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Vienna, June 13, 1934.

*Pierrepont
Moffat*

Dear Moffat:

I read in the FREIE PRESSE this morning a despatch from Berlin to the effect that Hanfstaengl is going to the United States to attend the class reunion at Harvard. He has been talking about this for almost a year, but when I saw him just the day before I left Berlin and asked him if he were going, he said that he was too busy and felt sure that he could not make it. The fact, of course, is, as you know, that he has been extraordinarily eager to go, and unbalanced as he may be in some directions and absolutely unashamed as he is in some ways, he felt that he might be exposing himself to snubs and that he had better stay home. On the other hand, his prestige has been steadily going down and he can hardly dare to admit what the real situation is, so he has never been able to reconcile himself to the thought of not going. I know that he made inquiries in a good many directions about the advisability of his going, and gathered the impression that he had better stay home. What has brought about this sudden change of mind, if the notice I see this morning is correct, I cannot imagine.

I know that you do not need any information concerning Hanfstaengl, but there is one thing which I thought I should tell you, which only came to my attention when I returned to Berlin from leave at home and which gives a clear indication of the man's character. Just a few weeks before I left Berlin, one of my German friends, who happens to be a Nazi of importance, told me that he thought I should know what Hanfstaengl had been trying to put over regarding me. He said that while I was home on leave - it seems that it was in February of this year - a well known German of the old régime, who is now in business and whom I know quite well, was talking with Pierce, who is the President of the American Chamber of Commerce

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in Berlin. Pierce is an American whose father, I think, was at one time an Assistant Secretary of State. He has some connection with the General Electric, and when I cleaned up the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany several years ago, I had them put in Pierce as the new president. I thought he would make a good man for the job, but circumstances soon showed that I had made a mistake, which, however, did not seem to be a serious one, so we let him alone in the job. He does not seem to be a very well balanced person, and is apparently completely under the domination of his wife, who is more unbalanced than he is and is a violent anti-Semite. Mrs. Pierce was most imprudent in what she said concerning events in Germany and became a very pronounced Nazi, I think entirely because of her sympathy with the anti-Semitic activities of the Party. In any event, Pierce, who is not a strong character but who I do not believe has any real sympathy with the Nazis, began to curry the favor of some of the secondary Nazi leaders, in the mistaken hope that he could in this way help the interest of his firm. Among these secondary luminaries he formed contact with was Hanfstaengl.

The well known German to whom I referred and who is my friend, and who kept himself apart from the political movement, also knows Pierce, and one day, knowing that Pierce knew Hanfstaengl, he suggested to Pierce that if he would introduce him to Hanfstaengl, it might help him in his business. The next thing that happened was that my friend received a telephone call from Hanfstaengl's office that he was to come to his office at a particular hour. He was surprised, but went, and when he arrived in Hanfstaengl's office he found Pierce there. Hanfstaengl asked my friend, "You know Mr. Messersmith?" to which my friend replied that he did. Hanfstaengl then said, "Messersmith has many German friends, do you know who some of them are?" To this my friend replied that he did not know who my friends were, but that he had reason to believe that I had many German friends, but that he was hardly in a position to say who my friends were.

Hanfstaengl then bluntly said that I was very unfriendly to the German Government and to the German people and that he was making a protocol of the criticism which I had made of the National Socialist Party

and Government, in order to form the basis for my recall as Consul General. He said that he wanted my friend to give him the names of all the Germans whom he knew that I knew, in order to get in touch with them and get from them any critical or unfriendly statements which I might have made. My friend replied that he had never discussed politics with me and that he had never heard me make any statements unfriendly towards the German people. He stated that he had every reason, on the other hand, to think that I had real sympathy for and understanding of Germany and her problems. He said further that even if he could give a complete list of all the Germans whom I knew, he would in no circumstances lend himself to such an action as that Mr. Hanfstaengl proposed. This attitude, I may say, is characteristic of my friend, who is a very fine person, a former officer and a man who has shown himself decent in every respect. He showed himself to be the brave man he really is, for he risked going to a concentration camp for his refusal. Hanfstaengl tried in various ways to get this German to give him the information he wanted, and when he failed to get it, either through cajolery or threats, he turned to Pierce, who was present throughout the interview but who took no part, and said, "But this is a tough fellow!"

The net result was that my friend was not bothered and, of course, never saw Pierce again, because it was impossible for him to understand how an American who held the position of President of the American Chamber of Commerce would lend himself to such a procedure. I should also say that it was not my friend who told me of what had happened to him, but, as I indicated, an important National Socialist friend of mine, to whom he recited the incident in case anything happened to him.

