁷ Given that the United States had originally supported the Fascist regime in Rome precisely because it opposed Communism, it is not surprising to find that the Spanish Civil War did little to affect America's relations with Italy.⁵⁸ Indeed, in November 1936 Mussolini would resume his correspondence with Roosevelt in a gracious and conciliatory letter.⁵⁹ Still, in the weeks and months ahead, events in Europe seemed to Roosevelt to preclude the clear enunciation of an American policy. In the face of growing German pressure on the Schuschnigg government, Italy once again pledged its "active and full support" for the maintenance of Austrian independence.⁶⁰ "Every week changes the picture," wrote Roosevelt to Phillips in Rome. "The basis for it all lies, I *think* not in communism or the fear of communism but in Germany and the fear of what the present German leaders are meeting for or being drawn toward."⁶¹ Could the United States rely on Italy once again to foil Hitler's ambitions in Europe? Conclusions about the "fundamental clash of interests" between Hitler and Mussolini in central Europe seemed to indicate that State Department believed it was possible.

As David Schmitz concludes, the Italo-Ethiopian war can be seen as the beginning of American attempts to appease Mussolini and did not mark a significant change in *official* American perceptions of Italy. In addition, the lessons learned by the State Department between 1935 and 1936 would serve as the foundation for American attempts to appease Hitler in the months ahead. Throughout the Abyssinian conflict, the United States consistently attempted to find a solution that would not harm the European balance in spite of their personal revulsion at Mussolini's action. Indeed, it was precisely because Europe, and not Africa, was determined to be the decisive theatre of operation that both the Secretary of State and the President soon set aside their anger and chose to work again with Mussolini.

Chapter Four

By the start of 1937, it was clear that the battle between Germany and Italy for control of Austria was entering its decisive phase. The Abyssinian war did not embroil the Continent in a general war the way State Department officials feared, but the tangible reminders of the conflict were enough to give American diplomats a moment of pause. The effort of launching and sustaining a colonial war of aggression had greatly weakened Italy's ability to influence European affairs. Furthermore, Mussolini's exuberant support of Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War did little to reinforce the position of the Schuschnigg Government against German encroachments. "The Italian position," wrote Messersmith to Phillips in December 1936, "has slipped a bit, and the German is naturally and inevitably correspondingly stronger." Recent overtures between Rome and Berlin led to rumours that Italy and Germany had divided central and southeastern Europe into separate zones of interest. As a direct result, Vienna was concerned that if Mussolini was no longer able to flex Italy's military might in central Europe, there would be little to dissuade him from auctioning Austria off to the highest bidder. Nevertheless, Messersmith expressed confidence that the Italian Foreign Office understood the challenge represented by Germany and that the balance would ultimately be restored. "The Italians realize that they allowed the position here to slip too much and are beginning to reassert themselves."¹

The great unknown, however, was whether or not Italy still possessed the will and the ability to challenge Hitler if the Nazis attempted another coup in Austria. Mussolini's attempts to play Germany off the Western Powers continued through 1937 and early 1938 despite Italy's weakened strategic position. Resentful of the way they were being treated by the Italian and increasingly sceptical of Mussolini's promises of support, the Austrian government attempted to take matters into its own hands. Hitler, however, was not discouraged by Austrian manoeuvres, and growing Italian weakness made the approaching *Anschluss* inevitable. Although Mussolini had always maintained that Italy could not prevent the *Anschluss* of Germany and Austria forever, the Italian was surprised and unprepared for the suddenness of Hitler's move.

In the meantime, 1937 and early 1938 witnessed the gradual reevaluation of American assumptions toward Europe. Increasingly sceptical of appeasement as a feasible response to Nazi Germany, Roosevelt began searching for a new policy to deal with the problems of the Continent. For the first time, searching questions were asked by State Department officials about Italy's ability, and inclination, to support the *status quo* in Europe. Furthermore, the promotion of George Messersmith to Assistant Secretary of State seemed to indicate that the President was preparing to take a more active role in foreign affairs. Though Roosevelt and the State Department realized that a new policy alternative was required for Germany, they were also conscious of their limitations. The vast majority of Americans were simply not ready or willing to become involved in global problems. Thus, late 1937 and early 1938 saw America's European policy enter a holding pattern. The appeasement of Germany was abandoned but there was no new policy put in its place. Instead, the State Department

continued to hope that Italy would be able to act as a restraining influence on Germany's ambitions in central Europe. When the *Anschluss* took place on March 12, most American diplomats believed that Italy's weakened strategic position, combined with the rapidity of events, placed Mussolini in a position where he had to publicly support Germany's actions. In private, they were convinced that the Italian was shocked and embarrassed by the *Anschluss*. After the union had taken place, the State Department still believed that Mussolini was a moderate statesman who could be influenced by reason. Italy's strategic position in Europe, however, had been lost the moment German troops crossed the border into Austria, and it was increasingly unlikely that Mussolini could be tempted back to the Western fold.

"We cannot be a mere observer no matter how much we may wish to maintain that attitude," declared George Messersmith to Assistant Secretary of State, R. Walton Moore in December 1936.

I know that it is not a popular viewpoint at home and that there are those who say that we can and will keep out of any trouble, but I believe it is much wiser and safer and much more in our interest to recognize what the real situation is, and that against our will we *may* be involved. Mere scolding of Europe and emphasizing an isolationist attitude on our part cannot help the European or international position and may only provoke in the end the struggle just as the equivocal attitude of England played such an unfortunate part in those fateful days in 1914.²

Indeed, the Schuschnigg government knew that the day of reckoning with Hitler's Nazis was rapidly approaching. What was more alarming for the Austrian Government was the fact that German officials no longer appeared to be intimidated by Italy's guarantees. In January 1937, the head of Hitler's *Luftwaffe*, Hermann Göring, met with Mussolini and warned the Italian that "the *Anschluss* will come one day in one way or another." Mussolini simply shook his

head and refused to respond to the German's comment.³

Despite the ominous nature of Göring's statements to Mussolini, events in Austria assumed a subdued character during the first few months of 1937. As Bruce Pauley points out, by and large, Hitler had left Austria alone after the signing of the July agreement in 1936. Instead of fomenting revolution in Austria, the German leader decided to concentrate on the pace of domestic rearmament and the Spanish Civil War.⁴ It is, therefore, not surprising to note that dispatches from the American embassy in Vienna reported increasingly proactive attempts by the Austrian Government to deal with the Nazi menace. Successive reports emphasized attempts to improve both the political and financial stability of the Schuschnigg regime and a growing schism between Mussolini and the Austrian Chancellor. Whether reporting on attempts to introduce much needed capital into the economy, or commenting on plans to restore the Habsburgs to the throne in Austria, it appeared that Schuschnigg's Government was enjoying a measure of success in repelling German advances without Italian assistance. By early March 1937, Messersmith was writing that "barring outside aid the Austrian Nazi movement has reached stagnation point." A "whispering" campaign by Austrian Nazis held that the internal loan arranged by Schuschnigg, estimated to be as high as 180 million schillings, was being earmarked for the purchase of weapons and armaments from Italy to combat Germany.⁵ Whether or not it was intended, the ultimate result of the plan was nothing less than a brilliant victory for Austrian nationalists. The Austrian Nazis believed that if they continued their attempts to undermine the Government, the result would be the undesirable restoration of the Habsburg monarchy instead of the *Anschluss* with Germany. If forced to decide between accepting the present Austrian government and a

Habsburg restoration, it was clear that the Nazis would prefer to deal with the Austrian Government.⁶

Ironically, the movement away from Rome in Austrian political and diplomatic circles occurred at roughly the same moment that American policymakers were beginning tentative reevaluations of their chief assumptions. In each case, neither the United States nor Austria was prepared or willing to abandon Mussolini altogether, but a measure of disaffection for the Italian's actions could be seen both in Vienna and Washington. In a dispatch dated April 2, 1937, Messersmith reported that figures inside the Austrian Government believed that "Italy's position as regards Central Europe was no longer as strong as previously." While this would not mark an immediate or radical change in Austria's attitude toward Italy, Schuschnigg was beginning to explore possible defensive alternatives for Austria, particularly in the formation of a defensive alignment with Prague and Budapest. Indeed, the wisdom of such a policy became evident upon consideration of recent Italian military actions in Spain. Casualty and defection rates among Italian soldiers in Spain were thought to be disproportionately high by the Austrian government, leading to the unstated, but nevertheless omnipresent, conclusion that Italian military guarantees against future German actions would be largely ineffective. Furthermore, the long-simmering enmity between Austrians and Italians boiled over at a recent soccer match that Messersmith reported "ended in a near riot". Rome was particularly upset by the incident, and told the government in Vienna that, since Austria was "an authoritarian state", such incidents should be easily prevented. According to American sources, the government responded that "there was nothing to be done about it ... as a large proportion of the Austrian public did not like the Italians and never would".⁷

