Vienna, July 30, 1934.

SUBJECT: FURTHER DETAILS WITH RESPECT TO THE ABOERTIVE
ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRIA.

No. 70a.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to my despatches No. 65 of
July 26, 1934, and No. 66 of July 29, 1934, reporting on the
abortive attempt to overthrow the Government of Austria and on
the circumstances surrounding the death of Chancellor Dollfuss,
in which the recital of the events is brought to the night of
July 29. I shall in this despatch endeavor to give the Depart-
ment some of the background information which it is already
possible with sufficient definiteness to transmit.

The news
The news of the occupation of the radio station and of the Hallerhäuser immediately secured international attention and as soon as the first news reached Italy it is now definitely established that orders were at once transmitted to the two Italian army corps which, as the Department knows, have been held on the Austro-Italian frontier, to keep themselves ready to move at once. Similar orders were transmitted to the flying forces which Italy has concentrated in the same neighborhood. The Italian Military Attaché here informed us at once in reply to our inquiry that there was no intention on the part of his Government to have the forces move unless it became necessary "for us to do so in accordance with our past". This quite frank reference of the Italian Military Attaché to an agreement is the first definite information which we have had here that Italy had given specific assurances to the Austrian Government. While we can only conjecture as to what this agreement is, if it exists, I would gather that it is limited to the specific promise of Italy to proceed to the aid of Austria at once if military forces from Germany or the so-called Austrian legion from Germany should cross into Austrian territory. I have not been able to get any information or intimations which would indicate that the Italian Government has also agreed to come to the aid of the Austrian Government if it is threatened only by internal political movements.

The Yugoslav Government was undoubtedly much disturbed by the preparations in these two Italian army corps to place themselves in a mobile position. The Yugoslav Minister has been in quite close contact with me from time to time and he expressed the fear that Italy would use this occasion to attack Yugoslavia. He showed by his attitude that he was clearly of the opinion that the Austrian Government should take in National Socialists. He asked my opinion about this. I told him that I could not express any opinion.
opinion to him concerning the internal Austrian political problem, but that Chancellor Dollfuss had always expressed to me his opinion that under no circumstances could National Socialists, even one, be taken into the Cabinet as it would be the signal for internal disorder and would eventually lead to further unbearable pretensions and create an impossible situation for Austria internally and probably bring about European complications. I only mention this at this time as it is indicative of the attitude of Yugoslavia which is so afraid of Italy that it is willing to implicate motives to it and to read meanings into its actions which may not exist.

As the Department is aware, the attitude of Italy after the abortive Nazi putsch on July 25 was immediate and has been consistently clear. From Dollfuss was at the time visiting Mussolini's family and when the news reached him, according to the Austrian press, he himself indicated that he would convey the sad news of her husband's death to her. He placed a Government airplane at her disposal to return to Vienna at once and his family undertook the care of the Dollfuss children who remained at Bisceglie.

The Department is further aware that Prince Schwarzenberg, the Vice Chancellor, who was at the Lake on a holiday, received still on the afternoon of July 25 a telegram from Mussolini in which he emphasized that his policy had been to give Austria aid in maintaining her independence and that he did not intend to change this attitude, but to support it by all necessary measures. The obvious placing in readiness of the Italian troops on the frontier and Mussolini's telegram to Schwarzenberg were, I believe, responsible for saving a situation which would otherwise have become of great gravity. Had it not been for Italy's immediate and energetic action it is quite possible, and indications point to it more and more, that the Austrian Legion would have crossed from Bavaria into Austria. This
would undoubtedly have led to immediate Italian action and unquestionable mobilisation in Jugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. A train of events would have been started of which no one could have foreseen the result.

I mention this for no matter what else may be said of the Italian attitude and action it is, I believe, quite clear that Italy by her prompt action on the early afternoon of July 26 and by her total lack of hesitation avoided an international situation which from all indications could have had wide and grave consequences.

