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An Appraisal:

George S. Messersmith on the Relationship Between
the United States and Germany 1933-1934

An Honors Thesis Submitted to
the Oberlin College History Department by

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Preface

George Strausser Messersmith was the most insightful American diplomat about German affairs in the early Nazi period. He served as Consul-General in Berlin from 1930 until May 1934 when he became Minister Plenipotentiary in Vienna. He eventually was appointed Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador to Cuba and Mexico.

Messersmith was born in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania in 1885 and began his career as a schoolteacher and administrator in the Delaware School System. Since schoolteacher's salaries were not substantial enough to support his family, Messersmith took the advice of J. Basset Moore, the Counselor for the State Department, and went into the Foreign Service. After serving in consulates in Canada, South America and Belgium, he secured the post in Berlin.

On a day to day basis, Messersmith was considered to be the State Department's most reliable and informed observer. He was able to establish contacts with a number of high ranking Nazi officials and he used these contacts to substantiate his reports. Messersmith commented on almost every aspect of German life and these comments were read by most American policymakers, including Roosevelt. His reports were considered particularly valuable by two State Department officials, William Phillips and J. Pierrepont Moffat, who both worked in the Western European Division.

Some of Messersmith's analysis is skewed and, sometimes, incorrect. There were two faults with his reports of the German situation. Until
1937, Messersmith did not recognize the economic strength of Germany. Up to that point, he felt the German economy would fail and bring the Hitler Government down. Instead the Government became stronger due to economic successes. Messersmith's other area of failure was as a policy-maker.

In this essay I shall examine Messersmith's reports of the Nazi situation paying particular attention to these two problems as well as his analysis of the Night of Long Knives on June 30, 1934. As one of the earliest skeptics of Hitler and of the Nazi regime, Messersmith was largely responsible for shaping American policy towards Germany during the first two years of Nazi rule. As a reporter of German affairs, he was the most insightful observer in the Foreign Service.
General Analysis

American Foreign Policy in the 1920's and 1930's was isolationist in attitude. For the most part, the United States viewed political events in Europe during this period with indifference. With the exception of their sponsorship of the agreement that legally banned war, the Kellog-Briand Pact, and in financial issues, the United States played a very minor role in European affairs during this period.

The history of formal U.S.-German relations between the two World Wars was equally uneventful. Most of the commercial contacts between the two countries during this period were handled in the United States by private investors. Relations were slow to develop. Because the United States never ratified the Treaty of Versailles, the two governments were not officially at peace until August 1921. With the election of President Harding in 1920, the United States followed a policy summed up by his campaign slogan, "a return to normalcy." This policy meant that the United States would stay away from European politics, and avoid, to use a phrase of George Washington's, "entangling alliances." Americans believed that this "America first" policy would keep the United States out of another European dispute like World War One. Not until the Dawes Plan in 1924 were there any substantial relations. With the Dawes Plan and German economic recovery, American loans began to flood the German Market, enabling the German government...
to pay its reparations promptly and in full. After the Stock Market Crash and the ensuing Depression, both countries directed most of their efforts toward economic recovery. At this point, relations between the two countries began to deteriorate. American banks called back their Dawes Plan loans aggravating the German situation.

When George Messersmith began his job as Consul in Berlin in 1930, German-American relations had already begun declining. By the time that Franklin Roosevelt became President of the United States in March 1933, barely one month after Adolf Hitler had become Chancellor in Germany, the Depression was near its worst point in both countries. The top priority of the Roosevelt Administration became economic recovery for the United States. In addition, Isolationism as a foreign policy doctrine was receiving acceptance across the country. In short, there was little support for an overly active American Foreign Policy.

During the next five years German-American relations would deteriorate further until, in 1938, the United States recalled their Ambassador in protest of the German pogrom against the Jews during Kristalnacht when Jewish stores, homes and synagogues were burned and vandalized. Messersmith's role in this deterioration was significant. His reports contributed to the formation of a malevolent U.S. policy towards Germany. Messersmith realized that there was little the United States could do to contribute to European Collective Security. Yet, he still considered it important to see to it that the State Department was well informed of the events inside Germany.
Messersmith's reports of German events were recorded in his personal letters and official correspondences. These communications, left at the University of Delaware and at the National Archives, lend insight into the formation of his ideas regarding Hitler and the Nazis. However, because his writing is overly wordy, his letters are difficult to read and therefore hard to research. Also since his papers are extremely lengthy (thereby earning him the nickname "Forty-Page George"), they are that much harder to probe. On many occasions Messersmith was asked by different Department officials to condense his observations; but, he usually responded that to do so would prevent him from filing a complete report. In one particularly turgid passage, Messersmith filled his despatch with an overabundance of independent clauses:

While it is generally recognized that the political relations between states, with which the diplomatic mission of our Government has to concern itself, have almost entirely an economic, financial or social background, and that purely political relations in the old sense of the word no longer exist, experience has...

Nevertheless, these stylistic problems should prevent neither the researcher nor the reader from understanding the valuable and informative analysis that Messersmith had of the Nazi situation during the first two years of Hitler's reign.

One of the aspects of Naziism that became obvious to Messersmith early in 1933 was the fine line that could be drawn between the legal parliamentary Government and the rule of the Nazi Party. In a despatch dated April 10, 1933, Messersmith described in detail this dual
government that had existed since March 6, "and from the course of events there is much reason to believe that the extra-legal Government is the stronger and influences definitely in most instances the acts of the legal and constitutional Government."4 With this type of a system, members of the government could insure that the bureaucracy was run within legal constraints. But, as members of the National Socialist Party, these same officials could engage in extra-legal acts. "There is", Messersmith continued, "reason to believe that the legal Government serves as a convenient alibi for the illegal acts and terror exercised by the Party organization."5 There was another advantage to this setup. When diplomats such as Messersmith complained of Governmental violence, the Government shifted the responsibility to the Party. This way the bureaucrats could prevent people like Messersmith from creating problems.

Acting on this observation of "sanctioned" violence, Messersmith worked to protect Americans and American property from German harassment. On many occasions he had reason to complain to the German Interior Ministry, and twice directly confronted Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick. The most serious case of an American being harassed occurred in Saxony in 1933, when SA men attacked a Jew named Zuckerman for not returning their Nazi salute. Even though Americans were not required to give the salute, these men beat Zuckerman until he required hospitalization. Messersmith personally took responsibility for the Zuckerman case and complained to the Foreign Ministry. The Ministry
pressured Frick about the poor care the case was being given by the Chief of Police in Saxony. Although the assailants were never apprehended, Messersmith made sure that Frick personally reprimanded the Police Chief in Saxony. Additionally, the Consul had a statement issued to stop further SA attacks on Americans. For his work Messersmith received a commendation and personal congratulations from many State Department officials.6

Messersmith filed many other complaints about the excessive violence of the Nazi Government both to Washington and Berlin. At the center of many of these complaints was Nazi anti-Semitism. In an article for Jewish Social Studies, an author on Jewish affairs, Shlomo Shafir examined Messersmith's role as an opponent of Nazi anti-Semitism and as a friend of the German Jews. The principal topic in Messersmith's early despatches from Berlin concern the Nazi treatment of Jews, and especially American Jews in Germany. In countless letters Messersmith related new German laws that were aimed specifically at removing Jews from their occupations. After the Nuremburg Party rally in September 1933, Messersmith wrote William Phillips a confidential letter describing his impressions. Phillips considered these observations so important he recommended that Roosevelt read the letter.

