



# Our Man in Berlin

The Diary of Sir Eric Phipps, 1933–1937

*Edited by Gaynor Johnson*



## Our Man in Berlin

*Also by Gaynor Johnson*

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THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND BRITISH DIPLOMACY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY  
(*Editor*)

# **Our Man in Berlin**

**The Diary of Sir Eric Phipps, 1933–1937**

Edited by

Gaynor Johnson

palgrave  
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*This book is dedicated to the memory  
of Richard Morgan Williams,  
13 March 1903–21 March 2003*

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All of the photographs are from the Phipps papers, Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge.

# Preface

The Phipps papers survive in the Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge in some 30 boxes. They include royal, private and public correspondence; photographs; papers; speeches and memoirs. Yet the highlight must be the unpublished Berlin diaries. They are not much to look at. Two slightly frayed grey ring binders containing flimsy typescript sheets. Yet they form a remarkable personal testament, recording Phipps' close interaction with the Nazi leadership during those pivotal years in which Hitler consolidated his power base at home, and began his expansion abroad.

The diaries include accounts of Sir Eric's audiences with Hitler, from first meeting to farewell tea. The former took place against the backdrop of the German walkout from the Geneva disarmament conference. By the time of the latter, three-and-a-half-years later, Germany had re-occupied the Rhineland and was playing an active role in the Spanish Civil War. The real theme of this work is the attempt and ultimate failure of Britain to keep Germany engaged and contained within the post-Versailles international system.

It is surprising that the publication of the diaries should have taken so long. It has long been the desire of Sir Eric's family to see them in print. Now the voice of our man in Berlin can be heard alongside the voices of his Whitehall and Westminster colleagues and counterparts, among them Churchill, Eden, Cadogan, Hankey and Vansittart, who have long since had their memoirs or diaries placed in the public domain.

Like all historical sources, the diaries must be assessed critically. The volumes are not true diaries in the sense that they were produced just after the events they describe, albeit from contemporary notes and despatches. They were also clearly produced with an eye for publication. They represent not only Phipps' impressions of events, but also his interpretations of those events. This edition, through its comprehensive introduction and extensive footnotes, establishes the historical framework for the diaries and their author.

This publication of the diaries of Sir Eric Phipps does not seek to answer all the questions about Anglo-German diplomacy in the 1930's. Yet it does provide a unique insight into the complex and colourful personalities and processes that shaped relations during a period which has tended, with hindsight, to be viewed in very black and white terms.

ALLEN PACKWOOD,  
December 2006.  
Churchill College,  
Cambridge.

# Acknowledgements

Editing the Berlin diary of Sir Eric Phipps has been a very enjoyable experience. It offered all of the delights of historical research while presenting few of the pitfalls, such as indecipherable handwriting or impenetrable use of abbreviations. I have also been very fortunate in being supported and assisted by a number of people who have shared my appreciation of Phipps the man, and Phipps the diplomat. In particular, I would like to thank Phipps' daughters, Mrs Margaret Roberts and Mrs Mary Sykes, for encouraging me to publish their father's diary. My task as editor has also been greatly assisted by Mr Allen Packwood, Acting Keeper of the Archives at Churchill College Archive Centre, University of Cambridge, and by his staff. They provided me with a photocopy of the diary and offered advice on the photographs, as well as taking an on-going interest in the project. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to Professor David Dutton for his advice on diary editing, to Dr Peter Jackson for material relating to André François-Poncet and to Mrs Rosalind Fergusson for her linguistic skills and for helping me track down some of the references to French literature.

# Select Biographies

**Aretas Akers-Douglas, Viscount Chilston** (1876–1947). Foreign Office Attaché 1898; Third Secretary Madrid, Constantinople and Athens 1898–1905; Consul-General Sofia 1907; Chargé d’Affaires Montenegro 1911, 1913; in Rumania 1912, 1914; Secretary at Vienna 1909–1914; Diplomatic Secretary to the Foreign Secretary 1919; Minister at Vienna 1921–1917; at Budapest 1928–1933; Ambassador to Moscow 1933–1938.

**Reginald Clifford Allen** (1889–1939). Created Lord Allen of Hurtwood in 1932. Director of the *Daily Herald*, 1925–1930; Chairman of the Independent Labour Party 1922–1926; Member of the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union.

**Pompeo Aloisi** (1875–1949). Italian Minister in Rumania, Albania and ambassador to Tokyo and Ankara 1923–1932; Head of Italian Delegation to the League of Nations 1932–1936; Member of Italian Senate 1939–1945.

**Wilfred William Ashley, First Baron Mount Temple** (1867–1939). Under-Secretary for War 1923–1924; Minister of Transport 1924–1929; President of the Anglo-German Fellowship in the 1930s.

**Bernado Attolico** (1880–1942). Italian ambassador to Brazil 1927–1930; to Moscow 1930–1935; to Germany 1935–1940; to the Vatican 1940–1942.

**Stanley Baldwin** (1867–1947). British Prime Minister 1923–1929, 1935–1937; Lord President of the Council 1931–1935.

**Louis Barthou** (1862–1934). French President of Inter-Allied Reparation Commission 1922–1926; Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1934; assassinated in Marseilles with King Alexander of Yugoslavia.

**Józef Beck** (1894–1944). Military Attaché in Paris 1922–1923; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1932–1939.

**Eduard Beneš** (1884–1948). Czech Minister for Foreign Affairs 1918–1935, President of Czechoslovakia 1936–1938; 1939–1945 head of provisional Czech government in exile; resigned presidency 1947.

**Henri Béraud** (1885–1958). Journalist and satirist, known for his Anglophobic articles in *Gringoire*.

**Otto von Bismarck** (1897–1976). Counsellor in the German embassy in London, 1926–1937 and grandson of Otto von Bismarck.

**Werner von Blomberg** (1878–1946). Adjutant general of the Reichswehr 1927–1929; appointed commander of *Wehrkreis I* at Königsberg 1929;

Minister of Defence 1933–1935; War Minister and Commander in Chief of the German Army, 1935–1938; present at the Hossbach conference 1937.

