MEMORANDUM

Vienna, February 18, 1935.

There are a few considerations with respect to E. I. C. in Paris which I wish to bring to the Department for its confidential information. In the first place, I wish to make it clear that, in my opinion, E. I. C. can be a very useful unit and its existence justifiable and desirable. It can furnish to the various missions in Europe, particularly at this time, very interesting and helpful data, and I believe that if properly conducted there is no chief of mission in Europe who would not wish this service to be continued and strengthened.

I am, however, convinced that unless certain measures are taken to safeguard the confidential nature of the letter prepared by E. I. C. that the service will lose the real value which it can have to the missions it is intended to serve. The confidential nature of the letter is, I believe, not now sufficiently safeguarded.

The letter is carried by the couriers and this provides safe and confidential transmission. The type of letter which E. I. C. is now preparing could not, in my opinion, be sent through the mails with safety. In some countries mail is safe; in others it is not. It is clear, however, that if sent through the open mail the contents of the letter would have to be much changed, and I doubt if a sufficiently useful letter to justify the existence of E. I. C. could be sent through the open mail.

I am not so sure that in the various missions to which the letter goes, and even in the Embassy in Paris, the confidential nature of this letter is sufficiently safeguarded. I think, in the first place, it is obvious that these letters should not get into the hands of any foreign personnel, and in the various missions to which they go it should be understood that they are seen only by the Foreign Service Officers and by, let us say, one American member of the staff who has charge of the files. Unless the legations send their despatches to E. I. C. and E. I. C. can have confidence that these letters are handled in the proper way in the missions, it will be impossible for various chiefs of mission to send really confidential despatches to E. I. C.
I believe, therefore, that a very definite instruction will have to be sent to the missions sharing in this service to the effect that the letters of E. I. C. must be seen only by the officers at the respective missions and not get into any other hands, except one trusted American clerk in each mission who may have charge of the files.

With respect to the letters themselves, I do not wish to offer much comment here, except to say that direct quotations or too close paraphrases of despatches is, I think, not desirable; in fact, should be avoided. There is no necessity for direct quotations, and it is not necessary for the proper use of these letters that sources should be given. In fact, the giving of sources, even though partially concealed, as is now the case in the letters, is undesirable. For example, in letter No. 56, of January 8, 1935, beginning on page 468, there is quoted almost verbatim a strictly confidential despatch that I wrote the Department summarizing the Austrian political situation over a given period. Anyone reading this confidential letter of E. I. C. will realize the source. If the despatches sent to E. I. C. are used in this way, it will mean that the officers in our missions when preparing despatches will unavoidably have in mind that they may be reproduced in this confidential letter circulated in Europe. If our despatches to the Department are to be what they should be, the preparing officers must not have this mental reservation with regard to certain use over here. If they do, it means interfering with the value of the despatches to the Department.

An examination of the letters would seem to show that some of the missions are already refraining from sending to E. I. C. certain confidential despatches because of this consideration. They are, of course, justified in this, but the inevitable result will be that in the course of time the value of the letters will disappear.

I think we must constantly keep in mind the possibility that in some mission, unless properly safeguarded, these letters may fall into the hands of an employee through whom they can get outside circulation.

I am loath to make any statement which might in any way interfere with the continuance of the courier service. I believe that the courier service has a value which its cost more than justifies. I would like to see it continued. I believe that under existing conditions in Europe and under the conditions we, unfortunately, may have to look forward to for a year or more, the courier service is necessary. In ordinary times I do not believe it is necessary.
I am also of the opinion that the use of the Paris officers as couriers is a good thing. It gives them an experience which is worth while and which even from the point of view of training has a value to our Government. I do not see, however, any object to be gained in sending American clerks from Paris unless they are to be used merely as couriers in the place of men regularly assigned to this duty. E. I. C. has obviously been instructing the couriers to see the chiefs of mission and the officers at it to gather information with regard to conditions, to make notes, and to make either oral or written reports on their return to Paris. In some cases this information has been used in the confidential letter.

The courier service as now organized cannot be used as an information gathering service. I have had clerks from the Paris Embassy come here and ask childlike and altogether naive questions with regard to the Austrian situation. They are not to be blamed for this. They have been asked to do something which they cannot be expected to do. It is not fair to them nor to the Foreign Service Officers whom they are asked to interview. The few hours or the day which a courier spends in a capital are not sufficient to enable him to get a picture. Our ministers and Foreign Service Officers cannot be expected to spend so much time in giving information to a courier who cannot have the necessary background for all the countries which he visits. I have found these conversations with couriers, even when Foreign Service Officers or officers of the Army or Navy, most unsatisfactory. It has been necessary to go into long explanations of matters which should be entirely clear to E. I. C. I have found the couriers getting very strange impressions from their visits to Vienna. I think this has probably been the experience at other missions. Certainly E. I. C. cannot use the information it gets from couriers.

If we had a courier service on the King's Messenger model, it would be another matter. Under this plan the same man covers the same ground constantly. He gets to know the situation most thoroughly and can talk very helpfully with the chiefs of mission and Foreign Service Officers and he becomes, in fact, an ambulatory E. I. C. He is given the most confidential information verbally, which he knows how to give to the various missions which he visits, and he has the necessary background through continuous experience to appreciate the various situations. No Foreign Service Officer, however, who makes a single trip or an occasional trip and the rest of the time is actively engaged on particular problems at particular missions or consulates, can properly serve as an information gathering medium for E. I. C. When this is attempted through a clerk it is reductio ad absurdum, not because the clerk is unintelligent, but because it is something which, under no circumstance, can be expected of him.
In several instances I have noticed that the couriers had quite strong preconceived notions concerning situations in the capitals they visited. In some cases they asked very direct, searching, and confidential questions, but when asked about the situation at other capitals from which they had just come, showed a reluctance to answer. I am afraid that the instructions given to the couriers have been somewhat unwise, and unless the service and the letters are given administrative attention the interest will decrease rapidly. Some of the ministers are already refusing to see the couriers.

G. S. M.