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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Berlin, Germany, December 5, 1938.

Dear Mr. Messersmith:

The confidential letter which you wrote to me about the instruction I had received from the Department to go to London and confer with Mr. Rublee has been received. I was very glad to have your letter, and you can be assured I would have found it extremely valuable if I had gone at that time. Besides, I am glad to have your latest views on this important matter.

You will remember that I saw Mr. Taylor in London last July and at that time made him acquainted with what I thought to be the best method of approaching the German Government; I suggested at that time that the Director should not attempt to come to Berlin, but that the first method of approach should be through the Assistant Director, Mr. Robert Pell, who could come to Berlin without the knowledge of the press and in a purely informal way to explore the possibilities of making some sort of financial arrangement. I thought that we could do a great deal to further the objects of such a visit. In fact, I considered that most of the real effort would be put forth by us, and not by the Assistant Director himself. You have now undoubtedly learned through Mr. Gilbert's telegrams that last week the German Foreign Office expressed themselves in favor of the Assistant Director acting in the matter, somewhat along the lines which I made known to Mr. Taylor last July. I was astonished when Mr. Gilbert informed me of the result of his interview with Dr. Woermann, who even

mentioned

The Honorable
George S. Messersmith,
Assistant Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

mentioned Pell's name and inferred that he could come over on the Continent with his wife and nobody would make any special sensation out of it.

Now the situation is somewhat hopeless. The Germans are in a mood of triumph and victory over their success in Czechoslovakia; and they consider that their course forward is positively irresistible. They have embarked on a program of annihilation of the Jews and we shall be allowed to save the remnants if we choose; but I am afraid that the chances of getting any co-operation from the persons who are now firmly in power are slight indeed. It is possible that the Inter-governmental Committee will be compelled to go ahead and do what it can without expecting from Germany the slightest cooperation. Still I would not consider giving the matter up; and I believe that we should act upon whatever hint we can get from the German Foreign Office. The whole question has been broached there through the conversations which the Ambassador and Neville Henderson had on the subject; and lately Mr. Gilbert has been following up the suggestion made by von Ribbentrop that possibly there might be something accomplished through the intervention of a third neutral party. Last Tuesday Woermann was even more specific and suggested Pell as the possible "third party". If Pell got at it I would be glad to second him and give him whatever support I could. I still am persona grata with the Nazis, though they have no illusions as to how I look upon events here and know that I am uncompromisingly American in my whole attitude. They cherish the illusion or truth, whichever it may be, that they can get away with nearly everything they do, and the consequences can only mean more power and prestige to Adolf Hitler.

I am of the opinion now that we should go ahead as fast as possible before the situation of the half million potential refugees becomes so desperate that salvation will be beyond recall; and that situation will now develop rapidly. I am not inclined to disapprove any measures taken by our Government and people to condemn what has happened in this country during the last month. No condemnation is strong enough. But I am fearful that we might fail in the method; and the

wrath

wrath of the oppressors fall harder upon the helpless victims. It might be well enough to sacrifice a half million people for the sake of upholding justice and the high principles of human dignity; but if we do so, then let us go all the way and prepare to attack the oppressor and bring about his destruction. If we are not able to do this then let us be wise in the manner we go about to protect the victims. Hitler meets reproof with defiance and redoubles his cruelty to show everybody that he is not afraid and will not hesitate to carry his hatred with steel and fire into the very bodies of the victims. This process is now going on with a relentlessness unparalleled in history since the days of Nero. The Jews in Germany are being condemned to death and their sentences will be slowly carried out; but probably too fast for the world to save them.

So far as the situation concerns us who are in the midst of it, I would suggest that we do nothing to aggravate the position of the victims, but avail ourselves quickly of any chance to approach the Germans and endeavor to halt this cruel process, if there is the slightest chance of doing it. I mean we ought to agree to come to some kind of working arrangement with the German authorities regarding the evacuation of the victims on a scale sufficiently great to make the Nazis think that by some show of moderation they can accelerate the exodus and carry out their policy of getting rid of the refugees. One must always count on a certain measure of deceit and double-crossing; but even that should not discourage us. This is a struggle to save the lives of innocent people and not only save their lives, but spare them years indescribable torture and privations. If we should go so far as to break off relations with this country the good accomplished would be little; it would mean little more than depriving thousands of the victims of their last hope and comfort. Thousands of these people still have faith in the ultimate magnanimity of the rest of the civilized world; their hopes would be dashed to pieces if we were to abandon them. Therefore I trust that we will not go too far in provoking the oppressors by our disapproval. Only we who sense the fanaticism and blindness rampant here know how dangerous

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it is to pursue a course of reproach when every sting will be promptly visited on the hostages. Since the wholesale arrests of November 10th we have got scores released and started on their way to new countries; and we do this as a matter of course without having the slightest trouble or disagreement with the oppressors. And so far as I hear, there is little promise of a relaxation of the cruel measures.

I think now that every effort should be made to establish contact with the German Government by having Pell come over here or meet the German representative in some nearby country. I believe that act should be the signal for the Ambassador to return and then every power that we are able to muster should be exerted to bring the Germans to some sort of an agreement. After we have saved these refugees, and the Catholics and Protestants have not become new victims of the wrath here, we could break off relations and prepare to join in a war against them. We shall have to do so sooner or later; as France and England will be steadily pushed to the wall and eventually to save ourselves we shall have to attempt to save them. The European situation was lost to the democracies at Munich and the final defeat is slowly being prepared. The age just lying before us will witness great struggles, and the outcome when it comes will decide the fate of civilization for a century or more.

You and I, however, are interested right now in what may be done to save the victims who are now being crushed to death; and I have only to repeat what I said in London last July and to recommend that a start be made as soon as possible. I sincerely hope that the Intergovernmental Committee when it meets will not break the bridges to Berlin by a sort of public announcement or condemnation which will arouse Hitler's wrath. In that case everything will be lost and the fires of persecution will burn all the fiercer and harder. I admire greatly the fine sentiments which have actuated the President to show his condemnation of these terrible events which are creating so many thousands of innocent victims; but I hope that he will

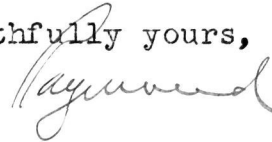
pause

pause in his course and consider what might be the final result for the human beings upon whom vengeance will be taken.

I hope that everything is well with you and that you are able to endure the strain which the heavy responsibilities place on you every day. The pressure here is growing steadily and we are constantly in a state of crisis; but we are holding our own and accomplishing a great deal. With warmest regards and sincere affection for you and Mrs. Messersmith, and many thanks for the valuable letter you sent me on the subject of the refugees, I am

ever

Faithfully yours,



P.S. Aside from humanitarian grounds I consider the refugee question of greatest political importance to the United States. If the pressure continues unabated to admit large numbers of Jewish people year after year into the United States, public reactions will, I am afraid, become more violent and there is danger this question may become important at home.

I have been successful in getting the French and British to allow persons in desperate circumstances whose turn in the quota will come within the next six to eight months, to spend the waiting time in France or England. I made a similar proposition to the Dutch Government, but thus far it has not been accepted. Mr. Gordon talked to me today over the telephone about it; apparently the Dutch Foreign Office would like to cooperate.

Don't give yourself any worry about the organization of the Bluecher Palais set-up. Your ambitions

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and wishes in this respect will be fully realized.
It is going to be done as you would do it. I am
sure it is going to be a great success.