The extreme brutality with which the anti-Semitic movement has been carried through, will I believe never be appreciated by the outside world, and while physical attacks may have stopped almost entirely I can assure you that the measures against the Jews are being carried out daily in a more implacable and a more effective manner....It is definitely the aim of the Government ... to eliminate the Jews from German life.7
While not even Messersmith knew what would become of the Jews under Nazi control in the next 12 years, this statement was an eerie forecast of the Final Solution. Such observations that Messersmith made appeared at the same time that other State Department officials were choosing to deny the validity of such reports. For instance, Arthur Morse's book, *While Six Million Died*, documents the story of American ignorance and appeasement of German anti-Semitism. With a large anti-Nazi demonstration planned by the Jewish Community in New York City, Secretary of State, Cordell Hull sent an urgent telegram to American diplomats in Germany asking for any kind of assurance that could be released to the press stating that the situation in Germany was not as bad as these potential demonstrators believed it to be. In the wake of this kind of pressure from Hull and other department officials, like Assistant Secretary of State, J. Pierrepont Moffat, Messersmith softened his reports of Nazi brutality. Privately, however, he remained vehemently critical of Nazi anti-Semitism. One of the leaders of the Philadelphia Jewish Community, Jacob Billikopf, quoted Messersmith as saying, "'There is no greater crime in history than that which the German Government is committing against the Jews.'"

Interestingly, however, Messersmith's solution to the problem of Nazi anti-Semitism was not the alteration of United States immigration laws to allow more Jews the opportunity to leave Germany. Messersmith offered explicit advice about what should not be done. "I believe that it would be a great mistake from every point of view to endeavor to make
any change in our immigration laws. We are carrying out our visa practice in Germany with the greatest sympathy ..."10

How could Messersmith in September of 1933 have exhorted the barbarity of Nazi anti-Semitism and two months later have suggested that nothing be done with United States immigration laws? There appears to be a direct contradiction in his statements. If the Jews were unwanted in the United States, how can Messersmith condemn Hitler's anti-Semitism? Perhaps, one of the potential dangers Messersmith anticipated by allowing more German Jews to emigrate to the United States, was the assimilation problem. The United States was already experiencing the worst unemployment in its history and further additions to the workforce would only have compounded the problem. Shafir cites another reason for Messersmith's view: that many of these potential refugees were affiliated with Socialist and Communist movements. To allow these people into the United States, especially the intellectuals of the New School, a group who became loosely affiliated with Columbia University and the University in Exile, could have had politically undesirable consequences. Shafir defines this fear of Messersmith's as a basic "jewophobia."11 To write off Messersmith's analysis as "jewophobia" does not seem sufficient. Messersmith was someone who saw the coming (or potential coming) of the harsh anti-Semitic legislation and did not advocate a change in policy to mitigate the problem. One explanation of why Messersmith did not see a change as being necessary was because he did not expect the Nazi Government to stay in power if
they tried to enforce too strongly these policies. Shafir concludes in his article that if someone as sympathetic to the German-Jewish problem as Messersmith was not willing to push for an easing of immigration laws, such a policy would probably not have found favor anywhere else in the State Department.

The person responsible for much of the Nazi anti-Jewish legislation was also the person that Messersmith considered the key to Nazi success, the Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels. Messersmith was one of the few people in the State Department who was aware of the importance the Nazis placed on propaganda and of its possible effect both in Germany and internationally. Very early he warned of the potential danger that Goebbels and his Ministry might be. The State Department meanwhile was very nonchalant about the possible effect propaganda might have. Hitler appointed Goebbels to head the newly formed Ministry for Propaganda and Public Intelligence. With the formation of his new Ministry, Goebbels outlined its aims and objectives:

> it must be our task not only to inform the press, but we have even a greater task, that of instructing the press so that it will make clear to the people what the Government is doing and why it is doing what it is (emphasis added).12

For the Government to sanction a Propaganda Ministry was unprecedented in Germany and in the world. Mass propaganda was a relatively recent phenomenon and many people were unaware of its potential both for the dissemination of information and for danger. The United States Government and the State Department in particular were very confused
about the potentials of propaganda. The recent development of shortwave radios made broadcasts to a large number of people very easy. Germany was one of the first countries to successfully use shortwave broadcasts for governmental purposes. Hitler or Goebbels could make a speech in Munich and have it be heard throughout the country.

The State Department, on the whole, had very nonchalant attitudes towards propaganda during this period. Already by May 12, Messersmith wrote, "press censorship may be considered as absolute." Messersmith was one of the only Americans who recognized the potential that German propaganda, especially under Goebbel's leadership, could have. Messersmith considered Goebbels to be the most dangerous Nazi of all. On November 24, 1933, Messersmith wrote a character sketch of Goebbels which summed up most of Messersmith's impressions of Goebbels and his Ministry. In this sketch of Goebbels, Messersmith called him,

the most energetic and indefatigable and hardest working man of the National-Socialist leaders. He is undoubtedly the most intelligent and clever man in the entire party.... He is the single most useful and effective member of the party.14

No one in the Nazi Party was more respected and feared by Messersmith than Goebbels. Other than Hitler, his effect on the course of events from 1933-34 in Germany was greater than any other Nazi. Messersmith, on many occasions, wrote that without Goebbels, Hitler would not have been able to maintain his dictatorship of Germany. This point could have been true.
Messersmith frequently mentioned his opinion concerning Hitler and his dictatorial power. Messersmith's attitudes during this period changed from a skeptical acceptance of the regime to a call for Hitler's complete removal from office.

Early in 1933 Messersmith knew little more about the future of Germany than any other observer. It did not take him long, however, before he realized what Hitler's plans were for Germany and what they would entail for the rest of the world. On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag building was set on fire. The identity of the arsonists is still unknown. A Dutch Communist, van der Lubbe, was arrested and confessed, but his guilt is still questioned. Hitler used the event to move against the Communists and in a series of events, culminating in a law of May 26, dissolved the Communist Party. Almost immediately Messersmith saw in the elimination of the Communist Party a precedent for further action. At the same time as he was sending despatches describing Nazi action against the Communists, the first Secretary of the American Embassy, Alfred Kliefoth, was explaining why such action would not take place. On February 20, 1933, Kliefoth quoted Frick in a despatch as saying that the Nazis, "would not supress the Communist Party, but would seek to overcome the Communist menace in Germany by convincing its followers of the error of their ways." Kliefoth continued by explaining that the reason the Nazis could not, "exterminate the Communists by brutal force, [was because] a serious attempt in this direction may throw Russia into the open arms of
France. Messersmith, however, by February 1933 was already disillusioned by Hitler's Germany and perceived the situation very differently than Kliefoth. Still, Messersmith's disillusionment did not stop him from making contacts in the Government because, after reaching the conclusion that the Nazi leaders were comparable to clinical psychopaths, he believed that informal contact with government officials was the only way to find anything out and to get anything done. By the time he left Berlin in May 1934, he had made contacts with many Nazis and other high placed Government officials. Messersmith felt that non-official meetings with leaders was the best way he could get information about the Nazis.