Indeed, by April, it appeared that Italy's role as an important player in the European constellation was beginning to be questioned by officials in the State Department and the White House. Phillips wrote to the President and said that the circumstances around Italy's international standing were so fluid that by the time a letter written in Rome reached Washington, the information it contained was out of date. Regardless, it was still possible to make a few observations about Italian foreign policy. "More and more," wrote Phillips, "it is realized here that peace is absolutely essential for Italy." Both Mussolini and Ciano were speaking of increasing international trade and improving economic cooperation, and the reasons for this shift in Italian policy were numerous. The war in Spain was proving to be more difficult than Mussolini had anticipated and the Italians were experiencing a measure of frustration because of the conflict. "The Italians recklessly assumed the entire burden of supporting Franco in the belief that Italian soldiers are invincible. But now the Government fervently hopes to find some way of withdrawing the 'volunteers' without too much loss of face". Furthermore, growing anti-Italian sentiment in America and England was thought to be having a significant impact on Mussolini, and the Italian leader appeared to Phillips to be taking some tentative steps towards mitigating his "bellicose language". Finally, although "Italy's relations with Germany are for the time being intimate," Phillips questioned how much longer the partnership would last. "Personally I have my doubts as to its durability," confessed Phillips.⁸

It is clear from Roosevelt's response to Phillips' letter that the President's thoughts about American foreign policy were undergoing a subtle transformation. Since the early 1930's, both the State Department and the White House believed that the root of all European

tensions lay in unsatisfied economic concerns and that only by liberalizing trade and stimulating economic growth could the fundamental problem be alleviated. However, "the more I study the situation," wrote Roosevelt in May 1937, "the more I am convinced that an economic approach to peace is a pretty weak reed for Europe to lean on." How was peace possible, asked the President, if a proposed solution did not address the twin problems of economic security and disarmament? England and France, wrote Roosevelt, "say we cannot help Germany and Italy to achieve economic security if they [Germany and Italy] continue to arm and threaten, while simultaneously Germany and Italy say we must continue to arm and threaten because they [Britain and France] will not give us economic security." It was a vicious circle, but the President was either unwilling or unable to seek another solution besides economic appeasement. While Roosevelt agreed that any solution that "postpones war" was good, he did not believe that the eventual conflict could be put off inevitably and predicted that war would come "in the next few years."⁹ The problem, now, was to find an effective way to address European problems.

This is, perhaps, one of the most important shifts in American policy during the inter-war years. Gradually, Roosevelt was turning away from the advice offered by Cordell Hull, whose patience was virtually limitless, and looking to Sumner Wells who "appealed to Roosevelt's desire to act."¹⁰ Wells proposed more ambitious solutions to world peace, including plans for world conferences to directly confront Europe's problems and to find solutions. The difficulty however, as Roosevelt revealed in a press conference, was that European statesmen would "look around for somebody outside of Europe to come forward with a hat and a rabbit in it and they think I got a hat with a rabbit in it ... I haven't got a hat

and I haven't got a rabbit in it."¹¹ In the meantime, after a few months of relative stability in Austria, the situation appeared to be deteriorating again in late June. "There are indications that [Austria's external position] may be modified in one way or another in the near future," wrote Messersmith. "These indications come from the manoeuvres [sic] of the great Western Powers and from the internal activity of Austrian National Socialists." Italy's policy of "political blackmail", that is, threatening to seek accommodation with Germany unless concessions were granted from Britain and France, was on the verge of backfiring. "The result would be that Great Britain, if sufficiently annoyed, would parley with Germany."¹²

Gradually, dispatches from Vienna were again emphasizing the resurgence of Nazi efforts to undermine Austrian independence. Reports that Hitler was again planning a coup filtered through to the American embassy and were duly forwarded to Washington.¹³ Despite rising tensions between London and Rome undermining, at least temporarily, Austria's international position, the State Department completed a previously arranged shuffle of State Department personnel. George Messersmith, one of the United States' most vocal, and effective, critics of Nazi Germany was promoted to Assistant Secretary of State. This was, in the words of the British Ambassador to Austria, Sir Walford Selby, "perhaps the greatest loss suffered by the Austrian Government in this year." Nazi Germany, wrote Selby, "feared Mr. Messersmith, and throughout the tenure of his post he had given the most consistent support to the two successive Chancellors."¹⁴

In some ways, the appointment of Messersmith to Assistant Secretary of State was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, Austria was losing one of its most active and influential foreign supporters. On the other hand, with the appointment of Messersmith as

Assistant Secretary of State, Roosevelt brought to Washington one of the most knowledgeable Americans on Nazi Germany - Messersmith having served as the American ambassador to Berlin during the rise of the Nazis in 1933 and his subsequent term of service in Austria from 1934 to 1937. In addition to bringing his wealth of personal experience and opinions about central European affairs, Messersmith also appeared to represent a substantial reinforcement to the activist wing of the Roosevelt administration represented by Sumner Wells.

It quickly became clear that Messersmith's brand of activism, however, was not the solution that either the State Department or the President were looking for. A strong advocate of collective security, Messersmith's assessments of the European balance had long ranked Germany as the leading threat to peace. Contrary to President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and countless others in the State Department, Messersmith did not believe that war against Germany should be avoided, for war would serve the dual purpose of clearing European tensions and eliminating the greatest threat to the *status quo*. Indeed, during the Abyssinian war, Messersmith vehemently opposed finding a "face-saving compromise" to the crisis, arguing that "Germany will be further weakened and isolated" if events were allowed to play themselves out and the principle of collective security was enforced. Perhaps, in this regard, Messersmith's understanding of European diplomacy and his assessment of the European threat was far ahead of his colleagues. Messersmith fully understood and appreciated that the application of collective security to the German problem would necessitate the involvement of Soviet Russia in western European affairs and would, most likely, mean war on the continent. Quite distinct from others in the State Department,

Messersmith did not believe that reintroducing Russia into the geopolitical mix would have disturbing effects.¹⁵ Nor did the prospect of removing the present governments in Rome and Berlin necessarily mean that the result would be a communist-style regimes in Italy and Germany or instability in western Europe. Quite the contrary. Peace and certainty, argued Messersmith, would prevail after eliminating the two revisionist governments.¹⁶

The appeasement policy that the United States adopted toward Italy and Germany, on the other hand, was a policy that Messersmith believed was truly misguided and inappropriate. Appeasement pandered to those who believed that the Soviet Union, and not Nazi Germany, represented the single greatest threat to American interests in Europe. In a letter to Secretary of State Hull just as the situation in Austria was preparing to enter its decisive phase, Messersmith criticised the fundamental premises of appeasement policy and issued a stern warning. "There is a tendency to characterize the present discorded world relations as due to the struggle between 'haves' and 'have nots'", wrote Messersmith. This idea was being advanced by the dictatorships to serve their own ends. "It is my opinion that there is something deeper and more vital than a struggle between the 'haves' and 'have nots' and that it is this even more basic clash of the ideologies which must be recognized." The dictators were reverting to the use of force "to replace the preset international law", therefore, it is not only territory in Europe that is at stake. "What is in play fundamentally are new ideas and new forces which are constantly going more strongly into action and whose field of action is definitely, if slowly expanding."¹⁷

Perhaps Messersmith's warning about the "true" nature of the struggle faced by the United States as a moral struggle influenced President Roosevelt's decision to deliver his

famous "quarantine" speech on October 5, 1937. Domestic legislation had been the priority for Roosevelt since his inauguration in March 1933, but by 1937, it was clear that the president was encountering serious opposition to his domestic program. Wayne Cole suggests that resistance to Roosevelt's court packing plan and aspects of the New Deal made the shift to greater emphasis on international affairs an easier transition for the President.¹⁸ However, if the United States was going to contemplate a change in policy direction, the administration would have to confront the strength of the isolationist lobby. Therefore, rather than delivering his remarks in Washington or New York, the president decided to make the speech in Chicago.

