
Pilgrims from the New World

AS JOE KENNEDY ENDEAVORED to master his ambassadorial duties in Britain, his charismatic older sons Joe Jr. and Jack were biding time before venturing into the political intrigues and aristocratic delights of London. Joe, a hard-working Harvard senior, and Jack, coasting through his sophomore year, were close friends, living and often dining together among many of Harvard's top athletes at Winthrop House, set on the Charles River with a fine view of the city of Boston. They were also the fiercest of rivals on the playing fields and in the sport of bedding women. One evening after Joe Jr. had wangled a date with actress Katharine Hepburn, Jack tried to outdo him by showing up at a nightclub with movie actress Gertrude Niesen, who was just starting her film career in *Top of the Town*. Joe Jr. cleverly arranged for Jack to be summoned to take a phone call, while he rushed off with Gertrude before his brother noticed he had been bushwhacked.

During his harried first days in London, the ambassador was very worried about Jack, who had to be hospitalized in the Harvard infirmary, and later New England Baptist Hospital, after his weight plummeted—due to what only years after the fact was understood by historians and doctors to be irritable bowel syndrome. Nonetheless, Jack sneaked out to swim in the college pool for an hour each afternoon and was barely beaten in the final heat for a place on the varsity swim team. In a family raised to prize athletic prowess and finishing first, Jack must have been tormented by his continued failure to match Joe's accomplishments until he found a way to trump his older brother. Neither his father nor Joe Jr., blocked by WASP elitists, had won admittance into Harvard's much-coveted social clubs, but

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Joe Kennedy greets Rose, Kick, Pat, Bobby, Jean, and Teddy upon their arrival at Plymouth on March 17, 1938. Joe and Rose had a temporary scare when Teddy went missing, but he was found on the far side of the ship looking for the “dredger.” (*Photofest*)

Jack was very popular among his friends in the university’s Protestant establishment; they banded together and insisted he be accepted in the prestigious Spee Club. Tellingly, Jack would write all his letters to his family in London on Spee stationery.

To his father’s great pride, Joe was busy that spring working on his senior thesis, *Intervention in Spain*, which sympathetically chronicled the efforts of an American isolationist organization, the Hands Off Spain Committee. Loyal to his anti-communist father, Joe Jr. surely favored Franco and the Catholics who were fighting to depose the Soviet-supported Loyalist government.

The ambassador was eager to bring his sons to London; he believed they would serve as useful lieutenants and, like John Quincy Adams and Charles Francis Adams before them, would not just witness history in action but help to make it.

After a difficult trip with “mountainous seas,” Rose and five of her

younger children arrived at Plymouth and were met by Joe. She and Joe underwent a momentary scare when Teddy went missing. After a frantic search, he was found leaning off the other side of the ship. “I want to see the dredger, Daddy,” he explained to his father. Joe teased Kick, telling his daughter he had been reading all about her in the papers. Kick blushed and asked why. Joe explained that earlier that day the press reported she had become engaged to her boyfriend back in the United States, Peter Grace, the Grace Lines shipping heir—and within minutes after the family disembarked, reporters ambushed Rose and eighteen-year-old Kick with questions about her reported engagement.

Placing his hand on Rose’s shoulder, and looking over at his five children, Kennedy exclaimed, “Now I’ve got everything,” and added, “London will be grand.”

The Kennedys instantly became major celebrities. The day after their arrival, the *Daily Express* headlined KATHLEEN, AGED 18, IS IN LOVE. Rose began to receive the kind of fawning publicity associated with top-tier film stars. *Vogue* magazine romanticized her as a “remarkable woman responsible for much of that rare harmony and unity which is both the central theme and the leitmotif of the Kennedys.” The British press called Joe “Jolly Joe,” “The U.S.A.’s Nine-Child Envoy,” and “The Father of His Country.”

Joe put his Hollywood public relations experience to good use. His PR team soon had the British press treating all the Kennedys as transatlantic stars. Kick was a particular focus of media attention. In the late 1930s London’s debutantes were treated as celebrities worthy of significant press coverage, and before Kick had even arrived in England, the aristocratic social chronicle *Queen* featured her as one of the stars of the upcoming social season.

Almost daily in the next few months, the London morning papers would feature pictures of one or more Kennedy children exploring the city: Teddy and Jean watching the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace; Bobby and Teddy on their first day of school; Teddy taking a picture with his camera upside down; Kick delivering home-baked cookies to London’s Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, or riding horseback with her father on Rotten Row.

