

1945

Vienna

39

Subject: Movement of German Army across the Rhine.

On the evening before the historic movement of the German troops across the Rhine, my wife and I were dining at a restaurant in Vienna known as the Drei Hussaren. It was the popular restaurant of Vienna at the time. There were only a few guests and among them was Montbas, the Counselor of the French Legation in Vienna. We had known Count and Countess Montbas for quite some time. He was a career officer of the French Diplomatic Service with considerable experience. When Montbas and his wife arrived at the restaurant I could see that they were depressed. He told me that he had just had news of what was going on. He asked me what I thought of it. I told him that I thought it was the most important thing that had happened or was happening since the Nazi regime came into power. I had had a good deal of the background of this matter from my friends in Berlin. Most of the information I had was from high officers of the Germany Army with whom I remained in close contact in Vienna through friends whom they could trust. Montbas did not know that the French and British troops were not going to offer any opposition. He had a feeling that they would not. As I saw no harm in telling him at least a good part of what I knew, I told him that there would be no resistance. That that had been decided upon by the French and British governments. I said that this was the turning point towards war - that there would now be no holding back Hitler and his fanatic group around him. The Army having been against the move for any number of reasons and having been sure that the French and British troops would offer resistance was now going to lose its influence. I said that many of the generals in the German Army who had so far stayed aloof from the Nazi movement would now jump aboard the band wagon. It would mean that the influence of the high command of the Army towards the stopping of dangerous measures which would lead to war was now practically finished,

1975

- 2 -

it would soon entirely disappear. It really meant that war was inevitable. The Nazi government would now be making moves against its neighbors. They were sure that there would be no interference with them. My wife

My wife was almost in tears. She was following all these developments with close interest and had a keen intuition. I recall her saying, "Now there is nothing that is going to stop a war". For her it was only a question of time.

Montbas was an intelligent and enlightened Frenchman who could see things in their perspective. He knew that his government had made a great mistake. He held such strong views about the developments in Germany and in Central and Southeastern Europe that obviously they were not pleasing to some of his superiors in the Foreign Office in Paris for he was very shortly moved on to Venezuela.

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