**Leon Blum** (1872–1950). Entered Chamber of Deputies 1919; leader of Socialist Party 1924; with Daladier, Thorez, Herriot and Mayer formed the Popular Front 1935; French Prime Minister 1936, 1938.

**Major-General Ferdinand von Bredow** (1884–1934). Stellvertretender Reichswehr Minister in the Schleicher Cabinet 1932–1933. One of those murdered on 30 June 1934.

**Aristide Briand** (1862–1932). Secretary of French Socialist Party 1901; Elected Deputy 1902; Foreign Minister 1915–1917; 1921–1922; 1926–1932; awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 1926.

**Louis Brodsky** (1857–1947). Poet and opponent of Hitler. He made a speech in Washington in September 1935 denouncing Nazi rule and had been the magistrate in the *Bremen* case.

**Heinrich Brüning** (1885–1970). Served in Prussian Ministry of Health 1919–1921; adviser to German Christian Trade Union Movement 1922–1929; Centre Party Member of Reichstag 1924–1933; Chancellor of Reich 1930–1932; emigrated to the United States 1934; Lecturer in government at Harvard University 1937–1939; Professor of Political Science at the University of Cologne 1951–1955.

**Duke of Brunswick**, Ernst August (b. 1887). Duke of Brunswick 1913–1918.

**Duchess of Brunswick**, Viktoria Luise (b. 1892). daughter of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

**Edward Hallett Carr** (1892–1982). Joined the Foreign office 1916; Director of Foreign Publicity at the Ministry of Information 1918; Wilson Professor of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth 1936–1947; Director of Foreign Publicity 1939–1940; Assistant editor of *The Times* 1941–1946; Master of Balliol College Oxford 1953–1955.

**Robert Cecil** (1893–1972). Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office 1935–1938. Viscount Cranborne, 1903–1947; became fifth Marquess of Salisbury 1947.

**Vittorio Cerruti**. Italian ambassador to Berlin, 1932–1935.

**Austen Chamberlain** (1863–1937). Conservative MP 1892–1937; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1903–1905; Secretary of State for India 1915–1917; Minister without Portfolio 1918–1919; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1919–1921; Lord Privy Seal 1921–1922; Foreign Secretary 1924–1929; First Lord of the Admiralty 1931.

**Neville Chamberlain** (1869–1940). Lord Mayor of Birmingham 1915–1916; Director-General of National Service 1916–1917; Conservative MP 1918–1940; Minister for Health 1923, 1924–1929, 1931; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1923–1924, 1931–1937; Prime Minister 1937–1940; Lord President of the Council 1940.

**Winston Churchill** (1874–1965). Chancellor of the Exchequer 1924–1929; First Lord of the Admiralty 1939–1940; Prime Minister 1940–1945 and 1951–1955.

**Count Galeazzo Ciano** (1903–1944). Italian fascist leader, son-in-law of Mussolini; foreign minister 1936–1943.

**Countess Edda Ciano** (1910–1995). Daughter of Mussolini and wife of Count Galeazzo Ciano.

**Georges Clemenceau** (1841–1929). Mayor of Montmartre 1870–1871; Member of Chamber of Deputies 1876–1893; founder of *La Justice* 1880; Senator 1902–1920; Minister of the Interior 1906; Prime Minister 1906–1909; Prime Minister and Minister for War 1917–1920.

**George Clerk** (1874–1951). British ambassador to Turkey 1926–1933; at Brussels 1933–1934; Paris 1934–1937.

**T. Philip Conwell-Evans** (1891–1968). Lecturer in History at Königsberg University 1932–1934; Joint Secretary of the Anglo-German Society 1934–1939. He acted as interpreter for Lloyd George during his visit to Berlin in 1936.

**André Charles Corbin**. French ambassador to London, 1933–1940.

**Father Charles E. Coughlan** (1891–1979). American priest famous for weekly radio sermons after 1926 advocating social justice and critical of political repression.

**Robert Craigie** (1883–1959). Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the British Foreign Office, 1934–1937; Ambassador to Japan, 1937–1941; British representative to the United Nations War Crimes Commission 1945–1948.

**Édouard Daladier** (1884–1970). Minister of War 1933; Minister of Foreign Affairs 1934; Minister of Defence 1936; President of the Council 1938–1940, also Minister of War and Defence.

**Richard-Walther Darré** (1895–1953). Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture 1933–1945; Head of Reich Food Estate 1939–1942; member of the Reichstag from 1933 and Chief of the SS Central Office for Race and Resettlement.

**Yvon Delbos** (1885–1956). French Minister of Justice and Vice President, 1936; Foreign Minister 1936–1938; Minister of Education 1939–1940.

**Hans-Heinrich Dieckhoff**. Political Director of Department III in the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs; Ambassador to Washington 1937–1941.

**Georgi Dimitroff** (or Dimitrov), (1882–1949), Bulgarian Communist. Along with Blagoi, Popov and Tanev, accused of setting the *Reichstag* fire on 27 February 1933 but was acquitted. Appointed General Secretary of the Communist International in Moscow 1935; leader of Bulgarian Communists after 1944; President of Bulgaria 1946–1949.

**William E. Dodd** (1869–1940), American ambassador to Berlin 1933–1937.

**Englebert Dollfuss** (1892–1934). Austrian Federal Chancellor 1932–1934; also held the posts of Foreign Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Forestry during this period; short periods as Minister for Public Security and of Defence in 1933 and 1934; founded Fatherland Front 1933.

**Francis Percival Don** (1886–1964). British Air Attaché Berlin 1934–1937; Head of Mission to French Air Forces 1939; British Air Forces in France 1940; North Region Civil Defence 1943–1945.

**Gaston Doumergue** (1863–1937). Elected to the Chamber of Deputies 1893; Minister for Colonies 1895–1909; leader of trade mission to Russia 1917; French Prime Minister 1913–1914, 1934; President of the French Republic 1924–1931.

