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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

March 16, 1938.

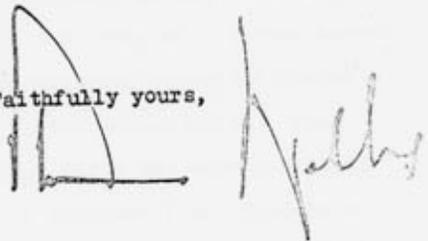
My dear Mr. President:

With reference to our telephone conversation this morning, I am enclosing a copy of the memorandum of a talk I had with the German Ambassador on March 14.

I also enclose a copy of the memorandum of a conversation I had with the Canadian Minister yesterday which I believe you will find of interest. The Minister's interpretation of the attitude of public opinion in Canada and of his own Government with regard to any policy which may be undertaken by the British Government now in connection with Central European problems is, I think, significant.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enclosures.

The President,  
The White House.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

*Memorandum of Conversation*

DATE: March 14, 1938.

SUBJECT: Recent events in Austria.

PARTICIPANTS: The German Ambassador, Herr Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff;  
The Under Secretary.

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The German Ambassador came in to see me this evening immediately after leaving the Secretary of State. The Ambassador told me that he had handed to the Secretary in its German text a formal communication he had been instructed by his Government to make to the Government of the United States quoting the texts of a German decree and of an Austrian decree promulgated yesterday declaring the union of Austria with the German Reich. The Ambassador remarked that these texts had been published by the press here and that he supposed I had seen them. I said that I had and that I thought they also had been telegraphed to the Department by our missions in Berlin and in Vienna. I asked the Ambassador if there was

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anything further in the communication he had delivered to this Government other than the text of these two decrees and he said merely the further statement that the Austrian Legation and the Austrian Consulates in the United States had been instructed to turn over their archives and to subordinate themselves to the German Embassy in Washington and to the nearest German consular officers. I made no comment.

The Ambassador seemed to find my failure to make any further remark somewhat exasperating and he gave me the impression of laboring under a very considerable degree of nervous excitement and tension. He then broke out with the remark "This is a great day, a wonderful day, for Germany". I again made no comment.

Mr. Dieckhoff then embarked upon a tirade which lasted certainly for ten minutes and which, in view of his usually extremely courteous and pleasant manner and in view of the fifteen years I have known him and have maintained extremely friendly personal relations with him, struck me as all the more extraordinary. He commenced with the assertion that no matter what Germany did, the rest of the world was always ready to inveigh against her, to question her good faith, to malign and maliciously to misinterpret her actions and her purposes,

and that the present moment was another example of that phenomenon. He said Austria has always desired an Anschluss with Germany, and both the Weimar and the Austrian constitutions provided for such amalgamation. Only through the inequity of the Versailles and the Saint-Germain treaties, said the Ambassador, was such a union made impossible at the end of the World War. He continued, saying that it was now evident to the whole world that the Austrian people unanimously desired to become an integral part of the German Reich.

At that point I interjected and said that so far as the impression of the world was concerned, it would seem to me that the impression created had been that the Austrian people had not been given an opportunity of determining that question and that the use of physical force must necessarily be considered as having obscured any considered and expressed determination by the Austrian people of what they themselves desired.

The Ambassador then went on to exclaim, "If you were in Vienna today you would not feel that way. You would see for yourself that every Austrian wishes to become a citizen of the German Reich". To this I made no comment.

The Ambassador then continued by stating, "And if

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the Austrians are not permitted to have a plebiscite, that would be nothing new. You will remember that when the French occupied Alsace and Lorraine after the World War, Poincaré announced that the mere manner in which French troops had been received by the populace in those two provinces was sufficient proof that the citizens of Alsace and of Lorraine desired to become Frenchmen once more". At this point I mentioned that it seemed to me that the precedent selected by the Ambassador was not a singularly happy one.

The Ambassador then went on to revile the press in the United States. He said that the news columns and the editorials in all of the American newspapers were filled with calumny and lies and that no effort was ever made to treat Germany or German policy objectively or even to deal with the issues in an impartial manner.

I reminded the Ambassador that we had had many conversations in the past months on the subject of the relations between our two countries and on the subject of the press, both in the United States and in Germany. I reminded him that it was absolutely impossible for the press or the people of the United States to take a dispassionate point of view with regard to certain occurrences which had taken place during recent years in

Germany. I stated to him that there was instinct in the spirit of every American citizen two great principles upon which the United States had been founded and had grown to its present stature. I said these two principles were the freedom of religious worship and the right of free speech and of a free press. I told the Ambassador that, as I had said to him frequently, so long as there were very great elements in our population who saw the members of their own race or of their own religion in Germany deprived of these rights which were considered fundamental by every American citizen, that prejudice would persist and I was sure that with his knowledge of human nature and with his long acquaintance with this country, he must realize that that was the fact.

The Ambassador then remarked, "But the Jews here are only a small proportion of your population. Why should you permit them to dominate the press and to dominate public opinion?"

I replied that while the Jewish element in the population of the United States was, as he said, only a small percentage of our total population, nevertheless, the people of the United States felt that that element among them was as much a part of the United States as any other element of the population; that we felt they

had contributed greatly to the progress and to the well-being of the nation; and that while I could under no conditions accept the Ambassador's statement that our press or our public opinion was dominated by the Jewish element in our population, nevertheless, in view of the fact that most Americans had Jewish friends whom they regarded highly and whom they admired as fellow citizens, the feelings and the sufferings of this part of our people very naturally necessarily had its effect upon the views and sentiments of the non-Jewish part of our population. I reminded the Ambassador in as much as he was undertaking to dissect the component parts of public opinion in the United States, that the members of other churches, both Catholic and Protestant, felt quite as strongly with regard to the two principles I had mentioned as the Jewish element in the United States.

I reminded the Ambassador that in previous conversations I had told him of my own early friendships in Germany and of the great benefits I as an individual had received from those friendships, and of the cultural benefits I had been privileged to obtain from Germany, and that therefore he knew that as an individual I was far from prejudiced and had always endeavored to see both sides to the German contention since the War and

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had fully appreciated the fact that in their dealings with Germany during the past twenty years injustices had been committed by other powers which I had always hoped would some day be righted through peaceful and reasonable negotiations such as those which Stresemann had endeavored to undertake. I stated, however, that in view of his knowledge of the American people and of the way in which public opinion in the United States reacted, the Ambassador would realize that the feeling now existing on the part of so large a proportion of our population would be very greatly intensified if new acts of repression and persecution were undertaken by the German authorities against Austrian citizens because of the latter's religious beliefs.

The Ambassador concluded our conversation by stating in the most vehement manner that the German Government as a result of its experience with the American press during the past years from which it had never received anything except malignant and malicious treatment would not be greatly concerned by any intensification of that feeling on the part of the press in this country.

S.W.