Declaring that "the present reign of terror and international lawlessness" had "reached the stage where the very foundations of civilization are seriously threatened," Roosevelt warned that the United States could not continue to feel insulated from international events. Instead, the President stated that "peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort in opposition to those ... creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through mere isolation and neutrality." When a community is threatened by a virulent disease, the citizens of that community take steps to "quarantine" the disease in order to prevent it from spreading.¹⁹ Many assumed that the Chicago speech meant that the President had a concrete agenda in mind to solve the various international crises. It quickly became clear after reporters pressed Roosevelt to elaborate on his plan, however, that the President was merely floating a balloon to gauge public reaction to a change in policy.²⁰ American foreign policy did not radically change after the "Quarantine Speech", but it was evident that some of Roosevelt's assumptions about the role of the United States were

beginning to change.²¹

Throughout the summer and early fall of 1937, events in Europe seemed to be deteriorating further. In late September, Mussolini travelled to Germany to witness the Reich's autumn manoeuvres. Although Mussolini told Schuschnigg afterwards that "the subject of Austria" was not discussed, it is clear that Austria had been brought up in conversation.²² At an informal meeting with Hitler and some of his associates, the Duce formally recognized Germany's "special interests" in Austria. According to German documents, Mussolini expressed his displeasure with Schuschnigg's leadership. On a given day, Italy could expect to be vilified in the Austrian press as its natural enemy and the next day Schuschnigg would be appealing to Mussolini for aid. Three years after the murder of Dollfuss, it appeared as though Mussolini was finally preparing to withdraw his protective hand from Austria. Sensing an opening, Hitler informed Mussolini that he did not approve of Göring's "revolutionary" approach to the "Austrian problem" with its bombs and roving bands of thugs in the streets. Perhaps to ease Mussolini's objections, Hitler said that in the future attempts would be made to ensure that Germany would "seek an evolutionary solution" to Austria.²³

In public statements at least, the Austrians continued to believe that improved relations between Italy and Germany would spare them from further attacks and did not think that such relations sounded the death knell of Austrian independence. "Austria is much less likely to be the victim of German aggression than is Czechoslovakia," said the Austrian Press *attaché*, Dr. Martin Fuchs. In any case, the Austrian argued that "it would be very difficult for Italy not to intervene in the event of a German attack on Austria". Ironically, in the very

next breath, Fuchs gave voice to one of the very reasons why Austria might not be able to expect aid from Mussolini. *"Germany now wants payment from Italy for favors granted by Germany to Italy at the time of the Abyssinian war and during the present Spanish war."*²⁴ The reality was that Italy's military forces were overextended in Spain and could not, therefore, prevent a German invasion even if Mussolini was so inclined.

Despite the best attempts of the Austrian Government, the forces supporting an *Anschluss* with Germany continued with renewed intensity in early 1938.²⁵ On January 27, Raymond Geist reported to Messersmith from Berlin that there would be another attempted *putsch* in Austria in the very near future. The recent discovery of the "Tavs plan" by the Austrian Nazis to take over Austria by force raised serious questions about the longevity of the Schuschnigg Government and gave credence to these claims.²⁶ Italy, however, remained a source of concern for German plans. Mussolini's notorious vacillation on the issue of Austria found the Italian swinging back toward the diplomatic defense of his neighbour. "The last information I have had from sources rather close to the Nazi radicals states that Mussolini has now definitely opposed the plan," wrote Geist, "and I notice that Mr. Klieforth makes reference to Mussolini's opposition." The Duce's objections were deemed to be strong enough to place a proposed visit by Hitler to Rome in jeopardy, indicating that relations between the two Axis powers was not without moments of tension.²⁷ Indeed, in mid-1937 Count Ciano was heard to comment to Chancellor Schuschnigg that "it is most disagreeable to have the Germans as enemies; but, believe me, even as friends they are not quite easy."²⁸

Perhaps too late to effect any substantial change, Mussolini began to realize the damage to his strategic position that the friendship with Hitler cost him. In what would be

the beginning of a series of agonizing coincidences and missed opportunities, reports began circulating in London on the very day that Schuschnigg travelled to Berchtesgaden that the Italian leader was desperately searching for a way out of his alliance with Hitler. "There may be something in this," noted Noble of the British Foreign Office. "One has felt all along that the Rome-Berlin axis was an unnatural creation and that Signor Mussolini could not relish becoming a satellite to Germany whose aims in central Europe are in conflict with those of Italy."²⁹

Thus, while reports of Mussolini's disillusionment with Hitler were beginning to surface, the fateful meeting between Hitler and Schuschnigg took place at Berchtesgaden on February 12. Admittedly, the position of the Austrian Chancellor was weak. Relations between Austria and Italy had been deteriorating for quite some time, and the Austrian army was far from being an effective deterrent force. Compounding Schuschnigg's problems was the very same question that Dollfuss wrestled with nearly five years before. Namely, what was the difference between an *Austrian* and a *German*? Unlike Dollfuss, Schuschnigg did not have an answer to this question. Although Schuschnigg did desire to maintain Austrian independence, the fact remained that in his mind, as with many of his countrymen, the separation of Austrians from Germans somehow seemed quite unnatural. Indeed, Hitler's desire to unite all "Germans" in one Reich enjoyed tremendous support in Austria. Had it been *Italian* soldiers that threatened Austria, there would be no question that Austria would fight to defend their homeland. But the notion of going to war with their German "brothers" was anathema to most Austrians. In view of these considerations, it is not surprising to find that Schuschnigg approached discussions with Hitler from a position of subservience. Austria

would not force the Germans into a confrontation and would try to satisfy Hitler's demands. In fact, Schuschnigg was more than willing to negotiate with Hitler on points that were tantamount to the complete surrender of Austrian sovereignty. Each concession, however, only incited the German to greater fits of rage until Schuschnigg finally gave way.³⁰ Verbally bludgeoned and beaten, Schuschnigg left Berchtesgaden convinced that the true extent of Austria's capitulation should be kept secret, lest it inspire public demonstrations that would provoke the Germans further.

Undoubtedly, Schuschnigg's decision to downplay the importance of the decisions reached at Berchtesgaden and his treatment at Hitler's hands greatly influenced the response of the Western Powers to the crisis.³¹ Italy, however, was one of the few countries given a direct report by Schuschnigg. After being informed about the results of the conference, the Italian Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Count Ciano reiterated in his diary the phrase that had become an Italian mantra since the invasion of Abyssinia nearly three years before. "*Anschluss* is inevitable," wrote Ciano, but should be delayed for as long as possible.³²

Time, however, was running out on Italy's ability to delay the *Anschluss* much longer. "The Germans are anxious to set up a Nazi State in Austria before the Spanish war ends," wrote Raymond Geist to George Messersmith, "as they think that Mussolini will be sufficiently occupied and handicapped by the Spanish venture to make any definite resistance to Hitler's program in Austria." Perhaps as an indication to the State Department that Italy's ability to influence European events was waning further, the American reported that the Italians had been left out the Berchtesgaden discussions altogether. But there was still reason to be optimistic. Geist indicated that, according to his sources, the creation of the German-

Austrian customs union* was considered a "grave development" by the Italians and that it "might prevent the Italians from cooperating further with the Germans." If Italy were to become a third party to the customs union, it was feared in Rome that Italian businesses would be gradually squeezed out by their larger German competitors. "It appears," concluded Geist, "that the Italians regard German relations as very difficult."³³

Back in Washington, Hull advised John Wiley in Vienna "to avoid, in the future, making any statements which can possibly be construed as implying that your Government is involving itself, in any sense, in European questions of a purely political character or is taking any part, even indirectly, in the determination of such questions." Nevertheless, a day later, the Secretary of State cabled William Phillips in Rome with instructions to immediately forward to the department "any indications of the Italian reaction to the recent developments."³⁴ Clearly, Hull believed that the fate of Austria rested in the hands of leaders in the European capitals, and Rome in particular.

Although the Italians may have regarded their relations with the Germans as being difficult, the unfortunate reality was that there was very little Mussolini could do to help Austria. Therefore, before the end of February, it appeared as though German persistence in pursuing Austria would finally be rewarded. Schuschnigg's meek performance in front of Hitler convinced the German leader that Austria would surrender quietly. Nearly two weeks

* Of the ten operative clauses of the Berchtesgaden Protocol, items 6 and 10 which declared that "all economic discrimination against National Socialists will be eliminated" and that "preparations will be made for the intensification of commerce between the Austrian and German economies", respectively, are actually the clauses which *least* infringed on Austrian sovereignty. In other sections, Hitler was able to dictate to Schuschnigg who would be allowed to form part of his cabinet, and allowed Germany to determine who could and could not be part of Austrian police and military forces.

had passed since the meeting between Hitler and Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden, and the Austrian government had done very little to either issue a call to arms in foreign capitals or to prepare her own defenses. Wiley's pessimistically wrote on February 15 that Austria's future looked grim. More experienced diplomats, however, were not prepared to admit defeat. "It is not the end," said the French Minister. "It is the moment before the end."³⁵ Yet, word began to circulate that Schuschnigg was preparing a response to Hitler's challenge. Momentum inside the Austrian Government was building for bold and decisive action to respond to Hitler's challenge. Perhaps to reinforce his domestic standing, on February 24 Schuschnigg delivered a remarkable speech that appealed to Austrians to defend their homeland and ended with the cry "Until death: Red-White-Red! Austria!"³⁶

What had happened in the interim to steel the resolve of the Austrian Chancellor? In Washington, Messersmith expressed his admiration for Schuschnigg's speech. "The Chancellor is really behaving like the fine character and the great patriot that we know him to be," wrote Messersmith. Still, matters were not entirely in Schuschnigg's hands. "Whether he will be able to hold on is a grave question," acknowledged Messersmith, "but my prayers and hopes are with him for I still believe that an independent Austria is a necessity for the peace of Europe".³⁷ One week later, the Austrian director of Political Affairs, Dr. Horbostel, requested an interview with John Wiley, the *Chargé d'affaires ad interim* of the American embassy, and warned that the Austrian Government might have to take more stringent measures to combat the Nazis. Perhaps a strong demonstration of domestic and international indignation would force Hitler to back down rather than facing another public confrontation with Mussolini over the future of Austria.³⁸ But even the Chancellor's most enthusiastic

supporters did not anticipate his next move. Schuschnigg planned to borrow one of Hitler's favourite tactics, the plebiscite, and turn it against the German. As bold as it was audacious, the plebiscite would address once and for all whether Austrians wanted *Anschluss* or not.