**Eric Drummond** (1876–1951). British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference 1919; Secretary-General to the League of Nations, 1919–1933; British ambassador to Rome, 1933–1939. Became 16th Earl of Perth, 1937.

**Friedrich Ebert** (1871–1925). President of the Weimar Republic 1919–1925.

**Anthony Eden** (1897–1977). Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1931–1933; Lord Privy Seal 1934–1935; Minister for the League of Nations 1935; Foreign Secretary 1935–1938, 1940–1945, 1951–1955; Knight of the Garter 1954; Prime Minister 1955–1957.

**Edward VIII** (1894–1972). King of Great Britain and Emperor of India 1936; abdicated 1936.

**Ex-Crown Prince of Germany** (Frederick). William von Hohenzollern, (1882–1951). Regimental commander Death's Head Hussars 1911–1914; commanded the 5th army 1914–1916; the southern army (Western Front) 1916–1918; in exile in Holland 1918–1923; paraded in Nazi uniform in 1933 but played no political role.

**Ex-Crown Princess of Germany** Cecilie, Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, (1886–1954). The wife of Frederick William von Hohenzollern.

**Ferdinand I** (1861–1948). King of Bulgaria, forced to abdicate, 1918.

**Sir William Fisher** (1875–1937). Chief of Staff of the Mediterranean Fleet 1919–1922; Atlantic Fleet 1922–1924; Fourth Sea Lord 1927–1928; Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff 1928–1930; Commander in Chief of the Navy 1932–1936.

**Pierre Étienne Flandin** (1889–1958). French Deputy 1914–1940; French Prime Minister 1934–1935; Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1936; chairman of *Républicains de Gauche* 1936; voted in favour of Pétain 1940; Vichy Foreign Minister 1940.

**Aimé Joseph de Fleuriau** (1870–1938). Ambassador to London 1924–1933.

**Francisco Franco** (1892–1975). Appointed Spanish Chief of the General Staff 1935; leader of nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939; fascist dictator of Spain 1939–1975.

**André François-Poncet** (1887–1978). Served as a Deputy infantry officer on the Western Front 1914–1916; Republican Deputy 1924–1931; Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1928–1931; Ambassador to Berlin, September 1931 October 1938; High Commissioner in Germany 1949–1955; Ambassador to Bonn 1955.

**Werner Freiherr von Fritsch** (1880–1939). Chief of German Army Command from 1934–1938.

**Friedrich Gaus**. Director of the Legal Department of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, 1923–1943.

**Virginio Gayda**. editor of *Giornale d'Italia*, a pro-fascist newspaper.

**George II**, King of the Hellenes (1890–1947). King of Greece 1922–1924, 1935–1941.

**George V** (1865–1936). King of Great Britain and Emperor of India 1910–1936.

**Dr Josef Göbbels** (1897–1945). German Minister for Propaganda 1933–1945. Phipps' usual spelling was Göbbels.

**Julius Gömbös** (1886–1936). Hungarian Minister of War under Bethlen, 1921–1931, and again under Julius Károlyi, 1931–1932, becoming Premier in 1932.

**Hermann Göring** (1893–1946). President of the Reichstag 1932–1933; Prime Minister of Prussia 1933; Commander-in-Chief of the German Air Force 1933–1945; Air Chief Marshal 1935; Commissioner for the Four Year Plan 1936; Field Marshal 1938; President of the General Council for the War Economy 1940.

**Dino Grandi** (1895–1988). Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs 1925, 1929–1932; Ambassador to London, 1932–1939; Minister of Justice 1939–1943.

**Franz Gürtner** (1881–1941). German Nationalist Party 1922–1932; Minister of Justice 1932–1941.

**Sigmund Gustloff** (1895–1936). Leading NSDAP leader in Switzerland, assassinated by David Frankfurter, a Jewish student, in Davos 1936.

**Sydney Harmsworth** (1868–1940). Proprietor of the *Daily Mirror*, 1914–1931, the *Daily Mail* and *Evening Standard*, 1922–1940. Created Viscount Rothermere, 1919.

**Ulrich von Hassel** (1881–1944). German Ambassador to the Vatican 1932–1938; Sentenced to death for his part in the July plot to kill Hitler.

**Edmund Heines** (1897–1934). Appointed SA Obergruppenführer in Silesia and commissioner of police at Breslau 1933.

**Nevile Henderson** (1882–1942). British Ambassador to Buenos Aires 1935–1937; Ambassador to Berlin 1937–39.

**Konrad Henlein** (1898–1945). Leader of Czech Sudeten German Youth Movement 1923–1933; Leader of the Sudeten German Homeland Front in

1933 to replace the Sudeten German National Socialist Party which had been dissolved in 1932; *Gauleiter* for the Sudetenland 1938–1939; commissioner for Bohemia 1939–1945.

**Edouard Herriot** (1872–1957). French President of the Chamber 1936–1940; interned in Germany 1944–1945; President of the National Assembly 1947–1954.

**Rudolf Hess** (1894–1987). Reich Minister. Joined National Socialist Party 1920; deputy party leader, 1933.

**Konstantin Hierl**. German Secretary of State for the Interior; head of the Nazi Labour organisation.

**Heinrich Himmler** (1900–1945). Served as a naval ensign 1918; head of the SS 1929–1945; and of the Federal German Police Force 1936–1945; Minister of the Interior 1943–1945; Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army 1944.

**Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg** (1847–1934). President of Germany 1925–1934.

**Adolf Hitler** (1889–1945). Chancellor of the German Reich 1933–1945; Head of State 1934–1945.

**Sir Samuel Hoare** (1890–1959). British Secretary of State for India 1931; Foreign Secretary 1935; First Lord of the Admiralty 1936; Home Secretary 1937–1939; Secretary of State for Air 1940; special ambassador to Spain 1940–1944.