The American press joined in the adulation. In April, Henry Luce celebrated the Kennedy family in *Life* magazine, declaring, “There are only five Dionne Quints and the Kennedy kids are nine . . . His bouncing offspring make the most politically ingratiating family since Theodore Roosevelt’s.” FDR, *Life* gushed, “got eleven ambassadors for the price of one. Amazed and delighted at the spectacle of an Ambassadorial family big enough to man

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Almost daily in the spring of 1938, London morning papers would show pictures of one or more Kennedy children exploring the city. Bobby and Jean take photographs, while Teddy mugs for the camera. (*JFK Library*)

a full-sized cricket team, England has taken them all, including extremely pretty and young-looking Mrs. Kennedy, to its heart. As a family act in the British press, the Nine Kennedy Kids are rapidly outstripping the Quints.”

Such rapt, even rapacious, press attention must have made Rose nervous. After the 1932 kidnapping and murder of the son of famed aviator Charles Lindbergh, Rose had asked their friend Henry Luce to curtail publicity of her family in *Time* and *Life* magazines. Just after Joe had arrived in England, a deranged Londoner named George Buchanan had written letters threatening to kill the Kennedy family. He was arrested. Joe’s public promotion of the Kennedy clan, while augmenting the family’s power and prominence, came at a cost to its comfort and security.

WHEN ROSE ARRIVED at Prince’s Gate, she wasted no time organizing her staff of twenty-four to shape up the run-down residence. The younger children delighted in running about the mansion, sliding down the

banisters on the great staircase, and calling each other from phones in the many bedrooms to arrange meetings in the hall. Teddy commandeered the elevator, taking giggling housemaids up and down, stopping to announce each floor as if he were a department-store elevator operator.

Bobby and Teddy, in maroon blazers and gray flannel shorts, were enrolled at Gibbs School for Boys, and Jean and Pat, soon to be joined by Eunice, were sent outside London, to the Sacred Heart Convent at Roehampton, where they were, according to a fellow student, “like birds of paradise, bringing a glamour and worldliness that contrasted with the attitude of the dour daughters of displaced European aristocrats and English girls in tweeds.”

Bobby’s London classmate Cecil Parker told author David Heymann that Bobby, who had difficulty making friends, was not happy at the Gibbs School: “He particularly hated Latin, did poorly in the subject and eventually dropped it. He also never quite got the hang of cricket, although he did his utmost to keep up with the rest of us . . . I remember his refusing to

The Kennedys’ London home at 14 Prince’s Gate, across the street from Hyde Park, was a badly deteriorated structure. Joe Kennedy spent \$250,000 of his own money to refurbish and furnish the home to make it suitable for elegant entertaining. Today it is the Royal College of General Practitioners. A plaque on the façade notes that John F. Kennedy lived there. (*Archives of the Royal College of General Practitioners.*)



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join the English Boy Scouts because he would have had to say a pledge of allegiance to the throne. He didn't want to appear unpatriotic to the United States."

CLEMENTINE CHURCHILL'S COUSINS David and Sydney Freeman-Mitford, the second baron and baroness Redesdale, maintained a home just around the corner from Prince's Gate. The Kennedys became friendly with this eccentric couple, whose six daughters variously championed the era's prevailing political ideologies. Unity and Diana had embraced fascism, and Jessica, twenty-one, had taken up communism and eloped to Spain with Winston Churchill's cousin Esmond Romilly. The youngest daughter, Debo, who went on to become the duchess of Devonshire, says, "I was never in the least bit interested in politics. I had too much of it at home."

Along with Kathleen Kennedy, Debo was one of the celebrated debutantes of the 1938 season. "Of course, everybody loved her," she would say of Kick. "It was the effervescent energy, all the things that go with—not beauty—but a kind of liveliness which is very rare." Joe Kennedy's bright young assistant Page Huidekoper adored Kick, even though she believed that Kick "did not have an intellectual bone in her body." They would become good friends.

ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY, Joe got in trouble with his Irish-Catholic supporters in Boston when he accompanied other diplomats and dignitaries to a full-dress court levee at Buckingham Palace. A Boston friend phoned to inform him there was talk of burning him in effigy in South Boston. It was a sober reminder of how carefully he was being watched at home, and of how many constituencies he had to satisfy.

