Memorandum of Conversation with Chancellor Schuschnigg
on March 19th.

I called by appointment on Chancellor Schuschnigg at
10:30 on March 19. I told him I was going home principally
for personal reasons and due to my mother's illness, but
that I was also eager to familiarize myself with conditions
at home. I gave him a brief resume of the situation at
home and he was particularly interested in the reports of
the President's prestige being diminished. I told him that
I thought these reports were much exaggerated and almost
entirely unfounded, and that in my opinion the President's
position was as strong, if not stronger, than ever in reality.
He was interested in what I had to say of the President's
courage and of his task and of his patience and forbearance.

During our conversation he was called to the phone to
speak to Innsbruck, and it was obvious that he was being
pressed by some one for an unpleasant decision. He was
very patient, very courteous, and it was interesting for me
to hear him say over the telephone: "But that is not
possible. We could not do it in this way; it would be
against the Constitution". It would be interesting to
some who consider Austria such an autocratic state to have
heard this conversation.

I then spoke of the general situation with the Chancellor
and told him that in my opinion Austria had become the focal
point in the question of the maintenance of peace, and that
his country was playing a role of primary importance all out
of keeping with its size and population. I said that Austria
had become the "Brennpunkt" if not the fulcrum of the whole
European situation for the present, and that in the opinion
of many her passing under German domination would mean merely
the first step towards the carrying out of National-Socialist
plans which would inevitably result in a European war, even
if the violation of Austria's sovereignty itself would not
do this. I said that he and the Foreign Minister occupied
in my opinion a very important post as it depended very much
on them as to whether Austria would hold out. He followed
what I said with very close attention and expressed his
agreement and indicated that his position was an exceedingly
difficult one. I thought he showed a good deal of decision
and I gathered the impression that he will be firm although
there must be all kinds of pressure on him.

We had quite a long talk about the position in general, within and without the country, and he was very much interested in what I told him about some of Papen's remarks. In connection with Papen's activity, he said: "It is an entirely impossible situation, but what are we going to do about it?"

My British colleague had been to see me before I saw the Chancellor and was very anxious that I should make him understand certain aspects of the British position, which I was able to do.

The Chancellor is an intellectual and by no means a weak person, but he needs a little encouragement from time to time, particularly as he has not had as much contact with foreigners as is really desirable.

March 19, 1935.
CONSULAR SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE