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*Noted 24 June
Palmer*

June 4, 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE RECORD

SEEN BY
AMBASSADOR PERKINS

On 27 May 1957 Ambassador Alessandrini called on me at his request. He stated that he was directed by his government to ask me, as a personal and an official favor, to attend a social function which he, Alessandrini, would give in Paris at a time and place of my choosing, and which would be attended by Mr. Graf, the Austrian Minister of Defense.



On arrival at Alessandrini's house, I found about 20 guests, largely Italian diplomatic and military officials and their wives, but also Mr. Graf and an assistant to him, whom I believe to have the status of interpreter only. Alessandrini, the Minister of Defense, the interpreter and myself withdrew to the library, where Mr. Graf immediately launched into a very strong plea for recognition of the strategic importance of Austria. I interrupted this to tell the Minister it was unnecessary to persuade me to this point of view since everyone in the Western world recognized the importance of Austria's position and had the greatest interest in his country because we all considered it a part of the Western family of nations.

He then proceeded to speak very forcefully for build-up of the Austrian armed forces. In commenting on this, I reviewed the Austrian program, its present status, and my general conclusion that satisfactory progress is being made. I told him that if he was interested in modifying the U.S. equipment aspects of the program, or in changing the timing with which this equipment was being made available, these were matters which should be taken up with the Embassy, since this constitutes the sole source of contact between the Austrian and the United States Governments in the field of military equipment.



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On the basis of a hand-drawn map of Austria and adjoining territories, he then launched into a description of their defense plans. The first line of defense ran generally north and south, passing just east of Linz. The second, or fall-back line, would run from Salzburg in the north to Villach in the south. This plan, as I understood it from the limited discussion, would leave about half the area of Austria undefended, with an even larger percentage of its population thus being exposed. I explained to him that I was not familiar with the terrain and consequently could not speak with any competence on his defense plan, but I did tell him of the broad principle of the sword and the shield which governed NATO thinking for the future, and pointed out that the application of the shield principle in Austria would move their defenses considerably east, perhaps as far as the first sound military line just west of the actual border. He then said his plan was one that had been worked out by his staff and coordinated with the Americans. I withdrew from this discussion by repeating what I had said at the outset, i. e., that I was speaking in very general terms and did not have knowledge of the specific terrain necessary to give him any firm advice.

We returned to the subject of build-up of the armed forces, and I stressed to him the importance of Austria maintaining its position as a neutral during this time, indicating that the armed forces should be built up calmly, deliberately and openly, so as to avoid any unnecessary incidents or provocation of any kind.

Mr. Graf concluded by asking if I would be willing to receive communications from him on the question of his armed forces build-up. Again I repeated to him that I had no basis for doing so as an Allied officer, and that on U.S. matters, his proper channel was through the Embassy. On his insistence, however, I told him that I, of course, would accept communications addressed to me at my U.S. Headquarters.


No light was shed in the course of the meeting on a specific purpose for which the MOD might have wished to meet with me. However, the general tone suggests to me that he had hoped to develop some pressures, per-

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haps on his own government, to develop a larger military program or to expedite the build-up and the supply of equipment under the existing program.



LAURIS NORSTAD
General USAF

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