After the plebiscite was publicly announced on March 9, Wiley was told by Dr. Hornbostel that during the next two to three weeks, Schuschnigg "will endeavour to 'take reins back into his own hands'". The present crisis, revealed the Austrian minister, had cost Austria much in the outflow of foreign investment, the export of art treasures and general business paralysis. The American also reported that the British Minister in Austria still held out hope that Italy would "save the situation", but noted that "Mussolini was not forewarned" about Austria's intentions. As a result, the Italian leader was "both annoyed and nervous" about the plebiscite's outcome.³⁹ A report from Hugh Wilson in Paris revealed that the Austrian government was concerned where Mussolini's loyalties would lie if he had been counselled in advance about the decision to hold the plebiscite. "If Austria had consulted Mussolini," reported Wilson, the Italian "would probably have consulted Hitler and that would have been the end of the story." In any case, the Austrians believed that they could not count on "any effective assistance from Italy" against German encroachments. Schuschnigg was convinced that Mussolini was simply using Austria as a pawn with which to blackmail England and that once the Italian had wrung all the concessions he could from Prime Minister Chamberlain, the Duce would abandon Austria to Hitler for "a good price".⁴⁰

Tragically, Austrians were never given the opportunity to decide for themselves the fate of their own country. In the face of growing threats and pressure from Berlin, and detecting no support whatsoever from Mussolini, Schuschnigg bowed to Nazi pressure on

March 11 and called off the proposed plebiscite. The cabinet resigned, and within days, German troops crossed the border into Austria without a single shot being fired. Mussolini remained remarkably silent through Austria's last days, giving rise to a certain amount of apprehension in Berlin. Evidently, in the words of Gordon Brook-Shepherd, up until the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour on the last day, Hitler was not certain if Mussolini would mass his troops on the Brenner the same way he had in July 1934. After receiving Mussolini's assurance that Italy would not act, Hitler was beside himself with joy promising to "never forget" what the Italian leader had done for him.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the German Ambassador to the United States reported that Cordell Hull's initial reaction to the *Anschluss* was favourable. For his part, Cordell Hull asked the ambassador what the prospects for peace on the continent were like now that the *Anschluss* had taken place. "I tried to draw [Dieckhoff] out on the Italian reaction now that German troops were nearing the Brenner Pass," indicating that Hull still believed that Mussolini would act. It was a confident German Ambassador who dismissed Hull's questions. Relations with Italy, Dieckhoff assured Hull, had never been better.⁴² "From a few questions which he asked," stated Dieckhoff to the German Foreign Office, "it was apparent that [Hull] thoroughly understands our action."⁴³ Three days later, however, the German Ambassador noted a definite change in the State Department's attitude toward the *Anschluss*. "Obviously," wrote Dieckhoff, "a result of the stiffening in the British attitude...Another source of annoyance to the State Department," continued the German, "is probably the fact that [the State Department] is being besieged by the Jews here to intervene on behalf of Jews in Vienna." After denying that the State Department had any right to criticize German actions,

the Ambassador concluded that the United States' "impotent rage" would not "alter the fact that the reunion of Austria with Germany is regarded here as a *fait accompli* which will have to be accepted."⁴⁴

For George Messersmith, *Anschluss* was a particularly bitter pill to swallow. Having seen and predicted the event did not make it any easier for the American. If anything, Hitler's actions confirmed his darkest suspicions about Nazi Germany and the fate of Europe. According to Messersmith's assessments, it was the policies of misguided statesmen that exacerbated the situation. Messersmith was convinced that Hitler was not a diplomat who could be negotiated with. Indeed, his years of experience in Germany and Austria led the former ambassador to believe that the German leader would only understand the use of force. Unfortunately, the challenge posed by Hitler was seen so clearly by Messersmith that, in the months after the *Anschluss*, the Assistant Secretary of State would bitterly attack those who could not see the threat that was so apparent to him. Indeed, Messersmith's frustration would find its expression in inappropriate ways. Some opponents could expect to be called names in Messersmith's letters, others found themselves being labelled conspirators in an imagined cabal forming against the Assistant Secretary. Gradually, Messersmith's responsibilities were eased, and in 1940, Messersmith left Washington as a Special Envoy to Havana.⁴⁵

Back in Rome, American diplomatic personnel detected a good deal of finger pointing and soul-searching amongst Italian diplomats. "The consensus of Italian opinion as manifested by certain of the newspapers today would seem to lay the blame for the present situation in Austria upon two so-called 'blunder' [sic] committed by the Versailles powers," began Phillips.

(One) The idea that Austria in its precarious condition both economically and politically should or could remain independent; and (two) the idea that Italy would at all times bear the burden of the situation...While the above represents the official version of the Italian attitude there is evident among many Italians a feeling of real concern and depression.⁴⁶

Less than a week later, Edward L. Reed, the *Chargé* of the American Embassy in Rome, reported more fully on the impact of the *Anschluss*. When first informed about the plebiscite, "the Foreign Office here regarded the Schuschnigg move as a clever and daring one. In fact the Austrian Minister was informed by Count Ciano that the Italian Government was pleased with Herr Schuschnigg's decision, while foreign press correspondents were told by an official of the Press Bureau that the action would probably contribute to Central European appeasement." However, once word began to spread that Hitler "was taking a strong line, the Italian Government's attitude toward Chancellor Schuschnigg's actions began to vary." On the afternoon of March 11, the controlled press in Italy was initially told to treat the crisis more objectively. A few hours later, the press was told to present the crisis "from a more or less favourable German point of view." Critically, American diplomatic personnel still clung to the image of Mussolini as Austria's protector. Italy had not willingly abandoned her southern neighbour, events had conspired to make an effective protest impossible. In forwarding his assessment, Reed would conclude that

it would appear, therefore, that Italy has decided to make the best of things and that, having foreseen the eventuality of an *Anschluss*, it wishes to remain on the best possible terms with Germany. *There seems little doubt, however, but that the rapidity of events took the Italian Government by surprise and its present assertions that it had frowned on the Chancellor Schuschnigg's proposed plebiscite from the start do not square with this Embassy's information.*⁴⁷

In his post-war memoirs, Phillips would elaborate on this same theme, writing that the Italian Government was taken completely by surprise by the coup and "had to make the best" of the situation, adding that "Italians generally thought that Mussolini was furious with Hitler."⁴⁸

Still, Mussolini publicly maintained that the presence of Germany on his northern frontier strengthened, rather than weakened, his position *vis-à-vis* the Western Powers. The Italian leader thought that German take-over of Austria would make Britain and France more willing to enter an alliance with him and to officially recognize Italy's claims to a colony in Africa.⁴⁹ Despite public statements of indifference, Mussolini understood that he had sacrificed a great deal when Austria fell to the Germans as an independent state. Occasionally, the Italian leader would talk about "changing sides" to ensure that "Germany was crushed for at least two centuries."⁵⁰ Thus, Mussolini attempted to continue his policy of playing both ends against the middle, promising a more formal military alliance to Germany while holding out for greater concessions from the Western Powers.

But there was no mistaking the fact that the incorporation of Austria into Hitler's Reich severely limited Italy's strategic position in Europe. By occupying the Austrian "buffer-zone" between Italy and Germany, Hitler placed Germany in the enviable position of being able to dictate future Italian actions and eliminating the pretence of an independent Italian policy. If Italy wished to maintain her empire in Africa, she could not afford to agitate Germany on her northern frontier. Indeed, the presence of a predominantly German population in the Alto Adige could not have comforted Mussolini should Hitler direct his pan-German aspirations against Italy.⁵¹ Finally, the German occupation of Austria severely limited Mussolini's ability to project military power into central Europe. It was one thing to have a

relatively weak Austrian army standing across the Brenner and a completely different matter to face the soldiers of the Third Reich. William Phillips, for one, believed that Mussolini increasingly came under Hitler's influence after the *Anschluss*.⁵² Thus, the same forces that should have ensured a forceful Italian reaction against the *Anschluss* made it unlikely that after 1938 Italy would abandon her alliance with Germany.

