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Enclosure No. to despatch No.
of August 1935, from the American
Legation, Vienna.

Vienna, August 14, 1935.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

I had an opportunity to have a long conversation with the Foreign Minister, Baron Berger-Waldenegg, in the home of our Military Attaché last night. The British Minister was also present during the entire conversation. Partly because of the holiday spent on his estate in Styria and partly through his meeting engagements of various kinds in different parts of the country which the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor found it impossible to meet, the Foreign Minister has been absent from Vienna a good deal recently. This was the first real conversation I have been able to have with him for over two weeks.

The British Minister led the conversation to the progress of the Danubian Pacts. The Foreign Minister reviewed the situation substantiating what has already been transmitted in my strictly confidential despatch No. 513, of August 3. The British Minister inquired whether Vienna had yet been informed of the answer which Paris had made to the Italian request for certain clarifications referred to in the despatch under reference. The Foreign Minister said that so far as he knew the answer had not been made and he had had no further word from Rome, but that he had just had a telegram from Rome to the effect that Chamberlain had seen Cuvich that day (August 13) and that he had probably given the French answer.

The Foreign Minister, however, indicated that the Austrian Government was satisfied beforehand that the Paris-Rome draft would be acceptable to them for it would establish the principle which was the main thing now. Indirectly referring to the Berlin efforts to sabotage the pact entirely, he said that he had just been informed that Berlin was trying to get Budapest to raise the question of equality (Gleichberechtigung) now. This is indicated, I may say parenthetically, by the statement which Combes made a day or two ago in Budapest on the Hungarian internal and external situation and in which he emphasized equality. The Foreign Minister observed that equality was ~~an~~ outgrowth of the pacts and that all the participants expected recognition of equality as a consequence of the pacts, but that it could not be made a condition of the negotiation or signature thereof. The British Minister enquired whether the Foreign Minister thought that Hungary would demand equality as a condition to adherence to or participation in the pacts, and the Foreign Minister smiled and said "We shall see". I gathered the impression that he considered the understanding between Budapest and Vienna in this respect so clear that he sees no obstacle to the conclusion of the pacts from Hungary on this point.

The Foreign Minister referred then to an article which had appeared in the VOLKISCHE BEOBACHTER of August 10, which spoke in an impossible manner of the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor. The Munich edition of the BEOBACHTER, he said, had printed the article only in part, but that on the basis of the article in the Berlin issue he had made formal protest in the Foreign Office in Berlin and had just been informed that the Berlin Foreign Office was not in agreement with such attacks on the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor and that the man who had written them (I understand he is a Dr. Walter Schmidt) would no longer be permitted to write. I gathered from what the Foreign Minister said that this is the first satisfaction of its kind that Vienna has had to protests in such a matter.

The Foreign Minister then referred to the situation within the country which he characterized as greatly improved, and spoke of with obvious and sincere satisfaction. He said that he had been over the country a lot during his so-called holiday and had talked with Burgermasters and local officials. He said that the economic situation had unquestionably much improved and that the splendid tourist season had helped in practically every part of the country. He remarked that a good many people still said that they did not like the Government, but had to admit that it had done a lot for the country. He said, "I must frankly admit that several months ago when I was going to a town in Styria (I forget the name of the town) I was advised not to go as it might be unpleasant. The Burgermaster has just told me that he would be glad to have me come now for I would have a good reception".

He spoke of the Chancellor and said that he had just come back from St. Gilgen where he was taking a little holiday, to the death-bed of his mother in Vienna. He remarked that her death was almost a certainty and that it would be an additional blow to the Chancellor as the relation between his mother and him was a peculiarly close one. He said that the Chancellor was losing almost at once his wife and his mother, who were the two people to whom he was most attached and with whom he had a particularly intimate relationship, and that for a man like the Chancellor it was a serious matter. He brought out what some of us know, that the Chancellor has few intimates and unusually few friends with whom he is on what might be called an intimate basis. He is a man, as I have brought out in despatches and letters, widely respected in the country and highly considered, but whose austere nature is such that he forms few intimate friendships and his wife and his mother were among the few people with whom he was entirely free. His associates in the Government respect him and I believe many are fond of him. This includes men like the Vice Chancellor, Prince Starhemberg, who in spite of rumors to the contrary, as I have informed the Department, has a deep attachment and respect for the Chancellor.

The Foreign Minister, however, emphasized that while the death of the Chancellor's mother would be an additional blow to him in his already great bereavement, he was a man of fortitude and would bear up under it. He intimated, however, that he and some of the others in the Government were urging on the Chancellor that he should take a holiday with his father and son, outside of Austria, both of whom by their dispositions are persons who can distract him.

George S. Messersmith.