

The Diary of Adolf A. Berle

1937-1971

The Franklin D Roosevelt Library

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

INTRODUCTION

Adolf A. Berle, Jr., was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1895. He graduated from Harvard in 1913 and received an M.A. degree the following year. In 1916, he earned a LL.B. from Harvard Law School and joined the law firm of Louis Brandeis. When the United States entered World War I, he enlisted in the Army, was commissioned a second lieutenant, and served as an intelligence officer at the Army War College in Washington, D.C. In 1918, he was sent to Santo Domingo to settle land titles for American sugar companies in order that they might increase sugar production for the war effort. In the course of this work he drafted a land law that is still in force in the Dominican Republic. After the Armistice he was assigned to the American Commission to Negotiate the Peace as an adviser on Russian, Polish and Baltic affairs. He objected to the Versailles settlement and asked to be relieved from his duties with the Commission in May 1919.

Following his discharge in July 1919, Berle returned to the practice of law in New York. In 1929, he and his brother Rudolf formed the firm of Berle and Berle. At the same time, Berle also began teaching, first as a lecturer at the Harvard Business School from 1920 to 1927, then as associate professor and professor of corporation law at Columbia University from 1927 until his retirement in 1963. In 1963 he was named professor emeritus.

Berle's association with Franklin D. Roosevelt began in 1932 as a member of the Brain Trust, a group headed by Raymond Moley which advised Roosevelt during his campaign for the presidency. Although he declined a formal position in the Roosevelt administration, Berle continued to assist the President in many ways. He participated in the Treasury conference during the "Bank Holiday" in March 1933, went to Cuba as financial

adviser to the American Embassy in August 1933, advised the President on stock exchange legislation, helped write a section of the Bankruptcy Act, and served as special counsel of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation from 1933 to 1938.

During this period, Berle was also active in New York City affairs. From 1931* to 1937, as Chamberlain of the City of New York, Berle worked to improve the city's finances and to consolidate its rapid transit rail lines under public ownership. In 1937, the office of the Chamberlain was abolished at his suggestion and he became temporary chairman of the Planning Commission of the City of New York and a member of the City Housing Authority. In 1934, he was elected to the Advisory Committee of the Board of Governors of the New York Stock Exchange.

In 1938, Berle accepted an appointment as Assistant Secretary of State, a post he held until 1944. He took particular interest in Latin American affairs, serving as a U.S. delegate to the inter-American conferences in Lima (1938) and Havana (1940). (He had been a delegate to the 1936-37 Buenos Aires conference and later attended the 1945 conference at Mexico City.) His duties at the Department of State included postwar planning, negotiating with the Allied governments in exile, coordinating U.S. and foreign intelligence activities, evaluating trends in international finance, drafting statements on international questions, and writing speeches for the President and administration officials. He was president and chairman of the U.S. delegation to the International Conference on Civil Aviation held in Chicago in 1944. From 1945 to 1946 he served as United States Ambassador to Brazil.

After the war Berle returned to law practice and teaching. He participated actively in New York politics as chairman of the Liberal Party of New York from 1947 to 1955. He worked with a number of foundations such as the Fund for the Republic, the Twentieth Century Fund, and the Rockefeller Foundation and served

on the boards of a number of committees, universities and corporations. He maintained his interest in Central and South American affairs, making frequent trips, conducting extensive correspondence with Latin American leaders, and acting as a link between the liberal elements in Latin America and the U.S. government. Although he no longer held a government position, officials continued to seek his advice. In 1956, at the request of the State Department, he assisted in the settlement of a dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. When John F. Kennedy was running for the presidency in 1960, he asked Berle to serve as chairman of a task force to study Latin American problems. After Kennedy's inauguration, Berle was made consultant to the Secretary of State and chairman of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Latin America which Kennedy established to coordinate "all policies and programs of concern to the Americas." Berle resigned these posts in July 1961, after submitting to the President the final report of the Task Force.

Mr. Berle's books include the immensely influential study *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (1932) written in collaboration with Gardiner Means, *Liquid Claims and National Wealth* (1934 with Victoria Pederson, *The 20th Century Capitalist Revolution* (1954), *Power Without Property* (1959), *Latin America: Diplomacy and Reality* (1962), and *Power* (1969). He wrote numerous articles and book reviews for such publications as *Survey Graphic*, *The Reporter*, *New York Times*, *Vital Speeches*, *Harper's Magazine*, and for several legal journals.

Adolf A. Berle died in New York on February 17, 1971. In 1973, Mrs. Berle donated her husband's papers to the Roosevelt Library. Berle's versatility and long career make his papers a rich source for the study of twentieth century America, particularly the Roosevelt years. His wide-ranging interests ran from the Henry Street Settlement and the tenurial problems of the Pueblo Indians and the sugar farmers of Santo Domingo all the way to the Free Europe Committee,

L'Ecole de l'Europe Litre at Strasbourg and the Twentieth Century Fund, of which he was chairman.