The next morning Joe was back at Buckingham Palace, presenting Rose to the queen, who came forward with a "happy, natural smile" to greet her. In their conversation, Rose noticed how keenly the queen understood politics. Dressed in her most chic two-piece blue suit, the ambassador's wife hid her anxiety and made small talk with the queen about raising their children: Princess Elizabeth was close in age to Bobby, and Princess Margaret was only slightly younger than Jean.

Rose had arrived in England six weeks before the official beginning of the London Season. According to protocol, she would have to meet the mothers of the year's debutantes before any of them could attend the parties she would throw for her daughters Kathleen and Rosemary. On

March 25, Lady Malcolm, the daughter of Edward VII's famous mistress Lily Langtry, had Rose to tea to meet all the mothers. The women, who looked, Rose thought, conservative with "little make-up" and "hardly any lipstick," were ushered up separately to meet her. Rose found them to be cordial, but proper in a way that chillingly reminded her of Boston Back Bay society.

Joe, meanwhile, had his own impending encounter with the British establishment. American ambassadors traditionally delivered their first major speech before the high-level political, diplomatic, and business members of London's Pilgrim's Society. The new envoy's speech was typically a non-controversial paean to Anglo-American unity. Kennedy's speech, coming at this time of increasing anxiety about the possibility of war, would be carefully scrutinized on both sides of the Atlantic.

On March 14, four days before the speech, Joe received a diplomatic dispatch from Hull, who told him that its tone was too rigid and that the content made America appear more isolationist than she was. Hull made clear that his changes had been reviewed and approved by the president. Politely downplaying his orders as "suggestions for your consideration," he asked Kennedy to omit comments about the American people's lack of interest in foreign affairs and their unwillingness to go to war.

At the Pilgrims dinner, held at Claridges, Lord Halifax joked about Joe's athletic prowess, his hole-in-one, and the fact that Britain's weather had been surprisingly sunny ever since the ambassador's arrival. Britain was lucky, Halifax said, that the new ambassador was "so representative of modern America." The feeling in the room was so convivial, Kennedy wrote his friend Arthur Krock, "that it was difficult to let them have the unpalatable truth I had to offer." He wrote his speech with an eye to reassuring Americans that, as he said to Krock, "he had not gone over to the British."

Extolling bluntness, Kennedy told his British hosts, "we should always be able to speak plainly, knowing that there can arise no misunderstanding that plain speaking will not clear away." Of the attitudes of his fellow citizens, he told them, "The average American has little interest in the details of foreign affairs . . . [and] today has two worries. He fears he may lose his job and he fears his country may get into a war . . . It must be realized that the great majority of Americans oppose any entangling alliances . . . We cannot see how armed conflict can be expected to settle any problem or to bring happiness or contentment to any nation. There certainly was no winner in the World War, we can all see now."

He gave words of encouragement for both isolationists and interven-

tionists: “In some quarters,” he said, the U.S. attitude has “been interpreted to mean our country would not fight under any circumstances short of actual invasion. That is not accurate, in my opinion, and it is a dangerous sort of misunderstanding to be current just now. Others seem to imagine that the United States could never remain neutral in the event a general war should unhappily break out. That I believe is just as dangerously conceived a misrepresentation as the other.” Afterward, Joe noted in his diary that parts of his speech “fell flat.”

On March 21, assessing his first weeks on the job, Kennedy sent Arthur Krock the first of many “Private and Confidential” letters that he would dispatch to many friends and American opinion leaders, among them columnists Walter Lippmann and Boake Carter; anti-New Deal columnists John O’Donnell and Hugh Johnson; William Randolph Hearst; T. J. White of the Hearst organization; Felix Morley of the *Washington Post*; Russell Davenport of *Fortune*; J. Pierrepont Moffat, the European section head at the State Department; diplomat Bernard Baruch; Jimmy Roosevelt; assorted senators, and the chairmen of the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committees. Inexplicably, the president was not included. Roosevelt became increasingly annoyed at Joe’s eagerness to inform everyone but the one man to whom he was beholden.