**Leopold von Hoesch** (1881–1936). German ambassador to Paris 1924–1932; Ambassador to London 1932–1936.

**Elliot Hotblack** (1887–1979). Major First Rhine Brigade 1921; General Staff Office War Office 1927; Instructor Staff College Camberley 1932–1935; Military Attaché Berlin 1935–1937; General Staff Office 1937–1939; ADC to the King 1939.

**Alfred Hugenberg** (1865–1951). German President of the Nationalist Party 1928; Minister of Agriculture and Economics 1933.

**Henry de Jouvenal**, editor-in-chief of *Le Matin*, former French ambassador to Italy.

**Wilhelm Keppler** (1882–1960). Commissioner for Economic Affairs in the *Reichschancellor*, he advised Göring on the Four Year Plans 1936; Reich Commissioner in Vienna 1938; Ministry for Foreign Affairs 1939–1945.

**Duchess of Kent**. Marina, Princess of Greece (1906–1968). Duchess of Kent 1934–1942.

**Duke of Kent**. George Edward Alexander Edmund Windsor (1902–1942), son of George V.

**Count de Kerchove de Denterghem.** Belgian Minister to Berlin during Phipps' embassy.

**Philip Kerr, Eleventh Marquess of Lothian** (1882–1940). Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1931; Ambassador to Washington 1939–1940.

**Baron Manfred von Killinger** (1886–1944). *Reichskommissar* for Saxony 1933; German ambassador to Slovakia 1940; and then to Rumania 1941–1944.

**Erich von Klausener** (1885–1934). Appointed Minister Director for Welfare 1924; Prussian Ministry of the Interior 1926–1933; Leader of Catholic Action organisation 1928–1933; a critic of Nazism especially after the Röhm purge 1934.

**Clemens Krauss** (1893–1954). Austrian conductor. Director Vienna Staatsoper 1929–1935; Berlin 1935–1937; Munich 1937–1944.

**Pierre Laval** (1883–1945). French Prime Minister 1931–1932; 1935–1936; Minister for Colonies 1934; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1934–1935; joined Pétain's Vichy government 1940–1942.

**Vladimir Lenin** (1870–1924). Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars from October 1917–1924.

**Leopold III** (1901–1983). King of Belgium 1934–1951; surrendered to Germans during the Second World War leading to hostility on his return in 1945; forced to abdicate in favour of his son, Boudouin.

**Robert Ley** (1890–1945). *Gauleiter* for Cologne-Aachen 1928–1933; Leader of the German Labour Front 1933–1945.

**Józef Lipski** (1894–1958). Polish ambassador to Germany 1933–1939; General Secretary of the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the Polish government in exile 1941–1945; emigrated to the United States 1947.

**Maxim Maximovich Litvinov** (1876–1951). Russian commissar for foreign affairs 1930; deputy commissar for foreign affairs 1939; Ambassador to the United States 1941–1943.

**Marinus van der Lubbe (Löbe)** (1910–1934). claimed to be the sole perpetrator of the Reichstag fire of 27 February 1933 and was executed in Leipzig jail, 10 January 1934.

**Ramsay MacDonald** (1866–1937). Labour Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary 1924, Prime Minister 1929–1935; Lord President of the Council 1935–1937.

**August von Mackensen** (1849–1945). Joined the Death's Head Hussars 1869; served as a regimental officer during the Franco-Prussian War 1870–1971; commanded the 9th Army on the Eastern Front 1914–1915; commanded the German-Austrian 11th Army in Galicia 1915; Field-Marshal 1915; interned by the French 1919. Retired from the Army 1920.

**Georges Mandel** (1885–1944). Real name Louis Georges Rothschild, journalist of *L'Aurore* and cabinet minister under Clemenceau. Urged French rearmament and as Minister of the Interior, organised the arrest of Nazi sympathisers; opposed Pétain's policy of collaboration and killed by a Vichy militia 1944.

**Constantin de Masirevich**. Hungarian Minister in Berlin during Phipps' embassy.

**Erhard Milch**, (1892–1972). Director of finance Lufthansa 1926–1933; State Secretary and head of armaments production Air Ministry 1933; *Generaloberst* in the *Luftwaffe* 1938; commander of *Luftflotte V* 1939–1940; General Field Marshal 1940; *Luftzeugmeister* 1941–1944; sentenced to life imprisonment at Nuremberg 1946, released 1954.

**Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov** (1890–1986). Chairman of the Peoples' Commissars of the Soviet Union; Soviet Prime Minister 1930–1941; foreign minister 1939–1949, 1953–1956.

**Oswald Mosley** (1896–1980). Formed British Union of Fascists 1933; imprisoned 1940.

**Gerald Charles Muirhead-Gould** (1889–1945). Lieutenant Commander 1918; Naval Attaché Berlin 1933–1936; Commander of the *Devonshire* 1936–1937; emigrated to Australia 1940; served with Australian Navy 1940–1945.

**Reichsbishop Ludwig Müller** (1883–1945). Head of the German Protestant Church 1933–1945.

**Count Kintomo Mushakoji**. Japanese ambassador to Berlin, signed the Anti-Comintern Pact on behalf of the Japanese government, 1936.

**Benito Mussolini** (1883–1945). Italian President of the Council of Ministers 1922–1926; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1924–1929 and 1932–1936; Head of State and Prime Minister 1926–1943, Minister of War 1926–1929 and 1933–1943.

**Rudolf Nadolny** (1873–1953). State Secretary to President of the Republic 1919; Ambassador to Turkey; leader of the German delegation to the Geneva Disarmament Conference 1933; Ambassador to the Soviet Union 1933.

**Constantin Freiherr von Neurath** (1873–1956). Entered the German Diplomatic Service as Vice-Consul in London 1903; Ambassador to Rome 1922; in London 1930–1932; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1932–1938; Reich Protector for Bohemia and Moravia 1939–1941; Senior SS Group Leader 1943.