American policymakers understood the importance of Austrian independence but realized there was little or nothing that the United States could do to directly influence events. Improved trade between the United States and Austria would have greatly improved Austria's chances for survival, but the reality is that the Roosevelt administration was not prepared to invest in the Austrian economy until that country's domestic situation stabilized. Even then, American diplomats were conscious of the limits to American power. The United States simply was not in an effective position to significantly influence events in central Europe. No matter how much Washington protested German actions, Hitler could act without fear of effective retaliation from the United States. Indeed, a year after the *Anschluss* when reports began to circulate that forty-three-year-old Chancellor Schuschnigg had become little more than a frail old man since his imprisonment by the Gestapo, Roosevelt's pessimistic reply indicated the relative strength of Washington's negotiating position. "If I were to say anything they would probably shoot [Schuschnigg]. Any action on my part would be most unwise for his sake."⁵³

Nonetheless, it is still possible to conclude that most of the State Department's basic assumptions about the Italy's role in the European balance were essentially correct. However, the State Department erred in assuming that Mussolini would both acknowledge Italy's

strategic limitations and place as much importance on the preservation of the European *status quo* as officials had in Washington. Because the union of Austria and Germany took place with Mussolini's tacit approval, it seemed as though the foundation of the Rome-Berlin axis was solidified and that a new policy was needed to deal with the rising German threat. Therefore, instead of appeasement, American diplomats would attempt to merely to "neutralize" Italy rather than use her as a weapon against Germany.⁵⁴ "The day the Germans arrived on the Brenner," said one British diplomat, "Italy became, to all intents and purposes, something less than a first class Power."⁵⁵ Quite simply, without an independent Austria on her northern frontier, Mussolini's tenure as the United States' foil to Hitler was over.

Endnotes

Notes to Introduction

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12. David F. Schmitz, The United States and Fascist Italy, 1920-1940. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). This argument is supported by James Edward Miller in "'That Admirable Italian Gentleman': The View From America (and from Italy)" in Diplomatic History 1989 13 (4), pp. 547-556.
13. Melvyn Leffler, The Elusive Quest. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1979)
14. John P. Diggins, Mussolini and Fascism. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972)
15. Alan Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). Hereafter cited as Mussolini.
16. Renzo De Felice, Mussolini il Duce. (Torino: Giulio Einaudi). Volume three relates directly to events in this thesis. Part I Gli anni del consenso, (1974) and Part II Lo Stato totalitario. (1981)
17. MacGregor Knox, Mussolini Unleashed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 1.
18. See, for example, MacGregor Knox, "Fascist Italy Assesses its Enemies, 1935-1940" in Ernest R. May (ed.), Knowing One's Enemies. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 347-372. MacGregor Knox, "The Italian Armed Forces, 1940-1943" in Allan Millett and Williamson Murray (eds.), Military Effectiveness. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988) Vol. III, pp. 136-173.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. "William C. Bullitt, Executive Officer, American Delegation, London Economic Conference to Roosevelt", London, July 8, 1933. In Nixon (ed.), Vol. I., p. 292. For their part, it is possible to conclude that the Russians, too, hoped that improved relations with the

United States would improve their situation *vis-à-vis* the Japanese. Please see Beatrice Farnsworth, William C. Bullitt and the Soviet Union. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967) p. 137.

2. Leffler, Schmitz, p. 85.

3. It must be noted that most historians doubt the extent to which the Communist threat actually existed in Italy by 1921-22. Regardless of the extent to which a Communist-style revolution was possible in Italy, it is clear that Mussolini and the Fascists were successful in exploiting the perceived Communist threat. See Cassels, Mussolini, p. 12, for example.

4. Philip Morgan, Italian Fascism, 1919-1945 (London: Macmillan, 1995) p. 9.

5. Adrian Lyttelton, The Seizure of Power (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 25.

6. Morgan, p. 10.

7. Giorgio Pini (trans. Luigi Villari), The Official Life of Benito Mussolini (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1939) p. 87.

8. Renzo De Felice, Fascism (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1976) pp. 45-46. Hereafter cited as Fascism.

9. Ibid. pp. 54-56. It must be noted that De Felice's comparatively favourable view of Italian Fascism has earned sharp criticism from some historians, most notably Denis Mack Smith.

10. Frank Rosengarten, The Italian Anti-Fascist Press, 1919-1945 (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University, 1968) pp. 6-7.

11. Cassels, Mussolini, p. 18.

12. C. Pellizzi, Ambassadors at Large (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1939) pp. 75-76.

13. Cassels, Mussolini, pp. 46-47, 79.

14. Schmitz, p. 96.

15. Ibid., p. 134.

16. Rachele Mussolini, Mussolini (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1974) p. 62.

17. Cassels, Mussolini, p. xi.

18. Dennison I. Rusinow, Italy's Austrian Heritage, 1919-1946, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) p. 1.

19. Gordon Brook-Shepherd, Dollfuss, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1961) p. 29. Hereafter cited as Dollfuss.

20. A May 1919 plebiscite showed 80% in favour of an *Anschluss* with Switzerland, while another plebiscite conducted by the Allied powers in 1921 showed 90% in favour of an Austro-German *Anschluss*. Please see Gottfried-Karl Kindermann (trans. by Sonia Brough and David Taylor), Hitler's Defeat in Austria, 1933-1934, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988) pp. 6-7, 9.

21. Martin Kitchen, The Coming of Austrian Fascism, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1980) pp. 3-4.

22. Brook-Shepherd, Dollfuss p. 191.

23. Kindermann, pp. xx, 48-49.

24. "F.D.R. to Breckinridge Long in Rome," The White House, June 16, 1933. In Elliott Roosevelt and Joseph P. Lash (eds.), F.D.R.: His Personal Letters. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950) Vol. I., pp. 351-352.

25. Breckinridge Long to Franklin D. Roosevelt, June 1, 1933. BLP, Box 105.

26. Offner, Appeasement, p. 31.

27. Franklin D. Roosevelt to Breckinridge Long, June 15, 1933. BLP, Box 105.

28. "The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Acting Secretary of State, Rome, July 24, 1933. In FRUS, 1933, Vol. I, p. 204. Emphasis mine.

29. "Draft of a Pact of Understanding and Collaboration Between Germany, France, Great Britain, and Italy". In FRUS, 1933, Vol. I., pp. 407-408.

30. No. 62. "The *Chargé* in Great Britain (Atherton) to the Secretary of State", London, March 31, 1933, p. 400, and "Memorandum by the Chairman of the American Delegation to the Disarmament Conference (Davis)", Geneva, no date given. In FRUS, 1933, Vol. I., p. 404.

31. "Memorandum by the Ambassador in Italy (Long)" Rome, June 6, 1933. In FRUS, 1933, Vol. I., p. 414; "A Commentary by the President on the Four Power Pact." June 9, 1933. In Samuel I Rosenman (ed.) Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt. (New York: Random House, 1938). Vol. II. Document #70, p. 221.

32. William E. Dodd (William E. Dodd, Jr., and Martha Dodd, eds.), Ambassador Dodd's Diary, 1933-1938, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941) p. 127.

7. Prince Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, (London, 1942) p. 91.
8. De Felice, Il Duce Vol. I. pp. 469-470.
9. Starhemberg, p. 93.
10. Kindermann, p. 40.
11. Long to FDR. Rome, September 14, 1933. BLP, Box 105.
12. Suvich, pp. 91, 92.
13. "John Cudahy, Ambassador to Poland, to Roosevelt" Warsaw, Poland, December 27, 1933. In Edgar B. Nixon, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) Vol. I., pp. 535-555. Subject File #163 "Italy - Memoranda", July 11, 1933, Box#105 BLP.
14. 2784/540467-70, No. 120. "Memorandum by the State Secretary", Berlin, December 12, 1933. In DGFP, C, Vol. II. pp. 207-209.
15. 2784/540460-63, No. 126. "Memorandum by the Foreign Minister" Berlin, December 13, 1923. Pp. 224-225; 3086/617066-67, No. 144. "Theo Habicht to Ambassador Hassell", Berlin, December 22, 1933. Pp. 269-270 and 3086/617062-65, No. 153. "Ambassador Hassell to Theo Habicht", Rome, December 28, 1933. Pp. 285-287 in DGFP, C, Vol. II.
16. Report #V-3501, January 16, 1934 by Lt. Colonel M.C. Shallenberger, Military *Attaché* in Vienna. RG 159.
17. Ibid.
18. Report #V-3505, January 31, 1934 by Lt. Colonel M.C. Shallenberger, Military *Attaché* in Vienna. RG 159.
19. Ibid.
20. 762.63/135, No. 23. "The Consul at Geneva (Gilbert) to the Secretary of State", Geneva, January 25, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, p. 6.
21. 762.63/145, "The *Chargé* in Austria (Kliefoth) to the Secretary of State", Vienna, January 27, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, pp. 8-9. Emphasis mine.
22. 863.00/882, Nos. 37, 38. "The Minister in Austria (Earle) to the Secretary of State" Vienna, February 28, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, pp. 20-21.

