Secret Affairs

Gellman, Irwin

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

Gellman, Irwin.  
Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles.  

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/69482
WHILE ROOSEVELT DROVE TO mobilize his countrymen to defeat the Axis, Hull had emerged as a part-time secretary of state, excluded from the war councils, brushed aside by the White House, and disgruntled over his lack of control within his own department. But he seemed oblivious to the fact that his political decline was attributable to his worsening physical condition. The secretary considered any taint on the foreign service to be a personal affront that had to be repelled, and in order to maintain some semblance of control he was ready to defend his department from incursions by Henry Morgenthau, Henry Wallace, Harry Hopkins, or any other intruder.

Hull, furthermore, never totally accepted Roosevelt’s thrust because of the rage he had aimed at Welles. Instead, the secretary launched a concerted attack against his chief assistant on three grounds: first, he was a homosexual and therefore an embarrassment (or worse) to the State Department; second, he acted irresponsibly in making foreign policy decisions; and third, he had proven disloyal. Upon returning to his office in late April 1942, Hull confided to his friend Breckinridge Long private
discussions that he had had with Roosevelt and Welles about the homosexuality charges. The discussions reassured Hull, causing him to question the truthfulness of the allegations—but he was ready to make contingency plans just in case.\footnote{1}

Toward the end of June, Hull met with Welles concerning the considerable attention that the under secretary had drawn to his postwar planning speeches. Roosevelt, according to Welles, had encouraged members of the administration to make postwar policy statements as trial balloons in order to gauge the public’s reaction. Welles asserted that he was not charting any new policy courses, but that he would submit his speeches to Hull for advance review, if he so desired. The secretary also objected to Welles’s depiction of the United States as eventually policing the world and caring for its people; those concepts ran contrary to the secretary’s practical approach of solving current problems and not peering too far into the future.\footnote{2} Assistant Secretary Berle thought that even though Welles had made some excellent points, it should have been Roosevelt or Hull who made them. But they had not, and as a consequence, “there is . . . an increase in tension between Mr. Hull and Sumner. I don’t know what the end of all this will be; it was forecast at the Rio Conference.”\footnote{3}

Long, too, was troubled, for Hull was “irritated and nervous—almost agitated. Said he could no longer trust Welles—he was laying plans for himself, was making speeches without approval and with an illusory consent ‘weasled’ . . . out of the White House.” The secretary was unfamiliar with many departmental procedures and decided to handle ambassadorial discussions, a function that nominally fell under Welles’s supervision. He was also suspicious and angry that others, such as Wallace, were trying to usurp his duties: “It is an odd humor for him to be in. He is nervously tired and lacks something of his fire and perspicacity—though he never was decisive. Tenacious to an idea—yes—but very, very awfully slow at decision.”\footnote{4}

Bullitt added to the friction. At the time of the Rio conference, he had been a special presidential emissary to the Near East and had not returned to New York until the end of January 1942, too late to commiserate with Hull over Welles’s alleged transgressions at Rio, for the
secretary had already left for Miami. Although Bullitt did not have a chance to confer with Hull, the envoy did have an opportunity to tell Harold Ickes about Welles’s disgraceful performance. The secretary of the interior had already heard Bullitt’s criticism of Welles’s diplomatic gaffes and his homosexuality. As a result, Ickes perceived that Roosevelt was driving the former ambassador out of the government because of his erratic behavior and his attacks on Welles.

With no new assignment from the White House into which to channel his positive energies, Bullitt openly campaigned to remove Welles and his followers from office. When the ambassador saw the vice-president, for example, Bullitt bitterly explained that he had had to move his offices out of the State Department because Berle had supposedly photostated some private correspondence and refused to destroy it. When Bullitt had demanded Hull’s intervention, the secretary had admitted that he had no control over Welles’s or Berle’s actions, and that was when Bullitt had left. He also had spoken with Hull and his wife, who, according to the ambassador, declared that “Welles was worse than a murderer” because of his homosexual conduct. Bullitt deplored this: “the President was weak in not firing Welles at once.” When these stories filtered back to the Oval Office, Roosevelt, on April 8, decided to limit the damage by offering Bullitt another overseas mission to the Near East, but he declined in favor of a specific job with a definite purpose. The president promised to consider this request, but nothing concrete ever came of it.