**Sir Basil Newton** (1889–1965). Counsellor British embassy in Berlin 1930–1935; Minister 1935–1937; Minister to Prague 1937–1939; Ambassador to Baghdad 1939–1941.

**Cesare Orsenigo** (1873–1946). Appointed Papal Nuncio to the Hague 1922–1925; to Hungary 1925–1930; to Berlin 1930–1945.

**Franz von Papen** (1879–1969). Military Attaché Washington 1914–1916; German Chancellor 1932; member of Hitler's Cabinet 1933–1934; Ambassador to Vienna 1934–1938.

**Victor Perowne** (1897–1951). British Embassy in Copenhagen 1929–1931; Foreign Office 1931–1936; Paris 1936–1938; Foreign Office 1938–1947.

**Philippe Pétain** (1856–1951). Commanded an Infantry Regiment 1914; an Army Corps 1914; the 2nd Army 1915; Chief of General Staff 1917; Commander-in-Chief 1917–1918; Vice-President of Supreme War Council 1920–1930; War Minister 1934; Ambassador to Madrid 1939–1940; Prime Minister 1940; Chief of State 1940–1944.

**Nicolai Petrescu-Comnène** (1881–1938). Rumanian Minister in Berlin; Rumanian Foreign Minister 1938.

**Joseph Pilsudski** (1867–1935). Chief of Polish State 1918–1922; Chief of General Staff 1923; Minister of War 1926–1935; Prime Minister 1927–1928 and 1930.

**Prince Philip of Hesse** (b. 1896). Hitler's envoy to Rome in March 1938 regarding the Anschluss with Austria.

**Erich Raeder** (1876–1960). *Oberbefehlshaber der Kriegsmarine* 1933–1943; awarded the National Socialist *Goldenes Parteiabzeichen* 1937.

**Walther Rathenau** (1867–1922). German Minister for Reconstruction 1921–1922; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1922.

**Walther von Reichenau** (1884–1942). Chief of Staff to Blomberg, 1933; General, 1935, Commander Seventh Army Corps 1935, Commander Army Group IV, 1938; Field Marshal 1940.

**Joachim von Ribbentrop** (1893–1978). German Ambassador to London 1936–1938; SS *Gruppenführer* 1936; Foreign Minister 1938–1945.

**Ernst Röhm** (1887–1934). Member of National Socialist Party 1919; involved in the Beer Hall *Putsch* 1923; SA Chief of Staff and Reichs Minister without Portfolio 1930–1934.

**Franklin Roosevelt** (1882–1945). Democrat President of the United States of America for four terms, 1933–1945.

**Alfred Rosenberg** (1893–1946). Elected a member of the *Reichstag* 1930; Director of the National Socialist Party Foreign Bureau; Supervisor of Youth Education 1940–1941; Minister for the Occupied Territory 1941–1945.

**Sir Horace Rumbold** (1869–1941). Ambassador to Constantinople 1920–1924; Madrid 1924–1928; Berlin 1928–1933; Vice-Chairman of the Royal Commission on Palestine 1936–1937.

**Sir Orme Sargent** (1884–1962). Head of the Central Department at the Foreign Office, 1928–1933; Assistant Under-Secretary of State, 1933–1939.

**Albert Sarraut** (1872–1962). Radical Socialist Senator; President of the French Council of Ministers 1933, 1936; Minister of the Navy 1933–1934; Minister of the Interior from 1934.

**Duke of Saxe-Coburg**, Carl Eduard (1884–1954). Duke of Saxe-Coburg 1900–1918. Cousin of Wilhelm II.

**Princess of Saxe-Meiningen**, Feodore (1890–1972). Also Duchess of Saxe-Weimar.

**Hjalmar Schacht** (1877–1970). Assistant Manager Dresdener Bank 1908–1915; Managing Partner National Bank of Germany 1915–1922; Reich Currency Commissioner 1923; President of the *Reichsbank* 1924–1930, reappointed 1933 by Hitler; Minister of Economics 1934–1937.

**Baldur von Schirach** (1907–1974). Appointed head of Nationalist Socialist German Students' League 1929; Leader of the Hitler Youth 1933; Gauleiter of Vienna 1941.

**Kurt von Schleicher** (1882–1934). German Defence Minister 1932; Chancellor of the Reich 1932–1933.

**Paul Schmid**, (1899–1970). Head of Secretariat and chief interpreter in the German Foreign Ministry 1924–1945; official interpreter at the Munich conference of 29–30 September 1938.

**Kurt Schmitt** (1886–1950). Reich Minister of Economics 1932–1935.

**August Schneidhuber**. Head of the Munich Police; became *Obergruppenführer* in SA 1934; one of those murdered on the Night of the Long Knives.

**Kurt von Schuschnigg** (1897–1977). Austrian Minister of Justice 1932–4; Minister of Education 1933–1934; Federal Chancellor and Minister for National Defence 1934–1938.

**Countess Schwerin von Krosigk**. The wife of Lutz Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, (1887–1952) Finance Minister 1932–1945.

**Hans von Seeckt** (1866–1936). Chief of the German Army Command 1920–1926; head of the German Military Mission in China 1934–5.

**Carl Severing** (1875–1952). Editor of *Volkswacht* Social Democratic newspaper 1912–1919; elected to Prussian Assembly 1919; Prussian Minister of Interior 1920; German Minister of the Interior 1928; Prussian Minister of Interior 1930.

**King of Siam**. Prajodhipok (1893–1941), King of Siam, 1925–1935.

**Queen of Siam**. Rambhai Barni (1905–1984).

**Sir John Simon** (1873–1954), Liberal Home Secretary 1915–1916 and 1935–1937; Liberal National MP 1931–1940; Foreign Secretary 1931–1935;

Home Secretary 1935–1937; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1937–1940; Lord Chancellor 1940–1945.

**Emmy Sonnemann** (1893–1973). An actress who became Hermann Göring's second wife in 1935.

**Joseph Stalin** (1879–1953). Joined Bolsheviks under Lenin 1903; commissar for nationalities 1921; General Secretary of the Communist Party 1922; after elimination of rivals assumes complete power 1929–1953.

