

George Messersmith Dies at 76; In Diplomatic Service 34 Years

Former Envoy in 3 Lands
Ends Career in '47 After
Mission to Argentina

HOUSTON, Jan. 29 (AP)—George S. Messersmith, former Assistant Secretary of State and once United States Ambassador to Mexico, died today. He was 76 years old.

Mr. Messersmith died at Methodist Hospital in the Texas Medical Center here, where he had been undergoing treatment. The nature of the treatment was not immediately known.

In U. S. Service 34 Years

George Strausser Messersmith, a career diplomat, ended his thirty-four years in the United States Foreign Service with a well-founded sense of a mission accomplished.

His retirement came in 1947, when he returned to this country after a successful tenure as ambassador to Argentina. Earlier, he had held such high diplomatic posts as the ambassadorships to Mexico and Cuba and the post of Assistant Secretary of State.

Mr. Messersmith was among the first to warn that dangers were developing on the international scene with the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany.

He was serving as consul general in Berlin when Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933. He later informed Washington that the new German Government was bent on war.

The late President Franklin D. Roosevelt promoted Mr. Messersmith to minister to Austria in 1934. He stayed there for three years, reporting on the Nazi organization and the threats to Austria's independence.

Aided State Department

In 1937 he was brought to Washington where he served for the next three years as Assistant Secretary of State. In this post he directed the internal reorganization of the State Department with the aim of gearing it to meet changed conditions in case of war.

Mr. Messersmith was born in 1883 at Fleetwood, Pa., of Pennsylvania Dutch stock. At first, he sought teaching as a career. But in 1914, the year of his marriage to Marion Lee Mustard, he entered the foreign service.

He first was assigned as a consul at Fort Erie, Ontario. Two years later, he started a diplomatic tour that took him to Curacao, Antwerp, Buenos Aires, Berlin and Vienna, and later to the ambassadorships in Cuba, Mexico and Argentina.

Mr. Messersmith's last Foreign Service assignment was in



Conway, 1947

George S. Messersmith

Buenos Aires, where, he said, his primary job was to persuade the Argentine Government to curb pro-Nazi activities. He went there early in 1946, shortly after the end of World War II.

Upon his arrival, Mr. Messersmith had a long interview with Argentine's strong man, Juan D. Perón, then riding on the crest of power and popularity.

Praised by Truman

In the spring of 1947, President Harry S. Truman announced that the diplomat's mission to Argentina had been accomplished. Mr. Messersmith then retired, saying he had asked to be retired from the Foreign Service after the Buenos Aires assignment had been completed.

Mr. Messersmith was a thorough worker, who was impatient with sloppy jobs by his staff. Of his reports, fellow members in the State Department said that you never read them, but weighed them.

"When you finished one you knew everything that anybody could ask about the subject," one associate commented.

Mr. Messersmith's first ambassadorship was to Cuba in 1940. The next year he was transferred to Mexico. Throughout the war, he always wore the United States colors—red carnation, white shirt and blue tie.

In the fall of 1947, Mr. Messersmith was elected chairman of the board of directors and chief executive officer of the Mexican Light and Power Company, with headquarters in Mexico City. He resigned as chief executive officer in 1954, but continued as honorary board chairman.

G. S. Messersmith, Diplomat, Dies

Special to the World-Telegram and Sun.

HOUSTON, Jan. 30.—Services were being planned today for George S. Messersmith, 76, a former Assistant Secretary of State who was one of the first to warn of the dangers of rising Nazism in Germany.

Mr. Messersmith, a veteran of more than 30 years in the United States Foreign Service, died yesterday at Methodist Hospital here. He had lived in Mexico City for the last 12 years.

He began his diplomatic career in 1914, after teaching school for several years, as consul in Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada.

As consul general in Berlin in 1933, when Adolf Hitler came to power, he reported to Washington, the danger to peace embodied in the Nazi rise. The following year, Mr. Messersmith was promoted to minister to Austria, where he remained for three years informing his State Department superiors of the growing Nazi threat to that country's independence.

He was named Assistant Secretary of State in 1937. In 1940, he became ambassador to Cuba and later served as ambassador to Mexico and Argentina.

Mr. Messersmith left the State Department in 1947 and was elected board chairman and chief executive officer of the Mexican Light & Power Co. He resigned as chief executive in 1954, but continued to head the power company's board. His body was being flown to Lewes, Del. for burial.

Central
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George S. Messersmith Dies; Long a Diplomat

A Former Assistant Secretary of State; Was Envoy to Mexico, Argentina, Cuba

HOUSTON, Jan. 29 (AP).—George S. Messersmith, seventy-six, former Assistant Secretary of State, died today.

Death came at Methodist Hospital in the Texas Medical Center here. Mr. Messersmith had been confined to the hospital for treatment, the nature of which was not immediately known.

He had lived in Mexico City in retirement in recent years.

Long a Diplomat

George Strausser Messersmith was the correct diplomat whose only vagary during a career that spanned a third of a century was to wear the United States colors—red carnation, white shirt and blue tie—every day while Ambassador to Mexico during World War II.

His associates considered him cold and formal. One, commenting on the fact that Mr. Messersmith had been a school teacher, said, "He couldn't help talking to you as though you hadn't done your homework."

Helped Realign State Dept.

Impatient with sloppy staff work, Mr. Messersmith used to describe himself as a man with "a serious attitude toward my work and toward the situation." His seriousness and the painstaking way he fulfilled every job, whether as consul general in Berlin when Hitler came to power, as Assistant Secretary of State directing the internal reorganization of the State Department, or as Ambassador to Cuba, Argentina and Mexico, was always evident.

Mr. Messersmith was one of the first Americans to warn the world about Nazism. Three months after Hitler took over the reins of Germany's government in 1933, Mr. Messersmith reported back to Washington that the dictator was bent on war, contrary to the reports of most foreign observers who thought that the excesses of the Nazis were merely the result of an exuberant nationalism.

vice-president of the State Board of Education.

In 1914, Mr. Messersmith married Marion Lee Mustard, who was at his side when he died yesterday, and left teaching for the Foreign Service. His first assignment was as consul in Fort Erie, Ont., and he subsequently began a diplomatic tour of duty which took him to Curacao, Antwerp, Buenos Aires and Berlin.

The body will be flown to Lewis, Del., tomorrow for services and burial.

Minister to Austria

President Roosevelt was so impressed by him that he was promoted in 1934 as Minister to Austria. Three years later, Mr. Messersmith returned to Washington. As Assistant Secretary of State he carried out the co-ordination of the foreign work of the Commerce, Treasury and Agriculture Departments with that of State.

His first ambassadorship was to Cuba in 1940. The next year, he was transferred to Mexico. Among his many tasks during those war years was to help settle the ticklish questions of expropriated United States oil properties and he arranged for President Roosevelt's trip to that country in 1943.

Headed Mexico Utility

His last foreign service assignment was in Buenos Aires, where his primary job was to persuade the Argentine government to curb pro-Nazi activities. Before he left Argentina in 1947, President Peron awarded him the Argentine Order of the Grand Cross of the Liberator General Jose San Martin.

After his retirement, Mr. Messersmith was elected chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the Mexican Light and Power Co., with headquarters in Mexico City. He resigned as chief executive officer in 1954 but continued as board chairman.

Born in Fleetwood, Pa., of Pennsylvania Dutch stock, Mr. Messersmith was graduated from the Keystone State Normal School in 1900 and began his teaching career in Delaware. There he served as superintendent of schools in various towns and then became secretary of the state Board of Examiners for Teachers and



Associa.co Pre.s

George S. Messersmith

