

1190

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL,
VIENNA, Germany.

April 13, 1939.

MEMORANDUM for Mr. Morris:

The memorandum of the Jewish Telegraph Agency which you showed me was written by Bernstein - whom you will remember in connection with the very peculiar Steiner case. The alleged quotation is, of course, entirely distorted. In typical journalistic fashion he has summed up a long conversation in what he presumably considers "snappy" style. Its fictitious nature is clearly evident from his putting in my mouth the statement that "Austrian Nazi officials ask me out for a drink" - a remark which is not only completely out of character as far as I am concerned, but is an absolute impossibility, since, as you know, we have only the barest official relations with the local Nazis.

Bernstein called on me at a time when the dismissal of Globocnik, Gauleiter of Vienna, for general incompetence was the sensation of the hour and the general topic of conversation. Our conversation naturally turned to the same subject and led to the question of whether or not it was true that a considerable number of Germans had been sent to Austria during the past months in an attempt to bring some sort of order out of the general confusion. I replied that this appeared to be so and that from the standpoint of the protection of American interests in general and American Jewish interests in particular this action proved advantageous, since where it was possible to contact one of these officials on special duty it was frequently possible to get more rapid and decisive action than from the appointees of the local Nazi machine, who had obviously in many cases only past political achievements, such as blowing up bridges and the like, to account for their holding office, and who, because of lack of experience in dealing with foreign officials and lack of confidence in the stability of their own position, usually sought to avoid a decision if at all possible. As an example in point I need only remind you of the case of Max Heller. For over a week we tried vainly to persuade any of the new Austrian Nazi officials to take an effective interest in his case. Finally we ran across an official who had been sent to Vienna from Berlin on special duty. This individual, Herr Haselbacher, who Mr. Geist states is one of his best Secret Police contacts, complied with our requests immediately.

I most emphatically reject the suggestion that there was anything in the conversation between me and Bernstein which was intended as praise of or defense of the Nazi régime or could reasonably be interpreted as such. I am also not of the opinion that there was any impropriety in discussing in a supposedly confidential conversation a situation which is well known to everyone and has been

1190

- 2 -

widely reported by the foreign press. See, for example, the March 12th New York Times Magazine (hardly a pro-Nazi journal) in which Anne O'Hare McCormick, whom I have never met but who is, I understand, regarded as very reliable, speaks of the "inefficient administration of the Austrian Nazis - malcontents, adventurers and unemployed riffraff who were good enough to undermine the former government but no good for responsible jobs."

John H. Morgan.