While anxiously hoping for a presidential appointment, Bullitt intensified his attacks on Welles by using social functions as forums. During trips to the capital, the former ambassador shared the quaint Georgetown house of his closest adviser, Carmel Offie, himself a homosexual, who had assisted Bullitt since 1934. At a small dinner party given on May 20 for Vice-President Wallace, Attorney General Francis Biddle, and their wives, Offie began telling anecdotes. One involved the rise of Batista in Cuba and a request by the admiral commanding U.S. naval forces that Welles recognize the Cuban military ruler. The ambassador stood erect, and with great pomposity responded in his deep, pontifical voice: “I will not shake hands with that nigger.” When Offie vividly described Welles’s extreme distaste at shaking hands with a “nigger,” Wallace glanced at Bullitt, remembering his stories of the under
secretary's sexual proclivities toward male Negroes, and found him laughing hilariously.

Another incident that the gathering found amusing was Welles's visit to Bullitt at the American embassy in Paris just before the Munich conference. While they were talking, Offie interrupted to see if they wanted more Scotch and soda—which both men were freely imbibing—at which point he overheard Welles tell Bullitt, "I have always admired you. You are the most distinguished member of our career service. I trust that you will do me the honor of calling me Sumner and that I may have the privilege of calling you Bill."

Biddle mentioned that Welles had recently talked to him about possible appointees to a committee, and that the attorney general had suggested, "Why I think Bill would be excellent on that committee." Welles angrily declared that he would not consider Bullitt for any post because of the scurrilous rumors that he was spreading.9

Although this kind of occasion gave Bullitt an opportunity to smear his enemy, the episode also demonstrated his greatest liability: he talked too much, too indiscreetly, and to an extreme. His poor taste was a mild embarrassment. Alone he was annoying, even troublesome. But when Hull decided to supply the needed punch, he called on Bullitt for the knockout combination that would ultimately interfere with the administration's successful prosecution of the war effort.

Bullitt knew that the president disapproved of these attacks, but the ambassador somehow clung to the expectation that he would receive a major executive appointment. Writing the president on June 13, Bullitt began to realize that he had fallen from grace: "I do not care about anything except helping to beat Hitler and the Japanese. If there is anything I can do with you or for you, I want to do it. If there is nothing, I must try to serve in other ways."10 Nine days later, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox made him a special assistant secretary to the navy and sent him to England to work on the North African invasion. For the remainder of the summer, Bullitt dealt with vital military issues rather than fomenting dissension inside the State Department, for he was too far removed to plot against Welles.11

However, Bullitt's departure did not end Welles's troubles. By late summer, Hull had linked Welles's perceived disloyalty to the gossip about
his homosexuality. The secretary mentioned this delicate situation to Long in July, and by the fall, it had crescendoed. Returning from a cabinet meeting on September 11, Hull confided to Long that he had investigated the stories about Welles’s alleged homosexual conduct, and that although he had no documentary proof, he now believed the rumors.

Long, for his part, had “too much confidence” in Welles to accept the gossip; in addition, he remembered how similar unfounded charges against Senator David Walsh, Democrat of Massachusetts, who chaired the Naval Affairs Committee, had almost destroyed him. In May the press had reported that New York City detectives and naval intelligence officers had raided a Brooklyn brothel for homosexuals that was reputed to be a haven for Nazi spies. They had learned from the manager that Walsh was an occasional customer and that he had met with a known German agent there several times. Roosevelt had no sympathy for homosexuals in general and Walsh in particular: if the senator were guilty, he should commit suicide. Without knowing that J. Edgar Hoover had had the brothel under surveillance for months, Roosevelt ordered a full FBI investigation. After a lengthy interrogation, the manager recanted his identification, and FBI agents later located another suspect who not only matched the senator’s description but also had been at the brothel on the dates in question. Walsh was exonerated, but not before Hoover had accumulated an eighty-five-page “Official and Confidential” file containing other derogatory material on the senator.12