23. 863.00/882, No. 11. "The Secretary of State to the Minister in Austria (Earle)", Washington, February 28, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, p. 21.
24. 863.00/935. "Memorandum by the Secretary of State", Washington, May 15, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, p. 26.
25. 762.63/185, No. 618. "The *Chargé* in Germany (White) to the Secretary of State", Berlin, March 18, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, p. 24.
26. Report #V-3547 by Lt. Colonel M.C. Shallenberger, Military *Attaché* in Vienna. March 12, 1934. RG 159.
27. No. 450. Breckinridge Long to the Secretary of State, Rome, March 15, 1934. "The Austrian Situation". RG 59 Austria, Roll #3 of 28.
28. "Writer Sees Fight in Vienna Streets" In *The New York Times*, February 13, 1934. P. 3.
29. "Cannon Destroy Workers' Homes" In *The New York Times*, February 14, 1934. P. 3.
30. Austria (Political) "Foreign Reaction to Revolt" by Lt. Colonel M.C. Shallenberger, Military *Attaché* in Vienna. March 3, 1934. Class #1209, RG 59, Roll 3; 863.00/868 "The *Chargé* in Austria (Kliefoth) to the Secretary of State", Vienna, February 16, 1934 in FRUS, 1934, p. 17.
31. No. 108. "Czechoslovakia and the Austrian Problem" by J. Webb Benton, *Chargé D'Affaires ad interim* in Prague. March 7, 1934. Class #M1209, RG 59, Roll 3.
32. No. 450. Breckinridge Long to the Secretary of State, Rome, March 15, 1934. "The Austrian Situation". RG 59 Austria, Roll #3 of 28.
33. "Felix Frankfurter to Roosevelt" Oxford, England, February 22, 1934. P. 652 in Nixon, Vol. I.
34. 3086/617328-32 "Memorandum by the Foreign Minister", Venice, June 15, 1934, p. 10 in DGFP.
35. 762.65/102, No. 120. "The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Secretary of State" Rome, June 16, 1934. Document #120 in FRUS, 1934, p. 223.
36. Denis Mack Smith, Mussolini. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981) p. 185.
37. Mussolini, p. 138
38. 762.65/104, No. 126. "The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Secretary of State", Rome, June 20, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, p. 28.

39. 863.00/938, No. 73. "The Minister in Austria (Messersmith) to the Secretary of State", Vienna, June 21, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, p. 28.
40. "John F. Montgomery, Minister to Hungary, to Roosevelt", Budapest, July 13, 1934. In Nixon, Vol. II, p. 166.
41. Kitchen, p. 145.
42. Heinz Höhne (trans. Richard Barry), The Order of the Death's Head. (London: Pan Books, 1972) pp. 101-121.
43. No. 157. Breckinridge Long to Secretary of State. Rome, June 26, 1934. RG 59 Austria, Roll #3 of 28.
44. Mussolini, p. 138.
45. For a complete discussion and examination of the Nazi plot to overthrow the Dollfuss government, please see Walter B. Maass, Assassination in Vienna. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1972); Brook-Shepherd, Dollfuss, pp. 231-284.
46. "Telegram from Signor Mussolini to Prince Starhemberg", Rome, July 26, 1934. In John W. Wheeler-Bennett and Stephen Heald (eds.), Documents on International Affairs, 1934. (London: Oxford University Press, 1935) Document (iv) EUROPE, p. 293.
47. "Nazism's Defeat in Austria", in *The Nation*, August 8, 1934. P. 144.
48. "M. De Dampierre, Chargé D'Affaires de France à Rome, à M. Barthou, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères", Rome, July 30, 1934. Document #24 in DDF, p. 33.
49. No. 161 Ambassador Breckinridge Long to Cordell Hull, July 27, 1934. RG 59, Roll #3.
50. 863.00/1077, "The Minister in Austria (Messersmith) to the Under Secretary of State (Phillips)", Vienna, August 1, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, pp. 35-47. Emphasis mine.
51. 863.00/1078. Messersmith to Phillips, Vienna, August 9, 1934. RG 59, Roll 4 of 33.
52. 863.00/1080 Messersmith to Phillips, Vienna, August 17, 1934. RG 59, Roll 4 of 33.
53. 3086/617269-70, No. 122. "Note by the State Secretary". Berlin, July 27, 1934. In DGFP, C, Vol. II, p. 251.
54. R 4271/37/3, No. 539. "Mr. Murray (Rome) to Sir J. Simon" Rome, July 27, 1934. In DBFP, Vol. IV. p. 878.

55. T. nos 483, 484 "M. Léon Noël, Minstre de France à Prague, à M. Barthou, Minstre des Affaires Étrangères" Prague, July 27, 1934. P. 8 in DDF.

56. R 4222/37/3, No. 541. "Sir W. Selby (Vienna) to Sir J. Simon", Vienna, July 28, 1934.; R 4253/37/3, No. 543. "Sir W. Selby (Vienna) to Sir J. Simon" Vienna, July 30, 1934. In DBFP, Vol. IV., pp. 880-881; "*Communication de la Légation de Yougoslavie à Paris au Département*", *Aide-mémoire*. Paris, August 1, 1934. In DDF, pp. 66-67.

57. T. nos 1323 à 1328; 1060 à 1065; 635 à 640; 850 à 855; 740 à 745. "M. Barthou, Minstre des Affaires Étrangères, aux Représentants Diplomatiques de France à Londres, Rome, Vienne, Prague, Belgrade". Paris, July 31, 1934. Pp. 43-44 in DDF.

58. "Messersmith to William Phillips", Vienna, September 7, 1934. Item #411 in GSM, Box #3.

59. Hans Buchheim (trans. Richard Barry), "The SS - Instrument of Domination" in Elizabeth Wiskemann, Anatomy of the SS State. (London: Collins, 1968) p. 129.

60. Dodd, p. 130.

61. The term "courtesy" is used in the loosest possible way. Upon meeting Franz von Papen for the first time, Messersmith refused to shake von Papen's hand, sat with his arms crossed and lips pressed firmly closed during the meeting at the American Embassy. When a subsequent meeting took place at the German Embassy, von Papen greeted the American warmly but did not offer his hand. "This time," von Papen informed Messersmith, "we are in my legation, and although you may not talk, I will talk and you will have to listen to me." This was the last time Messersmith would visit the German legation in Austria. Please see Stiller, p. 67.

62. "Raymond Geist to Moffat", Berlin, August 10, 1934. Item #398 in GSM, Box #3.

63. Dodd, p. 123.

64. Indeed, the Yugoslav legation to Paris believed that Mussolini was attempting to use the Dollfuss assassination as means to gain leverage against Belgrade. Please see "*Communication de la Légation de Yougoslavie à Paris au Département*", *Aide-mémoire*. Paris, August 1, 1934, pp. 66-67 in DDF.

65. De Felice, Il duce, Vol. I., pp. 303-304.

66. "Roosevelt to William E. Dodd, Ambassador to Germany, Berlin", Washington, August 25, 1934, in Nixon, Vol. II. p. 187.

67. "Extracts from Speeches by Signor Mussolini", Rome, August 24, 1934. Document (a) ITALY in Wheeler-Bennett and Heald, p. 362. Indeed, Pini's The Official Life of Benito

Mussolini paints this as the decisive moment when the Duce decided on a policy of expansion. P. 188.

68. "Press Conference, President's Study, Hyde Park", September 7, 1934. In Nixon, Vol. II, pp. 209-210.

69. 611.6531/94. "Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs (Moffat)", Washington, September 17, 1934. In FRUS, 1934, p. 585. In subsequent memoranda, the term "reciprocal trade negotiations" are used instead of "reciprocal tariff negotiations".

70. Messersmith expressed relief in a letter to William Phillips that London now seemed to acknowledge its responsibility in maintaining the peace of Europe rather than leaving matters entirely in the hands of the Italians. Please see "Messersmith to Phillips", Vienna, September 7, 1934. Item #411 in GSM, Box #3.

71. FO 371/19550 Italy. "Minute by O. Smalley", May 23, 1935.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Schmitz, p. 163.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

3. Kurt von Schuschnigg (trans. by Franz von Hildebrand), Austrian Requiem, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1946) p. 109.

