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SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL PEACE FEELERS
SEPTEMBER 1939-MARCH 1941.

THIS memorandum contains a summary of the chief peace-feelers which have been received by His Majesty's Government, the terms suggested where these were defined, and the reply returned where such was considered necessary or desirable.

2. It will be seen that these feelers occurred, generally speaking, at certain clearly defined periods and corresponded to the progress of German operations in the military sphere. The most substantial and forthcoming offers were received during and after the lightning campaign in Poland, when the German Government hoped that the Allies would recognise the accomplished fact and agree to a settlement before fighting began in the west. Even after Mr. Chamberlain's speech on the 12th October, 1939, which made it clear that the door was closed to all compromise on the German model, further less definite overtures were received until the outbreak of fighting in the spring. The suggestions began again after the collapse of France, when they were represented as a last offer before the invasion of England. Understandably, the terms offered were even less favourable than those advanced after the war in Poland. Though they were decisively rejected, feelers continued in a desultory fashion throughout the autumn of 1940 and the spring of 1941, but no serious basis for negotiations was suggested.

3. In nearly all these overtures Göring was alleged to be either the prime mover or at least an interested party. It was he who, according to the Swede, Dahlerus (section 1), hoped to negotiate an honourable settlement after the fall of Poland and offered to replace Hitler as the real ruler of Germany once peace was signed; and his name has constantly recurred. The other principal element alleged to be in favour of peace was a section of the German Army. These gentlemen were said to fear the outcome of the pact with the Soviet Union and to favour a peace of compromise, accompanied by the removal of Hitler and his replacement by a more moderate Government. They never suggested, however, any detailed basis for discussion and they never afforded any evidence of their ability to carry out such terms as might be agreed upon or to bring about the promised change of Government; while they gave no proof that the new Government would be any more trustworthy than the old.

4. It is not easy to decide precisely how genuine these different approaches were. It is no doubt true that certain sections of German opinion hoped before the outbreak of war that a more moderate handling of the situation would produce a compromise with England which would still satisfy the bulk of Germany's aspirations. After the war had begun this section may still have hoped that peace on the same basis was possible. It seems clear, however, that their influence was greatly overstated by the emissaries who approached us on their behalf, while the terms suggested, in so far as they were ever defined, did not ever offer a theoretical basis for negotiation. All the proposals amounted to suggesting that we should purchase peace at the sacrifice of the cause for which we were fighting and of the Allies with whom we had taken up arms. In fact, if the various moves are considered together and not in isolation, they appear suspiciously like elements in a grand propaganda design, aimed principally at testing the strength of the peace school in England and at sowing the seeds of doubt in our minds and in the minds of the less stalwart neutrals, through whom the overtures were mostly directed.

5. The policy adopted by His Majesty's Government in 1939 and 1940 was to ignore the less serious approaches and to answer those which appeared more authentic on the model of Mr. Chamberlain's statement in Parliament on the 12th October, 1939. At the same time the President of the United States was made aware of the suggestions which we had received and of our attitude towards them, in order that there should be no doubt in the United States of our