Hull was afraid that the press might publish a story about Welles that might stain the State Department’s reputation, or even worse, since Welles was so close to the White House, impair the president’s prestige. Uncertain about how to proceed, the secretary asked Long for advice, and he suggested that the secretary pointedly give Welles a chance to refute the allegations. Long refrained from mentioning that he had already spoken with Welles on several occasions about these charges as early as that spring, and that the under secretary had vehemently denied them, holding Bullitt responsible for spreading the vicious gossip. Long was sympathetic, for he believed Bullitt to be dishonorable and unreliable, but the former ambassador had placed Welles in an impossible position: “there was nothing one could do. To deny the story publicly
would be to add to its currency and would detract from his dignity by mentioning or alluding to a filthy scandal." Long had no easy answers, but it was clear that something had to be done before Welles suffered "serious consequences."13

In the midst of the quandary over how to respond to these unsavory charges, Hull left Washington on October 2 for a seventeen-day vacation at his wife's home in Staunton. During his absence, Welles gave his speech before an audience in Boston attacking Chile and Argentina for not breaking off relations with the Axis, and by his return Hull had bitterly condemned Welles in private discussions with his associates for taking this initiative without prior consultation. Mimicking those who attacked Welles's judgment, Hull argued that the address had violated the good neighbor spirit and signaled the possible resumption of Yankee imperialism.14

Welles's speech prompted Hull to arrange a secret meeting at his apartment with J. Edgar Hoover on Saturday, October 24. In the privacy of his home, Hull lectured the FBI director on Welles's "headline hunting" and his improper speeches, especially the recent statements on Chile and Argentina. In the secretary's eyes, "this matter had been entirely and grossly mishandled" because Welles had not consulted him, and the results might be disastrous. Hull also told the director that Mrs. Hull had heard several senators' wives discussing Welles's homosexuality at tea parties and talked at length about the gossip circulating in the capital. The secretary understood that the FBI had investigated these charges over a year ago and asked for a copy of the report in order to evaluate the evidence. Hoover admitted conducting an investigation at the request of Pa Watson and having transmitted the findings to Marvin McIntyre, the presidential appointments secretary. If Hull wished to read the file, he required White House permission. The secretary promised to contact either McIntyre or Roosevelt because "the situation was of a character that there might eventually be some publicity of considerable embarrassment unless some steps were promptly taken."15

Without ever actually reviewing the file, Hull now had verified its existence, knew where to find it, and strongly suspected that the documentation would confirm the truth of the allegations. Armed with this information, the secretary eventually secured a copy of the file.16 Even
before reading the narrative, he had become openly abusive of Welles’s reputation, to the point of referring to his chief subordinate as “my fairy.” When talking to Nelson Rockefeller, the secretary regularly belittled Welles for five, ten, or twenty minutes at a time by referring to him as “that polecat in the next room” and proclaiming that “he wasn’t going to get into a public pissing contest with a polecat.” On the other hand, Rockefeller, during interviews with Welles, never heard him criticize his superior.

Unbeknownst to Hull, the FBI added a bizarre element to its investigation. Friends of a well-known Philadelphia racketeer who was imprisoned and trying to win a pardon had learned about the Welles scandal. Toward the end of 1942, his associates considered sending a letter to Roosevelt, threatening that if no pardon was forthcoming, they would release sensational material on the under secretary. But before the plan could be carried out, the convict died in jail, and nothing ever materialized. Other unconfirmed reports of Welles’s alleged homosexual propositions periodically surfaced. According to one source, several FBI agents covered the under secretary twenty-four hours a day, and one of these guards had followed Welles on a train ride to Warm Springs, where the agent caught the under secretary and a Negro train employee in a compromising act. Hoover later commented that rumors like these would make the 1944 presidential campaign the dirtiest ever.