4. Esmonde M. Robertson, Mussolini as Empire Builder, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1977) p. 82.

5. Smith, pp. 188-189.

6. Renzo De Felice writes that Mussolini had made the decision to attempt a colonial venture as early as December 1925. See De Felice, Il duce, Vol. I. p. 603.

7. When questioned by the Americans, the British flatly denied that they had ever made such a pledge. See 765.84/46 "The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State" Moscow, September 22, 1934. 765.84/59 No. 989. "The Ambassador in Great Britain (Bingham) to the Secretary of State" London, October 15, 1934. In FRUS, 1934. Vol. II, pp. 757-760.

8. De Felice, Il duce, Vol. I., pp. 607-608; Pini, p. 189, and Smith, p. 191.

9. Pini, p. 189.

10. The Italian Ambassador to Italy, Dino Grandi, wrote in his memoirs that Laval travelled to Rome to "offer Italy a free hand in Ethiopia". See Grandi, p. 386.
11. "Breckinridge Long, Ambassador to Italy, to Roosevelt" Rome, April 19, 1935. In Nixon, Vol II., pp. 486-488.
12. Grandi, p. 388.
13. 765.84/299, No. 265. "The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Secretary of State), Rome, May 15, 1935. In FRUS, 1935 I: p. 601. Smith, p. 195. Interestingly enough, at the best of times during the Second World War, Italy could only mobilise one-third of the million men Mussolini claimed he could mobilise in 1935.
14. 765.00/71, No. 277. Breckinridge Long to Secretary of State. Rome, May 25, 1935. RG 59 Box 4367.
15. 765.84/451, No. 269. William C. Bullitt to Secretary of State, Moscow, July 6, 1935. RG 59 Box 4373.
16. Messersmith to Phillips, Vienna, June 6, 1935, and Item #507, Messersmith to Phillips, Vienna, June 14, 1935. GSM Box #4.
17. 863.00/1195, No. 448. "Summary of the Austrian Internal and External Position", Vienna, June 5, 1935 and 863.00/1197, No. 456. "Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Situation", Vienna, June 14, 1935. RG 59, Roll #4.
18. "William C. Bullitt, Ambassador to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to Roosevelt", Moscow, June 3, 1935. In Nixon, Vol. III., pp. 527-528.
19. 863.00/1185, No. 424 "The Views of the Minister for Foreign Affairs Regarding the Decrease of Naziism [sic] in Austria", Vienna, May 17, 1935 and 863.00/1189, No. 434 "A Brief Resume of Certain Factors in the Austrian Political Situation", Vienna, May 24, 1935. RG 59, Roll #4.
20. #489, Pierrepont Moffat to Messersmith, Washington, March 2, 1935. GSM, Box #4.
21. David F. Schmitz, "Speaking the Same Language" in David F. Schmitz and Richard D. Challenger (eds.), Appeasement in Europe, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) p. 80.
22. 765.84/427, No. 332. "The *Chargé* in Italy (Kirk) to the Secretary of State", Rome, July 2, 1935. In FRUS, 1935 I, p. 611.
23. 765.84/399, No. 279. "The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Secretary of State", Rome, May 29, 1935. In FRUS, 1935 I: p. 605.
24. William Phillips, Ventures in Diplomacy, (London: John Murray, 1955) p. 80.

25. 765.84/1134, No. 572. "The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Secretary of State", Rome, September 12, 1935, and 765.84/1152, No. 143. "The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Italy (Long)", Washington, September 14, 1935. In FRUS, 1935 I: pp. 749-751.
26. Hull, Vol. I., p. 421.
27. 863.00/1212. Phillips to Messersmith, Washington, August 14, 1935. RG 59 Austria, Roll #5.
28. Brice Harris, Jr., The United States and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964) pp. 35-38.
29. 884.6363/23 "The *Chargé* Ethiopia (Engert) to the Secretary of State" and 884.6363/27 "The Secretary of State to the *Chargé* in Ethiopia (Engert)" Washington, September 5, 1935. FRUS, 1935 I, pp. 783-784.
30. 765.84/1371 "Statement to the Press by the Secretary of State", Washington, September 12, 1935. In FRUS, 1935 I, p. 749.
31. Harris, p. 38.
32. 863.00/1233. Messersmith to Phillips. Vienna, September 20, 1935. RG 59, Roll #5.
33. Starhemberg, p. 216-217.
34. 863.00/1213. Messersmith to Phillips. Vienna, August 27, 1935. RG 59 Austria, Roll #5.
35. 863.00/1214, No. 554. "Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Position", Vienna, September 20, 1935. RG 59, Roll #5.
36. Hull, Vol. I., pp. 426, 428.
37. Harris, p. 57.
38. Phillips, p. 81. In his 1942 biography of Cordell Hull, Harold B. Hinton writes that public indignation at the Italian invasion of Abyssinia made it certain that the two cornerstones of American foreign policy - strict neutrality and the Good Neighbour policy - would not be maintained by the State Department during this particular crisis. Please see Harold B. Hinton, Cordell Hull, (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1942) p. 288.
39. Diggins, p. 289.
40. W.D. 1598, "Private Information concerning Italy's finances" by Warrington Dawson, Rome, October 14, 1935 and W.D. 1627 "Special Report: Information from a Commercial

Source concerning the Financial Situation in Italy" by Warrington Dawson, Paris, December 3, 1935. RG 59, M1423 Roll #20 of 33.

41. Andrew, For the President, p. 85-86; Brian R. Sullivan "A Highly Commendable Action": William J. Donovan's Intelligence Mission for Mussolini and Roosevelt, December 1935-February 1936" in Intelligence and Security, 6 (2), pp. 334-366; Schmitz, p. 161.

42. 863.00/1225, No. 595. "Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Position", Vienna, November 8, 1935. RG 59, Roll #5.

43. 863.00/1226, No. 613. "Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Position", Vienna, November 22, 1935. RG 59, Roll #5.

44. Schwarz, "The Nazi Diplomatic Offensive Against Austria: From Agreement to Aggression", in Il Politico 1, 1983, pp. 5-8.

45. Phillips, p. 97.

46. 8015/E576325-30, No. 485. "The Ambassador in Italy to the Foreign Ministry" Rome, January 7, 1936. In DGFP C IV, p. 975.

47. 6114/E454457-60, No. 487. "Memorandum by an Official of Department II", Berlin, January 9, 1936. In DGFP C IV, pp. 978-980.

48. Starhemberg reveals that he asked Mussolini some very pointed questions about the effect that the Abyssinian war would have on Italy's ability to safeguard Austrian independence. Mussolini brushed aside Starhemberg's question, asserting that the Abyssinian invasion was critical to Italy's survival. That night, at a reception at the Austrian legation in Rome, Starhemberg bluntly asked Mussolini if Austria could count on Italy's support. "You know my feeling towards Austria," replied the Italian leader. "I have shown it not only in words but in deeds. This feeling has not changed and will not change. I will not give up Austria. I cannot give her up. You may count upon that definitely." See Starhemberg, pp. 216-222.

49. 8015/E576325-30, No. 485. "The Ambassador in Italy to the Foreign Ministry" Rome, January 7, 1936. In DGFP, C, Vol. IV, p. 975.

50. James H. Burgwyn, "Italy, the Heimwehr, and the Austro-German Agreement" in Mitteilungen des Osterreichischen Staatsarchivs, 1985 (38), p. 312.

51. Starhemberg, p. 217, 219.

52. 1744/402867-69, No. 111. "The German Ambassador in Italy (Hassell) to the German Foreign Ministry". Rome, July 11, 1936. In DGFP, D, Vol. I, p. 283.

53. Report #V-4128. Vienna, June 30, 1936 Military Intelligence Report by M.C. Shallenberger. RG 165, Box #932.

54. Schwarz, p. 8-9. It is one of the history's great ironies that Hitler was concerned with maintaining the appearance of legality about all his actions. Most of his diplomatic *fait accomplis* of the mid-1930's were rapidly followed by plebiscites to justify his actions to the world community.

55. 863.00/1305, No. 914. Messersmith to Secretary of State, Vienna, September 24, 1936. RG 59, Roll #5.; FO 371/20425. Italy, 1936. R 6165. "Memorandum of Lecture of Imperial Defence College". October 8, 1936.

56. Roosevelt to Breckinridge Long, Ambassador to Italy. Washington, June 18, 1936.; Breckinridge Long, Ambassador to Italy, to Roosevelt. Rochester, Minnesota, June 23, 1936. In Nixon, pp. 330-331, 333-334.; Phillips, p. 88-89; Schmitz, p. 166.

57. Doc. #16. OF2314:TS "William Phillips, Ambassador to Italy, to Roosevelt", January 14, 1937. In Schewe, (ed.) Vol. IV, pp. 52-58.