**James Richard Stanhope** (1880–1967). Seventh Earl Stanhope. Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty 1931; Under-Secretary of State for War 1931–1934; Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs 1934–1936; President of the Board of Education 1937–1938; First Lord of the Admiralty 1938–1939; Lord President of the Council 1939–1940; Leader of the House of Lords 1938–1940.

**William Strang**, later first Baron Strang (1893–1978). Head of the League of Nations Section of the Foreign Office, 1933–1937; Head of the Central Department at the Foreign Office 1937–1939.

**Richard Strauss** (1864–1949). German composer much influenced by Wagner.

**Gustav Stresemann** (1878–1929). German Chancellor and Foreign Minister 1923; Foreign Minister 1923–1929.

**Fulvio Suvich** (1887–1936). Under-Secretary of State Italian Foreign Ministry 1932–1936.

**Pierre Tardieu** (1876–1945). French High Commissioner to the United States 1917; French Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1932, Minister without Portfolio, 1934.

**Hans Thomsen**. Official of the Reichschancellery, German Chargé d'affaires in the United States during the Second World War.

**Andrew Thorne** (1885–1970). Military Attaché Berlin 1932–1935; Major-General Commanding the Brigade of Guards 1938–9; served with the Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1950–1951.

**Fritz Thyssen** (1873–1951). German industrialist, chairman of the board of directors, *Vereinigte Stahlwerke* AG 1928; German National Socialist Workers Party 1932; resigned from Prussian Council of State 1938; emigrated to Switzerland 1939.

**Ernst Torgler** (1893–1963). Served in the German Army 1914–1918; joined the German Communist Party 1920; member of the *Reichstag* 1924–1933; expelled from Communist Party 1935.

**Sir Robert Vansittart** (1881–1957). Principal Private Secretary to Ramsay MacDonald 1928–1930; Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the Foreign Office 1938–1941.

**Count Johannes von Welczeck.** German Ambassador at Madrid; later ambassador to Paris.

**Arthur von Weinberg** (1860–1943). Field service as a Major in First World War; removed from post as curator at Goethe University 1933; dismissed from board of IG Farben 1937; deported to Theresienstadt 1942.

**Friedrich Karl Werner, Count von der Schulenberg** (1876–1961). Member of the Reichstag 1911–1918 and 1924–1928; Speaker of the Hesse Parliament 1932–1933; Prime Minister of Hesse 1933; German ambassador to Moscow.

**General Maxime Weygand** (1867–1965). French General Inspector of the Army 1931–1935; Minister of National Defence 1940; Governor-General Algeria 1941; imprisoned by Germans 1942–1945.

**Ralph Follet Wigram** (1890–1936). Third Secretary at the Foreign Office 1919; Second Secretary 1920; First Secretary Paris 1924–1933; Foreign Office 1933–1936.

**Woodrow Wilson** (1856–1924). 28th President of the United States 1912–1921; Nobel Peace Prize 1920.

**Paul van Zeeland** (1893–1973). Belgian Prime Minister 1935–1937; escaped to Britain 1940; *Commissaire aux Repatriés* 1944; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1949–1955.

# Introduction

## **The diarist and the diary**

Sir Eric Clare Edmund Phipps was born in Madrid in 1875, the only child of Sir Edmund Phipps, a career diplomatist. Phipps was further descended from the Mulgrave and Normanby families, who had a long and distinguished tradition of naval and diplomatic service. His great grandfather, Henry Phipps, First Earl of Mulgrave had been Foreign Secretary 1805–1806, while his great uncle, Constantine Phipps, First Marquess of Normanby, had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and ambassador to Paris. An earlier forebear had been imprisoned by the Parliamentarians in 1643, while another great uncle had been a captain in the Royal Navy, who had explored and charted the Arctic Ocean in the 1790s. Phipps' father, Sir Edmund, had been a Minister in Brussels and Envoy to Rio de Janeiro in the early years of the twentieth century. He retired from the Diplomatic Service as Minister Plenipotentiary in Paris in 1906. Unlike many of his social background, Phipps was not educated at a British public school but received a private education in Dresden, Vienna and Paris. This gave him a knowledge and appreciation of the continental European diplomatic perspective that many of his contemporaries in the Diplomatic Service lacked. In particular, it left him with a life-long love of all things French. He completed his education by studying for a year at King's College, Cambridge, finally obtaining his degree from the University of Paris.

Phipps entered the Diplomatic Service in 1899. His first appointment was as third secretary at the Paris embassy from 1899–1904, from where he moved to Constantinople as second secretary for nine months in 1905. Three-years at the Foreign Office, led Phipps to return to Paris as the private secretary to the then British ambassador, Sir Francis Bertie in 1909. In April 1912, as first secretary, Phipps was dispatched to the British ministry legation in St Petersburg, where he remained until October of the following year, from where he was transferred to Madrid before returning to Paris in the spring of 1916. During the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Phipps worked

closely with the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Maurice Hankey, as part of the British delegation. But it was his, now extensive experience, of French affairs that further fuelled his ambition to become ambassador to Paris when between 1922 and 1928, he was Minister Plenipotentiary during the Marquess of Crewe's embassy. Phipps then took up the post as Minister in Vienna, where he remained until he was appointed to what was his first ambassadorial post in Berlin in August 1933, although his appointment had been announced in May. He remained as ambassador to Berlin until 24 April 1937.