During the winter of 1942–1943, tensions inside the State Department grew dramatically worse. Although Hull looked old and frail, he acted quite energetically in his crusade against his disloyal subordinate. The secretary and his wife, according to Bullitt, complained that things were happening in the department of which the secretary had no knowledge, and that Welles’s errors in judgment and sexual misconduct further upset them. However, the secretary still refrained from asking Roosevelt to fire the under secretary. At the end of the year Hull lunched with Canadian Prime Minister MacKenzie King. The two men discussed several diplomatic problems, but the secretary was particularly worried about the rampant factionalism within the State Department. Hull had tried for some time to eliminate this kind of unhealthy competition, but the White House, he claimed, refused to cooperate in ending the intrigue. Adding to these problems was Welles, who maintained an
exhausting schedule, was "completely swamped under present conditions," and hardly had any time "except for urgent and immediate business."²¹

Roosevelt conveniently forgot his responsibility for creating this unwholesome rivalry. From the very start of the New Deal, he had welcomed Welles as well as others to come to the White House and present their ideas that could contradict the secretary's. The president was at last paying the price for his divisive management style. Already known for his antipathy toward the diplomatic corps, he was growing terribly frustrated with the Hull-Welles powder keg. That summer he remembered that as far back as 1932 he had intended "to clean up the State Department," but "Hull had not done a thing." Those accusations grew more caustic in late November 1942, when the president complained, "Cordell was absolutely helpless as an administrator and . . . he claimed he didn't have any control over his own department." Roosevelt also berated Welles and Berle for being publicity-hungry bureaucrats, but he never acknowledged that, as president, he had permitted this unconventional structure to flourish.²²

At the beginning of 1943 the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that Berle lamented in his diary, "The antagonism between Secretary Hull and Mr. Welles makes a good deal of difficulty; the Secretary resents Sumner's going to the White House too much but as he does not go very much himself, this leaves the President at the mercy of unskilled advisers."²³

In early March, Bullitt provided yet another example of his talent for sowing dissension by suggesting that the United States should negotiate points of disagreement with the Soviets before the fighting stopped. He warned that if this did not occur the United States would lose whatever bargaining position it had and the communists would come to dominate postwar Europe. He pressed his position in a memorandum to his superior, Navy Secretary Knox, resurrecting fears of Soviet aggression after the Nazi collapse. If the United States did not act quickly to gain concessions from the Soviets, Bullitt predicted, American forces might have to fight the Japanese alone. Secretary of War Stimson read Bullitt's arguments but dismissed them on the grounds that the United States had to cooperate with Stalin. When Drew Pearson learned about Bullitt's
recommendations and Stimson's rejection of them, he exposed the disagreement in the "Washington Merry-Go-Round." Bullitt promptly phoned Stimson to ask him to issue a denial, but he balked: "I realize what a preposterous thing it was for me to have my time taken up with this wretched, selfish, disloyal man's troubles. He has gotten into this mess himself by virtually being disloyal to his chief."  

Whereas Bullitt was blackballed from government service, Roosevelt generally simply ignored Hull. The president, for example, did not inform the secretary about the Casablanca conference until just before his departure, and he took along Harry Hopkins, deliberately snubbing the State Department. When Roosevelt announced the unconditional surrender pledge, Hull was not consulted and merely rationalized it as a military decision, albeit one with tremendous diplomatic implications. 

Despite the constant bypassing of his office, Hull's popularity with the American people soared. If Bullitt had his way, the secretary should fire Welles, Berle, and Acheson; with them gone, Hull should appoint individuals in whom he had confidence. At the end of January, Bullitt presented his case to the White House: "Hull has an old line American wisdom which is so great that I have not known him to go wrong once in the past ten years on a fundamental decision. Moreover, his prestige in the nation is unique. He is far more trusted than any other member of your administration. And he has an influence with the Senate which is very great and will be vital in obtaining the consent of the Senate to postwar agreements."  

In public, Roosevelt continued to rely on Hull's great prestige, but in private, the president still belittled him and single-handedly directed wartime policy. Humiliated by the executive decision to eliminate him from military strategy discussions, Hull had decided to confront Roosevelt upon his return from North Africa in order to force a showdown over Welles's dismissal. However, he did not present this demand in the form of an ultimatum, and as long as Hull did not give Roosevelt this distasteful choice, the president postponed any decision. 