The Berle papers are most significant as a primary source in diplomatic history. The evolution in United States foreign affairs may be tracked through his files on the American Commission to negotiate the Peace (1919), the State Department (1938-1944) and President Kennedy's Latin American Task Force (1960-1961). Fully one-quarter of the entire collection is devoted to diplomatic matters between 1938 and years when Berle was Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador to Brazil. Of particular concern are those papers relating to the Pan American Conferences, the St. Lawrence Seaway, postwar problems, and the International Civil Aviation Conference. Relations between the State Department and the White House unfold in Berle's memoranda to and about Franklin D. Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, Edward J. Stettinius and Sumner Welles. Berle's ambassadorial papers demonstrate the broad scope of United States interest in Brazil during 1945-46. Since Berle was a prolific writer and made many public speeches, his speech and writings file contains numerous drafts of articles, reviews and speeches on foreign relations. There was no easing off as he grew older, for the desire to write and speak out on foreign affairs was as strong as ever.

The Berle collection vividly recalls the economic and political milieu of those years we call the "Great Depression." The series dealing with the 1932 presidential campaign contains pivotal exchanges with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Raymond Moley, and Felix Frankfurter bearing on the election and the formation of New Deal policies. In his role as government adviser during the 1930's, Berle accumulated papers pertaining to railroad bankruptcy legislation, the Securities Act of 1933, the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the New York Stock Exchange, banking legislation, the Temporary Economic Committee, and other economic measures and institutions. His files, for example, contain notes on the Treasury Conference of March 5, 1933,

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convened during the bank holiday. Berle also addressed himself to these economic, financial and related social questions in his articles and addresses. Berle's concern for the welfare of minorities is documented in a file on the American Indian Defense Association (1923-24) as well as in his correspondence relating to the Henry Street Settlement and Lillian Wald. A life-long and heartfelt interest in education and social and economic research is evidenced by extensive files on the Columbia Law School, the Superior Education Council of Puerto Rico, the Twentieth Century Fund, and the Ecole de l'Europe Libre. Files of correspondence with his friend, Fiorello LaGuardia, and other politicians associated with the State's Liberal Party indicate Berle's interest in New York politics.

A small but significant part of the total collection is Berle's diary, a 34-year record of his important conversations, correspondence, decisions, observations, and opinions. He began his diary in February 1937, shortly before becoming Assistant Secretary of State, and continued it at increasingly irregular intervals until January 1971. Interspersed among the diary entries are letters, memoranda of conversations, speech drafts, and clippings which supplement the entries. This supplemental material is particularly voluminous for the war years when Berle lacked the time to make frequent and detailed entries. Much of his postwar correspondence with Latin American leaders is also in the diary file. The regularity with which Berle kept his diary varies considerably over its tenure, depending on Berle's government position and the press of business. One entry will ordinarily cover several days' activities. Over half the diary is concerned with the years of Berle's service as Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador to Brazil. Entries for later years tend to be both shorter and less frequent .

General topics covered in the diary include his personal and family affairs, his involvement in

New York and national politics, his teaching at Columbia, his concern with the threat of communism in the United States, and his service as Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador to Brazil, and head of President Kennedy's Latin American Task Force. During his years with the Department of State, the diary entries reflect Berle's special concern with American relations with the Free French and governments in exile during World War II, coordination of Allied intelligence activities, speechwriting for the President and administration officials, international aviation policy, and domestic economic policy.

The diary file is arranged in chronological order by the date the entry was prepared. Since entries were usually prepared to cover the events of several days, letters, memoranda of conversations, and other supplementary material may precede a related entry. At one time the diary pages were numbered, but the numbering system was disturbed when the diary was arranged in its present form and no longer has meaning. Although several pages of the diary were missing when it came to the Library, all but a few pages were found elsewhere in the Berle papers. The absence of the remaining items is noted in the proper places in the file. A small number of documents in the diary are still security classified or donor restricted. Control sheets indicating the removal of closed documents have been filmed with the diary. Researchers who want information about the closed documents or who wish to request mandatory review of classified items should write to the Director, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York 12J38.