The preparing of the Italian troops to be ready to move, Mussolini's telegram to Stolenberg, and the outbursts of wrath and indignation in the Italian press over the murder of Galliuss, as well as the report that a triple démarche on the part of Italy, France and England in Berlin was contemplated, it would seem resulted in the recall of Dr. Rieth as German Minister at Vienna and the announcement the following morning of the appointment of von Papen to this post. The general impression here is that the recall of Rieth and the appointment of von Papen was a desperate endeavor on the part of the German Government to avoid this action by the powers.

I should like to mention here my personal conviction that the German Minister, Dr. Rieth, was conversant with what was going to happen on July 26. He had been away and had intended to remain out of the city and when I heard that he had been at the Ballhaus-plate as a witness to the negotiations with the Government I at first could not believe it so sure I was that he was out of the city, but that reference must be made to the Chargé d’Affaires. The presence of Dr. Rieth in the city, therefore, at the time, which was as much of a surprise to most of his other colleagues as it was to me, is not without significance.
Similarly the presence in the city of Dr. Hintelen, the Austrian Minister in Rome, which would ordinarily not have any sinister significance, in view of various circumstances is full of meaning. The keynote to Dr. Hintelen's character, as I have already informed the Department, is his ambition and the one aim which he has had in the last few years is to be Austrian Chancellor and he had conceived a real enmity for Dollfuss when he considered the only real obstacle in his way. Dr. Hintelen's association with the National Socialist movement has undoubtedly been largely influenced by his ambitions which have been used by certain elements in Austria as well as by the National Socialist Party in Germany.

The publication on the morning of July 26 of the letter which Hitler wrote to von Papen, a translation of which is enclosed with this despatch, caused much adverse comment in the Austrian press and in well informed circles. There was free comment with respect to the obvious insincerity of the letter in well informed circles. The references to von Papen by Hitler as one of his most cherished and trusted co-workers was understood to be without foundation for it is well known here, as it is in informed circles in Germany, that von Papen for Hitler is unbearable and only a few weeks ago Hitler said to von Neurath "Für mich ist Papen unter anderen" which in free translation is the equivalent of "I simply can't bear Papen". Informed circles here were therefore not willing to place much value on the sincerity of Hitler's protestations in the letter with respect to his desire for peace with Austria. It was pointed out that the placing of von Papen directly under Hitler instead of as usual under the Foreign Ministry, was in itself sinister.

The Austrian Government has been asked for the agreement to von Papen as Minister, but it replied that it would have to delay answering until after the burial of the Chancellor. The Government
Government is in a difficult position with respect to the appointment. It feels that the last German Minister was aware of, if not supporting, the subversive movements in the country. It feels that the new Minister may be anxious to negotiate openly for the resumption of normal relations, but in reality to use further discord in an already troubled political situation. There is consent that until there is a real declaration by Germany that she will under all circumstances recognize the independence of Austria and under all circumstances refrain from interfering in Austrian internal affairs there is danger in the Papen mission.

Although the announcement of the appointment of von Papen was preceded by that of the removal of Habicht from his position, no evidence is given here to the real significance of this step.

After the conference at Stras announcement was made that the Austrian legion had been moved to East or North Prussia, but when the events of the 29th of July came to the foreground it was clear that the legion was still stationed where it was ready to strike at Austria. An impartial observer must sympathize with the Austrian point of view that it is an impossible situation that this legion should be allowed to continue to exist, not only tolerated but armed by the National Socialist Party which, according to Hitler himself and his associates, is the German Government. It is therefore a situation which has heretofore not existed between two countries at peace that in one an armed legion should be kept ready to await the propitious moment to intervene in the internal affairs of the other.

There are what appear to be quite well substantiated reports that on July 25 during the entire day an airplane was kept in readiness...
in readiness near Munich in which Habicht and Fransenfeld were to proceed to Vienna to assist in forming the National Socialist Government. The Department is aware through our Embassy in Berlin of the newspaper article which was to appear in the German papers and which was suppressed before publication and which clearly indicated that the Propaganda Minister in Berlin had previous knowledge of the planned attempt to overthrow the Austrian Government.