Yet even if the president had accepted Hull's request, the secretary still needed Welles. Hull, for example, left his office for a week in mid-February looking pale and coughing badly. He returned for a brief period and on the twenty-fifth headed for Palm Beach, Florida, for a
longer rest with his wife. He was not only physically ill but also dis­tressed over recent press criticism of American decisions made in North Africa in dealing with the various French factions.30

Before leaving the capital, Hull had wired British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden to delay a trip to the United States for several days to coincide with his return from Florida. Eden replied that this was impos­sible, and Welles informed Hull that he and Roosevelt would handle the discussions so that the secretary could complete his rest. Upon receiving the message on March 12, Hull lost no time in booking passage on the evening train to Washington to meet with Eden on March 15.31 During the ensuing discussions, Eden noticed the friction between Hull and Welles: “Their relations were vinegar, although the Secretary of State when speaking of his Under-Secretary in his absence was acidly cor­rect.”32 Just before Eden returned to London at the end of the month, the secretary gave a dinner party for the foreign secretary at which Welles was not present. The British statesman preferred to work with Welles and believed that Roosevelt held the same opinion. Eden liked Hull, but he disapproved of his obsession with the reciprocity program and his pursuit of private vendettas, such as his hatred of de Gaulle.33

Eden’s criticism was mild compared to that of Felix Frankfurter, who repeated his call to replace Hull with Acheson. The associate justice knew that the secretary was often sick, away from his desk, and in­capable of supervising his staff. Frankfurter acknowledged that the secretary would not resign, but noted that as long as Welles continued to function well, the State Department operated efficiently. The columnist Walter Lippmann concurred and argued that Hull should retire to let Welles assume command. Even if the rumors of his homosexuality were true, he would still be an improvement over Hull.34

Hull became even more agitated when, on April 8, Pearson pub­lished a devastating column calling for the secretary to leave office. Hull was determined to remain for two reasons: first, Congress was at that time debating the renewal of the reciprocal trade agreements program, and second, his wife opposed his retirement. The truth, according to the reporter, was that the secretary simply did not have the physical strength to stay in office. In 1942 alone, he had been out of Washington for six months, and he continued to miss some time each week. There had been
a time when he had conducted daily press briefings, but currently weeks passed without any contact with the media. But Hull would continue “until the last horn blows.” Welles, by comparison, took on even more duties that brought him into daily contact with the White House. When the president had a question, he usually talked directly to the under secretary, who seemed instantly to know the answer. Welles also had given the recent foreign policy addresses, and Roosevelt had specifically asked him to speak before the *Herald-Tribune* forum on current and postwar diplomacy.\(^{35}\)

Hamilton Armstrong, editor of the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs*, was an audience for another of Hull’s harangues, declaring that Welles had inspired the “scavenger” columnist Pearson to write that Hull was only a nominal cabinet official, and that by encouraging this kind of journalism, Welles was guilty of treachery. Armstrong disagreed and lamented that during “the greatest war in the history of the world, it is too awful to have the head of the premier department of the government suspect disloyalty on the part of his subordinates.” If Hull suspected betrayal, he should take action instead of choosing to wait: “he is a great believer in giving people rope enough to hang themselves. . . . Hull is notoriously one of the most sensitive and suspicious people who ever held office.”\(^{36}\)

Once again upset by the alleged disloyalty of Welles, Hull now actively searched for coconspirators with whom to plot against the under secretary. In late April, Hull met with Attorney General Biddle to ask him to go to the White House to have Welles fired, but Biddle refused. When Biddle later talked to Ickes, they agreed that if Hull forced the issue, Roosevelt would have to relieve Welles. Even though Welles carried on most of the departmental business, Hull had a powerful national following, and the White House needed that political clout.\(^{37}\)

The secretary also contacted Leo Crowley, who had served as chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and later as alien property custodian. A devout Catholic who had been a successful Wisconsin businessman, he had become a powerful Democrat in the administration, had gained a reputation as an adroit manipulator of patronage, and was known as a man with many congressional supporters.\(^{38}\) Biddle also pointed out that Crowley had worked for the attorney general and
“was very skillful at settling rows and cleaning up messes.” He also was friendly with James Byrnes, who had unofficially won the label “assistant president” for his work in domestic affairs and who had talked with Hull many times about the allegations against Welles. One afternoon, Roosevelt asked Byrnes for his advice, and the former associate justice replied that if Welles were being unjustly accused, the president should stand by him, but if the allegations were valid, Welles should go. Roosevelt then admitted, “I believe Hull’s statement is correct.” Byrnes now knew that the accusations were based on fact.

