Vienna, August 23, 1918.

No. 888

Subject: With further reference to the negotiation of the Danubian facts.

CONFIDENTIAL.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have to refer to my confidential despatches No. 580, of August 18, 1918, and No. 581, of the same date, on the progress in the negotiation of the Danubian facts, and to my telegram No. 52, of August 21st, 4 p.m. In background to this telegram I have to transmit the following information.

I had the opportunity for a long conversation with

The Minister
the Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday, and asked
him what information he could give me concerning the
status of the pacts. He stated that the Austrian
Government had now received from Paris and Rome the
agreed draft of the principal points on which the non-
interference, non-aggression, and consultative pacts for Central Europe are to be based. In a telegram and
in despatches already submitted I had informed the
Department that a preliminary draft had already been
submitted to the Austrian Government by Rome, with the
request for consent, but that the Vienna Government
was delaying its consent until Rome had received from
Paris certain clarifications which it had requested.
It now appears from what the Foreign Minister tells me
that Paris and Rome are in complete agreement with
regard to the draft of the principal points on which
the pacts are to be based, but that the actual form
of the pacts has not yet been decided upon.

The Foreign Minister stated that the Austrian
Government was immediately replying to Paris and Rome
that the proposals are satisfactory to it. The
Austrian Government in its reply, however, will state
that it takes it for granted that pending the negotiation
and signature of the new pacts the agreement for
consultation arrived at early this year between Paris
and Rome will stand.

With respect to the attitude of the Little Entente,
the Foreign Minister expressed the opinion that the
French-Italian proposals would be entirely acceptable.
He stated that France would undoubtedly not have reached
this
this agreement with Italy on the major points regarding the pact without prior consultation with the states of the Little Entente. He also stated that he had information to the effect that the French-Italian proposals were satisfactory to Hungary. He further stated that the French-Italian proposals were known to London and that the contents and form of the proposed pact had the approval of the British Government.

The Foreign Minister expressed the opinion that the negotiation and signature of the pact would now be accelerated. They would receive the formal approval of the states of the Little Entente at the meeting to be held at Blod on August 20th. It was possible that some of the Little Entente states might offer observations, which would, however, not interfere with the rapid negotiation and completion of the pact.

The Foreign Minister also stated that he had just seen the British Minister in Vienna, and had indicated to him that the Austrian Government would be pleased if the British Government would use its influence in facilitating and accelerating the signature of the pact.

The most interesting feature of the conversation, however, was the statement of the Foreign Minister that the rapid conclusion of the pact would be particularly agreeable to Austria, not only because of its natural desire to see these pacts realized in view of the general European situation, but also that it would remove a more or less
or less embarrassing situation with respect to Germany, which, by direct and indirect approaches to the Austrian Government, was trying to arrive at some separate agreement with the object of making the Danubian posts superfluous so far as Austria is concerned. In previous despatches I have reported upon the conversations which have been going on between the German Minister in Vienna and the Austrian Foreign Minister. It now appears that, in addition to this direct approach, there has also been indirect contact with the Austrian Government to influence it towards a separate agreement. As the German Minister had no concrete proposals to offer and as such suggestions as he did make, he had to admit, did not have official sanction, the Foreign Minister has not taken these conversations seriously. The Austrian Government has no faith in any agreement which might be entered into with the present German Government, and is of the opinion that the present efforts for a separate agreement are merely for the purpose of sabotaging the Danubian posts. It believes that it can place confidence in even the attenuated form of the posts which the other states are now prepared to enter into, and that such posts mean something for the maintenance of Austria and the peace of Europe. I gathered the distinct impression, however, that the constant German pressure for separate agreement was embarrassing to the Foreign Minister, and that it might have a bad effect on at least a part of public opinion in Austria if it were known that
that a separate agreement was being sought and not receiving serious attention by the Austrian Government. As already pointed out, the Austrian Government and the Foreign Minister are convinced that there is no serious intention on the part of Germany to bring about a separate agreement nor of keeping any agreement which might be entered into. It is, therefore, concentrating its hopes entirely on the conclusion of these non-interference, non-aggression, and consultative pacts, and would only consider separate agreement with Germany should the negotiation of such pacts prove entirely hopeless.

In consenting upon the direct and indirect approaches to the Austrian Government for separate agreement with Germany, the Foreign Minister referred to the fable of the wolf in sheep's clothing and said that the Austrian Government must act according to the realities of the situation. I gathered that in none of the direct and indirect approaches had any satisfactory offers been made by Germany to Austria, and that their intent was the sabotaging of the pacts to keep the way open for direct German action.

The Foreign Minister stated that the final form of the pacts should be ready early in September for the League meeting, which it was his present intention to attend.

Respectfully yours,

GSM/imp.
File No. 710

George S. Messersmith.