AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL
Berlin, Germany, September 18, 1933.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MINISTERIALRAT
DR. BUTTMANN IN THE REICH MINISTRY OF THE
INTERIOR.

I called by appointment at 5.30 o'clock on September 16 on Ministerialrat Dr. Buttmann, as Dr. Metzner, the personal Referent of the Minister of the Interior of the Reich, had told me that Dr. Buttmann was the officer of the Ministry able to act on the question of the professorship for Dr. Loeb. I gave Dr. Buttmann the background of the case and placed him as correspondent with my conversations with Staatssekretär Dr. Stuckart in the Prussian Ministry of Culture, on September 12, and with Dr. Metzner of the Ministry of the Interior, on September 13 (see my memorandum of these dates of these conversations). Dr. Buttmann then stated that he had seen the papers in the case. It was obviously he who had given the unfavorable decision of the Ministry of the Interior to the Prussian Ministry of Culture.

I emphasized that here was the case of a physician who was not only favorably known to his colleagues in Berlin but who had had much success as a Privatdozent in the University of Berlin, and who was also responsible largely for the founding of the Landhaus-Clinic, one of the most modern, if not the most modern, in Berlin. I said that both Ministries had lost an opportunity to do something not only for a worth-while person, but also something which would help them abroad.

Dr. Buttmann started to deliver me a lecture on the Jewish question. It is not necessary to detail here his conversation as it was the usual defense which we hear in the Ministries. I gathered at the outset and as the conversation developed, that on the Jewish question Dr. Buttmann is a fanatic. He had it in his eye and it developed through everything he said. He made the usual defense, that the Jews had poisoned the whole of German university, professional and business life, and that in taking the action which they did, which was necessary for the national safety, the Germans were also helping all the rest of the world solve this question. He emphasized that they were only applying a numerus clausus which was just and that he recognized that in individual cases there were hardships which they endeavored to avoid as much as possible. I interrupted here to say that the case of Dr. Loeb was certainly one where individual hardship could be avoided, but that obviously his own action had been entirely without thought of any personal consideration. Here was a physician and a teacher who had made his laboriously
laboriously in Germany and reached an excellent position and had rendered much public service and was about to become a professor, when simply because he is a Jew he was removed from his position in the university, his promotion to a professorship stopped, his connection with the Landhaus Clinic, which he had practically founded, stopped, and his private practice so affected by the various measures that it no longer gave him a living. I pointed out that it had been entirely in Dr. Buttmann's power to do something in this case to avoid the personal hardship which he said they avoided whenever possible, and he had done nothing. I said that so far as I was able to see, no attempt was made in one single case that I knew of, to avoid hardship. He had nothing to say to this.

He then went on to emphasize the numerus clausus, and I replied that I had not come to discuss the Jewish question, but the individual case of Dr. Loeb, an American, but that since he raised the question I would appreciate information how it was applied. I asked him whether, for instance, in the University of Berlin a single Jewish professor was left; that so far as I knew there was one left sometime ago and that he had since been removed. I insisted then whether he knew of a single Jewish professor left in the Berlin University, and he had to say that he could not give any definite answer as he did not know. I said further that at the University of Leipzig I understood the last Jewish professors there had been removed about a week ago, and I asked whether there was any Jewish professor left there. Again he had to reply that he did not know. I asked him then where his numerus clausus was, as at these two universities not a single Jewish professor was permitted to remain and this was true at practically all others.

He then went on to try to place the responsibility for the severity in the administrations of the various States. I told him again that I had not come to discuss the Jewish question, but that when he made such statements I must give him my reaction; if the Reichs Ministry of the Interior issued laws on this subject and if the various Ministries of the Interior of the State did not carry them through properly, it was certainly the responsibility, according to the usual practice in responsible countries, for the higher Ministry to take the necessary steps.

He then went on to say that in the chair where I sat there had recently sat professors from the United States who were getting a proper idea of the situation in Germany and who approved of what was being done here. I said that if he took what such persons might say as an indication of American approval of the way the Jewish question was handled in Germany, he was much mistaken. I was there not to express the attitude of my Government.

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or to discuss the Jewish question, but felt it necessary to say that my personal impression was that the American public understood very thoroughly what had been done in Germany with respect to Jewish professors, business and professional men, and could neither understand nor approve, and would never approve.

It was clear from the conversation that certain professional people who come to Germany, are shunted to this Dr. Buttmann, who is there to give them information with regard to the handling of the Jewish problem, and from what he tried to tell me it is quite clear that what he tells them is nothing but a correct picture of the situation.

I constantly tried to get the conversation back to what I had come for, i.e. to see what action could be taken about Dr. Loeb. I pointed out that Dr. Loeb was leaving definitely on Monday, September 18. He said he would take up the matter with the Minister, who alone had to decide. The fact that Dr. Loeb was leaving seemed to make no impression on him. I said the matter was entirely in their hands and that if he did not see fit to take the necessary action he would understand what further feeling the treatment of Dr. Loeb would cause among professional and business men in the United States.

I pointed out that Mr. Geist and I had done everything we could to make the responsible Ministries understand what the situation was, and had given them ample time to do what was obviously the only correct and proper thing, and that while in the Prussian Ministry of Culture we had got that understanding and a desire to do the right thing, it seemed not that his Ministry had made the proper action impossible.

He gave no indication as to what his personal recommendation to the Minister would be, and said that he would let me know next week their decision. I again pointed out that Dr. Loeb would undoubtedly have left by that time and that now washed our hands of the whole matter, leaving the responsibility entirely to them.

It is conversations with men like Dr. Buttmann which have shown Mr. Geist and me how impossible this situation with regard to the Jewish professional people seems to be. Responsible officers in certain Ministries absolutely disregard the facts and show an insincerity which seems almost inconceivable in men occupying the responsible positions which they are.

George S. Messersmith
American Consul General.