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Austria - Credentials

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Subject: Presentation of letters on arrival in Vienna.

When my wife and I left Berlin for our new post in Vienna we shipped our household goods by rail and went with our devoted Belgian servants, Arturo and Mary, by car to Vienna. I was really utterly exhausted and I was looking forward to several weeks in Vienna before presenting my letters, that is to say, my credentials. It is customary for an interval of a week or ten days or even two weeks to elapse after the arrival of a new chief of mission before he actually presents his credentials to the chief of state. I recall that we arrived in Vienna late in the afternoon at the Hotel Bristol, where we had taken an apartment, as there was no legation residence available in Vienna. We found Alfred Klieforth, the first secretary of the Legation, awaiting us at the hotel. To my consternation he told me that the Chancellor wished to see me the following day and that I was to present my letters immediately. I expressed my surprise at this quick action and also my regret and Klieforth said that it was at the express wish of Chancellor Dolfuss.

The following day^{in Vienna} I presented my letters to the President of the Austrian Republic, Mr. Micklas. He was very cordial in his reception and far more so than is usually the case. I realized it was because they knew of the position which I had taken in Berlin with respect to the Nazi regime and its activities and realized that I could have nothing but friendly intentions towards Austria. Later in the afternoon I went with the usual members of the staff of the Embassy to the Ballhaus Platz for my first conversation with Chancellor Dolfuss. When we arrived in the anteroom of the Chancellor's office we were asked to wait just a few minutes. After about a five minute wait the doors of the Chancellor's office opened and a group of men filed out. They were the Cabinet which had been meeting with the Chancellor. The Chief of Protocol in an excess of zeal took us into the Chancellor's office immediately when

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the last of this file had come out of his office. As I entered the office I saw a little man scurrying around among some tables and lifting ashtrays and emptying them into a big dish. He looked up as I came in and said, "Well, you have caught me cleaning up". The Chancellor was cleaning up his office himself. We had a long conversation. There was no doubt that he lived in great fear of developments in Germany. He expressed the hope that we would be able to see each other very often. He said, "I hope that we can see each other every day". He said that he knew that I was in close touch with what was happening in Berlin and in Germany and that this would be of a great deal of help to him. I shall speak elsewhere of my impressions of the Chancellor but I shall never forget his scurrying around cleaning up the ashtrays as I came into the room. It was an indication of the basic simplicity of the man.

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