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Enclosure No. 1, to Despatch No. 518,  
of August 12, 1933, from the American  
Legation, Vienna.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL JANSA, THE  
HEAD OF THE NEWLY CREATED GENERAL STAFF OF THE  
AUSTRIAN ARMY.

General Jansa, who is one of the most highly considered and an unusually intelligent officer of the Austrian Army, has been Military Attaché at the Austrian Legation in Berlin for several years. I know him there while I was assigned to Berlin and had very pleasant and useful contact with him. He has been brought back to Vienna to head the newly created General Staff of the Austrian Army, and I gave a dinner for him and some of his associates in the War Ministry last evening.

After dinner General Jansa spoke quite freely to me and several Austrians with respect to developments in Germany. He expressed the opinion that the developments of the past few weeks in Germany were of major importance and must be closely followed. He said that just before the new radical excesses began he noticed a very distinct change in the attitude of most of the Reichswehr officers with whom he came in contact. They were more reserved as to the freedom with which they spoke concerning the internal situation, but more definite in the actual comment which they passed. He remarked that they were quite definite in saying that the time had come when Blomberg must go as entirely too complacent with respect to the Party and its excesses and as too unrepresentative of the Army. He indicated that the great majority of the Reichswehr officers, particularly at the top, had no sympathy with the National Socialist economic and social program and very little sympathy with the political program. He said that these higher officers of the Reichswehr are still opposed to the policy of the regime in trying to force Anschluss either economic or political with Austria and hold to the theory that an independent Austria can be depended upon to be a friend of a reasonable Germany.

He spoke particularly of the excesses of the Party against the Church and against the Jews and against all classes of persons who showed the slightest lack of sympathy with the aims of the Party. He emphasized the terror exercised over high and low by the Geheims-Staatapolizei and gave examples of concrete cases of well informed persons and how they suffered from and under these terrors. He said that no one who had not lived in Germany and had the opportunities, such as for example a diplomat, had any real idea of this terror and repression or of what was actually taking place in the country. He said there was growing resistance to the regime and that this was undoubtedly one of the principal causes of the recent radical reaction, as the radical leaders felt themselves weaker and their power disappearing.

He said that there was a real struggle going on within the Party between the radical and more conservative elements. The radical elements had the upper hand so far, but he began to see the more conservative elements pushing forward. As an example of this he mentioned the rapid settlement of the difficulties between Poland and Danzig recently which in his opinion represented a backdown by Berlin which had enough trouble without permitting the Danzig question to become acute at this time. As another indication of the forward push of the conservative elements he mentioned the article which has just appeared in the BERLINER VOLKSWIRTSCHAFTLICHE ZEITUNG to the effect that the Austrians can be sure that never will German soldiers march against Austria. He expressed the opinion that it was too early to tell which side would get the upperhand in the Party, but that it was clear that all sorts of strange and inexplicable things were happening. A lot of ranking officers in the Party, such as Himmler, were unquestionably on the fence and utterly unable to determine yet which way to go. A man like Himmler, he said, was a pure opportunist and principally interested in maintaining his position. Himmler was a former officer and had certain elements of decency and would have no difficulty so far as his convictions went in going radical or conservative. His decision depended entirely on which way he thought the chances were the strongest for himself. Certain leaders, in his opinion, were too definitely committed but there were a lot of them in the position of Himmler.

When his fellow Austrians asked him whether the present Government could last and how long, he expressed the opinion that no one could tell how long it would last, but that it was weaker. He seemed to think that the economic and financial difficulties which the regime was experiencing had more chance of bringing it to its knees than the other factors in the situation.

He spoke of the corruption in the Party and of the reports in the last few days that seven people in the Ministry of Propaganda had been arrested by the Geheime-Staatspolizei without the knowledge of Goebbels, for extortion. He said that it was well known in Berlin in inner circles that a number of people in the Propaganda Ministry had been writing quite worthless film scenarios which they forced the German film industry to buy. This was only characteristic of what was going on through the administration of the Government under the influence of Party methods.

He remarked that every Austrian should be grateful that anything like Anschluss or coordination with Germany had been successfully avoided.

George S. Messersmith.

Vienna, August 10, 1935.