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AIR MAIL

SECRET

FIRST PRIORITY POUCH

México, D.F., April 23, 1945.

No. 24,115

**SUBJECT:** With Reference to the Department's Secret Circular Telegram of April 16, 5 p.m., Requesting Information from Officers at this Embassy Concerning Responsible Germans Whom They have known in Germany, and Who Might Serve in Civilian Capacity Under our Control.

The Honorable  
Secretary of State,  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the Department's secret circular telegram of April 16, 5 p.m., stating that information has been requested from the Department concerning the identification of anti-Nazi Germans who are residents of Germany at the present time and who may wish to work with the Allied authorities during the occupation in assuming functions of an administrative character. I have noted carefully the further substance of the Department's telegram and I should like to make the following observations which may be of interest to the Department.

The only persons now serving on the Embassy staff who have served in Germany since the Nazi regime came into power there are myself, Mr. O'Donoghue and Mr. Reveley, and Lieutenant Commander Dougherty of the staff of the Naval Attaché. I have discussed this matter with Mr. O'Donoghue and Mr. Reveley and they have no names which they could suggest to the Department.

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The Department's telegram raises a great many questions which I believe are of primary importance. It is aware that I went to Germany as Consul General in Berlin with supervisory powers over all of our Consulate establishments in that country in 1930. During the course of the four years that I remained in Germany I made trips to almost all of the largest cities of Germany, as the records of the Department will show. During these trips I met the leading administrative officials in the various state governments of Germany, as well as the leading people in business, finance, education and other aspects of German life. During the period from 1930 until the beginning of 1933, when the Nazi Government came into power, I was practically the only foreign official of any Government who had had contact with important persons in the National Socialist Party. I did this because I saw the movement as a danger to Germany and to the world and because I thought it was a part of my duty to know some of these people and to know what they were thinking about so that I could adequately inform my Government.

From 1934 to 1937 I was Minister to Vienna and was able to remain in very close contact with developments and with personalities in Germany. The records of the Department will show this through my reports and letters. I would not like to make any exaggerated statement but I believe that it is correct to say that there was no foreigner in Germany in an official or unofficial capacity, during the years 1930 to 1934, who had a wider personal acquaintance and knowledge of the attitudes and activities of Germans of all classes of opinion than I did.

I have not been in Germany since 1937. From 1937 until 1940, while I was serving in the Department of State as an Assistant Secretary, I was able to keep up contact with certain responsible persons in Germany through neutral channels. Since 1940 my direct contact with Germans residing in Germany has been completely broken.

My experience has been that any information which can be given by a person like myself, who has had such wide contact in Germany, in reply to an instruction such as this under reference as to who are good Germans, would be useless from any practical point of view. I go further in saying that any opinions which I might express based on my knowledge of individual Germans in Germany up to 1940 are now of value only for background. It is not of a character on which any present estimate could be based of the attitude of these Germans since 1940. I knew literally thousands of Germans of all classes who were bitterly opposed to the Nazi regime before it came into power. By this I mean I knew them personally and had no doubt as to the sincerity of their then convictions, expressions and conduct. After the Nazi party came into power in early 1933 and during the remainder of my stay in Germany until the spring of 1934, I knew many Germans who remained strong in their opposition to the Nazi regime, although this opposition was silent and in active. They realized the dangers of the Nazi Government

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and its ambitions to their country. Some of them knew the dangers of the Nazi Government and its ambitions to the rest of the world. The circumstances, however, under which the Nazi Government governed Germany from the very beginning of coming into power in 1933 made it impossible for such Germans to express any opinion and one of the most disillusioning experiences which I had in Germany was to see how men with strong convictions against the government showed a complete lack of what we call civic courage in the United States. One of the things that we must recognize in the German character is this complete lack of civic courage as we understand it in the United States and for example in Great Britain. In the United States it would have been impossible for the Nazi regime to fasten itself on the United States for a relatively small group which would have been willing to risk their lives for their opinions and for their country would have been able to stem the tide. In Germany through this lack of civic courage there was no real resistance except on the part of a very few isolated individuals.

During the period 1933 and 1934, I saw many, and in fact the majority of those who had held these views opposed to Nazi doctrine and practice, become open converts to the Nazi regime and active instruments thereof. It was one of the further disillusioning experiences which I, as well as some other observing foreigners, had in Germany in those years.

The Department will recall that in the spring of 1934 I went from Berlin to Vienna to assume my duties as Minister there and I remained in Austria until the spring of 1937 when I went to the Department to assume a post there at the request of then President Roosevelt and then Secretary Hull. During the three years that I was in Austria I made many trips to Berlin. I remained in close touch, in fact in almost daily touch during my stay in Austria, with developments in Germany, and with persons there of importance and the manner in which I did this it is not necessary to describe in this letter. These continuing contacts enabled me to continue to keep the Department informed of developments in Germany as well as in Austria. What I wish to bring out is that during those years from 1934 to 1937, I saw increasingly those Germans whom I had considered good Germans, for one reason or another, becoming ardent Supporters of the Nazi regime.

