A Preface to World Affairs

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William C. Bullitt

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TRANSACTION INTRODUCTION
WILLIAM C. BULLITT: DIPLOMAT AND PROPHET*

ON JANUARY 29, 1943, a trusted adviser and friend of President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote a lengthy, confidential memorandum about Soviet intentions that could have changed the course of post-World War II history had it not been ignored by the president. William Christian Bullitt, the author of the memorandum, was at the time a roving ambassador for FDR formally assigned to the Navy Department. He previously had served with distinction as America's first ambassador to the Soviet Union (1933-1936) and as ambassador to France (1936-1940). Bullitt followed up the January memorandum to FDR with two similar but shorter memoranda in May and August of 1943 that were likewise ignored by the president. FDR, as we know, believed that he understood and could handle Soviet dictator Josef Stalin better than Bullitt or any of his other advisers and allies (including Winston Churchill). Tragically, FDR was wrong. In one of the most momentous diplomatic failures of the twentieth century, FDR pursued policies, both military and political, during the Second World War that resulted in the

* "William C. Bullet: Diplomat and Prophet" originally appeared, in a slightly different form, in *American Diplomacy*, January 24, 2003, available at www.americandiplomacy.org, and is used by permission of the publisher.

replacement of the Nazi threat with an even greater and far more enduring Soviet geopolitical threat.

The British historian Paul Johnson has repeatedly reminded his readers that there are no inevitabilities in history. Soviet domination of Eastern and Central Europe and parts of East Asia was not a foregone conclusion in 1943. Military developments and political decisions would determine the structure of the postwar order. It mattered greatly *where* U.S. and British forces linked up with the Soviet army at war's end. Stalin understood this. Near the end of the war, the Soviet dictator commented to a Yugoslavian communist ally that a country's social system would be imposed on all the lands conquered or occupied by the country's armed forces. No one in the inner circles of the U.S. government understood or grasped that fact earlier than William Bullitt.

The failure of U.S. wartime diplomacy, the emergence of the Soviet geopolitical threat, and a proposal for a comprehensive Western strategy to counter that threat were the subjects of Bullitt's early postwar classic, *The Great Globe Itself.*

William Bullitt was born in 1891 into a family that was considered part of Philadelphia's aristocracy. His father, William C. Bullitt, Sr., was a successful lawyer, a state legislator, an executive of the Norfolk & Western Railroad, and the president of the Pocahontas Coal Company. His mother, Louisa, was the daughter of the successful streetcar company owner, Orville Horwitz. As a child, the future diplomat traveled to Europe each summer and became "fluent in French and German." As a teenager, Bullitt attended a private board-

ing school in Philadelphia, and during the summers he stayed at an elite boy's camp in New Hampshire called Camp Pasquaney. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Yale in 1912, where he excelled at foreign languages, debating, and drama. Bullitt started law school at Harvard, but dropped out soon after his father's death in 1914.[1]

In June 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, Bullitt accompanied his mother on a trip to Russia and Germany. When the war began, Bullitt and his mother left Germany for London where he unsuccessfully tried to become a war correspondent. Bullitt subsequently traveled to Paris in a successful effort to retrieve his grandmother's jewels, and while there, tried to enlist in the French army, but was rejected. He returned to Philadelphia and became a reporter for the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*.[2] He initially covered the police beat, but soon began writing pieces on the war that appeared on the paper's editorial page. In late 1915, he traveled again to Europe with other reporters to cover "a peace expedition sponsored by Henry Ford" that included among its members William Jennings Bryan, the former secretary of state and three-time candidate for president, and Thomas A. Edison, the brilliant inventor.[3]

When Bullitt returned to the United States he married Ernesta Bowen, the sister of Catherine Drinker Bowen (who later became a famous biographer). The couple honeymooned in war-torn Europe, staying mostly in Germany and Austria-Hungary, and Bullitt used the opportunity to continue writing about the war for the *Public Ledger*. Bullitt interviewed German and Austro-Hungarian government officials,

diplomats, army officers, industrialists, and ordinary citizens.[4] His dispatches from Europe demonstrated that Bullitt was, in the words of his biographers, "a dogged reporter, adept interviewer and a perceptive analyst." Walter Lippmann, then an editor for the *New Republic*, called Bullitt "the sharpest of the American correspondents" covering the war.[5]

Bullitt's success as a war correspondent led to his appointment in late 1916 as the Washington bureau chief for the *Public Ledger*. In that role Bullitt developed sources and friendships with some of President Woodrow Wilson's most important advisers, including Edward House. Bullitt provided House with "firsthand information about European affairs," and that, in turn, led to Bullitt's appointment as an assistant secretary of state in December 1917.[6]

