

Vienna, December 15, 1936.

MEMORANDUM.

Strictly Confidential.

The following are the developments with regard to my memorandum of December 10, 1936, in the matter of the letter which Mr. Gedye, the correspondent of the NEW YORK TIMES, wrote to Mr. Politis, the Greek Minister in Vienna.

Mr. Politis informed me yesterday over the telephone that he had, as he said he would, called Mr. Gedye over the telephone instead of replying to his letter. He had informed Mr. Gedye that the measures taken with respect to the correspondence of the NEW YORK TIMES were general ones and in no sense directed against the NEW YORK TIMES or its correspondents. With respect to the second paragraph of his letter, Mr. Politis said that it contained threats which he felt it would be better if he took no cognizance of and which made it impossible for him to make a written reply to the letter. Mr. Politis said to me that after he had made the foregoing statement to Mr. Gedye over the telephone, Mr. Gedye had insisted that the Greek order could not be a general one as some of the letters came through from their correspondent in Athens unopened while others were opened. Mr. Politis said that he did not continue the conversation, but ended it amicably.

I wrote Mr. Gedye on December 10 suggesting that he call on me at his convenience, and he came to see me this morning. I told him that Mr. Politis had brought his letter to my attention and that he has been much disturbed over it and felt inclined first to take some action with regard thereto. Mr. Politis had, however, decided to let the matter go by without any further action than the telephone conversation above referred to, which Mr. Gedye confirmed had taken place.

I said to Mr. Gedye that I thought he had made a very serious tactical error in writing such a letter to the Chief of Mission of a foreign government as the second paragraph contained what was equivalent to a threat. I doubted, I said, whether his superiors in New York would or could approve of his writing such a letter. There had been, I said, three other courses open to him which would have been much more desirable. First, instead of threatening to write such an article as suggested in the second paragraph of his letter, he could have gone ahead and written it without saying anything about it; or, second, he could have gone to see the Greek

Minister and discussed the matter with him, which would have been much better, for one can say things in such a conversation which one would under no circumstances put into writing; or, third, he could have come to see me and asked me to take up the matter in a friendly way with the Greek Minister.

Mr. Gedye said that he could not pursue the first alternative above mentioned, as had he done so the Greek authorities would have held their correspondent in Athens, who is a Greek subject, responsible. There was a real terror being exercised in Greece and he wanted to make sure that he, Gedye, carried all the responsibility. Mr. Gedye said that their correspondent in Athens, a Greek, had informed him that he would have to stop working as from December 31, and under no circumstances could he continue after that date as it was too dangerous for him. He had therefore been able to get the correspondent of one of the American press agencies in Athens, who is an American, to act temporarily for the *TIME* after January 1. Whether his other American principal would permit him to continue to act for any length of time was not yet clear. I told Mr. Gedye that this would improve their position in Athens very much as it was much easier for the *TIME* and for the officials of our Government to be of assistance in matters of this kind when the correspondent involved was not a national of the country. Government agencies were much hampered when a correspondent was a national of the country from which he was writing. Mr. Gedye said he quite appreciated this.

Mr. Gedye is a peculiar man who is a man of good principles and on the whole means well, but who is very much lacking in tact. I said that I quite appreciated what he had tried to do through this letter, and that his intentions were good, but that the procedure was bad. He must appreciate that such a letter must give offense, and serious offense, and could only aggravate a position rather than better it. It was his duty to see that the *TIME* was assured of a flow of objective news from Athens and the procedure which he had followed would certainly not help that. I was convinced that his paper could not approve of the writing of such a letter as the one in question when there were so many other avenues of approach open and which could lead to more prospect of favorable adjustment.

Mr. Gedye did not find it possible to admit the justice of my remarks, but I believe that they made their impression. I told him that fortunately the matter was settled for the present, particularly as regards the letter, through the quite liberal attitude taken by the Greek Minister here and my intervention. The situation was further helped, I thought, through their having an American correspondent in Athens after January 1. I suggested that when he had a similar situation arise it would be much preferable not to rush to

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write, but to go to see the Chief of the Mission or Press
Attache of the country concerned, and talk the matter over;
or if he preferred, to come to see me and I would be glad to
give him the best advice and counsel I could and probably be
able to assist in adjusting matters.

We then discussed the local political situation here
at some length as Mr. Gedye sees it.

George S. Messersmith

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