Joe’s first two letters to Krock showcase his isolationist views. “The march of events in Austria made my first few days here more exciting than they might otherwise have been,” he wrote, “but I am still unable to see that the Central European developments affect our country or my job.” Economic factors were crucial, he went on to say. “An unemployed man with a hungry family is the same fellow, whether the swastika or some other flag floats above his head.” He was worried about the effect of continued economic doldrums: “A few more months of depression of values will have us and the rest of the world so deeply in the doghouse that war might seem an attractive out. Pressure is brought to bear on those in authority to do something drastic to better the economic lot of their subjects . . . Britain . . . can’t go on much further unless there is a general pick-up. After all, the armament program will have to be financed with borrowed money. They have practically reached the limit of taxation, they seem to think.”

Joe thought the British were working on a “general appeasement” until they were “strong enough to stand up to the bargaining table with a few aces in the hole . . . That is a long shot, perhaps, but at least they think they know what they are doing. Are any of the rest of us conscious of what we are doing, if anything?”

Joe was convinced that “[n]obody is prepared to talk turkey to Messrs.

Hitler and Mussolini” and risk war. He, however, made the mistake of assuming that “none of these various moves has any significance to the United States, outside of general interest . . .”

ON MARCH 24, Neville Chamberlain delivered a long-awaited speech, telling the House of Commons, “the fundamental basis of British foreign policy [is] the maintenance and preservation of peace,” but made clear that “that does not mean that nothing would make us fight.” Britain would not give a direct guarantee to protect Czechoslovakia. Nor would she guarantee to fight with France to defend the Czechs. Such a promise would leave Britain no control over the circumstances that might precipitate a war, Chamberlain said. Britain would not fight over an area “where our vital interests are not so concerned as in France and Belgium.” Joe told Arthur Krock that Chamberlain’s speech was a “masterpiece.” “I sat spell-bound in the diplomatic gallery,” he continued. “It impressed me as a combination of high morals and politics such as I had never witnessed.” The speech, he said, “simply slew the Opposition.” Other, more experienced, politicians did not agree with the greenhorn ambassador.

Winston Churchill’s speech was as prescient as it was eloquent: “After a boa constrictor has devoured its prey it often has a considerable digestive spell . . . Now after Austria has been struck down . . . there may be another pause . . . then presently we will come to another stroke. For five years . . . I have watched this famous island descending incontinently, fecklessly, the stairway which leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning, but after a bit the carpet ends.” The nation, “rising in its ancient vigor, can even in this hour save civilization.”

Two days later, as if to confirm Churchill’s foreboding, Hermann Goering told Jews that they should leave Austria, and Hitler cranked up his propaganda campaign to undermine the Czechs by convincing Konrad Henlein, leader of the large Sudeten German minority in Czechoslovakia, to ratchet up tension by making unrelenting and unreasonable demands on the Czech government.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, March 29, the dowager Queen Mary received Joe and Rose in a small sitting room in her home, Marlborough House. Rose was impressed that “[s]he sat very straight, [and] was meticulously groomed.” Attuned to power, Joe noted in his diary that the queen struck him as “one to rule the roost.” Queen Mary’s willingness to receive the Kennedys was part of a concerted effort by the royal family and the upper classes to make America’s representatives feel welcome in England.

THE VIRGINIA-BORN NANCY ASTOR, a passionate collector of interesting people and a vigorous proponent of British-American friendship, could not wait to meet the new ambassador and his family. In 1918 she had succeeded her husband Waldorf Astor as a member of Parliament for Plymouth, becoming the first woman to serve in the House of Commons. Among her intimates were Mahatma Gandhi; George Bernard Shaw; Philip Kerr, the eleventh marquess of Lothian, who would soon become British ambassador to the United States; Lady Alexandra Metcalfe, whose easygoing and dim husband “Fruity” was a notoriously close friend—some say romantically close—of the duke of Windsor; Geoffrey Dawson, editor of the London *Times*; Rudyard Kipling; Charlie Chaplin; and T. E. Lawrence. They all visited the Astors at their London townhouse and at Cliveden, their huge Italianate mansion, which had been designed by Charles Barry, architect of the Houses of Parliament. Situated on an idyllic bend in the Thames River, it offered panoramic views of the Berkshire countryside.

Nancy Astor was often brilliantly witty but could also be tactless. According to Debo Mitford, “there was a fearsome uncertainty as to what Lady Astor might say or do.” She was known to interrupt Churchill’s speeches at the House of Commons by yelling, “Rude,” or “Shame.” Once at a party, Churchill, wanting to get attention, called, “How many toes are there in a pig’s foot?” Nancy retorted, “Take off your shoes and count.”