It was while he was in the State Department that Bullitt began to advocate U.S. recognition of the new Bolshevik regime in Russia. He subsequently opposed the sending of American troops to Archangel and Murmansk during the Russian Civil War. The Wilson administration, however, refused to recognize Lenin's government, and sent U.S. forces to Russia primarily to guard and reclaim war supplies that had been provided to Russia's previous government. In a letter to Edward House, Bullitt warned that the U.S. was "blunder[ing] blind[ly] to disaster in Russia," and proposed the creation in Washington of "an organization competent to interpret Russia and the Revolution," staffed by "men of deep wisdom and liberality."[7]

When the war ended, the United States sent to Paris the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. The Commission

consisted of President Wilson, Edward House, former ambassador to France, Henry White, and General Tasker Bliss. One of the Commission's staff members was William Bullitt. While in Paris, Bullitt floated the idea of sending an American delegation to Russia to meet with representatives of Lenin's government to discuss possible diplomatic recognition. President Wilson approved the plan, but insisted that it must be done in secret. Bullitt was chosen to head the delegation.[8]

Bullitt arrived in Russia on March 6, 1919, talked with Georgi Chicherin, the foreign minister, and his top assistant, Maxim Litvinov, on March 9, and five days later met with Lenin in Moscow. Bullitt's mission accomplished nothing substantive and was repudiated by the United States when it became public.[9] In truth, Bullitt was among the first Americans and Westerners to be hoodwinked by Soviet leaders, a disturbing phenomenon that would continue to occur during the next thirty years, and that has been painstakingly documented by Paul Hollander in his book, *Political Pilgrims*. Bullitt judged Lenin, who advocated and implemented terror at home and violent revolution abroad, to be "genial and with large humor and serenity." "[T]he Communist Party," he wrote, "is strong politically and morally."[10] Bullitt appealed directly to the president to consider recognizing the Bolshevik regime, but Wilson declined to do so, perhaps due to a report he had received from Herbert Hoover in late March 1919 that stated that the Bolsheviks "resorted to terror, bloodshed and murder to a degree long since abandoned even amongst reactionary tyrannies.... We

cannot ever remotely recognize this murderous tyranny without stimulating actionist radicalism in every country in Europe and without transgressing...every national ideal of our own."[11]

On May 17, 1919, Bullitt resigned from the State Department in protest over the terms of the proposed Treaty of Versailles. The treaty, he predicted, would lead to another war; a war that the United States would not be able to stay out of. He subsequently testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in opposition to the Treaty and U.S. participation in the League of Nations.[12]

During the 1920s, Bullitt split his time between Europe and the United States. He divorced his wife, and subsequently married Louisa Bryant, the widow of John Reed, the American radical who had romanticized the Bolshevik coup in his book, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (Bullitt and Bryant divorced in 1930). Bullitt wrote a successful novel about the social life of Philadelphia entitled *It's Not Done*, and began collaborating with Sigmund Freud on a psychological study of Woodrow Wilson that was ultimately published in 1966.[13] Although out of public life, Bullitt continued to associate and make friends with important European officials. Bullitt, according to David Fromkin, "was on close terms with more European statesmen than any other American of his time."[14]

Bullitt returned to public life with the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency in 1932. Bullitt had worked on Roosevelt's campaign, writing speeches for, and providing advice on foreign policy to, the future president.[15] After the election, but before Roosevelt took office as president,

Bullitt twice traveled to Europe as a "private citizen," at the secret request of the incoming administration.[16] During one of these trips, Bullitt reported to Roosevelt with uncharacteristic misjudgment that "Hitler is finished...as a possible dictator.... Hitler's influence is waning so fast that the Government [in Germany] is no longer afraid of the growth of the Nazi movement." Bullitt, it appears, was listening to uninformed sources within the German government, since Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany one month later.[17]

Although Bullitt hoped to become ambassador to France once FDR assumed office, that job had been promised to another person, so Bullitt was appointed as a special assistant to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. One of Bullitt's first assignments was to study the possibility of formal recognition of the Soviet Union, now led by Josef Stalin. The outstanding issues between the two governments at the time, as Bullitt recognized in an October 4, 1933 memo to the secretary of state, included the activities of the Comintern and communist propaganda in the United States, the protection of civil and religious rights of Americans in Russia, and the repayment of U.S. loans made to the Russian Provisional Government that the Bolsheviks had overthrown in 1917.[18] Bullitt met with several Soviet diplomats, including Foreign Minister Litvinov, to negotiate the terms of formal recognition. In a series of letters to FDR dated November 16, 1933, Litvinov agreed that in return for U.S. recognition, the Soviet Union would "refrain from interfering in any manner in the internal affairs of the United States...," and promised to protect

the religious and civil rights of Americans in the Soviet Union. The next day, the United States extended formal diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union, and William C. Bullitt was appointed as the U.S. ambassador to Moscow.[19]

Bullitt's ambassadorship to the Soviet Union lasted until May 1936. He accepted the position with great expectations that U.S.-Soviet relations could greatly improve, especially due to their shared interest in halting Japanese expansion in Manchuria. In this he was destined to be disappointed. Initially, the Soviets treated Bullitt well and expressed their alleged desire for cordial relations with the United States. On December 20, 1933, Bullitt attended a lavish dinner at the Kremlin where he met with top Soviet officials, including Stalin. There was much drinking, toasts to FDR and Soviet President Kalinin, and expressions of goodwill. When they bade farewell to each other that evening, Stalin and Bullitt kissed each other on the cheek! Bullitt also traveled to Kiev, Leningrad, Yalta, Odessa, and Kharkov, where he "made polite speeches, toured factories and farms, and was warmly received."[20]