Phipps was short and stocky, and he habitually wore a monocle in his right eye. The habitually stern expression revealed in photographs belied a man with a keen sense of humour and a well-developed sense of the absurd. One observer described him as 'rather un-English in appearance, ... a man of great charm and intelligence, clever, amusing, cynical, [and] proficient in his job'.<sup>1</sup> In the Foreign Office, Phipps' dispatches from Berlin became famous for their wit and insight. At the time, praise was heaped on him, particularly by his brother-in-law, Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, and by Sir Orme Sargent, head of the Central European Department.<sup>2</sup> However, the events of the late 1930s and the war years persuaded Vansittart to revise his opinion, and led him to agree with the comment attributed to Baldwin that Phipps' Berlin dispatches 'contained too much wit and not enough warning'.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Nicholas Rostow has suggested that Phipps resorted to wit because he was given so few firm instructions by the Foreign Office.<sup>4</sup> This edition of Phipps' diary, and the recent work by the German historian, Matthias Jaroch, suggest that this assessment is harsh.<sup>5</sup> Scholars have tended to focus on the apparently flawed judgement of those who favoured appeasing Hitler. With the exception of Winston Churchill, much less has been written about those who warned against the folly of adopting such a policy than those who did not. Had Churchill not gone on to lead the British part of the Allied coalition to victory in 1945, he too would probably have been accused of saying or doing too little to prevent the outbreak of war. But it is necessary to ask whether any individual, even an intelligent and experienced diplomat with direct access to Hitler, could have predicted the outcome of the game of diplomatic bluff between Germany, Britain and France in 1938 and 1939, or the terrible levels of death and destruction that the Second World War would bring. The answer is almost certainly, no. Recent thinking on the Treaty of Versailles has suggested that those who drew up the peace treaties at the end of the First World War should not be condemned, because it is doubtful whether any settlement would have been worked because of the enormity of the task.<sup>6</sup> Phipps' diary makes a similar case for the MacDonald and Baldwin administrations between 1933 and 1937. They did their best and acted with the noblest of intentions, but the diplomatic dice were always loaded against them, both in relation to Britain's friends as well as her former enemies.

## Phipps and his peers

During his Berlin embassy, the ambassadors with whom he worked most closely were William E. Dodd, American ambassador to Berlin for a year longer than Phipps, remaining in the German capital until 1938, and their French opposite number, André François-Poncet. Although on good terms with both men, the three never enjoyed an intimate social relationship. The diary reveals that Phipps had a great affinity with his French counterpart, especially when he was on the receiving end of one of Hitler's tirades. At one point in the diary, Phipps quotes a note from Dodd in its entirety, although within their correspondence there are clearer indicators of the nature of their relationship than is provided here. But in his view, Dodd was too overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of dealing with Hitler to work effectively. Dodd was, as he told Simon, 'always inclined to take too pessimistic a view of the *near* future'.<sup>7</sup> Dodd, in turn, often found Phipps socially diffident. After one encounter, he told Harry Hopkins, a confidant of President Roosevelt, that 'Sir Eric was as non-communicative as ever'.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, they nevertheless worked amicably together. Before the Röhm Purge, they were both equally confident that Hitler could probably be persuaded to consider a disarmament agreement and be made to co-operate in international affairs. On 15 October 1933, details had been wired to Washington stating that Germany must have a standing army of 300,000, guns and defensive airplanes. Now Hitler proposed to submit the same scheme again together with a ten-year pact against war and would agree to an internal commission to inspect and supervise armaments, including the SS and SA. Phipps had submitted these suggestions and Simon's reply was sent to Dodd, who reported that 'it looked to me like a real movement towards disarmament'.<sup>9</sup> The following day, 10 December, Dodd called on Phipps to discuss the disarmament situation further on a walk on the Hermann Göringstrasse.<sup>10</sup> Dodd felt that Japan, according to information, was likely to attack Vladivostock in April or May the following year; if the Americans were to support the German-British position on disarmament, would the British government lend support to the United States' opposition of Japanese aggression in the Far East? Dodd also felt that it was better for the British, German and French governments to sign a disarmament pact than to take a chance on an eventual Italian-German-Russian deal that might force France into a dictatorship. Phipps did not think the Japanese threat real, he believed that on the one hand Britain wished to have American moral support but on the other hand it had also recognised Japanese claims in Manchuria. Both men agreed that a peace pact signed between Britain, Germany, the United States and endorsed by Russia was the most effective means of maintaining peace. The British should compromise so that Roosevelt could negotiate with Europe and the impasse on disarmament could be broken.<sup>11</sup>

Eleven months later, five months after the Röhm Purge had revealed to both Phipps and Dodd that Hitler's ambitions would not be easily contained, Phipps wrote: 'He pretended to be surprised when I gave him the facts about German purchases of aircraft from the United States in the last six months'. Dodd told him that Schacht had revealed to him the war purposes of the Nazis. Dodd was trying to cultivate Phipps should Roosevelt try to bring American arms manufacture under government control.

Dodd noted:

My hope was to enlist him in a move to persuade his government to set up an investigation like that of Senator Nye. Although I know England had protested against the exposure of the corrupt practices of its arms manufacturers, I bluntly alluded to the good effects of the Nye exposure. He agreed, though he did not indicate a desire to say anything further.<sup>12</sup>

The Foreign Office official and future ambassador to Paris, Gladwyn Jebb, described Phipps as 'splendidly anti-Nazi' and 'one of our ablest diplomats'.<sup>13</sup> Jebb appreciated that there was a point to Phipps' humour, telling the story that 'when Göring returned from one of his shooting parties, boasting of a bag of several thousand, Phipps inquired gently "Animals, I hope?"'<sup>14</sup> Despite his facility with words, he was not known for his sparkling conversation at social gatherings, preferring instead to talk about mundane issues. His wit appears to have been reserved either for his written communications or, when in company, levelled at those he viewed with contempt.

