Einstein Case Goat

The Role Assigned to Consul General Messersmith

To the New York Herald Tribune:

It looks to me as though George S. Messersmith, consul general at Berlin, caught the unpleasant end of a lot of buck passing. I surmise that the Berlin correspondents feel somewhat the same way; for, while they lampooned the Einstein situation for all it was worth, they very pointedly left out the name of the consul general, who was an important actor in the scene. Certainly they would not have left out such a material fact if they had not felt reason to do so. It was the State Department which mentioned his name in the proceedings, thus making him the goat.

Mr. Messersmith is an intelligent man, and Einstein himself points out that his visa previously had been granted without even personal application. But when that complaint was passed over by the State Department it certainly amounted to an order to go through the formalities, which an official could not afford to ignore in such a conspicuous case.

Doubtless realizing the ridiculousness of having to ask the questions, Mr. Messersmith as a foreign service official, of course, was unable to apologize or explain that he was on the administrative end of a silly law, with a reminder from headquarters to enforce it. So he went through it with a straight face, and immediately reported he would grant the visa. And, of course, he is unable to say anything publicly in his own defense.

For a man who has devoted long, important and unpublicized service to the State Department, it is doubtless very uncomfortable to be made thus suddenly conspicuous, particularly at a time of changing Federal administrations. That is why I venture to wonder whether it might not be appropriate to print a word putting the onus where it belongs.

HICKMAN POWELL,