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BRITISH EMBASSY,
 WASHINGTON, D.C.,
 January 20th, 1939.

No. 72.

My Lord,

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With reference to my telegram No. 20 of the 12th January, I have the honour to transmit herewith copies of the text of the President's message to Congress on defence. The proposals actually made fall short of the very large increases, especially in the airforce, which the press had led the public to expect. Figures as high as \$1,600,000,000 had been canvassed, instead of the \$525,000,000 now asked for.

2. I have the honour to enclose notes by the Naval, Military and Air Attachés to this Embassy on the detailed proposals contained in the message.

3. Press comment has, on the whole, been favourable, and relief at the moderation of the President's demands is commonly expressed in editorials. "Balanced" and "businesslike" are typical adjectives from New York papers. Even the normally critical "New York Herald Tribune" calls the programme "seemingly well-calculated to meet the actual needs of the new conditions". The Scripps-Howard "New York World-Telegram" thinks the programme is one which should and will receive support. The "Baltimore Sun" and one or two Mid-Western papers feel that more information

should/

The Right Honourable

The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,

etc., etc., etc.

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should be given about the foreign policy which these greatly increased armaments are designed to support. The "Chicago Tribune" goes so far as to deny that the danger to the United States has increased in the last three years and to argue that the President himself is responsible if it has.

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4. A good deal of interest has been aroused by the reported evidence given to the secret meeting of the House and Senate Military Affairs Committee on January 10th by the United States Ambassadors in London and Paris, as mentioned in my telegram No. 18 of the 11th January, and especially in Mr. Kennedy's alleged disclosure that he was responsible for Colonel Lindbergh's reports on the German and Russian air forces and for their communication to His Majesty's Government. While conceding that importance must be attached to the Ambassador's views, the press is, on the whole, inclined to take their reported warnings with a grain of salt. On the other hand Mr. Bullitt recently told the French Ambassador that he thought the members of the Committee were considerably impressed. The timing of the secret session was certainly planned by the administration to prepare the minds of members for the President's defence message. This strategy appears to have been effective. The sum asked for is small indeed compared with what Congress

is asked to vote for relief funds, and the message is temperately written, with its initial disclaimer of hysteria. The President is not likely to meet with much opposition except from those political opponents who argue that the whole defence plan is just a scare to throw dust in the eyes of the public which is getting tired of New Deal extravagance. If he had asked for more he might have got it from Congress, but evidently his military experts have warned him that in present conditions his programme is about as big as is practicable in the coming year. In this connexion I would invite Your Lordship's attention to the Air Attaché's remarks.

5. As regards the state of public opinion at large on the question of rearmament, the results are worth mentioning of recent polls taken by the American Institute of Public Opinion, whose surveys have proved remarkably accurate in the past. These have shown that eight out of ten who took part in them want to see the army and navy increased, and that nine out of ten favour a larger air-force.

The surveys also show that a majority is even willing to pay larger taxes on this account. Nearly half the voters in a recent survey thought, moreover, that the United States would have to fight Germany again within their lifetime.

6. Since the foregoing was drafted an Administration bill giving the Secretary of War authority to provide up to six thousand airplanes to the Air Corps, together with airships and

balloons/

balloons necessary for training purposes has been introduced in the House by Representative May, Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, and a similar measure will shortly be introduced in the Senate. The bill is reported to have been introduced in the exact form in which the War Department drafted it and constitutes the first item of legislation necessary to carry out the President's recommendations. In outlining details of the defence programme to the House Military Affairs Committee Major General Arnold, the Chief of the Air Corps, is reported as emphasising strongly that the programme was "for defence only.... and not for operation in the Eastern Hemisphere or for the attack of any other country"; also that it was necessitated by "world conditions now prevailing and in prospect".

7. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Canada.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,

My Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient,
humble servant,

(SGD) V. A. L. WALLEY,

H.M. Chargé d'Affaires.