By early 1934, however, Bullitt was expressing to Washington his increasing frustration with the Soviets. In one letter he noted: "We are staggering along here, not only meeting disappointments in major matters but having to endure a thousand petty vexations each month." One such "petty vexation" involved Leningrad police detaining Bullitt and his daughter for improperly crossing a street![21] Perhaps due to this frustration, Bullitt spent much time traveling to more hospitable and friendly European countries, renewing asso-

ciations with the many European diplomats he had previously befriended. He also visited Japan, where he talked with the emperor, and China where he met three times with Chiang Kai-shek.[22]

In April 1935, Bullitt wrote to the president from Paris, expressing his belief that the Soviet Union would sometime in the future reach an accommodation with Germany to the detriment of France and the rest of Europe.[23] Four years later, of course, in August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact that paved the way for their mutual invasion of Poland and the beginning of the Second World War.

Bullitt also kept Washington informed of the progress of Stalin's war against his own people. In May 1935, he reported that "[t]he terror, always present, has risen to such a pitch that the least of the Muscovites, as well as the greatest, is in fear."[24] The previous month, Bullitt had reported confidential details about the murder of Sergei Kirov, the communist boss of Leningrad, and noted that the "arrest and exiling of innocent human beings in all quarters of the Soviet Union continues apace."[25]

Bullitt also informed Washington, after a meeting of the Comintern, that the Soviets had broken their pledge to refrain from conducting propaganda and subversive activities against the United States. "It is...perfectly clear that to speak of 'normal relations' between the Soviet Union and any other country is to speak of something which does not *and will not* exist," he wrote (emphasis added).[26] Here, Bullitt appeared to sense that the very nature of the Soviet regime would

preclude the United States from having normal diplomatic relations with it.

In July 1935, Bullitt was even more pessimistic, summarizing Soviet foreign policy as follows:

War in Europe is regarded as inevitable and ultimately desirable from the Communist point of view. The Soviet Government fears war...at the present time because the Soviet Union is unprepared, and it is feared that war this year or next in Europe would grow into world war with simultaneous attacks on the Soviet Union by Germany, Poland and Japan.... It is, of course, the heartiest hope of the Soviet Government that the United States will become involved in a war with Japan.... [T]he aim of the Soviet Government is, and will remain, to produce world revolution. The leaders of the Soviet Union believe that the first step toward this revolution must be to strengthen the defensive and offensive power of the Soviet Union.... To maintain peace for the present, to keep the nations of Europe divided, to foster enmity between Japan and the United States, and to gain the blind devotion and obedience of the Communists of all countries...is the sum of Stalin's policy.[27]

In another letter to Washington that same year, Bullitt warned that "[u]nless the states of Europe stop fighting each other or the Soviet Union is defeated in war within the next fifteen years, it will be a juggernaut that will be able to sweep the continent."[28] He compared the countries of Europe (Germany and France) to the "squabbling city states of Greece" (Athens and Sparta), with Stalin's Russia playing the role of Philip's Macedonia, ready to take geopolitical advantage of the situation.[29] In August 1935, he predicted to Secretary of

State Hull that, "In this decade the Soviet Union either will be the center of attack from Europe and the Far East or will develop rapidly into one of the greatest physical forces in the world."[30]

By 1936, in his last year as ambassador to the Soviet Union, Bullitt gave up all hope for establishing proper diplomatic relations with Stalin's regime. "We should not cherish for a moment," he wrote to Secretary of State Hull in April 1936, "the illusion that it is possible to establish really friendly relations with the Soviet Government or with any communist party or communist individuals."[31] The problem, he explained, was systemic in nature, transcending the personality of Stalin: "The problem of relations with the Government of the Soviet Union is, therefore, a subordinate part of the problem presented by communism as a militant faith determined to produce world revolution and the 'liquidation'...of all non-believers."[32] He noted that the Soviet "secret police" was loyal to the communist regime, and the Red Army was strong.[33]

Bullitt still believed, however, that the United States needed to have a diplomatic presence in Moscow simply because the Soviet Union was one of the great powers "and its relations with Europe, China, and Japan are so important that we can not conduct our foreign relations intelligently if we do not know what is happening in Moscow." But, he wrote, "We should neither expect too much nor despair of getting anything at all [from the Soviets]." "We should," he further explained, "remain unimpressed in the face of expansive professions of friendliness and unperturbed in the face of slights

and underhand opposition." Our trade with them, Bullitt opined, may never be "stable or permanent." He advised Washington against giving loans or long-term credits to the Soviets. He also warned about the potential danger of communists in the United States.[34]

