

964

THE KANSAS CITY STAR



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Dear Mr. Messersmith:

Watching the distressing events of the last few days I recall some of our conversations in Vienna in 1935, and also talks with Fodor, who I see has had to flee the country. My recollection is that at that time Fodor thought a majority of Austrians really favored the Anschluss; that everybody ~~was~~ enthusiastic for it while Germany was under the republic; that while many objected to various phases of the Hitler regime, still the attraction exercised by Germany was still strong, and that eventually it would carry over Austria to Germany.

I see Robert Dell guesses that 70 per cent of the Austrians were against the Hitler coup, and Thomas Mann who was here a few days ago insisted that the fact that Hitler would not permit a plebiscite was proof that Austrians were overwhelmingly against him. I had hoped this view was correct. But the extent of the demonstrations in favor of Hitler after the coup was accomplished, and the enthusiasm with which he was welcomed, made me wonder. Of course a good many people always shout with the winner, and it might have been very dangerous to have publicly shown disapproval. Still, it seems to me it would have been difficult to work up such enthusiasm if only a small minority had favored the Anschluss. A Kansas City doctor who speaks German traveled in Austria last summer and he tells me most of the people he talked with were for Hitler.

I wonder what your own impression is - not for quotation of course, but for my own information.

Sincerely yours

*Harry J. Ashbell*

The Honorable George S. Messersmith  
Assistant Secretary of State  
Washington