I do not believe it is proper for me here to enter yet into the reasons for which it is believed in Austria that the attempt to overthrow the Government on July 25 was a deliberate effort of the National Socialist Party in Germany. Dr. Hirtlein, whose reported attempt at suicide has been recounted in previous despatches, is according to reports at this writing improving and expected to recover. In the last few days numerous associates of his have been arrested and are being examined. The trial by military court of the 164 persons taken prisoner in the Ballhausplatz has not yet taken place as the Government does not wish to have any executions until all possible information has been secured from the prisoners. I am informed, but am not yet able to state definitely, that information has already been secured by the Government which points to a far-reaching plot which had its base outside of Austria and which leads back directly to the National Socialist Government in Berlin.

Whatever may be the results of the investigation here, it does seem, however, already fairly well established that the attempt was a well planned one to overthrow the Austrian Government and one long contemplated. It appears, however, that the decision to make it on the 25th of July was somewhat precipitate and was hurried because it was felt by the heads of the operation that the execution
of Carl, a Socialist, would cause favorable background for
Socialist and Communist participation in the movement against
the Government. That the action was precipitate would also
seem to be indicated by the fact that the National Socialist
group in Styria and Carinthia did not get into action until late
on the 26th and on the 27th. Another significant fact is that
the most serious action of the National Socialists in Austria was
at Leoben where the Alpine Montan Gesellschaft is situated.

This company has already been reported upon in previous despatches
of this Legation and it is, as the Department is aware, one of
the parts of Austria in which Germany is most interested. The
head of the Alpine Montan Gesellschaft was arrested and is held
for examination. It does not seem likely that such considerable
quantities of arms and munitions could have been kept at the works
without the knowledge of its director and principal officers.

Before closing this despatch it may be appropriate to say
here that the circumstances surrounding the death of the Chancellor
have undoubtedly gone a long way towards building together at
least a good part of the Austrian people and towards preparing the
way for internal political peace for some time. The political
situation in Austria is such a complex one and there are so many
factors at work which are deep seated and far reaching in their
effect that it is difficult to make any predictions for long
political peace and change in the country. Further than that,
although the Government has been dictatorial in form, but quite
benevolent in its actions, it nevertheless has in it only a few
of the sections of political opinion. Such a Government is
bound to have trouble and must maintain itself with a certain
shoe of arbitrary power. It may be, and likely is, the only
government which Austria can have until the danger to her inde-
pendence and interference from Germany are no longer in the picture.

When
When the threat of invasion and interference from Germany are gone the way will be open for internal political readjustments in Austria; probably not with safety before. This was always the idea expressed to me by Chancellor Dollfuss who was anything but an arbitrary dictator. He was always planning for internal political peace as soon as he felt other elements could be taken into the Government with safety. He was adamant, however, on the necessity for the exclusion of the National Socialists until the question of Austria's independence and interference from the outside were unequivocally settled. There were indications that he was planning a reconciliation with the Social Democrats which would probably have materialized within two weeks had his murder not put an end to his activities.

The brutal manner in which the Chancellor was allowed to die has had a great effect on the population. Two police officers who were on duty at the Hallhausplatz and who were taken prisoner by the invading Nazis were the only persons who were allowed to give aid to the dying Chancellor. According to the evidence which they have given some of the imprisoned officers were asked if there were anyone in the building who knew how to place a bandage. These two police officers stated that they had some knowledge of emergency aid. Two emergency bandage kits were found and they were led to the Chancellor and endeavored to bind up the wounds to the best of their ability. According to them the Chancellor said to them "Children, you are too good to me, I thank you. Why aren't the others like you. After all I only wanted peace. May God forgive the others." This evidence of the two police officers has been given wide publicity. The statement of Major Fey that the Chancellor had asked him to do all possible to prevent further shedding of blood has also made a great impression.
impression as has the Chancellor's solicitude for his wife and family. The fact that Frau Dollfuss is shortly to give birth to another child has also had an effect on the kindly and sympathetic temperament of the Austrian population. I only mention these details as the Department is aware that they have very real significance and effect in the forming of public opinion.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.

Enclosure:
1. Translation of Hitler's letter to von Papen.