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Berlin, Germany
April 20, 1938

Personal and Confidential

Dear Mr. Messersmith:

I have received your letters, the one to Mrs. Stresemann and another regarding your conversations in 1933 with Lord Astor and his associates. Regarding the first, I have been unable to see Mrs. Stresemann, as she has been away visiting over the Easter holidays; but as soon as she returns I shall read your letter to her and then destroy it. I do not know what she wrote to you, and I am sorry if she was disturbed over the most careful and tactful hint which I gave to Joachim's brother when I learned he was about to leave for the United States. I knew when you mentioned the fact that Joachim had been indiscreet in some remarks that there was something to it, and that only a true and deeply interested friend such as you would give the warning where it might be needed. I am, of course, also sincerely interested in the welfare of these three people, and have gone a good deal out of my way to help them and to be of some use to them; and I am afraid that I could not always have strict regard to their own sensibilities when I was convinced that their vital interests and well-being might be at stake. On the other hand the greatest allowance must be made for Mrs. Stresemann's feelings. What she endures here is enough to make her lose her equanimity, as she certainly suffers a great deal and lives a life of severe mental strain and depression. I shall see her as soon as she gets back and put her mind entirely at ease.

Regarding the second letter I shall let you know as soon as Williams has had a chance to consult his diary. He told me that he recalls the whole interview very well, but that he would like to consult his diary and possibly a report which he wrote to London at the time when Lord Astor was here. I shall recur to this subject in my next letter giving you all the details not only as Williams recalls them but as they exist in my memory. The incident took place in the spring of 1933.

I have been very much honored and pleased with the appointment to the Embassy's staff and thank you very deeply and sincerely for this additional proof of your confidence and trust in me. I thank you with all my heart, but always more profoundly and lastingly for the friendship which I value more than anything else. All the protection work, whether it originates in the Consular establishments in Germany or in the Embassy itself is being turned over to me, and I am slowly getting into the swing of functioning in the two capacities. It adds a great deal to my daily work and to my responsibility and this I like very much; if I am snowed under with work I am the ~~more~~ happier for it. I am not sure that certain people in the Foreign Office are so pleased that I have been let loose on them. They have not answered as yet the Embassy's note advising them of my appointment; but told Heath that it was quite agreeable. I understand that it is not always the custom to acknowledge formally such notes; and this may have no significance whatever. It is significant, however, that up to the present time no exequators have been granted to our officers in Vienna, a delay which is rather embarrassing and awkward. Wiley says they are functioning in Vienna as an "ex-Legation" and nothing else. I have not gone to the Foreign Office yet on official business, having been waiting for some kind of acknowledgement of my status. This afternoon Heath informed

me that they found it "quite agreeable" for me to function in the two capacities; and I am going there tomorrow to make my official bow. Then I shall commence what work I have to do up there in deadly earnest.

I hope you will understand me when I tell you that I heartily agree with a comment which you made in a recent letter regarding "better relations" between the German Government and our official representation in Berlin. I have not changed my attitude an iota, and you can depend upon me not to do so in any respect. I do not think that "expediency" could make me curry favor with these people or encourage them in their despicable policies no matter what the inducement might be. I shall certainly observe those amenities that are required in an official position such as mine; but I have no intention of being weak and saying "yes" when I know that my integrity requires that I act and speak otherwise. I am not sure that I shall be as pleasing to certain people in the Foreign Office as one who would agree with everything they say and always accept their points of view. I know that the position is going to be a very difficult one. If you try to gain your end by currying favor and being "exceedingly friendly and ostensibly in sympathy with Nazi ambitions and aspirations" you betray yourself as an insincere weakling, get deceived, laughed at and held of no account. On the other hand if one antagonizes and creates enmities and bitterness the result is equally nil. The only policy I believe one can adopt is the one which you adopted here and that is an attitude of severe correctness, decisiveness and firmness, calculated to inspire the sense of force and determination, and therefore "respect" and a sense of "fear". Respect, fear and a sense of power are the only realities which these Germans understand; and my steady aim will be to make this prevail. If I fail my usefulness will come to an end; if I succeed there will be definite accomplishments. Therefore I shall go very slowly, in order not to give any false impressions or lose any of the advantages which may accumulate to my credit. Wherever it is possible to make friendships on "my terms" I shall not miss the opportunity; but these friendships must be made on the basis of decency and common love of decency; otherwise not.

I wish only to add that I am not yet entirely clear how free I shall be to carry this policy out. Time will tell. But so far as I am concerned there can only be one result and that is the result upon which you and I agree in principle. I could not accept with any sense of honor or conscience any additional responsibilities in the discharge of which I had to take a fundamentally different attitude than that which I felt constrained heretofore to adopt. I am sure that I have your fullest approval and sympathy in this.

I sent a telegram today to your friend in Chicago, Mr; Walter Lichtenstein, Vice President of the First National Bank advising him of the departure on the S. S. Washington of the young lady who is going over to the United States to join her fiancé. She was onboard last night when I saw my sister off, who has gone home for a long recuperation. The heavy care and worry she has been to me is now passed, and I am freer to give all my energies to my work.

I am hurrying this letter off in the pouch which leaves today. I have been keeping in touch with Wiley in Vienna and helping him in every way possible.

With love to you and Mrs; Messersmith and always anxious and concerned about your personal well-being and health I am ever,

Faithfully yours

Raymond