The information that Messersmith accumulated through his informal interactions with these officials led him to conclude that the situation in Germany had grown "very serious" and that the "Department must be very careful in its dealings with Germany as long as the present Government is in power..." This letter to Phillips was very prophetic. In the middle of the letter, Messersmith wrote that Hitler was becoming disturbed because the masses in the Party were trying to carry out what was called the "Second Revolution." This involved implementing some of the socialist aspects of National Socialism that Hitler resisted. Messersmith mentioned that Hitler intended to purge the Party after his power was consolidated. Messersmith would comment on this issue many more times, always asking the question, will the leaders be able to "impose their moderate will on the masses?" When Hitler purged Ernst
Roehm and other radicals from the Party, this question was not lost on Messersmith. I shall consider the Night of Long Knives and Messersmith's observations of the event in chapter 3.

Hitler's war preparations were also anticipated by Messersmith. In the same letter to Phillips, Messersmith made some insightful points concerning Nazi plans for peace and for war in the present and in the future:

while the Germany of today wants peace, it is by no means a peaceful country or one looking forward to a long period of peace. The present German Government and its adherents desire peace ardently for the present because they need peace to carry through the changes in Germany which they want to bring about. What they want to do, however, definitely is to make Germany the most capable instrument of war that there has ever existed.20

Considering that this statement was made after only five months of Hitler's reign, Messersmith was not far from setting the scenario for the future of German politics for the next ten years. This was precisely the situation that Germany was in. Hitler needed peace for the early years so that he could build a German war machine without distractions. This was one of Messersmith's most insightful points. He concluded his letter very pessimistically, claiming that the German Government was carrying itself and Europe to certain doom. He warned Phillips that great care had to be taken when dealing with Germany due to these plans for the future.21

In October 1933, after Hitler had withdrawn Germany from the League of Nations and from the Disarmament Conference, Messersmith again wrote
Phillips with his observations. In his comments concerning Hitler's announcement of the withdrawal, Messersmith questioned the sincerity of Hitler's regime. "I believe, that when Hitler says anything he for the moment convinces himself that it is true. He is ... a fanatic." 22 If Messersmith had ever trusted Hitler's Government, by October this trust had disappeared. At the end of this letter Messersmith compared the state of the German Government to a madhouse,

There are so many pathological cases involved that it would be impossible to tell from day to day what will happen any more than the keeper of a madhouse is able to tell what his inmates will do in the next hour or during the next day. 23

Even by October 1933, Messersmith had become frustrated enough to make this comparison. He was beginning to understand that this was not a traditional government and would not act in a traditional manner. Given that the situation at that time was so uncertain Messersmith gave his readers in Washington advice concerning how to deal with Germany. The situation was, "very insecure and [we] shall have to judge Germany by her deeds rather than by the declarations of her leaders." 24

Nine days later Messersmith concluded that the time had come for the United States to be very firm with Hitler's Government. Since none of their leaders could be trusted, any relations, other than those "essential for ordinary intercourse", should be stopped. Any gestures that Germany might attempt should be rebuffed. "I think we will be doing Germany as well as ourselves and the whole world a service." 25
Shortly after sending this letter, another event occurred in Germany heightened Messersmith's cynicism. On November 12, 1933 the Nazi Government held a plebiscite to measure the support of the Nazi policies to that date. The election was intended to discover how the German people felt about the German Government's withdrawal earlier that year from both the Disarmament Conference in Geneva and from the League of Nations. This pretense did not confuse Messersmith. A week before the vote was taken he wrote that the elections, "are going to be a hoax. Nothing can be learned from the results despite the fact that Hitler will claim a major victory... The only real victory will be the masterminding effort of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry for masterminding this basic election into a Nazi triumph."26 Part of the reason why the propaganda effort was so successful was because Goebbels and Hitler had the elections held the day after the fifteen year anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War One — the day that led to Germany being bound by the "shakles of Versailles." Now the people of Germany had the chance to throw off these shackles and regain their rightful position in Europe. Hitler and Goebbels did not miss their chance to exploit this sentiment everywhere. Messersmith's despatch continues, "All of the public, regardless of their politics (Nazi, anti-Nazi, Socialist), want to see Germany reestablished in a position in Europe of equality."27 If for this reason alone, Messersmith wrote to Phillips on November 23, the election must be viewed as a "huge spectacle."
The results of the election were staggering — ninety-six percent turnout with ninety-five percent of the votes in favor of Hitler's policies. These figures did not surprise Messersmith who had become cynical of the whole election before it even took place. In his letter to Phillips, he described both the overt and covert coercion that was used. "The German people have learned during the past eight months what lack of conformity to party wishes and discipline involves. An election was to be held and the party mandate went out to vote 'yes'. This was sufficient in present day Germany." This election, more than any other specific event in 1933, was responsible for Messersmith's disillusionment of Nazi Germany. The coercion involved typified for Messersmith the ideas and practices of the Nazi regime. By the end of 1933 the recovery that Messersmith was so confident of, at the beginning of the year, had disappeared, and there was not much hope in his mind that the future would be any better.

In January 1934, Messersmith went home to visit with family and friends. While he was at home, Roosevelt nominated him for the post of Minister to Uruguay. As a minister Messersmith would have had the chance to move out of the Consul Corps and into the Foreign Service branch of the State Department. Messersmith was quite pleased with the promotion except such a move would remove him from the focus of his concerns. Messersmith returned to Berlin in March to pack his bags. When he returned he discovered that the American Ambassador in Berlin, William E. Dodd, had been pushing for Messersmith's nomination for the
vacated ministerial post in Vienna. Roosevelt felt Messersmith would be the perfect man for such a position, and withdrew the nomination for the Montevideo post offering him the job in Vienna. Messersmith gladly accepted. Such a position was perfect for Messersmith. He had received the promotion to Minister which would make further advancement easier, and he was able to stay near the Nazi situation in a crucial listening post.

One of the first things Messersmith noticed when he returned to Europe was that nothing had changed — the deterioration had continued at a constant rate. Messersmith's job in Vienna gave him a different angle of vision to observe Germany with. He was no longer at the center of activity in Berlin. He felt that being in Vienna offered him, "[t]he opportunity for perhaps even greater objectivity and relatively more correct perspective."30 This different viewing position did not change his opinion of the regime.