Fearless, big-hearted, and sometimes muddle-headed, Lady Astor—and her taciturn husband—championed Kathleen Kennedy and her parents as vibrant new faces on the London scene. The support of the era’s leading social and political hostess was a coup for the Kennedys, especially given Lady Astor’s previous expressions of anti-Catholicism.

It would also prove to be a mixed blessing. Joe Kennedy was soon branded a “Cliveden set appeaser” by the leftist journalist Claud Cockburn, who claimed that the guests at Cliveden were an influential, Hitler-adoring cabal plotting to make British foreign policy pro-Nazi. In reality, Lady Astor’s gatherings were populated by a mix of pro- and anti-appeasement politicians and celebrities. Cockburn hit a nerve, however, exploiting intense fears on both sides of the Atlantic about people in power kowtowing to the Nazis. When reports of Kennedy’s “Cliveden sympathies” reached the American press, Joe sent Nancy Astor a playful note: “Well, you see what a terrible woman you are, and how a poor little fellow like me is being politically seduced. *O web ist mir!*” Ultimately, Cockburn would do significant damage to the international reputations of Kennedy and the Astors.

Before her first visit to Cliveden, Kick wrote her friend Lem Billings she was “scared to death not knowing any of them,” but she enjoyed herself. According to Rose, Nancy Astor thought of Kick as a “kindred soul, a younger version of herself . . . they would both talk about anything with great spirit and intelligence.” Kick was also introduced to Nancy Astor’s favorite after-dinner entertainment, charades and musical chairs, and found the evening “very chummy and much gaiety. Dukes running around like mad freshmen.”

Rose had first met Lady Astor on March 30, at the American Women’s Club luncheon. Lady Astor, who had five sons and a daughter, told Rose over lunch that she “quite envied me the last three youngsters.” Right from the start, Rose, emotionally inhibited and very proper in public, was drawn to Nancy, who was her opposite, the kind of freewheeling woman who would chew gum while wearing a \$75,000 tiara. “She is great fun anyplace, talks about everything, anything, intelligently and with gusto and with an inexhaustible sense of humor,” Rose wrote in her memoir. “Also she is a clever mimic, and when she puts in a pair of false teeth she changes her whole facial expression and is marvelous.” By contrast, Rose said of herself, “Well, I am just an old-fashioned girl. I don’t drink, I don’t smoke and I have a lot of children.”

On April 4, the Astors entertained the new ambassador and his wife at a star-studded dinner at their Victorian townhouse in St. James’s Square. Joe crowed in his diary that Clementine Churchill, sitting next to him at dinner, had told him that “her husband liked me very much and would see me any time that I cared to see him,” and that the Archbishop of Canterbury told him that “he knew of no one who met the success I had since my arrival and wanted to have me for lunch.” Joe took an immediate liking to Lady Astor. With their blunt and at times reckless manners, the two were worthy sparring partners.

DURING THE LATE 1930S, London was a menaced and menacing city. Oswald Mosley’s black-shirted fascists marched through heavily Jewish neighborhoods. Communist, fascist, and democratic values were at war amid a realm where aristocratic power was fading and social classes clashed. On April 10, tensions over British support of fascism boiled over in Hyde Park when Unity Mitford, smartly dressed and sporting her swastika badge, showed up at a Socialist Party event, “Save Peace, Save Spain,” and was attacked by the crowd. Police officers had to rescue Unity when the angry Socialists started pushing her toward the Serpentine River.

That same day Joe Kennedy also made news, with his decision to end the presentation of U.S.-residing debutantes at the court of King George VI. The *New York Times* reported that he had been “driven almost to distraction by a flood of applications from home.” Joe also released a letter he had written to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts explaining why he would not present a young lady from his home state at the British court: It was “undemocratic” to choose, merely on the basis of the number and quality of their recommendations, a small selection of women from a large pool of applicants. Kennedy had received three hundred letters from young women living in the United States and abroad. One Midwestern applicant had submitted references from six governors, five senators, and thirteen House members. Joe declared that only Americans living in England, or family members of American officials in Britain, would be presented. Cynical observers could not help but note that Joe’s decision allowed his own daughters to be presented at court with less competition for attention.