As the rumors of Welles’s homosexuality spread to a wider audience, it was clear that eventually someone antagonistic to the administration would hear about the scandal. Senator Ralph Owen Brewster, Republican of Maine, was that man. Never a major political force, he was known for his opposition to the New Deal and his assignment on the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, better known as the Truman committee, which had gained a national recognition for exposing wrongdoing in wartime procurement contracts.

Armed with some details concerning the 1940 train episode, Brewster called on J. Edgar Hoover on April 27, asserting that “thoroughly reliable sources” had informed him that the FBI had investigated “certain alleged disgraceful actions upon the part of” Welles. The senator even declared that he had the names of the FBI agents and those whom they had interviewed. He then stated “that the information was so shocking that he had not discussed this matter with any one but had come directly to see [Hoover] in order to determine whether or not any such investigation had in fact been made by this Bureau.” Hoover admitted making a report on the incident but told Brewster that if he wanted more information, he should see Hull, who was well acquainted with the charges. Without knowing that the secretary himself had choreographed these very steps, Brewster followed Hoover’s lead and talked to Hull, who confirmed the story and in turn blamed Roosevelt for refusing to remove Welles. Since the president would not act, Brewster next went to Biddle to find out why. If nothing would be done, the senator, as a member of the Truman committee, threatened to launch an inquiry into these allegations. With the real possibility of a public exposé, the attorney general promised to take up the matter with Roosevelt.
Biddle scheduled an appointment with Pa Watson on Monday, May 3. Now that a congressional adversary knew about the incident, the president had to take measures to prevent it from becoming public knowledge, even though that would involve the painful and disagreeable task of firing Welles. Even though the under secretary was the only member of the diplomatic corps who both fully understood foreign affairs and had the trust of the White House, the greater political reality made those advantages meaningless. If Brewster pursued his inquiry, it would pose a major liability for the Democratic ticket in the 1944 campaign.43

The president had heard that Bullitt had spread rumors about Welles’s homosexuality, and he asked him to come to the White House for a meeting with his press secretary, Stephen Early, on May 5 at 11:00 A.M. When they met, Early accused Bullitt of talking with Hull and others about Welles’s conduct; Bullitt responded that he had discussed the subject three times with the president and would only take up this issue with him. Early disregarded this response and alleged that Bullitt had turned over documents on the train incident to Eleanor “Cissy” Patterson, the publisher of the Washington Herald, a charge that Bullitt branded “a complete lie.” Toward the end of the meeting, the ambassador cautioned Early to remind Roosevelt that Welles “would be his Achilles Heel, and that he must dismiss him both for his own good and for the good of the country.” After giving that advice, Bullitt admitted that he and the president had moved from a cordial to a distant relationship but said that he had no regrets; he had done his duty, while Roosevelt had closed his mind and surrounded himself with “yes men.” Early agreed that even though the president wished to silence the gossip about Welles’s sexual habits, they were about to become public. The meeting ended on this somber prediction, and so did Bullitt’s service at the White House.44

The next day the attorney general discussed the Welles matter with the president. By that time, Biddle had already spoken with Truman, who had promised to keep the entire affair out of his committee’s deliberations. Crowley had seen the Republican leaders, and they promised not to bring up the subject either. The President “was very much relieved and grateful.”45
These White House tactics did not impede Hull’s momentum in removing Welles. The Hulls invited Farley to dinner at their apartment on May 8. Hull was in good physical condition, but he was still distressed over his treatment by Roosevelt and Welles. The secretary expected to remain at his post until failing health dictated retirement. Disturbed by the wide spread of the homosexuality gossip, the Hulls understood that several embassies had now learned of the story, and they feared that if the rumors spread much further, newspaper coverage could not be far off. Hull had informed the president about these possibilities, but Roosevelt had refused to fire the under secretary. The Hulls were even more pessimistic because they now believed that the Republicans would win the 1944 presidential election.46