### **Phipps' reputation**

Phipps' career as ambassador to Berlin and then to Paris, has frequently been viewed as one of contradiction.<sup>15</sup> In Berlin, he has been characterised as an arch anti-appeaser, warning of the pointlessness of trying to negotiate with a regime bent on waging war. But in Paris, so it is argued, he was converted to the cause of appeasement, and became a staunch supporter of Neville Chamberlain's attempts to strike a bargain with Hitler. The existing studies of Phipps' career at this time, by the late John Herman,<sup>16</sup> and by Matthias Jaroch,<sup>17</sup> implicitly accept this assessment. Jaroch does not mention it, while Herman discusses it at length, but does not offer an explanation for it. Herman also fails to give full consideration to the wider impact of Phipps' views within the foreign policy decision-making process. I have endeavoured to avoid this pitfall by emphasising the effect of the ambassador's advice on the various foreign secretaries of the period. But one of the principal aims of this book is to show that Phipps was not hostile to a rapprochement with Hitler. Far from it, it was what he strove for throughout his period in Berlin. It is beyond the remit of this study to assess the extent to which these ideas were consistent with those he put forward in Paris. But the evi-

dence presented in Herman's book and in the relevant volumes of the *Documents on British Foreign Policy* suggests that there is greater congruity between these two phases of Phipps' career than has been recognised hitherto. More work needs to be done on this issue, but it is likely that [that] research would reveal Phipps' views about the most appropriate diplomatic strategies to contain Hitler varied little between 1933 and 1939.

At the same time, it would be misleading to suggest that Phipps was an idealistic appeaser. His message was in fact mixed. While every effort should be made to rein in Hitler by treaty and agreement, the likelihood of success was not great, and, as events revealed, were to diminish with time. But such a strategy should be tried nevertheless. In the meantime, the British government should prepare for a war that was likely to breakout later rather than sooner, but which would occur eventually. Phipps' reports of German plans for rearmament usually carried a suggestion that monies should be found for further British military expansion to meet any potential challenge. This point was appreciated by Vansittart. In a letter discussing the latest German rearmament plans, he wrote: 'Anyhow, my dear Eric, you and I have a clear conscience in this matter. We have given every warning that is conceivable for men in our position to be able to give.'<sup>18</sup>

While Phipps' views on how best to handle the challenges to the treaties of Versailles and Locarno posed by Hitler remained largely constant, his views about the Nazis and Nazism did evolve. Jaroch's study of Phipps' Berlin embassy suggests that it was the collaboration between Hitler and Mussolini over the Spanish Civil War during the summer of 1936 and the continued claim for the reinstatement of Germany's colonies that persuaded Phipps that the pattern of German foreign policy would probably lead to war.<sup>19</sup> This study suggests that that point was reached much earlier in Phipps' mind. It was the events surrounding the Röhm purge (Night of the Long Knives) on 30 June 1934 that convinced Phipps that Hitler would stop at nothing to pursue his agenda, be that domestically with the removal of a rival faction, or in foreign affairs. Nevertheless, this political bloodletting did not destroy his faith in the Führer's willing to negotiate with foreign powers, but added urgency to his entreaties to increase the diplomatic pressure on Germany to conclude agreements with Britain and France that would prevent the outbreak of war. Hitler was not just awkward. He was dangerous.

The diary also dispels some of the myths about Phipps' effectiveness in Berlin, in particular the view of the American journalist, William Shirer, that the ambassador had a 'mighty fear of Hitler's wrath'.<sup>20</sup> It aims to tread in the middle ground between this remark and Ian Colvin's description of Phipps as 'the last ambassador who could laugh at Hitler'.<sup>21</sup> It offers an insight into how his opinions about Hitler and National Socialism evolved; into why it was that contemporaries such as Hugh Dalton claimed that 'Phipps was the better man in Berlin' than in Paris.<sup>22</sup>

As already suggested, the diary endeavours to contextualise many of Phipps' remarks within the general framework of British foreign policy strategy.

During Phipps' embassy in Berlin, the voices of those at the Foreign Office, such as Sir John Simon and Antony Eden, who sought rapprochements with Germany, were in a minority within the Cabinet. The diary comments on the difficulties that these men, who together occupied the post of Foreign Secretary for much of Phipps' period in Berlin, had in persuading their colleagues to embrace their ideas. Efforts had been made throughout Ramsay MacDonald's leadership of the National Government, to seek a rapprochement with Germany regarding disarmament. But by the time Phipps took up his post as ambassador to Berlin, many believed that MacDonald's mental faculties were in decline and his judgement impaired. In Phipps' view, Simon lacked the personal warmth to convert colleagues to his cause, while the more charismatic Eden was seen to be able but still lacking in experience. Eden was just two-years old when Phipps took up his first diplomatic post. The relationship that emerges between them in the diary is very conscious of the generation gap between them, and this transposed itself on to their approach to Hitler.

The diary covers the whole of Phipps' embassy, except for the first three months. It begins with his first encounter with Hitler, and the diary as a whole can be seen as an extended essay on Hitler as a political leader and diplomatic strategist. The diary is primarily a synthesis of letters and dispatches that he produced while in Berlin. He compiled it in 1940, when Europe was suffering the full horror caused by the diplomatic failures and misjudgements of the previous decade. In 1941 and in 1942 Phipps wrote to Sir Orme Sargent requesting permission to publish it. On both occasions his request was turned down. It was not, Sargent argued, appropriate because Britain was then at war with Germany. Sargent would also have been aware that Phipps' diary would have made uncomfortable reading for those who had advocated a conciliatory approach to Germany between 1933 and 1937. An additional reason for turning down the request was that the Foreign Office was in the process of compiling a selection of documents for publication charting British foreign policy from the conclusion of the Treaty of Locarno in 1925, to the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>23</sup> Phipps' book would therefore be redundant.

Unfortunately, Phipps died in 1945 before making a further request to publish the diary. The reasons why he wished it to appear in print are various. As suggested above, it was not uncommon for politicians and diplomats to produce memoirs in their declining years. In that respect, the diary is unremarkable. What is interesting, however, is that it represented the second stage of recording his career as a diplomat, which he had begun when he was Minister in Vienna. In his unpublished memoir 'Light and Shade in Paris and Elsewhere',<sup>24</sup> Phipps displays a greater awareness than most diplomats of the historical importance of his work. He was, as already indicated, from a long line of diplomats and other servants of the Crown. Much of this memoir is concerned with the extent to which he measured up to his forebears in skill,