

The Washington

Merry-Go-Round

Part 9-18-43

By Drew Pearson

(This is the third in the series of Drew Pearson's articles on the inside of the State Department, now holding the spotlight almost more than any other agency in Washington.)

ADOLF BERLE, JR., Assistant Secretary of State, is another of the many monuments to the fact that a man—or his wife—must have a private fortune if he is to go places in American diplomacy.

Coupled with this necessary wherewithal, Berle has one of the most brilliant minds in the Roosevelt Administration, a generally progressive approach, and an overweening conceit. There is some justification for this conceit. Berle entered Harvard a gangling youth of 14, still in knee-breeches, graduated in law at 21. He has written more weighty tomes — on "Liquid Claims," "Corporation Finance" and "National Wealth"—than any other Brain-Truster.

Finally he is progressive enough, according to the magazine *New Yorker*, to have twin tubs in his bathroom, so that he and Mrs. Berle, both busy people, can have time to converse while bathing. For this, he has won the title of "Two Bathtub Berle."

Mrs. Berle also is progressive—sometimes much to the consternation of the staid old State Department. It literally wrung its hands over Mrs. Berle's proposal to lecture on birth control in the Catholic capital of Peru while her husband was a delegate to the Lima Conference.

Mrs. Berle, the former Beatrice Bishop, had to be progressive to marry Adolf. She took her fortune in her hands when she did so. Her father disowned her and she was given away at the wedding by her uncle, Ambassador William P. Fletcher, former chairman of the Republican National Committee. Since then, however, she has secured a large share of the Bishop millions and recently sold a block of New York real estate for three million dollars.

Entrance to Diplomacy

WHEN ADOLF was a 21-year-old second lieutenant in the last war he got his first taste of diplomacy by a whim of fate which sent him to the Versailles Peace Conference. He was holding a minor job in the War Department's Military Intelligence, when the lieutenant colonel in charge of Russian affairs was transferred to Siberia. Next day the colonel in charge complained that with the lieutenant colonel's departure no one in the War Department could provide the daily quotation on the Russian ruble.

Berle volunteered, never told anyone that he dug up the ruble quotations from the *New York Times*, so later was taken to Paris as chief of the Russian Division of the American delegation.

Ever since, Berle has been an expert on Russia, and as such he has been (until recent weeks) an out-and-out Russian opponent.

The State Department's Russian policy always was based upon the old, last war thesis of building up a series of buffer states against Russia. Chief architect of this policy was Berle, and it is toward him that Secretary Hull usually has turned during lengthy round table State Department conferences when the question swung to Russia.

It was Berle who took a hand in stopping the shipment of oil refining machinery to Russia in the fall of 1914 after the President had approved.

Gen. James Burns, on July 23, 1941, had submitted a list of commodities which were to move to Russia, and the President signed a chit on July 25 which ordered that these materials must be "gotten through by tonight."

Berle vs. FDR

NEVERTHELESS, three months later, Berle took the lead in a State Department conference which held up the shipment of these oil refineries on the ground that they were needed at home. Eventually the Russians got their refineries, but a year late. By that time they were embittered by the delay and extremely suspicious of the State Department and Berle.

Another thing which has irked the Russians is the manner in which Berle and other anti-Russian advisers around Hull have given passports to enemies of Russia, while their own Ambassador, officially accredited to the exiled governments, was kept cooling his heels in London, not permitted to confer with the Free French in North Africa.

Among others, Berle and his friends gave a visa to former Finance Minister Matuzewski of Poland, listed by the Russians as one of three Polish leaders responsible for forcing a break of diplomatic relations. Yet Matuzewski not only was given a passport to enter the U. S. A., but now contributes articles to the Polish-American daily *Novy Swiat* violently attacking Russia.

When certain French democrats entered this country they were warned by the State Department to be careful what they

said in print. But not the Soviet-hater Matuzewski.

Naturally the Russians read the newspapers, and this rankles. They also are familiar with Berle's friendly cooperation with the anti-Russian leader, Tibor Eckhardt of Hungary who received a diplomatic passport from the State Department to enter this country. Eckhardt was even given a letter by Berle's office stating that his activities are fully known to this department and have been worked out in close cooperation with us."

Russian Suspicions

SINCE ECKHARDT showed the letter to many people, the Russians naturally heard about it, and it made them even more suspicious. But when Sumner Welles heard about it, he wrote another letter denying that Eckhardt had any connection with the State Department.

Suspected as a part of the plan of buffer states against Russia, was the entry of Milan Hodza, the Slovak leader who opposed the pro-Russian policy of President Benes. The State Department gave Hodza a passport without even consulting the Czechoslovak Embassy.

Supplementing this was a conversation between Berle and OWI representatives last winter at which time he claimed the military situation was stalemated and said the only way to end the war was through internal revolution in Axis territory. Russia, Berle said, was bogging down and could stage no real comeback. Germany would be extremely difficult to invade.

Therefore, Berle concluded, our one big hope was to stir up revolution within Europe. To that end, he said, it had now become the official policy of the United States to work with Admiral Horthy in Hungary, Count Ciano and Victor Emmanuel in Italy, together with certain Fascist leaders in Central Europe.

In the last few days, however, Berle has changed his tune. Last week he called in certain officials from other bureaus and expressed the broadest possible views regarding Russia. He even said that Russia could have all of Eastern Europe as far as he was concerned.

Apparently the recent public debate over Russia had had results. But the big question is whether Berle's change of heart is soon enough to have much effect on the suspicious and irritated Russians.