

EXPRESS.

7th April 1937

R

PERSONAL.

1987 HFL 29

The Hon. George S. Messersmith,
 Passenger on Board S/S MANHATTAN,
 c/o The American Consul,
SOUTHAMPTON.

Dear Friend,

This is to thank you for your letter of March 30 and to wish you and Mrs. Messersmith a very pleasant trip home.

As you will be staying over there until the beginning of June, I hope I may have an opportunity of meeting you somewhere in the States.

In my last letter I told you I had seen Dr. Schacht in Berlin. As a matter of fact I had a very long talk with him (2 1/2 hours), and I lunched with him.

He is greatly concerned about the present situation in Germany. He said they could not carry on under the existing conditions, feeding 67 million inhabitants and at the same time obtaining the required raw materials. Some understanding must be reached with other countries.

I replied that other nations found it very difficult to understand Germany, and that to-day other nations knew as much about Germany as Germany knew of Russia before the War, and it gives one a rather uneasy feeling to sign an agreement with somebody whom you do not thoroughly understand and whom you therefore do not fully trust. And I added that there is something like a fog surrounding Germany and which most people did not like to penetrate.

Schacht criticized very much the foreign policy of Germany, especially in respect of Italy, Austria and, above all, the adventure in Spain. He said that something must continually be done, on account of the internal situation. I answered that I knew, indeed, that a dictatorship was like a bicycle: it must continually be running, for if it stands still it falls.

He did ask me if I would help him as I had often done before and during Brüning's régime; then I thought it was worthwhile helping because I considered the Treaty of Versailles was nonsense. But I told him frankly that under the present circumstances I could not see my way to help preventing the bicycle from falling.

81

1287
EXPEDITION
-7-4-37

7/4/37

- 2 -

Schacht admits very openly that the campaign against the Jews and the Catholic and Protestant Churches is extremely harmful to Germany but that the Führer cannot give up this attitude as the eyes of the German people are focussed on this policy and if it was given up everything would crumble. He could not abandon it unless it was replaced by some diplomatic success abroad, such as the return of colonies and so forth. Hence this colonial question is much more a political than an economic question.

He also said that foreign governments were mistaken in thinking that Hitler would fall and that they would be able to come to an agreement with a Government other than his. I replied that that might be so but that on the other hand it was probably very difficult for other countries to come to an agreement with Hitler owing to the lack of confidence.

Schacht is coming to Brussels next week, and he will be dining at my house on Tuesday evening. He is undoubtedly a very able man and a man of strong intellect and nerve. As he says, he is working and fighting very bravely for his country, but at the same time he is rather downhearted because he sees that conditions are growing worse instead of better, and that finally all his work will be useless.

He told me that many people in Germany thought as he did, but unfortunately they had nothing to say for the time being. This is the opinion of the man who, as you know, is one of the most outstanding personalities in Germany and who understands the conditions of the country better than anybody else. A man who loves his country and one who, under other circumstances, would receive every consideration not only on the part of his own countrymen but also from everybody outside.

There is going to be a great battle here on the 11th April between Degrelle and Van Zeeland. The latter will undoubtedly win, and I hope it will be with a very large majority. Van Zeeland most certainly stands above politics and understands the economic requirements of this country and of the world at large. I think he will be going to the States in June in order to be honoured with the Diploma of Dr. Honoris Causa at Princeton University. This will of course be an occasion for him to meet all the important people in Washington.



7/4/37

- 3 -

Some pages of the preamble to the Sofina Report have been somewhat altered and I am sending you a revised copy herewith. Secretary Hull has read some of our previous reports and perhaps he would be interested in reading this year's also.

Again wishing you 'Bon Voyage', and with kindest regards,

Very sincerely yours,

Werneman