During his first year in Austria, Messersmith observed two crises — one in Germany and one in Austria. Barely one month after his arrival in Vienna, Hitler purged the Nazi Party, killing Roehm, Gregor Strasser and others in the Night of Long Knives on June 30 (see Chapter 3). Less than one month after the purge, a band of Austrian Nazis broke into the Austrian Chancellery on July 25, and shot and killed Englebert Dollfuss, the Austrian Chancellor. These two events (though Hitler was not totally responsible for either) combined to horrify Messersmith, and permanently embitter him towards the Hitler regime. This is obvious
through the tone of his letters and despatches — he began to refer unfavorably of "the mentality of the Triumverate."

This bitterness grew throughout the summer. After Hindenburg's death in August, Messersmith wrote one of his most pessimistic accounts of the German situation. He began by discounting the view many people still held that Hitler was becoming milder in his actions. "This I consider to be one of the most dangerous factors of the European situation."31 Up to the outbreak of the War, Hitler was able to effectively exploit appeasement-minded leaders with promises of a milder course of action. Messersmith no longer wrote of linking German policy to economic benefits. Instead he called for a denial of those benefits to bring the Nazi Government down. Messersmith offered a warning that a, "change [of strategy] cannot be mistaken to be a change of policy."32

Messersmith then related the significance that Hindenburg's death on August 2 would have on the situation in Germany. An hour after the President's death an announcement was made that the offices of Chancellor and President would be merged. By assuming the office of President, Hitler also took over Hindenburg's job as Commander-in-Chief of the Army. By becoming Commander of the Reichswehr, Hitler was given a personal oath of allegiance by the officers and men of the Reichswehr, "I will render unconditional obedience to the Fuhrer of the German Reich and People, Adolf Hitler, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready, as a brave soldier, to stake my life at any time for this oath."33 Messersmith pointed out the significance of this oath:
As long as Hindenburg was alive the Army's oath of allegiance was directly to him and in taking action against the National Socialist Party the army was in no sense violating its oath. Now they have been placed in the position of swearing allegiance to Hitler and this in my opinion greatly complicates the situation. It prevents the function of action of the army, for now action is equivalent to a breach of their oath.34

Messersmith saw this same situation while he was serving in Argentina. The army saw itself as the only means to overthrow the corrupt Government of Irigoyen; but, because of their oath of allegiance, they were unable to act. He was concerned because he realized that the circumstances in Argentina were similar to those that he was observing in Germany. Even though the Reichswehr might have wanted to overthrow Hitler's Government, they would not. Their oath of allegiance was uncompromisable. The Army did not want to compromise their oath because Hitler, in their opinion, was following a favorable course. During the war, as Hitler began to assume a dictatorial role over military affairs, many officers refrained from opposing him because of this oath. In 1934, however, they were in support of the Hitler Government.

Later in this letter after warning Phillips about the gravity of the situation, Messersmith complimented the United States' policy towards Germany, "I think our [decisions] have been very wise so far."35 This approval was understandable. Messersmith's letters were a significant factor in framing this policy. His recommendation of malevolent neutrality toward the Hitler Government was heeded by the State Department. On a day-to-day basis Messersmith was considered by the
Department to be the most reliable reporter of German affairs. The United States and Germany had little formal interaction, and this was exactly the course Messersmith advocated.

Things had not improved for Messersmith in the next three weeks, and on September 7, he made his most decisive statement to that date: "I believe that the only hope for Europe, and in a way for us all, lies in the elimination of the present German Government." 36 One of the problems eliminating the Hitler Government would be finding a replacement. To many people this meant Communism. Hitler and Goebbels used this fear among Europeans and Americans, portraying Germany as the bulwark against Communism and Bolshevism. Like the election propaganda ploy, Messersmith was not misled by this illustration. At the same time as he was making these statements, Hitler was trying to obtain international credits. "The threat is that the world must choose between this Government and the only alternative which would be Communism. To those who know the German situation [this threat] will mean little." 37 Messersmith, on the other hand, argued that the next German Government would probably be Conservative, not Communist. Nevertheless, Messersmith believed that the Nazis had done more harm in Germany and Europe in two years than the Bolsheviks had done in Russia in fifteen.

1934 ended slightly more optimistic for Messersmith than it had started. Messersmith was encouraged by French, British and Italian cooperation against Germany and further denials by the United States for
credits. The situation inside Germany had grown worse. Hitler was able
to consolidate his power and the populous had grown even more
submissive. A change in location did not change Messersmith's adament
stand against Hitler and the Nazis. He would continue to send reports
calling for Hitler's expulsion. I would now like to examine
Messersmith's analysis of the German economy and then consider his
observations dealing with the Night of Long Knives.
Economic Analysis

The central issue in Germany during this period was the same as that confronting the United States: economic depression. Germany was probably the country that was most affected by the Great Depression. In January 1933, President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Hitler, Chancellor with the hope that Hitler could achieve some stability. One of the most important issues in Messersmith's mind was how successful Hitler and the Nazis would be in solving this depression. As Consul-General, Messersmith sent a report composed by all nine American consulates in Germany to Washington concerning the economic situation in their respective areas shortly after Hitler became Chancellor. Interestingly, all nine consulates reported that they considered that the nadir of the depression in Germany had been reached and the recovery prospects for the future appeared to be bright. The report went on to say that the improvement of the German economy was the result of activity which had begun in the last three months of 1932.38 I shall expand a discussion of Germany's economic recovery later.

As a means of introduction, this report, which was one of the first that Messersmith sent regarding the new Hitler Government, was crucial to his evaluation of this Government and of its economic policies. In his additions to this report, Messersmith included comments about the new government and Germany's economic and political future. Obviously, after four days of the Hitler Chancellorship, Messersmith could predict very little of Germany's future.
It is impossible to estimate at this time what the effect of the Hitler-Hugenberg Government will have upon this improvement which has become evident in the last three months, but there is a wide feeling among conservative businessmen and financiers that it is extremely unfortunate that this change of Government with its possibilities of various types of political experiments should have come at this time as it may not only slow up, but stop the improvement which was fairly well started in the general internal economic situation.39

Also in this report, Messersmith offered another commonly held opinion of the Nazis: regardless of how long the regime lasted, its failure might demonstrate that the Nazis and Hitler were just as incapable of solving Germany's economic problems as any other radical regime would be. Messersmith articulated to the State Department his ideas of what might come in the next few weeks and months. "I believe that it is safe to venture that nothing will happen within Germany to seriously disturb this forward movement or to make the German internal situation a disturbing factor in the improvement in world economic conditions ..."40 As cited in the last chapter, it did not take Messersmith long to change his opinion of Hitler and the Nazis.