In May 1936, Bullitt left Moscow and soon thereafter resigned his position as ambassador to the Soviet Union. Eighteen years earlier, he had advised President Wilson to establish diplomatic relations with the new Bolshevik regime, and secretly met with Lenin and other top Soviet officials in an effort to reach an agreement to further that end. In 1933, with FDR in the White House, Bullitt helped to pave the way for diplomatic relations between the United States and Soviet Russia, and sought to establish a sound basis for the relationship in his role as ambassador. But the brutal nature of the Soviet regime (manifested by the state-created famine in the Ukraine and surrounding areas, the Great Terror, and the growth of the Soviet Gulag) and its continued activities through the Comintern to promote world revolution, dashed Bullitt's remaining hopes for cordial relations between the two powers and transformed him into a fervent anti-communist.

Bullitt's tenure in Moscow, however, produced two benefits to the United States. First, his selection of George F. Kennan, Loy Henderson, and Charles "Chip" Bohlen as deputies at the embassy in Moscow launched the careers of three men who rendered effective, and sometimes brilliant, diplomatic service to their country for many years to come. Second, the harsh realities of the nature of the Soviet regime

transformed William Bullitt, who would become a close confidante of FDR, into an insightful and prophetic analyst of Soviet motives and intentions.

On August 25, 1936, FDR appointed Bullitt as U.S. ambassador to France. For the next four years, Bullitt was at the very center of the European crisis that eventually led to the outbreak of the Second World War. As David Fromkin has pointed out, "though accredited only to France, [Bullitt] was acting as an American observer of the entire European scene."[35] He arrived at his new post in Paris in early October, presenting his credentials to the French President, Albert Lebrun.[36] "I come to France not as a stranger," said Bullitt, "but as one who for many years has known the magnificent achievements of French civilization."[37] Bullitt was very much at home in the French capitol. As his brother Orville later wrote, "For him it was a happy appointment to his second home. He knew the French so well and was apparently so much in their confidence that he was able to give the President the most intimate details of the thoughts and probable actions of the leading statesmen, both in office and in opposition."[38]

By late 1936 storm clouds were gathering in Europe. France and Great Britain, despite the shrill warnings of Winston Churchill, were well advanced on their course of appeasing the German dictator. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, was, as Bullitt had predicted, encouraging France to take a tougher stance toward Germany, while keeping open the possibility of reaching an understanding herself with Germany.

Bullitt initially sought to encourage French leaders to reach an accommodation with Germany. He repeatedly warned his hosts that the United States was not going to send American boys to fight on France's side in another European war. In confidential letters to FDR, Bullitt recommended that the United States stay out of a future European war. To his State Department colleague and friend, Judge R. Walton Moore, Bullitt wrote that, "We can do France no worse disservice today than to allow her to base her security on an illusion of American support."[39]

Bullitt had no illusions about Hitler or Germany. "Czechoslovakia, clearly, is the next item on Hitler's menu," he told FDR on November 24, 1936. "If Hitler should send forces into Czechoslovakia, the position of France, as well as Czechoslovakia, would become tragic."[40] After Germany occupied all of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Bullitt warned the president that, "unless some nation in Europe stands up to Germany quickly, France and England may face defeat, and such defeat would mean the French and British fleets in the hands of the Germans and the Italians. We should then have the Japs in the Pacific and an overwhelming fleet against us in the Atlantic."[41]

Bullitt perceived a greater danger lurking to the east. He believed that if France and Germany fought against each other again in a war that would be even more destructive than that of 1914-1918, the Soviet Union would be in a position to dominate the continent. The European powers, he told FDR, may end up "destroying themselves completely and handing Europe over to the Bolsheviks."[42] In another

letter to the president in December 1936, Bullitt predicted that, "war will mean such horrible suffering that it will end in general revolution, and...the only winners will be Stalin and Company."[43] As late as May 20, 1938, Bullitt was still warning FDR that a general European war would result in "the complete destruction of western Europe and Bolshevism from one end of the Continent to the other."[44] That is why Bullitt worked so hard initially to encourage a Franco-German détente.

Gradually, Bullitt came to the realization that a permanent accommodation between France and Germany was a chimera. Hitler was determined to dominate the continent, and France needed U.S. material support to resist German aggression. The diplomatic surrender by Britain and France at Munich did much to convince Bullitt that war was unavoidable and that the United States had to assist the democracies in the coming struggle with Hitler. Referring to the perceived German lead in air power vis-à-vis France and Britain and its impact on the negotiations with Hitler, Bullitt remarked to FDR: "If you have enough airplanes, you don't have to go to Berchtesgaden."[45] He stopped short, however, of recommending that U.S. forces be sent to fight in Europe. "I remain as convinced as ever," he had written to the president in June 1938, "that we should not permit ourselves to be drawn in."[46] Yet, in September 1938 at a ceremony commemorating the landing of American troops in Bordeaux during the First World War, Bullitt stated that, "If war breaks out in Europe, no one can say or predict whether the United States would be drawn into such a war."[47]

In a remarkably prescient letter to FDR on June 13, 1938, Bullitt sensed the coming of war. "I feel like a participant in the last days of Pompeii," he told the president. He suggested that Poland might be attacked by Germany from the west, and by Soviet Russia from the east,[48] which is precisely what happened in September 1939. The world had been shocked when on August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact. Poland's fate was sealed. The two dictators had secretly agreed to divide-up Poland and other areas of Eastern and Central Europe.