When I left Vienna in 1937 for the Department, one of the grave fears which I had for the future was that of all the Germans whom I had considered good Germans, practically all had gone over to the Nazi regime, or had been so tortured, or actually executed or committed so-called suicide, so that they could play no part in the picture. In this connection I may say, for example, that when the Nazi regime came into power in the beginning of 1933, I knew personally the Burgermaster of practically every important or semi-important city of Germany. Within approximately six months after the

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Nazis came in every one of these Burgermasters was either dead, in concentration camps, had fled the country or was a full-fledged Nazi. This same important change took place in practically every category of German official and civil life.

As a matter of fact, as the Department is aware and as the record will show, those officials of the German Government, German businessmen, educators, in fact all Germans who did not conform to the Nazi regime were either executed, committed so-called suicide, placed in concentration camps, tortured so that they became physical wrecks and incapable of further usefulness or had been able to flee the country.

One of the facts to which we will have to reconcile ourselves is that we will not find many elements in Germany which can serve any useful purpose for a number of years after hostilities cease. To have any illusions on this score, whether it is held by our military or by our civilian authorities, or by our Allies, would be one of the gravest errors which we can make for our own future safety and security and that of the rest of the world. Those of us who lived so closely with this German problem realize this and it is perhaps only those who have lived closely to it who can fully realize the importance of this fact.

While I believe that behind the telegram now under reply there is good intent and while it shows due caution and while I can appreciate the reason for which it is sent, I believe it will be found that there is no person who has lived in Germany even as recently as I, and who had as wide contacts as I, who can definitely say now that a particular German could be trusted or not trusted. I have had so many disillusionments in this respect that with regard to Germans, I have no illusions left whatever.

I should add in this respect that my contact with refugee Germans outside of Germany, irrespective of race, has also not left with me any illusions as to the usefulness which most of these could play in any civil administration for many years to come in Germany, even if acting under Allied control. Without wishing to make a personal reference, the Department is aware that I was instrumental in aiding many of the most important and useful elements in Germany to escape the Nazi outrages and to enable them to reach other countries, including our own. I was able to keep up a certain amount of contact which circumstances permitted with refugee Germans in the United States and in other places. I have found that although they left Germany because they were opposed to the regime, many of them were defenders of some of the worst acts of that regime, and even of the war which that regime imposed on the civilized world. While I had many disillusionments

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with respect to Germans within Germany, I have had even graver disillusionments with respect to Germans outside of Germany who at least lived in a free atmosphere.

While I believe that among the Germans outside of Germany there are some elements which can be usefully employed in civilian capacities under adequate control by ourselves and our Allies, I am convinced that even these refugee Germans must be most carefully sifted before they are entrusted with any civil position, even though such civil position will be secondary in character and exercised under Allied control.

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I wish here to say that I am one of those who believe recognize the enormity of the task which we and England and Soviet Russia have before us in Germany and in Central Europe. In Germany particularly it is probably the most gigantic task which has ever faced any country. In my opinion the task which is before us, once military action ceases in Germany, is even graver and more difficult than the actual military hostilities still in progress. The issue at stake in the immediate postwar period and for a number of years is just as great as the issue still at stake in the military operations. For me there will be no rejoicing in the military victory until I see that we and our Allies will take the near and the long-range measures in connection with Germany and Central Europe and particularly with respect to Germany, which are necessary for our future security and that of the world.

It is not my intention in this despatch to enter into a full discussion of this problem. I only wish to point out that I believe that it is impossible, as experience has shown us so definitely, to indicate Germans in Germany now who can, because of their previous sentiments when we knew them, become useful instruments now under Allied military or civil control of that country. I know that this is a negative answer because the task before the Allied military authorities is so broad in scope and so important that it is almost beyond comprehension. On the other hand, the gravest mistake we can make is to think that certain Germans whom we knew some years ago when our contact with them ceased, as good Germans, may still be considered in that category.

I would like to venture here to offer my personal conviction growing out of my long knowledge of Germany and Central Europe since 1919, that the first control exercised by the Allied powers in Germany must be practically entirely military for a period, the length of which we are not presently able to determine. Obviously such military authority exercised by the Allied powers would have to have civilian advisers who are altogether competent. The control, however, from the top to the bottom in Germany must for a period, which we are not now able to measure, be exercised by Allied military as it is the only control which will be effective. The German people will not understand anything except military authority in this stage

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and it is the only authority which they will respect and obey. Such military authority in view of the totally disorganized conditions is the only authority which can maintain any semblance of order and bring about order. While I do not believe in principle in military authority carrying on administrative functions in what we may call times of peace and while I believe that military authorities will make many mistakes when given such administrative tasks, I am convinced that the task in this initial period is one which can only be carried through by a purely military control, with Allied civilian advisers. I am one of those who believe that the most complete and severe measures must be taken in German territory over a period, the length of which I do not think any of us in our Government or in the Government of Soviet Russia or Britain can ~~be~~ determined at this time. It is very much to be hoped that this period of purely military control, with Allied civilian advisers, will not be too long but the length of it cannot be determined now.

