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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: May 13, 1938.

SUBJECT:

See Miss Helen Cotten

PARTICIPANTS: Miss D'Estinauville, an American residing more or less permanently in Switzerland, and Mr. Messeremith.

COPIES TO: The Secretary
The Under Secretary
Eu - Mr. Moffat
PA/D - Mr. Dunn

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Some days ago I had a letter from Mr. Edward Bringham, a well known citizen of Wilmington, Delaware and who belongs to a family rooted there for four or five generations, telling me that an old and valued friend of their family, Miss D'Estinauville, had just arrived from Europe and was very anxious to see someone in the State Department as she felt she had information of interest to this Government. Mr. Bringham had suggested to her that she come to see me.

She called on me yesterday and said that she lived more or less permanently in Switzerland as she was very much interested in various League activities. Her family for several generations had been closely associated with our Navy and she had herself taken a deep interest in our international

international relationships. She frequently went to Brussels where she knew most of the leading Belgian statesmen. About three weeks ago she had been in Brussels staying at the Hotel Metropole and while there a man was introduced to her at his request. He said he was a German officer in active service and had heard that she was an American of wide acquaintance and whose family had a Navy background. He would like to ask her some questions of rather direct character. She told him that he could do so.

This German officer, Miss D'Estinauville says, asked her what in her opinion the United States would do if Germany in one way or another would take over the British islands in the West Indies. Would the United States in case of such German action stand behind Great Britain? She remarked that he seemed to be putting a very hypothetical question, to which the officer replied that it was not so hypothetical as it might seem and that that was why he was so interested. She says that she replied that she did not know whether the United States would "stand behind Great Britain" but certainly in such event Germany would have to deal directly with the United States. She asked the officer whether he knew that there was such a thing as the Monroe Doctrine. He seemed to know nothing about it. Miss D'Estinauville says that, in view of this extraordinary conversation, she thought it advisable to engage the officer further and she had quite a long talk with

with him. She gathered from this talk that he was not only an officer in active service, but that he was more or less on a mission for his Government. Just what he was doing in Brussels she could not determine. From her further conversations she gathered that this idea of Germany in some way or another getting the West Indian possessions of Great Britain was not so much an idea of this officer as it seemed to be a part of a general German plan. The officer, she said, was considerably and visibly upset by the knowledge that there was such a thing as the Monroe Doctrine which they would run counter of in any such enterprise.

Miss D'Estinauville said that the whole conversation left such an impresson on her that she felt she ought to change her plans and return to this country immediately for a brief stay in order to convey this information to the Department. She knew that what she had to say sounded fantastic but she nevertheless had to report the conversation as it had taken place. I thanked her for being good enough to give this information and for having gone to so much trouble.

She is a woman quite advanced in years and obviously a gentlewoman of culture and very unusual intelligence. Her conversation with me was such as to show that she is a woman of a good deal of poise and apparently of good judgment. I

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find that she is known to officers of the Department who have met her in Switzerland and who seem to hold her in high regard as a person who at one time had a certain importance.

Miss D'Estinauville further asked me whether we in this Department got reports of the radio speeches made by high ranking officers of the German Government. I said that on occasions we did. She called attention to having heard General Goering speak twice over the radio after the occupation of Austria in both of which addresses he referred at length to the Germans living abroad and that wherever there was one German beyond the present frontiers of Germany that country was of interest to the new Germany. She says that he spoke of various areas which must become German because of the predominance of German blood there and that he referred specifically in this connection to Switzerland and the United States. She said that in two of these radio addresses which she heard in Switzerland (she says she has a perfect knowledge of German) General Goering said that there were 16 millions of Germans in the United States who must become the nucleus of bringing the United States within the German sphere. I said to her that General Goering and others made some strange statements but I had not heard anything concerning such a remark about the United States and I could hardly credit it. She assured me that he had made the
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remark in two radio speeches as there was no question of her misunderstanding.

The only comment which I have to make on this latter statement of Miss D'Estinauville is that the reports which we get of the speeches of members of the German Government made over the radio are very inadequate, whether official or through the press. During my long stay in Europe I found it advisable to follow a good many of these speeches over the radio in spite of the time it consumed, as I found it was the only way really to learn what was said. On the basis of this experience I ^{would} ~~can~~ say that, while it seems almost incredible that General Goering should have made such a remark over the radio concerning the United States, it cannot in any sense be considered as out of the question. Her observation in this respect at least leads me to the conclusion that we should issue an instruction to at least one establishment in most of the countries of Europe that certain radio addresses should be listened in on by an officer with a thorough knowledge of the language and any important comment reported to the Department.

G. S. Messersmith.