In January 1939, Bullitt visited the Polish ambassador in Paris who reported that Bullitt remarked that if war broke out, the United States would ultimately become a belligerent.[49] In March 1939, German troops occupied all of Czechoslovakia in blatant violation of the Munich agreement. Bullitt now became a forceful advocate of U.S. military assistance to France, and with French approval he floated the idea of exchanging U.S. war planes for French island possessions in a variant of what would become lend-lease with Great Britain. Bullitt also advised FDR that the American military must be strengthened and made "ready for action."[50]

During the early morning hours of September 1, 1939, President Roosevelt was awakened by a phone call from his ambassador to France. Bullitt called to inform the president that German troops had crossed the Polish border. Two days later, France and Great Britain honored their commitments to Poland by declaring war on Germany. The Second World War had begun. Bullitt now pressed more than ever for U.S. military assistance to France and Britain. He realized that if

Germany defeated France and Great Britain, the United States would have to fight. "I am entirely certain," he wrote to Cordell Hull on September 19, 1939, "that if France and England should be unable to defeat Hitler in Europe American soldiers will have to fight his forces in the Americas."[51]

Franklin Roosevelt most likely agreed with Bulitt's analysis, but he was not yet ready to get ahead of American opinion, which at that time was decidedly against U.S. participation in another European war. There was no widespread sentiment in the country for abandoning the Neutrality Act (though FDR sought its repeal in late 1939), and 1940 was an election year in which the president would run for an unprecedented third term. FDR had repeatedly promised, and would do so again during the 1940 presidential campaign, that he would not send American boys overseas to fight in a war. The president, instead, would slowly prod public opinion to support giving assistance to the democracies in their struggle against Hitler.

Throughout early 1940, Bullitt continued to assess the war situation in letters and cables to Washington. He greatly overestimated the fighting spirit of the French people and army. Washington and much of the world were stunned at how quickly the Germans defeated France in May-June 1940. As German troops neared Paris, Bullitt advised the president that he intended to remain at the Embassy: "No American Ambassador in Paris has ever run away from anything, and that I think is the best tradition that we have in the American diplomatic service...." In a personal note to Roosevelt, he said, "In case I should get blown up before I see

you again, I want you to know that it has been marvelous to work for you."[52]

Bullitt was ordered to leave Paris and to maintain contact with the new French government that had fled before the Germans arrived. In July 1940, he interviewed several officials (including Petain and Darlan) who would become leaders in the new Vichy regime in "unoccupied" France, and informed Washington of their defeatist attitudes in a report that George F. Kennan later called "one of [Bullitt's] most informative and historically important dispatches"[53]:

The impression which emerges...is the extraordinary one that the French leaders desire to cut loose from all that France has represented during the past two generations, that their physical and moral defeat has been so absolute that they have accepted completely for France the fate of becoming a province of Nazi Germany. Moreover, in order that they may have as many companions in misery as possible they hope that England will be rapidly and completely defeated by Germany.... Their hope is that France may become Germany's favorite province.... The truth is that the French are so completely crushed and so without hope for the future that they are likely to say or do almost anything.... The simple people of the country are as fine as they have ever been. The upper classes have failed completely.[54]

The famed war correspondent and chronicler of both Hitler's rise to power and the fallen French Republic, William L. Shirer, called this report "the most enlightening diplomatic dispatch [Bullitt] ever wrote." The report, Shirer wrote, "gives better than any contemporary record I have

seen the state of mind and heart and soul of the tattered men who controlled the French government at this hour of adversity and trial."[55]

Bullitt traveled from southern France to Spain to Portugal from where he left Europe for the United States on July 15, 1940. When he returned home, Bullitt briefed the secretary of state and FDR on his view of the European situation. He was invited by FDR to Hyde Park where he and the president discussed the war and Bullitt's future role in the government. Bullitt wanted to be in Roosevelt's Cabinet as either secretary of war or secretary of the Navy, but he was not offered either position. Instead, FDR, perhaps sensing the need to build bipartisan support for future U.S. involvement in the war, appointed two prominent Republicans, Frank Knox at the Navy Department and Henry Stimson at the War Department. Moreover, Bullitt was soon eased out of his ambassadorship; FDR appointed the former chief of naval operations, William Leahy, to be the U.S.'s ambassador to the Vichy French government.[56]