I further believe that as soon as circumstances permit the military control exercised by ourselves, Britain and Russia and perhaps in a measure by France, should be turned into Allied civil control with the military as the instrument of the civilian authorities. I believe, however, that when Allied civilian control comes in the Allied military must remain for a period which cannot now be determined as the instrument of the Allied civil control authorities. When Allied civil control replaces purely Allied military control, the Allied military must remain in the picture for they will have to serve as the arm and the instrument of the Allied civilian authority.

The third phase will come when a considerable measure of internal government can pass into the hands of the Germans themselves. It is assumed, of course, from the very outset that there would be complete disarmament and that this will be maintained even when a considerable measure of internal government may pass into the hands of the Germans in the third phase. When that period will be reached none of us can say but it is years in the future and it is only after the educational measures will have had their effect and which will have been instituted under the military and the civil control exercised by the Allies. Disarmament, economic restrictions, military and civil controls all will be ineffective unless the new generations, for at least two generations in Germany, are educated during the exercise of such controls.

The task which we face I realize is so gigantic that it is quite reasonable to see why both the military and civil authorities of the responsible Allied governments are endeavoring to find what German instruments are available which can be used. I would like to venture the thought and with me it is a conviction that such Germans cannot be used, even if we are convinced of their sincerity, except in the most secondary positions and always under the closest

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and immediate Allied effective supervision and control. I therefore venture the opinion that it is only the Allied military and civil authorities which will, within Germany, through experience and observation, be able to determine what Germans they may use in certain subordinate and controlled positions. Obviously a certain number of Germans will have to be used but it will have to be under these controls and in very secondary positions, and these Germans cannot be selected on the basis of previous knowledge of some of us of their opinions but on the basis of what is found in practice by our authorities on the spot are instruments which can be tried out.

The fear which haunts me is that with the victory may come a relaxation of our vigilance and that we may commit the errors again of the past. No matter how expensive, no matter how difficult, no matter how gigantic the task involved in these controls in Germany and in some other parts of Central Europe may be and no matter if they have to continue during two generations, which is quite likely, the cost will be less and the effort will be less than another war which will be most certainly engendered if these controls are not exercised. The Allied governments have as great a responsibility in the postwar period with respect to Germany as they had to eliminate the Nazi and Fascist regimes and the elimination will not be complete until several new generations are educated into a new way of life and thought.

In this connection I would like to make the following observations as of some interest to the Department. They are made out of my knowledge of the German people and out of the knowledge which I have of Central European countries over so many years. Briefly they are as follows.

1. I do not believe that we can consider that our safety and security and peace are assured with the military victory over Germany and Japan and that therefore in one respect the war cannot be considered as being over until the following steps and procedures have been carried through successfully.

2. Our security and future and peace are not assured until the last vestige of Fascism and Nazism is wiped out in Europe and in the Far East.

3. Our security and future and peace are not assured until military controls can be replaced by civil controls with the military as their instrument.

4. Our security and future and peace are not assured until these civil controls can be replaced by two new generations of Germans who have been educated in a new way of life and thinking.

5. The war will be lost unless the appropriate educational measures are undertaken together with the military and civil controls, disarmament, economic measures, etc.

6. Our security and future and peace are not assured until the great powers are in a position to be in full accord with respect to the operation in practice of an

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international organization for security and peace.

7. Our security and future and peace are not assured until extreme nationalism in small as well as in great countries is controlled and eliminated.

8. Our security and future and peace are not assured until small as well as great powers realize fully their responsibilities in international as well as in external conduct.

9. Our security and future and peace are not assured until the lanes of commerce are kept free and barriers of trade, whatever their nature, are eliminated.

10. Our security and future and peace are not assured until there is still greater progress towards social equilibrium through the establishments of greater social justice in small and in large states.

There are many observations which I would like to make in this connection and which are pertinent but I have wished to emphasize in this despatch only that my previous knowledge with respect to Germans and their activities and attitudes is in no sense an indication that they may now be useful in some capacity within their country, as instruments in subordinate positions under Allied control. To have any illusions in this respect I think would make from the very beginning the task of our military authorities almost impossible for from the very beginning their efforts would be sabotaged and the security for which we are struggling would be definitely lost.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith

(To Department in quintuplicate)  
GSM:NA

A true copy  
of the signed  
original