One of the reasons that Messersmith changed his opinion of the Nazis was because of their economic policy. This is an interesting fact, considering that the Nazi economic policy put the Germans back to work and, by the time Messersmith left Europe in 1937, Germany had a labor shortage. It is obvious from the passages quoted earlier that Messersmith was not particularly happy with the Nazi Government from the start. In his opinion, Germany had begun the road to economic recovery
and the only thing the Nazis could do would be to disrupt this course. Throughout his tenure in Europe the economic failure of Germany was one of Messersmith's major areas of attack. Almost every time Messersmith predicted a change of government, he assigned to that change an economic cause. Nonetheless, it is a frustrating issue to understand because throughout his commentary he rarely offered the specific economic factor which would incite these changes of power. In March 1933, in a despatch, Messersmith wrote, "[Germany's economic] policy is so uncertain and so undeveloped and is headed in such radical directions ..." Messersmith never gave statistical evidence for these claims. He never explained what it was in German economic policy that was so uncertain, undeveloped and radical. Possibly the most concrete analysis Messersmith gave concerning Germany's economic situation was a year later when he wrote to Phillips that the cost of living was still going up and personal income was going down. This analysis was incorrect.

Messersmith's economic analysis was his most critical failure. Not until 1937, when he returned to the United States, did he acknowledge that Hitler had economically strengthened Germany. Equally significant, however, is the distrust and hatred of the Nazis that Messersmith developed because of this perceived economic failure. The issue here is not whether Messersmith's observations were correct but that from these observations came a great deal of distrust of Hitler and the Nazis. Messersmith saw an economic upturn at the end of 1932, just before Hitler became Chancellor. In 1933, while Hitler was Chancellor,
Messersmith believed he saw the economic recovery stop and reverse direction. What Messersmith perceived to be economic problems was a source of his distrust of Hitler's Germany. In analyzing Messersmith, this is as important a point as what the economy was actually doing because so much of Messersmith's distrust emanated from his perception of economic failure under Nazi policy.

I would like to assess Germany's economic situation during the early Nazi years in order to determine to what extent Messersmith's analysis was indeed correct. The economic problem in Germany was a very sensitive issue. A German leader could not remain in office without helping the German economy. Messersmith pointed out this fact in his first despatch concerning the new Nazi Government. During the 1920's, Germany suffered from massive inflation and cost of living increases. Governments changed as often as the mark fluctuated. In the Depression of 1929, Germany was the country in Europe most affected. Messersmith and the rest of the American consuls detected in the last three months of 1932 an improvement and stabilization in the German economy. There was a certain amount of truth in their analysis. On paper 1932 was the worst year of the depression, with unemployment figures over 30 percent. The economic problems, however, seem to have reached a nadir in the middle of that year. With the Lausanne Conference in the Summer of 1932 suspending reparations payments, German business improved. Production was increasingly active, with the index of industrial production going up 10 percent from August to November. This increased production led to
an increase in employment and consumption. The onset of Winter and seasonal stagnation slowed this improvement slightly, but Messersmith had reason to be generally encouraged by the economic recovery. The arrival of an uncertain regime would naturally lead to apprehension concerning the economic recovery of Germany. However, this economic recovery continued. Wages in both Agriculture and Industry stabilized in 1933, well below 1929 figures, but the severe decline had been halted. The cost of living levelled off as well, and, most importantly, the unemployment figures declined sharply over the two years 1933-34, from an over 30 percent figure in 1932 to one under 15 percent for 1934. These indicators directly contradict Messersmith's forecasts of economic doom for Hitlerian Germany.43

Messersmith's economic analysis is recognized as the faultiest area of his observations. Furthermore, his plans to deal with the Hitler government centered around this analysis. But, if this was Messersmith's biggest mistake, he was not alone in making it. Many other analysts, German and others, were also under the impression that Hitler's Germany was on the edge of an economic collapse. As late as September 1934, when Messersmith was in Vienna, he wrote the State Department a despatch claiming that the major crisis in the country was the economic one.44 Throughout his tenure in Berlin, Messersmith described many conversations with high-level German officials, both Nazi and non-Nazi, who anticipated potential economic problems in Germany.
One financial issue that Messersmith was correct about was the German need for credit in the form of loans and raw materials. A way to prevent the Nazi government from becoming too strong was to remain as aloof as possible to German requests for these credits. The policy of the State Department during this period under the leadership of Wilbur J. Carr was to fight diplomatic battles economically. Messersmith saw this credit battle as a way to keep Germany, and Hitler in particular, in check. In April of 1934 Messersmith wrote two letters concerning the German economy and his attitudes toward what should be done by the United States. On April 13, in a letter to Phillips, Messersmith painted a particularly gloomy picture of the German economy. He compared the situation to a wartime regime — rationing of raw materials, severe importation restrictions, stoppage of interest payments by the Government. Given the position that Germany was in at that time, Messersmith claimed that many patriotic Germans were beginning to see a ray of hope.

They feel that the greatest hope that they have is that the rest of the world will maintain its present attitude, refusing to prop up in any way the existing regime.45

The next day Messersmith wrote to Moffat outlining his ideas for what United States policy should be towards giving Germany credits. For Messersmith, especially after July 1934 at which point he openly calls for a change of government, the job of the United States was to play a wait-and-see game with German requests for credits, "rather than jump right in because of the short-sighted greed of a few industrialists. We
are in the driver's seat and have nothing to lose and everything to gain by waiting."46

In one letter Messersmith described a conversation he had with Dr. Franz Grueger, chief of the economic department of a large government-owned bank, who predicted serious economic problems for Hitler's Germany.47 In this letter of May 17, 1934, Grueger placed the success of the regime on how able it was to reemploy the country and raise the standard of living. The only reason that Hitler had been able to reduce unemployment up to that point was through massive government subsidies that could not continue without importation of raw materials to keep production at such a high level. What neither Grueger nor Messersmith seemed to see was that Hitler's reemployment programs were directly related to his rearmament designs. He could easily put the country back to work in jobs that would displace no one by creating an armaments industry. The only problem that Grueger addressed with this analysis was his claim that German stocks of raw materials were almost exhausted and substitutes could not be found in substantial amounts in Germany. The way the Government was maintaining this level of production was by placing the German economy on a war-time basis and isolating Germany until economic export concessions were granted by foreign countries. Because present stocks of raw materials had been almost exhausted, industry would be forced to cut back, leading almost certainly to massive unemployment under which the present regime could not survive. Why did such a scenario not materialize and bring down the Hitler Government?
The situation in Germany never reached this crisis point, because Hitler, with the encouragement of his chief economic adviser, Hjalmar Schacht, was able to sign bilateral trade agreements with countries that could supply Germany with the raw materials it needed. Iron ore was obtained from Sweden and oil from Rumania. Gustav Stolper's book, *The German Economy 1870 to the Present*, states that Germany was able to establish trade agreements with all the important trading countries except Britain and the United States. Messersmith's policy of containing Germany by not trading with them was circumvented by German trade agreements with other countries.