Bullitt, at Roosevelt's request, delivered an address in Philadelphia in August 1940 to the American Philosophical Society. He used this opportunity to warn the American people about the geopolitical threat of Nazi domination of Europe. "America is in danger," he told the audience of four thousand in Independence Square. "The United States is in as great peril today as was France a year ago," he continued. "[U]nless we act now, decisively, to meet the threat, we shall be too late." The Atlantic Ocean, Bullitt explained, "is an obstacle [to an attack on the United States] only so long as

the European exits to the Atlantic are controlled by a nation which is genuinely friendly to us." The survival of an independent and friendly Britain was a vital interest of the United States, because "[w]ithout the British Navy, the Atlantic would give us no more protection than the Maginot Line gave France after German troops had marched through Belgium." The only thing standing between the United States and the dictators of Europe, Bullitt emphasized, was "the British fleet and the courage of the British people."[57]

Bullitt's address was a geopolitical analysis worthy of the likes of Sir Halford Mackinder, the British geographer who in 1904 and again in 1919 had warned the democracies about the danger of a great Eurasian land power gaining control of coastal areas and using the continent's vast resources to challenge the sea powers in their own element. According to Will Brownell and Richard Billings, in their excellent biography of Bullitt, two million copies of Bullitt's speech were printed for distribution. It was widely noted in the press, and furiously denounced by isolationists in the United States.[58]

FDR was elected president for the third time by another Electoral College landslide in November 1940. Bullitt met with the president after the election to determine what, if any, role he would play in FDR's government. He was still technically ambassador to France, but was looking to serve in a high position at home. The president had nothing definite to offer him (having promised or filled some key Cabinet offices with prominent Republicans), so Bullitt asked that his resignation as ambassador to France be accepted. On

January 7, 1941, FDR, "with great reluctance," accepted Bullitt's resignation.[59]

Though out of government, Bullitt continued to speak out on the world crisis. In January, February, and April of 1941, he delivered two speeches and wrote an article in *Life* that warned about the threat posed to the United States by Nazi Germany. The world, he argued, had grown smaller. "The war machines of Europe," he explained, "can reach the Western Hemisphere in a few hours." Bullitt realized that the British Navy was the United States' first line of defense against Hitler. "If the British Navy should be eliminated," he wrote, "we would be left with a one-ocean navy for the defense of the coastlines of two oceans." The United States had to enter the war, Bullitt advised. "There is no easy way by which we can escape from war with Hitler. We cannot get off this planet."[60]

On June 22, 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Bullitt, like many others in the United States and Britain, thought that Stalin had fatally weakened the Soviet military during the purges in the mid-to-late 1930s. He greatly feared, he wrote Roosevelt, that Germany would be able swiftly to defeat Soviet Russia and use its vast resources to attack England and the United States.[61] Two months later, Bullitt opined, in a speech to the Altoona, Pennsylvania American Legion convention, that the United States would soon be at war with Hitler.[62] In October 1941, he told the Union League of Philadelphia that if the U.S. did not enter the war, Hitler would conquer the world.[63]

Bullitt still expressed his fear of the communists, too. In a July 1, 1941 letter to FDR, Bullitt said that the "Communists in the United States are just as dangerous enemies as ever, and should not be allowed to crawl into our productive mechanism in order later to wreck it when they get new orders from somewhere abroad."[64] He was among the few Americans at that time that understood that American communists essentially followed the lead of their masters in Moscow.

In November 1941, FDR sent Bullitt to Africa and the Middle East. "Reposing special faith and confidence in you," FDR wrote to Bullitt, "I am asking you to proceed at your earliest convenience to the Near Eastern area, there to act as my personal representative with the rank of Ambassador."[65] FDR cabled British Prime Minister Winston Churchill that he was sending his "old friend Bill Bullitt" to visit the area and asked Churchill to ensure that Bullitt received appropriate briefings from British civilian and military officials.[66] In that capacity, Bullitt traveled to Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, and Lebanon. While Bullitt was en route to the Middle East, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

On December 27, 1941, Bullitt wrote to FDR about the military situation in North Africa, and suggested the possibility of sending an American expeditionary force to Casablanca to help the British and to persuade the French in North Africa to join the Allied war effort.[67] In a joint telegram dated December 31, 1941, intended for consideration by Roosevelt and Churchill, Bullitt and the British minister

of state for the Middle East, Oliver Lyttelton, proposed that the United States "should immediately start preparations for Casablanca expedition."[68] At that time, the British leadership preferred a U.S. invasion of North Africa to the proposed cross-channel invasion of Europe favored by FDR's military advisors. In the event, in early November 1942 the United States invaded North Africa. The proposed cross-channel invasion was postponed until, at the earliest, 1943.

Bullitt's mission to the Near East and Africa had produced important political and military intelligence that helped shape FDR's decision to invade North Africa. Bullitt recorded that in April 1942, the president told him that he (Bullitt) had "made him feel as if he had seen the entire area with his own eyes."[69] Bullitt, however, resisted FDR's urgings to continue his roving ambassadorship in the Near East and Africa. He still wanted a Cabinet position, but none was offered.

