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Submitted

Vienna, March 5, 1937.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Entirely in a lighter vein, but still of interest as background especially as supplementing what I have said in former letters to Under Secretary Phillips and later to you concerning Herr von Papen, the German Minister here, I give you the following incident which occurred during the recent visit of the German Foreign Minister here and which I shall recite without any embroidery.

Mr. von Neurath arrived in Vienna on the morning of February 22, and on the eve of his departure on February 23, the German Minister here, Herr von Papen, who, as you know, has the personal rank of Ambassador, gave a dinner in the German Legation which was followed by a large reception. Of the diplomatic corps Mr. von Papen invited to the dinner only the Italian and Hungarian Ministers, which was quite understandable. From the Foreign Office here he invited only the Chancellor who also holds the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, and his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Schmidt. When it became known in the Foreign Office that the invitations to the dinner had been limited by Mr. von Papen in this way, Mr. Hoffinger, who was formerly Austrian Minister to Warsaw and who continues to hold that rank in the Foreign Office to which he has recently been transferred and where he and Dr. Hornbostel, who

The Honorable
Cordell Hull,
Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

also has the same rank, are the heads of the Political Division, became very excited and brought the matter to the attention of his immediate chief, Dr. Schmidt. He said it was inconceivable that on the occasion of the visit of the German Foreign Minister to Vienna he, as the head of the section having to deal with German affairs, had not been invited. Dr. Schmidt called his attention to the fact that Dr. Hornbostel, his associate in the Foreign Office and other ranking members of the staff had not been invited. Dr. Schmidt counselled no action in the matter as it was better to leave the whole matter unnoticed.

Incidentally, and for an understanding of this incident, it is necessary here to say that Dr. Hornbostel was for some years practically the sole head of the Political Division in the Foreign Office. He is a man of unusual intelligence and capacities and is very highly considered by the foreign Chiefs of Mission in Vienna. He is known, however, to be a deep and unalterable adherent of the idea that the independence and integrity of Austria must be maintained at all costs. For this reason in Germany and in National Socialist circles he has been considered as too pro-French and pro-English, and perhaps pro-Italian. After the accord of July 11, 1936, between Berlin and Vienna, it was decided to relieve Dr. Hornbostel of part of the too heavy burden he had been carrying by creating two divisions in the Political Section and bringing in Dr. Hoffinger from Warsaw as an associate. Hoffinger was generally considered to be more acceptable to the Germans although in fact he is probably as Austrian in his attitude as Dr. Hornbostel.

The resentment of the Foreign Office staff in connection with this dinner of Mr. von Papen came to his ears and he immediately called on Dr. Schmidt to say that the only reason he had not asked Dr. Hoffinger, Dr. Hornbostel, and others of the rank of Minister in the Foreign

Office was that his space in the Legation was limited. He remarked also that he would have been glad to ask Dr. Hoffinger, but that this would have meant that he would have to ask Dr. Hornbostel, as his associate and still ranking officer in the Foreign Office. This he felt he could not do as Hornbostel had shown such a lack of objectivity, if not decided hostility to Germany. The Secretary of State replied that Mr. von Papen was quite within his rights in asking to the dinner whom he might choose and that he had no observations to make except to definitely repudiate as unacceptable the statement which Mr. von Papen had made concerning the lack of objectivity of Dr. Hornbostel. Mr. von Papen then closed the conversation by saying that he would immediately endeavor to make the arrangements which would make it possible for him to invite not only Hornbostel and Hoffinger, but other ranking officers of the Foreign Office, and the invitations were in fact sent.

Dr. Schmidt, however, did not fail to inform Hornbostel, Hoffinger, and others in the Foreign Office of the visit of Herr von Papen and the conversation which had taken place, and this only accentuated the resentment which was felt there. On receipt of his invitation Dr. Hornbostel immediately wrote a note to von Papen stating that he could not accept the invitation to the dinner, realizing as he did through his chief how unacceptable his presence there would be. His associates in the Foreign Office decided to take the same stand. On receipt of this note of Hornbostel's, which was very clear and to the point, von Papen immediately sat down and wrote a two-page note in his own hand to Hornbostel, expressing great regret over the whole incident, saying that if he had failed in correctness in his attitude heretofore he wished to make amends, that he hoped in the future they would be able to see each other often and exchange views in the manner which would seem desirable in view of their respective positions in the capital, and expressing the hope that in view of this note he would find it possible to attend the dinner. On receipt of this note Hornbostel,

Hoffinger, and several others whom Papen had ignored but later decided to invite, went to the dinner the atmosphere of which, however, was quite glacial.