The problem of Messersmith's analysis, however, has not been answered. Linking United States credit to German actions, as Messersmith advocated, would not have prevented Germany from continuing on the course that it did. It seems as though Messersmith, like many other observers who advocated a similar policy of containment, made the mistake of expecting that if Germany were treated in a conventional manner, she would respond conventionally. This was not the case. Messersmith's policy might have temporarily delayed Hitler from moving on his expansionist course; but after Hitler managed to procure materials, he would have reverted to his same course as before. This lesson Messersmith had learned by August 1934 when he wrote Phillips, "I think we must realize that irrespective of what [Hitler] says and of what gestures he may make and even some reassuring actions which he may take, he will not be in any sense swerved from his original policies and intentions."
Early in 1935 Messersmith was encouraged by the possibility of containing Hitler. The formation of the Stresa Front -- the united stand by Italy, France and Britain against German aggression -- appeared to be the beginnings of a sound policy of containment. Coupled with a United States denial of credits the Front would be even more successful and possibly contribute to a removal of Hitler from power.

This policy did not succeed as the Stresa Front collapsed and Germany was able to find trading partners other than the United States to get supplies and materials. Messersmith was unable to see German economic strength until 1937 at which point it was too late for anyone to adopt preventive measures. Messersmith's economic analysis, ironically a source of so much of his distrust of Naziism, was incorrect throughout this period. However, there was so much about Hitler's Germany that Messersmith despised, even without the economic distrust, Messersmith still would have come to his same conclusions in other areas. Another situation responsible for much of Messersmith's negative outlook toward Hitler and Naziism was the Night of Long Knives.
The Roehm Purge

One of the critical events in the early Nazi regime that Messersmith was witness to occurred while he was in Vienna. The Roehm Purge, or the Night of Long Knives, was one of the most brutal Nazi actions during Messersmith's tenure in Europe. His observations from Vienna are interesting and, for the most part, insightful. Being away from Germany gave him the opportunity to view Hitler's actions at a distance. Messersmith's despatches and letters to Washington lend insight, not only into the specific situation, but also into his own ideas concerning the Nazi regime and Hitler. Before examining Messersmith's analysis of the situation, it is necessary to see how history has observed the Night of Long Knives. For this purpose I rely on two biographies of Hitler one by Joachim Fest and the other by Alan Bullock, both titled Hitler.

In 1934, many members of the Nazi Party began calling for further reforms in the form of a Second Revolution. One of the people involved was Ernst Roehm, the leader of the Nazi Stormtroops, the SA. Roehm wanted to merge his troops with the standing Army, the Reichswehr. In Roehm's eyes, the SA had been largely responsible for helping Hitler obtain power and after a year in office Hitler had not improved the status of the SA. This was partially true; however, Hitler had yet another worry. If he tried to integrate the SA with the Reichswehr, he would have met with strong opposition from the latter group. Hitler would do nothing to antagonize the tenuous support of the Reichswehr; but, something had to be done with the problem between the two groups.
During the Spring the problem became tense. Hitler learned that the SA leadership had decided to pressure him into giving the SA a greater role in the Government and in the armed forces. Hermann Goering and Goebbels, the other two Nazi leaders, along with Heinrich Himmler, leader of the Nazi Secret Police, plotting against Roehm and the SA leadership, who they feared might try to undermine their positions within the Nazi leadership. They informed Hitler of plots by the SA to force Hitler to integrate the SA into the Reichswehr. Hitler decided to send the members of the SA on a mandatory one month leave of absence scheduled to begin on July 1. The night of June 30, Goering and Goebbels informed Hitler of a potential coup planned by Roehm and the rest of the SA leadership. How much of Goering and Goebbels' information Hitler believed or just found as a convenient alibi for conspiring against the SA, is still debated. It seems as though, if he were already alienated from the SA, it would not have taken much to convince him to act. That same night, Hitler ordered the arrest of the SA leadership; Roehm, Ernst, Heines and other SA leaders were either killed or imprisoned.

Hitler delayed making any public announcements about the Roehm Purge until July 13, almost two weeks after the incident. In the speech, Hitler gave two reasons for the purge. The first was that Roehm and General Kurt von Shcleicher were planning to take over the Government. The purge was also necessary according to Hitler, in order to prevent the SA from integrating itself with the Reichswehr. Hitler, in order to placate the Army, prevented this from happening, "in the State there is
only one bearer of arms, and that is the army; there is only one bearer of the political will, and that is the National Socialist Party."49

Hitler's explanation of the Night of Long Knives is a valuable one for the study of history; it does not explain in full what happened the night of the Roehm Purge, nor why Hitler acted in the manner that he did. It is this issue I now wish to address.

Removing Roehm and his cadres was certainly an important aspect of the purge. Roehm had grown to become a potential rival for Hitler's power and there is evidence that Roehm might have begun to use this power in the near future. He had discussed the possibility of pressuring Hitler into decisions more amenable to his ideas, for instance, giving the SA a greater role in Nazi policy-making.

There was another factor in purging the SA and Roehm. President Hindenburg, the leader of the Reichswehr, was very old (He died just over a month after the purge). While the Reichswehr never prevented the Nazi Government from carrying out its policies, they never overtly supported the Hitler Government, either. In addition, Hitler had let the SA grow to a size ten times that of the Reichswehr. With Hindenburg about to die Hitler wanted to make sure the Army's support of the Nazi regime did not die, also. Hitler also knew that since March, the head of the army, General von Fritsche and Roehm had been feuding over which man's organization was the principle armed force in Germany. If Hitler were to show the Reichswehr that they were the sole armed force in Germany, they might have given Hitler the military support he would need in the future. This was exactly what happened when Hindenburg did die.
on August 2. The Minister of War, Werner von Blomberg, von Fritsche and all the Reichswehr leaders pledged their support of the Nazi Regime and took a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler as the Head of the German State.

The SA leadership were not the only victims of the Night of Long Knives. Many other people were killed at the same time as Roehm—among them, Gregor Strasser, a former Nazi leader, Erich Klausener, head of the Catholic Union. Many others were arrested and killed as well. It is ironic that Hitler mentioned in his speech the planned removal by Roehm of vice-Chancellor, Franz von Papen. Had not Hindenburg directly intervened in Hitler's plans, Hitler would have had Papen killed because of a speech Papen delivered on June 17, two weeks before the purge which attacked some Nazi principles and Nazi propaganda. The man who wrote the speech for Papen, Edgar Jung, as well as another of Papen's secretaries, was killed in the purge. There were some individuals and groups who improved their status because of the outcomes of the purge. Goering and Goebbels were able to solidify their role in the Party and the State. A Nazi organization that benefitted from the purge of the SA was the SS, who replaced the SA as the Nazi police force. Himmler, the Head of the SS, was responsible for the execution of the purges. How responsible Hitler was for sanctioning many of the murders is not known. It was certainly an opportunity to clean the Party as well as to get political revenge for past grievances. The murder of former General State Commissioner Kahr seems to have no logical reasoning except as Hitler's personal revenge because of Kahr's role in thwarting Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch in 1923.
There were also negative consequences of the purge. It was a definitive break with Hitler's policy of legality. Each person that was killed without trial contributed further to this break. This did not have much of an effect on the internal situation in Germany where the public had become submissive. However, reports of the purge and its brutality were read outside of Germany where the outrage was great. For the first time Hitler had tipped his hand to the world and the world responded with shock. The London Times presented an editorial deploring the methods which Hitler used to carry out his purge, and Messersmith recommended strongly that the State Department read it.

