

OF 3447
Rehr, Dr Franz

October 15, 1938

MEMORANDUM FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT

For preparation of reply.

F. D. R.

Enclosure

fdr/tmb

Let. to the President's Mother from Clara Ragaz, Gartenhofstrasse 7, Zurich 4, Switzerland, August 14, 1938; encloses a document regarding Dr. Franz Rehrl, former Governor of Salzburg, who has been imprisoned; his health is endangered, and as Mrs. Roosevelt met Dr. Rehrl last year, appeals for aid in his behalf that his prison term be shortened or at least his situation in prison improved.

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



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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In reply refer to
PR 363.6315/128

October 22, 1938

My dear Miss LeHand:

In compliance with the President's memorandum of October 15, 1938, the American Consul General at Zurich will be instructed to acknowledge receipt of Miss Ragaz's communication to Mrs. James Roosevelt, Sr., if the President concurs with this action.

Since Dr. Rehr is a political prisoner, it would seem inadvisable for Mrs. Roosevelt, the President's mother, to go beyond this acknowledgment, but we shall be glad to write a letter for her signature if the President wishes.

Your file is returned herewith for convenient reference.

Sincerely yours,

Enclosure:
Your file.

G. D. Jameson
Chief of Protocol.

Miss Marguerite A. LeHand,
Private Secretary to the President,
The White House.

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International Headquarters

Téléphone 45.652 — Chèques postaux I. 1869
Adresse télégraphique: WILLIF

as from Gartenhofstrasse 7,
Zurich 4, Switzerland
August 14th 1938

Mrs. Roosevelt,

Madam,

I received to-day the enclosed document concerning Dr.Rehrl whom you met, as I am told, last year in Salzburg. I am sending it to our Geneva Office to be translated into English and to be sent on to you as quickly as possible; for there seems to be a human life at stake. This alone gives me the courage to address myself to you who in the present time must be submerged by requests from all sides. But I know from other experiences that names far less famous than yours have achieved wonderful changes for prisoners. A simple letter asking for news, enquiring after Dr.Rehrl's health and signed with your name may at least procure him the necessary medical assistance and the permission to have the diet adequate to his state of health.

As for the writer of the letter containing the statements about Dr.Rehrl I can take full guarantee for her absolute reliability. She is a personal friend of mine; she does not live in Salzburg, but has many connexions there. Politically she stands on other grounds than Dr.Rehrl; but she speaks with the highest esteem of his personal integrity and of his merits with regard to Salzburg's development whilst he was in office.

Trusting that you will kindly excuse my intruding on you and hoping that you may be able to give your help to this victim of nazi-ism

I remain

Yours very truly

Clara Ragaz

Clara Ragaz.

P.S. I am not writing this in the name of the W-I-L-P-F, but as a private person although I am sure that my Co-Chairmen would fully consent to the step I am taking. I only use our letter-paper because I am utterly unknown to you, and it may show you what I am working for.

Dr. Franz Rehrl, former Governor (Landeshauptmann) of Salzburg, was arrested immediately after the annexation of Austria by National-Socialist Germany. He was released after a month but has again been imprisoned since the beginning of May. He has been suffering from Diabetes for many years and during his imprisonment this malady increased to such a degree that his family was in great fear and that even the authorities had him transferred to the prison hospital (Inquisitenspital). His state of health has rather got worse since, as Dr. Rehrl is without medical assistance and care, which would be necessary for someone so ill. He has, for instance, to apply the daily injections of Insulin himself. Moreover, his family is no longer allowed to bring him food prepared according to the diet he needs and he has to eat the ordinary prison food.

Dr. Rehrl is allowed visits from his family only once every two weeks the interviews, which may last from 5 - 10 minutes according to the mood of the keeper, are strictly watched. He is not allowed to discuss his legal position with his secretary or his solicitor. He and his family are entirely in the dark as to the accusations formed against him. What he himself desires is to get a regular trial which would necessarily show that the accusations brought against him are unfounded. Reasonable people, even in the ranks of the National Socialist Party say that the arrest of Dr. Rehrl is a disgrace in the eyes of the world. Only they do not know how to justify his arrest and they therefore circulate the most absurd accusations against Dr. Rehrl in order to hit, at least morally, the man who has done so much positive work for the city and county of Salzburg. The rumour was spread that the city funds had been mishandled and, above all, that Dr. Rehrl had committed the greatest crime in the eyes of the Nazis, namely that he had invested his property in Switzerland. Even if he had invested his own legally acquired property in a foreign country in order to protect it from being seized and to save it for his children (the National-Socialists always confiscating the property of their political opponents) this could not justify the treatment he is subjected to. His bank-account in Salzburg has been blocked and as Dr. Rehrl does not dispose of much cash, he is without financial means.

What is much worse for him, however, is to know that he is utterly helpless and without possibility of defending himself and that there is little chance of his ever getting out of this hell alive. The political prisoners are being demoralized by their not being allowed to read or write.

Dr. Rehrl's family has got strict orders not to tell anything about the treatment of Dr. R's. For instance, the house-maid was warned that she would be arrested if she told anything about the house-searching. Also the family is not allowed to meet former friends or the secretary of Dr. Rehrl. They only do it with the greatest caution and under danger.

A National-Socialist legal assistant has been put at Dr. Rehrl's disposal.

Page 2.

It is earnestly urged that this information be treated with the utmost caution; above all, the family of Dr. Rehrl's must never be mentioned as its source, since it would mean great danger to them. Perhaps an invitation from Mrs. Roosevelt, the mother of President Roosevelt, who met Dr. Rehrl in Salzburg, could shorten the time of his imprisonment. In any case, if prominent American personalities showed their interest in Dr. Rehrl, his situation in prison might at least improve.

In this moment bad news from Salzburg are reaching me: Dr. Rehrl's fingers and toes are beginning to suppurate, which is a very bad sign in a case of diabetes. If something can be done it must be done quickly before it is too late.

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Since I, the writer of this letter, am unable, under prevailing conditions, to disclose my name, the person who is forwarding the letter vouches for the truth of the above information. I hold the information from primary sources, i.e. from the mother and sister of Dr. Rehrl's. The person who is forwarding the letter knows me personally, my name and address, and is able, if necessary, to give further information.

All those who are in a position to help are urgently requested to do so. A valuable human being is disappearing in the goals of the Nazis.

If Stat. Dept
thinks such a letter
can be written well
they prepare one
for Mrs Roosevelt's
signature -
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January 10, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE: x20

The enclosed letter from Mrs. Mildred Scott Olmsted explains itself. If the Department thinks such a letter can be written, will you be good enough to prepare one for the signature of Mrs. James Roosevelt, Sr.?

M. A. Lehland
PRIVATE SECRETARY

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Letter to Mrs. James Roosevelt, Sr., dated 10/27/38 x1078

Mrs. Mildred Scott Olmsted, *
National Organization Secretary,
Woman's International League for Peace and Freedom, *
1734 F Street, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

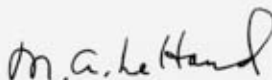
Re the case of Dr. Ernest Rehr of Austria, who was thrown into prison after Nazis took over Austria; Mrs. Olmsted wonders if, in view of Dr. Rehr's having entertained Mrs. Roosevelt, it would be possible for her to write him a letter inviting him to visit America; this would make sufficient impression on the authorities for them to hasten his trial or allow him to have his own personal physician and more comfortable care while in prison.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 10, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE:

The enclosed letter from Mrs. Mildred
Scott Olmsted explains itself. If the
Department thinks such a letter can be
written, will you be good enough to prepare
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M. A. LeHand
PRIVATE SECRETARY