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OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO
SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D. C.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

March 4, 1938.

Personal and confidential

Dear Hugh:

I have your letter of February 21 with regard to Lee's departure for Amsterdam. We quite appreciate your reasons for having suggested some delay in his departure and it is entirely agreeable to us. We do not wish, however, that Lee's departure for Amsterdam should be too much delayed as the office is a fairly important one. I suppose by the time this reaches you Lee may have already left as I see from the telegrams that you have presented your letters.

I hope that you will be able without too much trouble to get comfortably settled in a suitable house in Berlin. I am sure that in the meantime you will be able to make yourselves relatively comfortable in the Esplanade. I know how much happier you will both be when you are actually settled but my experience has always been, as I am sure yours has been also, that it is best to put up with some of the discomforts of hotel life for a time so as to be sure that one has no regrets about a house through having made a decision too quickly. Geist has been in Berlin so long and knows the city so well that I believe you will find it helpful to discuss this problem with him.

I was delighted to have your private and confidential note of February 17, which I did not fail to bring to the attention of Mr. Welles. There is, of course, no reason at all why Prentiss Gilbert should not write us and I need not tell you that Shaw and myself, and I am sure Mr. Welles, will be glad to have any comment at any time on this situation you may wish to make.

I am

The Honorable
Hugh R. Wilson,
American Ambassador,
Berlin.

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I am sending you herewith a clipping from the Washington Herald of February 26 in which there is a sort of nasty dig at you and it is just this sort of thing that I had in mind when I advised you so strongly that certain changes should not be made until after you had been in Berlin for some time and then found them desirable. By proceeding as you have, you have taken the ground from under the feet of these thoughtless critics as I am sure that otherwise we would have had a great deal of stuff similar to this in the appended clipping.

I need not tell you that the developments in the general situation abroad have caused us a great deal of concern. Of one thing, however, I may assure you, and that is that our policy has in no sense changed and I think this decision is a quite definite one and will govern our procedure for some time. I do not believe that there will be any major change in our policy. While we wish Chamberlain well, we do not see how his efforts can lead to anything constructive or safe. He has embarked upon a very difficult and a very dangerous course. He seems to be disregarding fundamental facts and, in assuming a so-called realistic attitude, it is generally thought in this country that he is doing anything but facing the known facts. We here for the present are not saying anything but I thought you would be interested to know that we are holding on to the definite lines laid down by the Secretary with no thought of change and I understand that the President is in complete accord with this line.

It may interest you to know that the recent articles which appeared in the New York Times and other papers with regard to the discovery of a so-called "spy ring" were really based on accurate information, but Justice was so tremendously interested in the information which had been turned over to them that they had to "spill the beans". Some very interesting information came into the possession of our Government and it indicated very wide ramifications of the activities of a certain group in this country. It may be that the precipitate action of Justice in giving publicity to the matter will interfere with further investigations on this particular information. The necessary steps have been taken to see that there will be no further publicity on any steps which we may take to protect ourselves against these activities. I thought, however, you would be interested to know that the thing was not merely a canard and that various agencies in this country are very

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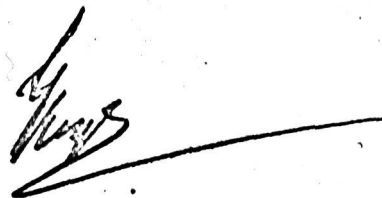
much interested in learning what certain people are doing in this country. For this reason you may be sure that we shall be very glad to have any information which the Embassy or our consulates in Germany can send us with regard to the movements and activities of certain persons who may be coming to or are known to be operating in this country. You may be assured, I believe, that there will be no further publicity of this kind which was so unfortunate for several reasons, but from our point of view principally because it gave an opportunity for a lot of people to run to cover.

We were of course interested in the German statement with regard to Germans in this country being told not to become members of the Bund and similar organizations. We did not fail to note, however, that there should have been no need really for issuing any such a statement. The Press here also did not fail to note that the German statement implied still a certain control which Germany believes she can exercise over her nationals even though they may be domiciled on a permanent basis in another country. Just recently the German Consul General in New York wrote to a man there, who was born in Germany but who has been naturalized since 1931, practically ordering him to appear at the Consulate and make provision for the support of his mother in Germany. He was told in categorical terms that he was subject to German law in this respect. There is every reason to believe that the German Consulate General in New York knew that the man was an American citizen when he was so addressed. It is in activities such as this that we must see the impelling motives of German action rather than in the recent statement that Germans are to refrain from becoming members of the Bund.

I am merely giving you the foregoing as I know you will be interested to know of some of the things of which we have to continue to think here.

With every good wish to you and your wife from us both,

Cordially and sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature, likely of George Messersmith, written in dark ink. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'G. Messersmith'.