February 26, 1938.

Dear Selby:

We were delighted to have your letter of January 27 and I must at the outset make my apologies for not having answered your previous letter which did reach me. I have now been here since the end of July of last year and you will appreciate the burden under which I am working when I tell you that I have been at my desk from about 8:30 until 7:00 every day except Sunday during that time except on one or two occasions when I had to go out to make a speech and for two little visits which I was able to make to my aged mother who is now 88 but still in relatively good health. As a matter of fact, I have been here Sunday mornings as well. The burden has been such that personal correspondence has been out of the question but this does not mean that our thoughts have not turned to Vienna and to Lisbon every day.

My duties here are unfortunately rather heavy. I am charged with the administrative work of this Department and of the whole of the Foreign Service and in addition to that I have, of course, my duties in connection with the policy work of the Department and on top of that I have been charged with a complete study of our Departmental and Foreign Service organization and with the duty of putting in effect certain measures to increase the efficiency of our machinery here in Washington and in the field. I have been working rather hard for 37 years but I can assure you that at no time have I been obliged to put in such long days and such continuous unremitting effort. I am glad to do it as I believe it is all very much worth while and then I happen to be one of those who believe that we are living through fateful days.

We

Sir Walford Selby,
H. B. M. Ambassador,
Lisbon, Portugal.
We are pleasantly established in an old house in
Georgetown which is really a part of Washington. It is
very comfortable and homelike and sufficiently large for
all our purposes. It is in many ways very pleasant to
be back in our own country and we particularly enjoy many
of the associations here in Washington. We see a great
deal of our friends from different parts of the country
so that we are seldom alone at the house. We have both
been keeping quite well and that is a great comfort for
one is thankful for any blessings these days. We think
and talk of you so often and I do hope that you are happy
and comfortable in your new surroundings. We had a
Christmas card from Vera and Rupert and we hope that all is
going well with them and the baby. We hope the baby has
fully recovered from the terrible accident last summer
over which we were terribly upset but we understand that
everything went well afterwards.

I wish that we could sit down and have a real talk
about the general situation. The recent events in Germany,
of course, were not altogether a surprise but the develop­
ments in the general situation have gone far more rapidly
and further than even the most pessimistic of us anticipated.
I always had the feeling that, when it came to a showdown
in Germany between the Army and the Party, the Army would
win out, but, now that the showdown has come, I feel that
the net result is a very distinct lessening of the restrain­
ing power which the Army had on external adventure and even
on internal policy in Germany. The Army had been able to
do a great deal to hold back external/social measures in
Germany. Now that power, I believe, is almost entirely
gone. It unquestionably had a great restraining influence
on external adventure and now, while that is not altogether
gone, it is gone to the extent that Hitler and the radical
elements in the Party are definitely able to control external
as well as internal policy. It means that when Germany
wants to march the chances are that the Army will move.

There were, of course, many factors involved in
bringing this to a crisis but I believe that one of the
principal factors was that Hitler realized he had to move
faster on his external program if he was going to move at
all. The increasing friendliness between Austria and
Czechoslovakia, the tightening bonds between Austria
and Hungary, and the more general recognition in South­
eastern Europe that common economic defense against Germany
was necessary made Germany see red and they felt they had to
arrest
arrest this growing cooperation which their diplomatic pressure was no longer able to keep back. Then too, the increasing need in Germany of certain foodstuffs and raw materials made the offensive power of Germany so uncertain that they simply had to do something. The matter was brought to a head by the Austrians refusing to deliver ore and pig iron, which Germany needs very much, unless they were paid for it. Further, the pressure which the Germans were bringing to bear on the Austrian National Bank was being firmly resisted by Keinbock with Schuschnigg's full approval. Deliveries of agricultural products, which Germany wanted, Austria would not make except for payment. Hitler realized that if he did not make more progress in Austria, which was the weakest of these states, his pressure would be less effective in the others. Austria knew what was in the balance for you and I know what definite evidence the Chancellor had as to German activities there. This came to a head when there was a real plot fostered from Berlin to take over the situation and the Austrians had to take action and arrest Tavs. This infuriated Hitler and I am convinced that Popen told him that more active steps were necessary. In order to go ahead, however, in Austria, or rather with Austria, Hitler had to have the Army behind him and the Army was still against the use of force, and even the show of force, against Austria. Hitler could not risk the Generals turning down action against Austria as they had turned down the sending of more troops to Spain. The coordination of the Army was, therefore, necessary and the risks taken, and strange to say he was again successful.