Messersmith was not in Germany at the time of the Night of Long Knives. He had begun his job in Vienna less than two months earlier, but his memories of Germany and its leaders were still very fresh in his mind. On July 3, three days after the purge, Messersmith wrote a despatch to the Department describing Austria's reaction to the purge. Two days later he wrote Phillips an eight-page personal and confidential letter giving his own, "reaction and interpretation". This is the most extensive document Messersmith wrote on the Night of Long Knives.

Messersmith began his letter by discounting Hitler's explanation that he thwarted a plot by Roehm and Schleicher. Instead he wrote that, "the weight of the facts available is on the side that it was a coup by Hitler, Goring and Goebbels to save the Party and their own situation". Later in the same paragraph he defined the word "coup" a second way — an overthrow of the State by a group out of power. Simply because Hitler held the office of Chancellor did not necessarily mean he
was in power. In fact, Messersmith asserted that the opposite was the case,

it is quite clear and has been for some time, as I have pointed out in my letters, that the power had passed from Hitler and the primary leaders, if they ever had it, to the secondary leaders, who for the most part are in or with the S.A. It has been clear for several months that the dissensions in the Party were serious and approaching a point where they might be disastrous.52

Within the last four months Hitler had seen his power slip and knew that if he did not do something to secure his power he would be lost. Messersmith continued, pointing out that Hitler was willing to use, as he showed this night, any means possible in order to gain his ends — no matter how brutal.

Messersmith then began to speculate why certain people were murdered. In his thinking about the matter it seems as though he placed too great an emphasis on a cause-effect relationship.

For instance, Messersmith considered the murder of Schleicher to be an incident which was designed both to prevent action by the Reichswehr and intimidate its officers. The role of the army will be discussed later; but, Schleicher's murder seems to have been much more related to a personal vendetta which Hitler developed because of the role Shleicher played in keeping Hitler out of office in 1932. Messersmith compared these killings to "Mafia-type" intimidation. "The execution of Gregor Strasser was apparently intended to intimidate the intellectuals and middle class."53 But Messersmith was one step short in his analysis. Hitler ordered Strasser's execution not only because of his personal hatred for Strasser but also, because he saw in Strasser a potential
leader of middle class and intellectual resistance. By killing Strasser, Hitler prevented a potential source of opposition from emerging. In this respect, Strasser's murder could be compared to Roehm's. By killing the leadership (or in Strasser's case, potential leadership) of potential resisters, Hitler rendered this group impotent, and prevented them from creating serious political damage.

Messersmith next outlined the roles Goering and Goebbels played in the purges. He considered it strange that both men should support Hitler together given that they disliked one another so intensely. It is even stranger that Goebbels took a stand against the SA. Until recently before the SA purge, Goebbels had been in support of the generally more radical policies of the SA and Strasser. Such a switch on Goebbels' part did not surprise Messersmith. "Goebbels is intelligent and he knew that they [the SA] were rapidly going on the rocks, so that the only way to save his position was to side with Hitler." Messersmith felt Goering would stay in the government if the Reichswehr ushered in a new Conservative Government.

Messersmith did not realize that the army, had no political aspirations. The Army's main aim was to make sure that their role as the only military force in Germany was secure. Hitler satisfied these
aspirations on June 30 when he eliminated the SA, reaffirming, his speech to the Reichstag, the Army's preeminent position. Messersmith hoped that the Riechswehr would see in the Night of Long Knives the brutality of the Nazi regime. He hoped this would compel them to move against Hitler. Unfortunately for Messersmith, the Reichswehr was the sole non-Nazi beneficiary of the purge, and because of this, they willing to turn a blind eye to the Party's brutality.

Three months before the Roehm purge, Messersmith observed the growing hostility between Roehm and von Fritsche over the role of the SA and of the Reichswehr. Messersmith wrote, "The final decision in this quarrel will rest with Hitler, and I am inclined to think that Hitler will not let Roehm's plans go through. The Chancellor himself is not prepared to let the Reichswehr disappear for he may have to use it himself ..."55 Nine months before this letter Messersmith wrote a despatch outlining information he had received which involved Hitler's purging of the Party, the SA and other radical views. He felt such action would be, "decidedly more optimistic and encouraging than it has been at any time since March 5."56 It is clear Messersmith had considered — even encouraged — the idea of a purge. Why then was he so horrified when the actual event took place? More importantly, why did he think that the Reichswehr, who he admitted had little or no political aspirations, would try to take power after the purge?

Messersmith's horror and shock was not derived from Hitler's intentions, but rather from his methods. It was one thing for the Fuhrer to suggest a purge of the Party ranks and another for him,
Goering, Goebbels and the SS to murder Roehm and other former leaders, Nazi and non-Nazi.

One of the things that astounded Messersmith was how much Germany was unaffected by the purge. The country seemed to react as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Another reason for Messersmith's horror was the ruthless tactics used by Hitler and the others. The terror was, in Messersmith's mind, excessive and unnecessary. Not even Messersmith would have considered Hitler capable of carrying out such a bloody scheme.

On July 11, 1934 Messersmith wrote Moffat that the Army's job would be to usher in a new government, insisting that such change was inevitable. With all the disadvantages Hitler suffered from the purge, the one definite victory he accrued was the accumulation of the Army's support — the culmination of which was in the personal oath of loyalty to Hitler that all the officers took later that summer as a result of Hindenburg's death. There is little doubt that if Hitler had not given the assurances he did to the Army in the Roehm purge, the Reichswehr would not have given Hitler a personal oath of loyalty.