58. For a comprehensive analysis of American policy toward the Spanish Civil War, please see Douglas Little, Malevolent Neutrality, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985)

59. "Mussolini to F.D.R. at the White House", Rome, November 14, 1936. In Roosevelt, p. 628.

60. 863.00/1318. No. 960. Messersmith to Secretary of State. Vienna, November 16, 1936. RG 59, Roll #5.

61. Doc. #61. OF2314:CT, "Roosevelt to William Phillips, Ambassador to Italy", February 6, 1937. In Schewe, Vol. IV, p. 160.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Item #788, Messersmith to William Phillips. Vienna, December 2, 1936. In GSM, Box #6.

2. Item #790, Messersmith to R. Walton Moore. Vienna, December 5, 1936. In GSM, Box #6.

3. 2127/462800-03, No. 199. "Memorandum by the German Ambassador in Italy (Hassell)". Rome, January 16, 1937. In DGFP D, Vol. I., pp. 376-378.; Gordon Brook-Shepherd Anschluss: The Rape of Austria. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1963), p. 2. Hereafter cited as Anschluss.

4. Bruce F. Pauley, Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981) p. 193.
5. 863.00/1337, No. 1078. Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Situation. Vienna, March 8, 1937. RG 59, Roll #6.
6. 863.00/1338, No. 1083. Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Situation. Vienna, March 15, 1937. Indeed, William Bullitt reported from France that an agreement between Mussolini and Hitler was reached whereby the German leader agreed to respect Austrian independence so long as plans to restore the Habsburgs were shelved. See 740.00/149, No. 516. William Bullitt to Secretary of State. Paris, April 22, 1937. RG 59, Roll #6.
7. 863.00/1340, No. 1099. Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Situation. Vienna, April 2, 1937. RG 59, Roll #6.
8. Document #208. William Phillips, Ambassador to Italy, to Roosevelt, April 22, 1937. In Schewe, Vol. V., pp. 91-95.
9. Document #239. Roosevelt to William Phillips, Ambassador to Italy, May 17, 1937. In Schewe, Vol. V., pp. 200-201.
10. Schmitz, p. 182.
11. Document #373. Press Conference in the White House, July 13, 1937, 4:10 P.M. In Schewe, Vol. VI. pp. 120-121.
12. 863.00/1351, No. 1152. Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Situation. Vienna, June 21, 1937. RG 59, Roll #6.
13. 863.00/1357, No. 1173. Developments in the Austrian Internal and External Situation. Vienna, July 19, 1937. RG 59, Roll #6.
14. Selby, p. 74.
15. Messersmith to Long. Vienna, November 12, 1935. BLP, Box #113.
16. Item #650. "A Brief Resume on Some Major Aspects on the European Situation Today as Seen from Vienna." Vienna, February 12, 1936. In GSM, Box #5.
17. Item #899. Undersecretary of State Messersmith to Hull. Washington, October 11, 1937. In GSM, Box #7. When the German ambassador paid a visit to Hull in January 1938 and argued that the democracies were automatically opposed to Germany and Italy, Hull responded to the German with a paraphrase of the Messersmith argument. See Hull, p. 572.
18. Cole, p. 243.

19. Rosenman, Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. V, pp. 406-411.
20. Document #540. Press Conference, in the White House, October 8, 1937. In Schewe, Vol. VII, pp. 53-54.
21. Dallek, "Beyond Tradition", p. 149.
22. Schuschnigg, p. 125.
23. 1282/344180-82, No. 256. "Memorandum of a Conversation With Foreign Minister Baron von Neurath". Berlin, October 1, 1937. In DGFP, D, Vol. I., pp. 463-464.
24. 863.00/1366, No. 1292. Remarks of the Austrian Press *Attaché*, Dr. Martin Fuchs. Paris, November 26, 1937. RG 59, Roll #6. Italics mine.
25. Item #929. Kleiforth to Prentiss Gilbert. Cologne, January 26, 1938. In GSM, Box #7.
26. 863.00/1386, No. 4. "The *Chargé* in Austria (Wiley) to the Secretary of State". Vienna, January 27, 1938. 863.00/1370, No. 6. "The *Chargé* in Austria (Wiley) the Secretary of State". Vienna, January 29, 1938. In FRUS, 1938 Vol. I, pp. 385-386.
27. Item #930. Raymond H. Geist to Messersmith. Berlin, January 27, 1938. In GSM, Box #7. On the "Tavs plan", please see Pauley, pp. 195-196, and Brook-Shepherd, Anschluss, pp. 15-19.
28. Schuschnigg, p. 124.
29. FO 371/22418. R. 1221. Minute by Noble. London, February 12, 1938.
30. The most complete account of the meeting between the two leaders can be found in Schuschnigg, pp. 3-27.
31. Please see Brook-Shepherd, Anschluss, for a more elaborate discussion of this issue, particularly pp. 73-95.
32. De Felice, Il duce, Vol. II, p. 454.
33. There would appear to be some confusion about when Mussolini was informed about the results of the meeting between Hitler and Schuschnigg. To the Americans, the Italians claimed that they were informed about the meeting and its results only after it occurred. However, it is clear according to German documents that the Italians were well informed about the meeting. Von Ribbentrop wrote that the Italians "obviously" learned of the agreements reached at Berchtesgaden by a source other than the newspapers, for the Italian ambassador, Attolico, seemed to know more information than had been carried in press coverage. Brook-Shepherd offers the solution to part of this dilemma by claiming that the

Italian government was the only foreign capital notified that Schuschnigg would travel to meet with Hitler and that Mussolini was actually given a copy of the Berchtesgaden protocol before the Austrian President. See Brook-Shepherd, *Anschluss*, p. 78 ;120/67728-29, No. 296. Memorandum by the Foreign Minsiter. In DGFP, D, Vol. I, pp. 517-518.; Item #958. Raymond H. Geist to Messersmith. Berlin, March 1, 1938. In GSM, Box #7. On the Berchtesgaden protocol, please see 2871/563849-54, No. 295. "Protocol of the Conference of February 12, 1938". In DGFP, D, Vol. I, pp. 515-516.

34. 762.63/427, No. 6. "The Secretary of State to the *Chargé* in Austria (Wiley)". Washington, February 15, 1938. 762.63/450a, No. 14. "The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Italy (Phillips)". Washington, February 16, 1938. In FRUS, 1938. Vol. I, pp. 396, 398.

35. 762.63/428, No. 20. "The *Chargé* in Austria (Wiley) to the Secretary of State". Vienna, February 15, 1938. In FRUS, 1938. Vol. I, p. 393.

36. Brook-Shepherd, *Anschluss*, p. 102.

37. Item #956. Messersmith to Sir Walford Selby, British Ambassador to Portugal. Washington, February 26, 1938. In GSM, Box #7.

38. 863.00/1394 John C. Wiley, *Chargé d'affaires ad interim*, to Secretary of State. Vienna, March 1, 1938. RG 59, Roll #6.

39. 863.00/1396, No. 54. John Wiley to Secretary of State. Vienna, March 9, 1938. RG 59, Roll #6.

40. 863.00/1399, No. 368. Wilson to Secretary of State. Paris, March 10, 1938. RG 59, Roll #6.

41. Brook-Shepherd, *Anschluss*, p. 179.

42. Hull, Vol. I., p. 575.

43. 1798/409416, No. 362. "The German Ambassador in the United States (Dieckhoff) to the German Foreign Ministry". Washington, March 12, 1938. In DGFP D, Vol. I, p. 583.

44. 1798/409498, No. 391. "The German Ambassador in the United States (Dieckhoff) to the German Foreign Ministry". Washington, March 15, 1938. In DGFP D, Vol. I, pp. 604-605.

45. Mass, p. 249.

46. 863.00/1434. Phillips to the Secretary of State. Rome, March 12, 1938. RG 59, Roll #6.

47. This statement directly contradicts Schuschnigg's statement in his own memoirs. See Schuschnigg, p. 38. 863.00/1601. Edward L. Reed, Conselor of the Embassy, to the Secretary of State. Rome, March 18, 1938. RG 59, Roll #6. Emphasis mine.
48. Phillips, p. 110.
49. De Felice, *Il duce*, Vol. II, p. 467. Smith, p. 218.
50. Smith, pp. 218-219.
51. On May 7, 1938, Hitler issued as his "political testament to the German people", declaring the inviolability of the Alpine frontier between Italy and the former Austrian state "for all time". See Knox, Mussolini Unleashed, p. 37.
52. Phillips, pp. 114-115.
53. "F.D.R. to Mrs. James Roosevelt at Hyde Park", The White House, January 10, 1939. In Roosevelt, Vol. II, p. 848.
54. Schmitz, p. 191.
55. FO 371/22438. R. 8491. Minute by Nichols, London, October 26, 1938.

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