This complete retreat of Mr. von Papen has neither helped his position here nor has it increased the respect for or confidence in him in Foreign Office circles. It was felt in the Foreign Office that after he had taken this stand concerning Dr. Hornbostel in an official conversation in the Foreign Office it would have been better and more dignified to maintain it. As a matter of fact, private comment of Foreign Office officials is that the incident only goes to show what they have always known and that is that the only way to meet this aggressive attitude of a German is by an equally determined stand and that the German will almost invariably recede,

While the incident is illuminating both as indicative of the personality of Mr. von Papen and of a German trait which some of us have learned to recognize long since by continuous experience, a little further background may be of interest. Mr. von Papen did wish to ignore Dr. Hornbostel whose Austrian and objective attitude he has resented. Further, he found it convenient to confine himself for this dinner to the Chancellor and Dr. Schmidt so that he could avoid asking Dr. Wildner and Dr. Schüller, the heads of the Economic Division of the Foreign Office whose attitude he also equally resented because they have not responded to German pressure during the recent trade negotiations. It also enabled him to carry through the Aryan paragraph in the German Legation here which he has been doing steadily for months by escaping inviting Dr. Schüller who is a Jew. Mr. von Papen has in fact been "coordinated" as completely as though he were in Berlin.

It is also necessary to record that Mr. von Papen's statement to Dr. Schmidt that he did not invite these gentlemen because he was cramped for space in the Legation could not have been sincere, and this was well recognized in the Foreign Office and was one reason why the whole incident assumed an importance which it would otherwise not have had. Mr. von Papen and his wife are both wealthy and he has in addition large funds from his Government for entertainment here. The German Legation here is the old Imperial Embassy which occupies half a block and is by far the most pretentious and commodious in the city. It has enormous rooms for entertainment and almost unlimited accommodations for dinner parties. Neither the personal expense nor the question of room would therefore have any influence on Mr. von Papen who, in addition, likes to give big affairs and get as many people to his Legation as he can.

A rather long despatch which I sent to the Department on the visit of von Neurath reports on the rather glacial atmosphere which existed during his entire two days stay here. The morning of Mr. von Neurath's arrival, on February 22, was taken up with the usual ceremonial calls and a small luncheon. After the luncheon the Chancellor and he and a few immediate associates got together for their first conversation. The official conversations began with Dr. Schmidt's asking Mr. von Neurath if he could give him any background concerning the prohibition of the Vienna NEUE FREIE PRESSE in Berlin the preceeding day and the appointment by Berlin of a former Austrian refugee now living in Berlin and who had committed treason against his own country, the day before as the German representative to treat with the Austrians under the recent trade agreement in matters affecting the importation of Austrian wood into Germany. Mr. von Neurath expressed great surprise over both of these things concerning which he said he knew nothing and could give

no information. Dr. Schmidt remarked that under these circumstances it seemed almost unnecessary for them to even begin their conversations. It was one of the greatest evidences which the Austrian Government could have as to how little Mr. von Neurath had to do with matters affecting policy when immediately before his visit to Vienna two such steps were taken in Berlin, obviously unfriendly and most annoying to Austria. I merely mention the foregoing as it is explanatory of the attitude which existed during the entire two days of Mr. von Neurath's stay in spite of the fact that the most courteous and considerate reception was given to him, and all the "convenances" were observed.

This atmosphere, to which I have referred in my despatch on the Neurath visit, was so obvious that it could not escape the attention of even those who only participated, like myself, in the official receptions following the dinner in the Belvedere Palace on Monday evening and in the German Legation on Tuesday evening of the visit. I am told that Chancellor Schuschnigg was so upset by the conversations on the afternoon of Monday, the 22nd, that when it came to proposing the toast at the small dinner in the Belvedere Palace that evening which he offered to Mr. von Neurath, he found it impossible to give the toast which he had prepared and which was published in the press, but confined himself to three short sentences which, cordial as they were, left much to be desired by the German guests. Mr. von Neurath in responding to the Chancellor's toast stuttered and stumbled more than once during the reading of his own prepared little speech and was obviously suffering from great embarrassment, restraint, and a certain resentment.

I am afraid that all of this represents more or less the state of the relations between the two countries. I know that all the foregoing may seem rather trivial to

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you, but as background and in a somewhat lighter vein I thought it might be of interest to you. It is in these small things that we must often read a great deal which influences unfortunately so much of greater import.

I am planning to sail for home, as I have already told you, on the MANHATTAN from Hamburg on April 7, and look forward very much to the opportunity of seeing you in Washington about the middle of April.

With very good wishes, believe me

Cordially and sincerely yours,

George S. Messersmith.

GSM-mjp