In June 1942, FDR appointed Bullitt as special assistant to the secretary of the Navy. During the summer of 1942 in separate meetings, Bullitt discussed the progress of the war with Churchill, de Gaulle, and General Eisenhower.[70] Bullitt was acting, in effect, as a special envoy for the president. On November 19, 1942, the president asked that Bullitt provide him with "your personal views on the machinery of preparation for civil administration in occupied territories."[71] It was in response to that request from FDR that Bullitt wrote three memos on the need for the United States to conduct the war with a view to the political structure of the postwar world. In these memos, George F. Kennan later wrote, Bullitt "predicted with startling accuracy the situation to which the

war would lead if existing policies continued to be pursued." Bullitt's prophetic memos to FDR, wrote Kennan, "had no counterpart...as a warning of that date to the American President of the effective division of Europe which would ensue if the war continued to be pursued on the basis of the concepts then prevailing."[72]

The "concepts then prevailing" that Kennan referred to included the policy of "unconditional surrender" that Roosevelt announced at the Casablanca conference and FDR's attempted "courtship" of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. These aspects of FDR's wartime diplomacy have been thoroughly analyzed by, among others, Robert Nisbet in *Roosevelt and Stalin: The Failed Courtship*,[73] Thomas Fleming in *The New Dealers' War*,[74] and Michael Beschloss in *The Conquerors: Roosevelt, Truman and the Destruction of Hitler's Germany, 1941-1945*.[75] "Unconditional surrender" made it unlikely that Germany could be defeated without its destruction and occupation by Allied forces. FDR's courtship of Stalin made it inevitable that at war's end Soviet power would extend into Eastern and Central Europe. As Winston Churchill noted in his brilliant history of the Second World War, the peril of Nazi domination of the world was replaced by the even more formidable peril of Soviet domination of the world.[76]

Had the president followed the advice offered by William Bullitt in 1943 things could have turned out differently.

Bullitt's first memo to FDR was written on January 29, 1943. It was, Bullitt told the president, "as serious a document as any I have ever sent you." He began by acknowledging that many observers in the United States believed that

Stalin shared the president's postwar vision expressed in the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms. Bullitt countered that no "factual evidence" existed to support the view that Stalin was a changed man. "We find no evidence," he wrote, "but we find in all democratic countries an intense wish to believe that Stalin has changed...." This view of a changed Stalin, therefore, was "a product of the fatal vice in foreign affairs—the vice of wishful thinking." U.S. and British admiration for the valor demonstrated by the Russian people in the defense of their homeland was causing policymakers to overlook "both basic Russian Nationalist policy and Soviet Communist policy."

"The reality," Bullitt explained,

is that the Soviet Union, up to the present time, has been a totalitarian dictatorship in which there has been no freedom of speech, no freedom of the press, and a travesty of freedom of religion; in which there has been universal fear of the O.G.P.U. [secret police] and Freedom from Want has been subordinated always to the policy of guns instead of butter.

Stalin controls "in each country of the world," Bullit further explained, "a 5th column" composed of "public or underground Communist Parties." Stalin uses this Fifth Column for "espionage, propaganda, character assassination of opponents, and political influence...."

"[T]here is no evidence," Bullitt emphasized, "that [Stalin] has abandoned either the policy of extending communism or the policy of controlling all foreign communist parties." The Soviet Union "moves where opposition is weak, [but] stops

where opposition is strong." The United States must, advised Bullitt,

demonstrate to Stalin—and mean it—that while we genuinely want to cooperate with the Soviet Union, we will not permit our war to prevent Nazi domination of Europe to be turned into a war to establish Soviet domination of Europe. We have to back democracy in Europe to the limit, and prove to Stalin that, while we have intense admiration for the Russian people and will collaborate fully with a pacific Soviet State, we will resist a predatory Soviet State just as fiercely as we are now resisting a predatory Nazi State.

Bullitt provided FDR with a brief history lesson to show that Russia had always been an expansionist power. "Since the time of Peter the Great," he wrote, "the Russians have extended their rule ruthlessly over one people after another.... No race on earth, not even the Germans, has shown such burgeoning energy as the Russian during the past hundred years. They have conquered one sixth of the earth's surface. They are still bursting with expansive energy." Therefore, Bullitt opined, "[e]ven if Stalin had become a mere Russian nationalist—which he has not—that would be no guarantee of pacific behavior; indeed, it would be a guarantee of aggressive imperialism."

Bullitt then listed Stalin's "avowed" aims, which included the annexation of Bukovina, eastern Poland, Besserabia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and parts of Finland, and his secret goals, which included establishing communist governments in Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland, and northern Iran, and expanding the influence communist par-

ties in France and Germany. Bullit feared that a Soviet Union victorious in Europe would try to take geopolitical advantage of the fact that the United States and Great Britain still had to contend with Japan in the Far East. In such circumstances, Bullit wrote, "[t]here will be no single power or coalition in Europe to counterbalance the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union will be in a position to devote all its strength to overrunning Europe...." He sketched the following scenario:

While the United States and Great Britain are engaged in defeating Japan, the Red Army, accompanied by a mob of fraternizing common soldiers from the German and all other Axis armies, and a swarm of propagandists, now ready in Moscow, will sweep through Europe from east to west, being welcomed by the Soviet 5th columns already organized in every European country. Then will follow the familiar comedy. There will be no talk of "annexation by the Soviet Union." There will be a "freely chosen form of government" (Soviet); "free expression of the people's will" (under occupation by the Red Army); and out will be trotted again all the obscene lies that accompanied the "freely expressed desire of the Baltic Republics, to be received into the Soviet Union."