In her memoirs, Rose Kennedy called the weekend of April 9 “one of the most fabulous, fascinating events” of her life. When the Kennedys arrived for their visit to Windsor Castle, the master of the household took them to their rooms in a castle tower. While sipping their cordial and savoring their dizzying rise to the highest ranks of society, Joe reportedly told his wife, “Well, Rose, it’s a hell of a long way from East Boston.” His words, perhaps apocryphal, have passed into legend as part of the Kennedy story.

The Kennedys dined in the Garter Throne Room, with its spectacular chandeliers and tables with floral centerpieces so tall that the king could barely see the queen across the table. Joe sat next to Queen Elizabeth, and Rose shared the king with Mrs. Chamberlain. Conversing with the queen during dinner, Kennedy propounded the American isolationist position about involvement in Europe’s affairs: “When they remember 1917 and how they went in to make the world safe for democracy and then they look now at the crop of dictatorships, quarrels, and miseries arising out of that war they say to themselves, ‘Never again!’ And I can’t say I blame them. I feel the same way myself.”

“I feel that way too, Mr. Kennedy,” the queen answered. But, according to Joe, she did not hesitate to challenge him: “But if we had the United States actively on our side, working with us, think how that would strengthen our position with the dictators.”

Joe may not have taken the queen’s words to heart, but he found her very appealing: “Fired by an idea, speaking rapidly, her face acquired a charming animation that never shows in photographs.” Kennedy told her

that a visit by the king and queen would greatly improve Anglo-American relations. As he put it to the queen that night, “You could charm them as you are charming me.” He broached the same idea privately with the king. Their Majesties, who had long wanted to come to the United States, were enthusiastic.

Lady Halifax asked Joe what his friend Franklin Roosevelt was like. Joe told her about Roosevelt’s heroic struggle against his disability and his doughty will: “If you want him in one word, it is gallantry. The man is almost paralyzed, yet he ignores it and this forces others to overlook it. He dominates a room. I have seen him, when he is determined to win an argument, rise to his full height and, bearing his weight solely upon his arms braced against the desk, make the point to bring him victory.” Joe’s praise for Roosevelt would redound against him; the president did not appreciate anyone talking about his disability.

After dinner the women joined the queen, who stood alone in front of a fireplace so that she could have a private audience with each of the wives. During Rose’s fifteen minutes with her, she mispronounced “Ma’am”—the correct form of address for the queen—until Her Majesty took pity on her and released her from that formal obligation. Discussing the difficulties of sleeping in noisy London, the queen was amused when Rose confessed to sleeping with wax in her ears.

Rose studied the queen as Lady Halifax, her lady-in-waiting, brought Mrs. Chamberlain and the other ladies up for their private conversations. She was standing under Van Dyck’s famous portrait of the five older children of King Charles I. Rose was captivated by this portrait and had a premonition: “There was something about seeing those children frozen for that moment in time, blissfully ignorant of all the pain of the years ahead, that made me shudder inside and suddenly feel afraid.” Despite her public image as an unfailingly optimistic individual, Rose was privately fatalistic, “believing that tragedy had to follow triumph, as surely as night follows day—that Providence allows no perfect, happy families.”

The following afternoon, while out for a walk with Halifax, Prime Minister Chamberlain and Ambassador Kennedy began to bond. Chamberlain explained that every time he tried to address the German government’s incessant complaints about having been deprived of their rightful territories, they refused to become specific as to what territory they wanted back and when.

On April 16, he got his Anglo-Italian pact. The agreement, known as the “Easter accords,” was signed in Rome—and with it, Chamberlain hoped, would come peace in the Mediterranean and a wedge against Hitler

in Eastern Europe. Despite a barrage of criticism, the British would recognize Italy's sovereignty over Ethiopia in return for the cessation of Italy's anti-British propaganda in the Middle East, and for Italy's agreement to reduce its troop fighting in Libya and in the Spanish Civil War. Lord Halifax asked Joe to press Roosevelt to issue a statement supporting the agreement. But the most FDR was willing to say publicly was that the treaty was "proof of the value of peaceful negotiations."

Any optimism about the Anglo-Italian agreement was tempered by a fresh crisis brewing in Czechoslovakia. The Nazi propaganda machine was spreading stories that the Czechs were torturing and mistreating its Sudeten German minority. Feigning outrage, Hitler claimed that he had to defend his maltreated compatriots. On April 21, Hitler ordered secret plans for an invasion of Czechoslovakia. Five days later, the German Reich withdrew from the New York World's Fair. Germany's willful alienation from the community of nations further portended war.