When I learned this, it was a question as to whether I should do anything about it, and I decided that as I was leaving Berlin, nothing would be gained, so I simply told the story to Jack White and Orme Wilson and to Geist, for their background. I did make inquiry in at least two well informed sources to determine whether anyone else had information as to what Hanfstaengl was up to at the time, and I found that one of them knew that Hanfstaengl had conceived this idea as something he could do in order to prop up his falling favor in

Nazi circles. The whole thing was ridiculous and foolish, and I am merely telling it to you now so that you have a concrete incident to show how his mind works. I purposely also did not do anything about it, because I did not wish to involve Pierce. He is one of those men who suffers from too much influence from the other half of his family, and if his company knew of the incident, he would lose his job. He will in due course be quietly eased out of his position as President of the American Chamber of Commerce, and otherwise he is too unimportant to make it worth while to bother about him.

When I started out to tell you this incident, I did not realize that it would take so much of your time, but it is just as well that you should know it, as you may be getting some information about Hanfstaengl which might indicate that he is more responsible than he really is. When Mr. Dodd first came to Berlin and brought Martha and William with him, the two young people formed intimate contact with a number of the Nazis, among whom was Hanfstaengl. While I saw no harm in their having these contacts and saw some advantage in it, I did feel that the close, constant, contact with Hanfstaengl was not in our best interest. It aroused a certain amount of comment and did create a certain amount of reserve among certain people who could otherwise have been more frank with the Ambassador. While having every confidence in him, these people did not have the same confidence in Martha and William and feared indiscretions on their part. I often felt like saying something to the Ambassador about it, but as it was rather a delicate matter, I confined myself to making it clear as to what kind of a person Hanfstaengl really is. Whether he ever said anything to Martha and William I do not know, but I do know that up until I left Berlin they saw him a great deal. I have always felt that the contact in the form it existed was an undesirable one, and if any favorable comment regarding Hanfstaengl comes to you or to the Department, it will probably be through Martha and William. I say this with a good deal of reserve and regret, because I am very fond of the Ambassador and hold him in very high regard, but I feel I must tell you this, as the issues at stake are too important.

Hanfstaengl is totally unreliable and irresponsible. He has never been more than somewhat of a court jester. Hitler has for him the real affection and attachment

which he has for a number of people who have been kind to him or who have helped him, and Hanfstaengl's mother took him in at Munich when he was practically an out-cast and gave him shelter, and this Hitler will never forget. Hitler at first had the impression that Hanfstaengl knew all about the United States, and for that reason he really intended to use him, and did during the first weeks after the new Government came into power. Hitler rapidly learned that Hanfstaengl was not responsible, but, as is the case with many other men in whom he has lost confidence, he keeps him around him. Hanfstaengl has no prestige in the Party, but does have access to Hitler and is one of the few people who see him during his leisure moments.

Hanfstaengl is musical and has certain genius in that direction. He can be very affable, and puts himself out to be pleasant, likes to appear bright and cheery, and he has a certain superficial knowledge of the United States. He can speak apparently learnedly about all parts of the country, but it is like reading a piece out of an encyclopaedia or a geography. About our real selves he knows nothing. He is totally insincere, and one cannot believe a word he says. He pretends the closest friendship with those whom he is at the same time trying to undermine or whom he may be directly attacking. In the Party he has no prestige, for he is considered a lightweight and irresponsible, and in this respect they have his correct measure. He pretends to be helping along the more conservative men in the party, but in reality he is with the radical elements, because he believes them the stronger. He will even go to a party where there is a Jew to show how broad-minded he is, but he is in reality anti-Semitic and, like Goebbels, gives comfort to the Chancellor in his violent anti-Semitic attitude rather than in trying to give him good advice. He is constantly trying to give the impression to Americans, to correspondents and to foreigners that he is a conservative and really out of sympathy with many acts of the Party, but in fact this is merely a pose. If it is not merely a pose, and if he is in reality a conservative, his attitude is only the worse and the more dangerous, for his closest contact is with the radical and reactionary elements.

Why he should be going to the United States is beyond my comprehension. Probably he is doing it to

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save his face at home; that is the only solution that I can see. He should, I believe, be given distinctly the cold shoulder, for treating him with consideration will not help our interests in Germany nor our prestige. If he gets away with this effrontery, it will not help us any.

I hope you do not mind my having inflicted this long letter on you about a really very secondary sort of person, but what he is doing is really in very bad taste, but it is characteristic of Nazi procedure. What I wanted to emphasize again is that he is totally insincere, and although he is at times plausible, he cannot be trusted. There are quite a number of more important things that I hope to be able to write to you shortly.

Cordially yours,

George S. Messersmith

GSM/LGW