In 1973, Mrs. Adolf Berle and Travis Beal Jacobs published an edited version of the diary under the title *Navigating the Rapids 1918-1971: From the Papers of Adolf A. Berle*. Since no formal diary was found for the years 1918-1936, the record was reconstructed from Berle's correspondence and writings. This earlier material has not been included in the present microfilm publication. The copyright to that part of the diary

published in *Navigating the Rapids*, which amounts to approximately 20 percent of the total diary file, has been retained by the publisher Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., and is reproduced in this microfilm publication with its permission. Researchers who wish to reproduce or quote from copyrighted portions of the diary must obtain permission from the publisher. If you wish to quote from any part of the diary we suggest you contact the Library for advice. Although rights in the rest of the diary have been donated to the United States, researchers should be aware that this involves only Berle's writings. The authors of letters and memoranda to Berle retain their rights. It is the responsibility of the researcher to observe these rights. Questions regarding permission to reproduce or quote may be referred to the Director of the Roosevelt Library who can advise researchers as to the status of copyright in specific portions of the diary.

Users of this microfilm publication are asked to indicate clearly in their citations which items they are referring to. Such clear citations will aid the Library in helping other researchers who request items which they found cited in other authors' works. Citations should include the type of document (e.g., letter, memo, diary entry, etc.), name of sender and recipient, date, file number or title, and the body of material in which it is filed, and lastly, a reference to the Roosevelt Library. The library does not object to abbreviated forms. Citations to material from microfilm should mention that fact. An example of a correct citation to the material in this microfilm publication is:

Diary entry, August 20, 1943, *The Adolf A. Eerie Diary* (Hyde Park, H.Y., Franklin D. Roosevelt Library: 1978), Roll 5, Frame 82.

Access to the originals of the Berle diary, the rest of the Berle papers, and the other collections of the Roosevelt Library may be had upon application to the Director. The library makes every effort to

provide the researcher with all of the material he requests, However, certain collections, including the Berle papers, contain material which is closed either by stipulation of the donor's deed of gift or by government regulations. Comparatively few documents in processed collections are now closed. In order to fully inform researchers about closed material, each file from which documents have been removed contains a document control card listing all security classified or donor restricted documents. These control cards have been filmed in the appropriate places. The staff of the library is continuously reviewing closed material, with a view to opening as much as possible. Information on the progress of this review is published in *Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives*. A complete listing of each item opened since February 1970, is maintained at the library.

Under the provisions of Executive Order 11652, a researcher may request mandatory review of United States security classified material more than ten years old. The review is made by the government department or agency which originally imposed the restriction. The researcher may obtain more detailed information about access to collections or about review programs by writing to the library.

The Berle Diary was prepared for filming by Jeanne Schauble, who also wrote these introductory remarks and provided the other editorial material.

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2	NOVEMBER 1939 – APRIL 1941
3	MAY 1941 – MARCH 1942
4	APRIL 1942 - JULY 1943
5	AUGUST 1943 - MARCH 1945
6	APRIL 1945 - 1953
7	1954 - 1960
8	1961 - 1971

ROLL NOTES

The following is a list of major issues and events documented within the appropriate rolls:

Roll 1: 1937 - October 1939

Berle's appointment as Assistant Secretary of State, New York City politics, the Supreme Court controversy, economic policy, the Munich agreement, neutrality legislation, and the outbreak of war in Europe.

Roll 2: November 1939 - April 1941

Aid to the allies and the lend lease bill, the Russian invasion of Finland, the status of Greenland and Iceland, relations with governments in exile, the fall of France, the Pan American Conference at Havana, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and the third term controversy.

Roll 3: May 1941 - March 1942

The St. Lawrence Seaway, peace planning, the German invasion of Russia, American entry into the war, the Declaration of the United Nations, St. Pierre and Miquelon, the Rio de Janeiro Conference, and intelligence activities.

Roll It: April 1942 - July 1943

Relations with the Free French, Britain and Russia, New York politics, the invasion of North Africa, intelligence matters, and postwar planning.

Roll 5: August 1943 - March 1945

Resignation of Sumner Welles, events in Greece, Yugoslavia, and Poland, policy toward Argentina, the surrender of Italy, the Normandy invasion, the International Civil Aviation Conference, Berle's resignation as Assistant Secretary of State and appointment as Ambassador to Brazil, and the Pan American Conference in Mexico City.

Roll 6: April 1945 - 1953

Death of President Roosevelt, Brazilian affairs, Berle's resignation from the State Department, Liberal Party (N.Y.) affairs and New York politics, Cold War policy, the 1952 election, the National Committee for a Free Europe, and Latin American affairs.

Roll 7: 1954 - 1960

Affairs in Costa Rica and Puerto Rico, correspondence with Latin American leaders, Radio Free Europe, U.S. politics, the Cuban revolution, the 1960 election, and President-elect Kennedy's Latin American Task Force.

Roll 8: 1961 - 1970

The Interdepartmental Task Force on Latin America, events in Latin America particularly Cuba, Costa Rica, and Venezuela, Viet Nam and political unrest in the United States.