To prevent Soviet domination of Europe after the war, Bullitt counseled, the United States must establish in "occupied or liberated countries in Europe democratic administrations which, working together, will be strong enough to provide the requisite defense against invasion by the Soviet Union." He compared Soviet expansion to the "flow of [a] Red amoeba," and opined that "[n]o single state in Eastern Europe can be made strong enough to resist the flow of the

Soviet Union without the support of other states." "A combination of feeble states," he wrote, "will be inadequate. An agglomeration of weakness is not strength." The United States, he advised Roosevelt, must "lay the ground work for a combination of democratic governments in Europe strong enough to preserve democracy in Europe and keep the Bolsheviks from replacing the Nazis as masters of Europe."

The United States, argued Bullitt, should not rely on agreements with the Soviet Union to preserve peace and the balance of power in Europe and the world. "The onward flow of the Soviet Union," he explained, "has never been impeded by any written agreement.... Soviet invasion finds barriers in armed strength, not in Soviet promises." That armed strength, according to Bullitt, should consist of an integrated, democratic, and armed Europe backed by Great Britain and the United States.

Bullitt made it clear that the Europe he was referring to was the pre-1938 Europe. Only Bessarabia, he wrote, should be conceded to the Soviets. The only way to achieve an integrated pre-1938 Europe was to ensure that American and British military forces arrived in Eastern Europe before the Soviet army. This meant, advised Bullitt, that the Allies should attack the Axis "not by way of France and Italy but by way of Salonika and Constantinople." In other words, Bullitt was advising FDR to marry military strategy to political ends. "[T]he strategic plan that promises political success," wrote Bullitt, "is to be preferred to the strategic plan that promises political disaster."[77]

Four months later, on May 12, 1943, Bullitt wrote a short follow-up memo to the president. He urged FDR to get commitments from the Soviet Union and Britain to help us in our war against Japan, and repeated his call for a military invasion of the Balkans to liberate Eastern and Central Europe before Soviet forces occupied the region. U.S. power was at its zenith, according to Bullitt, so it was essential that we translate that power to achieve our political goals.[78]

On August 10, 1943, Bullitt wrote a final letter to the president on this subject. Echoing the great theorist of war, Karl von Clausewitz, Bullitt emphasized to Roosevelt that "[w]ar is an attempt to achieve political objectives by fighting; and political objectives must be kept in mind in planning operations." The political objectives of the United States, he explained, "require the establishment of British and American forces in the Balkans and eastern and central Europe. Their first objective should be the defeat of Germany, their second, the barring to the Red Army of the way into Europe...."

A Soviet dominated Europe would be as great a threat to the United States and Britain as a German dominated Europe, wrote Bullitt. The dilemma of U.S. policy was to find a way to "prevent the domination of Europe by the Moscow dictatorship without losing the participation of the Red Army in the war against the Nazi dictatorship." The most important elements of such a policy were, he wrote, the "creation of a British-American line in Eastern Europe," and the establishment of "democratic governments behind" that line.[79]

Bullitt's analysis in these 1943 memos and letters was, according to Robert Nisbet, a "matchless treatise on Soviet geopolitics, diplomatic and military history, and highly probable annexations of eastern European countries after the war."[80] He was, wrote David Fromkin, "the first within the [U.S.] government to focus on the Russian threat."[81] But it was to no avail. FDR, though acknowledging the logic and reasoning underlying Bullitt's analysis, instead acted on his "hunch" that "Stalin is not that kind of man." "I think," Roosevelt told Bullitt, "that if I give [Stalin] everything I possibly can and ask nothing from him in return, *noblesse oblige*, he won't try to annex anything and will work with me for a world of democracy and peace."[82] Bullitt attempted to persuade the tired, sick, and war-weary president that in dealing with Stalin he was not negotiating with a British duke, but rather with "a Caucasian bandit, whose only thought when he got something for nothing was that the other fellow was an ass." FDR replied that he was going to play his "hunch."[83]

Bullitt's relationship with FDR steadily eroded as a result of Bullitt's involvement in 1943 in the effort, led by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, to end Sumner Welles' career in government. Welles, as undersecretary of state, had eclipsed Hull as FDR's top foreign policy advisor. Welles' worldview was similar to the president's—the postwar order should be governed by a world organization (the U.N.) in which the United States and Soviet Union would cooperate to keep the peace. Bullitt and Hull helped to spread damaging information about Welles' conduct and personal life that ultimately