To undermine Welles’s authority, Hull began that spring to insist that every crucial departmental matter come across his desk, instead of his subordinate’s. When, in the middle of June, Welles went to New York to complete negotiations with the Bolivian president that had begun in Washington, Hull demanded to know why he had not been advised of them so that he could participate. When Hull interrogated Harley Notter (who served as one of the department’s representatives on the postwar committee for a new international organization) about Welles’s central role, the secretary became angry and threatened to attend those meetings. Prior to that conversation, the secretary had ignored the committee’s deliberations.47 When Berle anticipated traveling to England for bilateral talks, Hull objected to what he considered independent action. By the end of June, Hull was frustrated with Welles’s disloyalty and his unfair treatment at the hands of the White House. He was disappointed at not receiving proper credit for his work on the trade agreements, the good neighbor policy, and other policies, but, according to Farley, the secretary was “determined to sit it out.”48

In a talk with Morgenthau on July 9, Hull painfully conceded that since Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt had not consulted him on major foreign policy issues, “and I just don’t know what’s going on and the President won’t let me help him.” Hull, who asserted that he himself made no mistakes, compared himself favorably to Welles, who made several major blunders. Under his system of scorekeeping, Hull could not con-
ceive why Roosevelt favored the under secretary over him on foreign policy questions.49

Roosevelt’s insensitivity to Hull’s real and imagined complaints made Hull hate Welles all the more. Since Hull could not directly attack the president, the secretary went after his most vulnerable confidant, and he chose the period after Congress adjourned that summer to make his move. When the under secretary went on a brief vacation from July 8 through 12, Hull seized the opportunity to meet with Brewster and Bullitt to plot against Welles. The secretary also spoke with Long about the possibility that foreign governments that had learned about Welles’s homosexuality might try to blackmail him. Hull was further agitated over the under secretary’s contacts with the White House; the secretary thought that the results of these conferences went unreported to him, and he resented being uninformed.50

Hull met with Roosevelt for lunch on July 16, probably to discuss Welles’s resignation. By that time, the president knew that Bullitt’s charges were widespread and that if the under secretary resigned, Brewster would not bring the sordid episode before the Truman committee. The secretary seemed confident that he had finally triumphed toward the end of the month, when Berle reported that Hull was “in excellent form; he seemed to think that matters were beginning to clear up.”51

To place even more pressure on the president, Hull asked Arthur Krock, the powerful Washington bureau chief for the New York Times, to write a front-page article on the many bureaucratic conflicts in the government, especially the State Department. According to the reporter, Hull was virtuous whereas Welles had emerged as a bitter rival who was trying to oust his superior. This kind of inappropriate behavior disrupted the smooth running of international affairs.52

While Roosevelt was responding to the assault against Welles, he was also preparing for the Quebec conference. When Churchill had arrived at Hyde Park on August 12 for preliminary discussions, he was unaware of Roosevelt’s predicament concerning Welles, possibly because Hull was also a houseguest. Roosevelt did divulge that he and the secretary would leave New York on Sunday for a brief trip to Washington and then head for Canada, without explaining the reasons for this decision.53
That Monday, August 15, Roosevelt lunched with Hull at the White House and later summoned Welles. According to the secretary's memoirs, the president told Welles that Hull had demanded his removal. To soften this painful blow, the president, with Hull's concurrence, offered Welles a roving ambassadorship to Latin America or a special assignment to the Soviet Union. After completing his task, Welles would then quietly leave government service. With this distasteful duty done, the president left for Quebec. After the White House interview, Welles immediately returned to the State Department, where he confronted Hull. The secretary admitted asking the president to remove Welles, but steadfastly maintained that Roosevelt had concluded that the homosexual gossip would "explode in Congress with great damage to the State Department." The secretary held out the special mission as an opportunity for Welles to continue serving his country. The under secretary then rose, went over to Hull's desk, shook hands, and left. From that moment forward, they never again spoke to one another.

Hull had won. "I never saw him in a better humor," Farley reported after a meeting late Tuesday morning. The secretary "appeared to be very happy over his own situation because it looks to me, as if he is going to get clear on the Welles situation and he said he felt that within a few days everything would be all right." On the following day, Hull left the capital with his chief adviser, James Dunn, for the two-day journey to Quebec, the only wartime gathering that the secretary and the president ever attended together. Hull undoubtedly believed that Welles would remain as acting secretary during his absence, consider his options, and accept the secretary's offer. What other choice did he have? Satisfied with his accomplishment, the secretary turned to the upcoming conference at Quebec. He had gotten rid of his enemy and had done it quietly. Why should he not be satisfied?