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Vienna, September 15, 1936.



Dear Dunn:

We have been having an influx of royal visits in Austria as a part of the extraordinary tourist traffic to the country, which has been the heaviest since the war. In August alone, 31 million schillings in foreign exchange came to the National Bank from this tourist traffic. The King of Belgium is, I understand, still in the Tyrol incognito and intends to stay in all three weeks. The King of Spain is staying at the Wörthersee, but is using it as a base for various visits, the purpose of some of which is leading to a good deal of speculation. In informed quarters he is generally considered as having fallen pretty deeply from his former high estate, and he seems to be mixed up in the arms traffic not only with Spain, but other quarters as well. I have kept the Department informed about the Haizlip plane, and there is not any question that it was originally leased by him for this flight to Czechoslovakia and Austria. Prince Paul of Yugoslavia and the Duke of Kent have been in Austria recently, and, as you know, the Italian Crown Prince and his wife spent some days in Salzburg. The Grossglockner Road over the Alps is quite an attraction, not only for these royal visitors but for interesting people from all over Europe, and together with the Salzburg Festivals has brought many people here who would not otherwise have come. I hope some time you may be able to take the drive over the Grossglockner, for it is most interesting.

I am writing you principally today to give you some background about the visit of the King of England, who left on Sunday evening after a week's stay at the Bristol as the Earl of Chester, accompanied only by a very small suite. The King, as you know, had been to Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece,

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and while I think undoubtedly he wanted a holiday, there is equally no doubt but that his trip to those parts had a very real political significance. You are so well informed concerning that aspect of his trip that I shall make no comment here, except to say that we see very real evidences of the favorable effect which it had, and it certainly did contribute to the holding together of the Little Entente and Balkan Union and to giving a real significance to the meeting of the Little Entente Ministers President which has just closed at Bratislava. The Germans, as you know, felt certain that they had the contracts for the Dardanelles fortifications in their pocket, but as a result of the King's visit it is at last certain that the contracts are not going to Krupps and to the Germans; they are going either to the Skoda Works in Czechoslovakia or to England, and the probabilities are that the English will get a good share in spite of the British bids being higher than those of the Skoda.

I do not think that the King's stay in Austria was intended primarily to have any political significance, although, of course, it cannot help but have political consequences. It does emphasize the continued interest of England in Austria, even if it is a somewhat more platonic interest than the Austrians would like to see. It has had its consequences in the country, for the way in which the King has picked out Vienna and Kitzbühel has been of tremendous help in stimulating Austria as the mode for tourists, and I think the Austrians are duly grateful.

The King made every effort to keep his visit a private one, and it is really to the credit of the Austrians that they have respected his wishes in a surprising degree. He had very few people with him here, and of course Mrs. Simpson. I think one of the reasons why he really likes Vienna is because Mrs. Simpson is very fond of it here and he has the opportunity here to live more as a private person than perhaps anywhere he could go. He usually has, as he did this time, the whole first floor of the New Bristol. There is usually a crowd of curious in front of the hotel to watch his comings and goings,

but aside from that he is left entirely alone. He goes about the streets frequently accompanied only by Mrs. Simpson and a stalwart inspector from Scotland Yard. The crowds, although they recognize him, for some reason respect his incognito. It is really quite unusual that he should be able to do this so effectively and with so little molestation or demonstration, especially as there is certainly a real interest of the people here in him. The Austrians seem to have learned that fine art of minding their own business in some things.

During the week that the King was here he paid a visit to the President at the Ballhausplatz, and the King went to the British Legation to receive his return visit, which was short. The visit of the King to the President, however, was quite long, and as he talks good German, it seems that they chatted in a most friendly fashion about all sorts of things for over an hour. The conversation had no real political significance, but the King did tell the President how much he approved of the Austrian policy of maintaining an independent attitude in internal and external policy. The only other official occasion was the call which the Chancellor made on the King, which was also at the British Legation. At the request of the King, the British Minister asked only the Chancellor and some twenty officials of the Austrian Government, who came to a little tea-party, and aside from the staff of the Legation, no one else was there. The King remained there for two hours chatting with everyone in a most informal fashion, that greatly delighted the Austrians, if it somewhat surprised them, as the Austrians are quite accustomed, as you know, to official formality.

He played golf one afternoon with the British Minister and went shooting another day with the Minister. He visited several museums in Vienna which he knows well, and he seems to take pleasure in going back to these places he knows. He went to the Opera twice while he was here this time, I think largely because Flagstad was singing. The rest of the time he spent in going about the city on foot and by automobile; he usually dined at one of the Vienna restaurants; his favorite one being

the "Drei Husaren", which was started by Count Palffy, who is the divorced husband of Dorothy Deacon, who still makes her home here in Vienna. After dinner at a restaurant he generally went to two or three of the Vienna night-clubs, which are known here as bars, and which are all small, intimate places. It is really interesting that while it is true that these clubs were probably better frequented while the King was here by those who hoped he might visit these clubs, if he did appear at one he was left entirely alone, and the only way in which his identity was recognized was when he left. I am told that when he left these bars the people generally got up for a moment as he was leaving.

It is very interesting that there has not been any of the gossip about drinking, etc., while he has been here, and there is not any question but that he conducted himself in a very correct, if informal, manner. He behaved just as any other Englishman would here on a holiday. That his attachment to Vienna and to the life here is real is quite certain, and the British Minister, who was in to see me yesterday, tells me that the King left Vienna as delighted and as happy as he has ever seen him.

As I have already said, the King had no special objective except his own desires and those of Mrs. Simpson in making this visit to Vienna. That it has had a good effect here is natural and inevitable. I have only given you this intimate detail with regard to the visit as I thought you would be interested, and as it is quite clear that no political objective was aimed at. Certainly the conversations which he had with the Chancellor and the President, while pleasant and cordial and while political things were touched upon, had no direct objective.

There is just one little phase of the visit which I think will interest you. A friend of mine from London and who is also a friend of the King's was here during the King's visit, and he expressed himself with a good deal of heat over the King's visits to the Opera. He said that in London they had tried to get him to the opera on various occasions and had not been able to do it, and he could not quite understand why he should go to the

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opera twice in one week in Vienna. I tried to tell him that I thought he must see the natural explanation in the fact that the King was on a holiday.

With all good wishes,

Cordially yours,

George S. Messersmith

GSM/LGW