Messersmith never really explained why he said the Army would move against Hitler after the purge. He mentioned the randomness of the killing as a factor; but, this did not upset the Reichswehr because they were given what they wanted. Instead, it seems as though Messersmith saw in the Army the last possible hope for a change in government. The people had been terrified to the point of total docility, and the only way Messersmith's hope of ousting Hitler and the Nazis from power was
with the Reichswehr. This was possibly the greatest error in judgement Messersmith could have made. By that point his wishes were impeding his analysis. This mistake was a common one among diplomats who dealt with the Nazis in the 1930's. Chamberlain, Dodd, Francois-Poncet and others allowed their feelings and hopes to infringe upon their analyses of the situation. Messersmith was not alone in assuming that the Blood Purge would bring the Government down. Throughout Europe, foreign statesmen felt that Hitler would soon be replaced. Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Minister; Benes in Czechoslovakia; and persons at the Quai d'Orsay in France all predicted that Hitler would soon become a figurehead for the Reichswehr.57

The rest of Messersmith's analysis of the purge was less skewed than as his prediction of a Reichswehr revolution. For Messersmith, the actual occurrence of the purge was a minor victory for his analysis. For months he warned Washington of Nazi brutality. Though Messersmith never expected anything on the scale of the Roehm purge, Hitler's actions gave substance to Messersmith's warnings. The policy Messersmith had advocated in relation to Nazi brutality was for the United States to remain economically distant. "I hope we will maintain our attitude of complete aloofness, for it is the best possible way we have to help Germany and the rest of the world and ourselves."58

Messersmith left the Night of Long Knives feeling very pessimistic about the future. He first made the point that the Nazi housecleaning was only partial; and, as long as Goebbels and others remained, dangerous elements within the Party still existed. Secondly,
Messersmith claimed that Hitler, by sanctioning the mass killings, had lowered himself to the same barbarous level as the people that were killed. To fight barbarity with barbarity only exposed the ruthless character of Hitler, Goring, Goebbels and Himmler.

The most important aspect of the purge for Messersmith was not its short-term effect, but rather its future impact. Messersmith sadly noted in his letter to Phillips that nothing had changed. Two weeks later, in a letter to Moffat he wrote, "since the 30th of June there has been no indication whatever of a change in policy in the social or economic field. No matter how much the Triumverate may wish to change its policy, it is just as incapable of doing it today with any success as before the 30th."59 When Messersmith came away from the purge realizing that all to be seen in the future was more of the same, he was correct. Little did he know what such a future would hold.
Conclusions

Messersmith remained in Vienna for two more years at which time he was called back to Washington to serve as Assistant Secretary of State. During the remainder of his stay in Europe he continued to warn of the Nazi threat and potential danger. His talents as an observer and reporter of Nazi affairs were unparalleled anywhere in the State Department.

His failure to see German economic growth under Hitler was undeniable. His decision not to press for an easing of immigration laws to allow more Jews the opportunity to emigrate to the United States while he was aware of what the Nazis were doing, was unexcusable. Letting his feelings and his wishes impede his analysis was unprofessional. In these shortcomings, Messersmith was not alone. Many other high placed European leaders and diplomats miscalculated Nazi intentions to the same erroneous extent as Messersmith.

The State Department during this period, with the exception of Messersmith, was nearly inept in its dealings with the German Government. The American Ambassador in Berlin, William Dodd, was also a severe critic of Nazi Germany. He was so cynical of the Hitler regime, however, that he ended all contact he had with the Government and tried to do his job with as little involvement with the German Government as possible. Dodd's reporting suffered because of this tactic. Messersmith, while he never had an active relationship with the German
Government, kept in close contact with persons from whom he could receive information. Other diplomats, like Alfred Kliefoth, had poor analysis. Even the people in a position to formulate policy were ineffectual. Robert Divine's book, *The Reluctant Belligerant*, and Offner's *American Appeasement* outline the ineffectiveness of Roosevelt's foreign policy toward Germany through the outbreak of war. While Messersmith was not the most perceptive diplomat ever, his insights concerning Germany were far more enlightened and professional than any of his peers and superiors. Even in his incorrect economic analysis, he cited many other people's analyses to substantiate his claim. If he was not always correct, he was usually professional.
NOTES

1Gatzke, Hans. Germany and the United States. p. 86.

2Jones, Kenneth P. American Diplomats in Europe. p. 115.

3Messersmith to Secretary of State Henry Stimson, a.q.i. Ibid., p. 115.

4Messersmith to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, April 10, 1933, Item 142, Messersmith Papers. (Hereinafter cited as MP).

5Messersmith to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, April 10, 1933, Item 142, Messersmith Papers. (Hereinafter cited as MP).

6The case also resulted in a stronger United States stance on the German debt payment issue.

7Messersmith to Assistant Secretary of State William Phillips, September 29, 1933, Item 312, MP.

8Telegram, Hull to American Embassy, March 24, 1933, Department of State Decimal File 862.4016/80, Record Group 59, National Archives (Hereinafter cited as NA).

9Jacob Billikopf to Judge Julian Mack, September 14, 1933, Item 298, MP.

10Messersmith to Phillips, November 23, 1933, Item 342, MP.


12Translation of an article from the "Berliner Tageblatt", March 16, 1933, MP.

13Messersmith to Hull, May 12, 1933, Item 172, MP.

14Messersmith to State Department, November 24, 1933, Item 343, MP.

151st Secretary of the American Embassy in Berlin Alfred Kliefeth to Hull, February 20, 1933, D.S. 762.00/66, RG 59, NA.

16Ibid.

17Messersmith to Phillips, October 19, 1933, Item 320, MP.

18Ibid.
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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.

22 Messersmith to Phillips, October 19, 1933, Item 320, MP.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.

25 Messersmith to Phillips, October 28, 1933, Item 324, MP.
26 Despatch, Messersmith to Hull, Nov. 3, 1933, DS 500.011.1872, NA.
27 Ibid.

29 Messersmith to Phillips, November 23, 1933, Item 342, MP.
30 Messersmith to Phillips, December 21, 1934, Item 455, MP.
31 Messersmith to Phillips, August 17, 1934, Item 403, MP.
32 Ibid.
33 a.q.i. Bullock. Hitler. p. 309
34 Messersmith to Phillips, August 17, 1934, Item 403, MP.
35 Ibid.

36 Letter, Messersmith to Phillips, September 7, 1934, DS 863.00/1084, NA.
37 Messersmith to Hull, November 27, 1934, Item 450, MP.
38 Messersmith to State Department, February 4, 1933, DS 862.51/3565, RG 59, NA.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
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41 Messersmith to Hull, March 1933, Item 197, MP.
42 Messersmith to State Department, February 4, 1933, DS 862.51/3565, RG 59, NA.
43 Economic figures from Mitchell, European Historical Statistics 1750-1970
44 Messersmith to Hull, September 24, 1934, Item 421, MP.
45 Messersmith to Phillips, April 13, 1934, Item 364, MP.
46 Messersmith to Moffat, April 14, 1934, Item 365, MP.
47 Despatch, Messersmith to Hull, May 17, 1934, DS 862.50/806, RG 59, NA.
48 Messersmith to Phillips, August 17, 1934, Item 403, MP.
50 Messersmith to Phillips, July 5, 1934, Item 385, MP.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Item 361, March 29, 1934, MP.
56 Messersmith to Hull, July 10, 1933, Item 211, MP.
58 Messersmith to Phillips, July 5, 1934, Item 385, MP.
59 Messersmith to Moffat, July 17, 1934, Item 389, MP.
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