The Chancellor is really behaving like the fine character and the great patriot that we know him to be. Whether he will be able to hold on is a grave question. I am not at all sure that he can succeed, but my prayers and my hopes are with him for I still believe that an independent Austria is a necessity for the peace of Europe and that when that bulwark is gone the way is open to the advance of Germany through Southeastern Europe. Once Germany has control of Southeastern Europe, even though at the outset it be largely economic (and you and I know that economic control really means political control) her power is immeasurably strengthened. Through the fortifications on the Western frontier she is largely able to immobilize France and England and great progress has been made in establishing this line paralleling the Maginot line. Any blockade by the English fleet of the Northern ports of
Germany will not be so serious for Germany once she has Southeastern Europe for she will have not only there a huge granary but she will have access to Rumanian oil which is so essential. I feel very definitely that in control of Southeastern Europe, England and France will be largely immobilized, their offensive power largely gone and their defensive power definitely weakened. I see as the ultimate consequence, the emerging of Germany as the strongest power in Europe and that will give her striking power and nuisance value in every part of the world. Communications with the Empire would be seriously interfered with and with Germany so largely dictating economic policy on the Continent, I think there would be a distinct weakening of the Empire and, you know how definitely important I feel is the maintenance of the British Empire as an element for peace and stability. 

All this is deeply interesting to me as an American for I feel that we are a member of the family of nations and that every country must have friends. We too have things which these gangster dictators want and it would be useless and foolish for us to think that we will be allowed to remain tranquil if these racketeers have their way. I therefore feel that we are very definitely and intimately interested in the maintenance of democratic institutions and of certain principles such as those enunciated by Secretary Hull on July 16 last year. We are not able to pursue an active foreign policy because in this hysterical desire for peace so many people do not realize that this attitude is only encouraging the gangsters. There has been an increasing understanding of the situation in this country but our hands are still tied. We are now definitely engaged on a naval program which I think at least will give some of these bandits cause to think.

Of course, I think that we must not view the situation pessimistically yet. In the Far East Japan is full of consternation over the continued Chinese resistance and is not able to understand why it cannot form a Chinese Government that will meet its demands. If the Chinese resistance can continue for a while, Japan will find that China is too much of a morsel to swallow and much less to digest. Even though Austria may finally succumb, which is not yet certain, the progress through Southeastern Europe will not be as easy as the Party imagines for you and I know that the Balkans may perhaps be swallowed but the process of digestion would, I think, be so difficult
that the glutton might succumb. The Berlin-Rome axis was pretty severely bent recently through the German demands on Vienna and Mussolini is beginning to understand how definitely he plays second fiddle to Berlin. He may yet find that it is preferable to play a secondary role with England than with Germany. Let us hope that he may show some of the elements of wisdom that have not been lacking in the past.

I think the recent events in Germany have done nothing to strengthen the situation there. I gather that the internal party rivalries and the internal dissensions and divisions have been greatly emphasized by recent events. Perhaps we will yet see these personal rivalries result in these men eating each other up. That seems for the present the principal hope but it may disappoint the world just as the Army disappointed the hopes of decent people everywhere.

I think we must keep up our courage and hope that wisdom will prevail and that we may all take a more courageous and a more farseeing course. I still believe that no bargains with gangsters can be lasting ones and that temporary peace may be bought at too great an ultimate cost. Nothing that has happened has in any way changed my views but has rather strengthened and fortified them.

This is a very sketchy and inadequate summary of the situation as I see it but I thought you would be interested in these reactions. I am sending you this letter under cover to Young, who I am sure will be good enough to see that you get it. I hope that they are happy in Lisbon. I need not tell you how much I miss our association and friends and Marion speaks so often of the pleasant comfortable hours we were able to spend with you in your and our homes. They are a very precious memory and our hope is that in the not too distant future we may be able to get together again.

With very best wishes to you both in which Marion asks to join,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

A-M: GSM: VNG