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Vienna, March 15, 1935.

Personal Reference

Dear Mr. Phillips:

I should like very briefly to supplement my last letter which was dated March 9. I have received the Department's instruction permitting me to spend five days in Berlin on my way home on leave, and will therefore leave here on March 20 for Berlin and sail on the 26th from Hamburg for New York on the WASHINGTON. I should get to New York on April 4 and will immediately go on to see my mother for a few days and arrive in Washington on the afternoon of April 8. I look forward very much to the pleasure of seeing you and will get in touch with you on April 9. This will undoubtedly be my last opportunity to write you before leaving.

On the evening of March 19, there will be given in the Volksopera here the first production of an American opera in Austria. It is a very meritorious work of Richard Hageman, who is quite well known in musical circles at home and who was for fourteen years with the Metropolitan, and who is next year going to Chicago as director of the opera there. The Chancellor and the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Education have taken over the patronage of this première with me and it will be quite an event in musical life here, and I hope will have good repercussions at home. Every effort has been made to give the opera a fitting production and at least half an hour of it will be broadcasted by the NBC to the United States. It has not been altogether easy to bring about the production of an American opera. You will also be interested to hear that one of Maxwell Anderson's historical plays is to be given a very fitting production in the Burgtheater here before the end of the present season. It will in some ways be the most important production of an American drama that has ever been given abroad. I am inclined to think that this sort of thing is of much more help than a more formal cultural agreement which some of the countries over here are making with each other now.

The Honorable
William Phillips,
Under Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

The sentence in the Rintelen trial was announced yesterday afternoon. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. In my last letter I told you that the sentence might be a lighter one and it undoubtedly would have been had it not been for evidence which turned up later in the day on the same day I wrote you. A former valet of Rintelen who served him while he was Minister at Rome, telegraphed to the Court that he had read in the reports of the trial that Dr. Rintelen claims not to know a certain individual with whom he in reality, to the valet's knowledge, had frequently had dinner in the Legation in Rome and remained closeted with him until late in the night. As this man is a refugee from justice and was undoubtedly one of those who was most responsible for the putsch which resulted in the murder of Dollfuss, this telegram came as a surprise to the public even if the information itself may not have been a surprise to the judicial authorities here who knew a great deal more than was brought out at the trial. The effect, however, was that the valet had to be invited to come and give his testimony, which he did, and it was then clear that the sentence would have to be the maximum one for the charge for which he was being tried.

As Rintelen's health is not good, the probabilities are that he will not spend much time in prison but will be confined in a hospital and in all probability in a few years be free. He is, however, a broken man physically and I think that though his mind is clear, he is pretty well finished, for he is an inordinately proud and ambitious man who hoped to be Chancellor or President of Austria, instead of ending his career in this humiliating fashion. He received an extraordinarily fair trial and of his guilt there could be no question.

There has been no change in the internal situation which I think is really likely to remain quiet for some months. In some respects the economic situation may give greater cause for concern than the political. Although the economic situation has been getting better, there are signs of a slowing up and the consumptive power of the population is not keeping up as it should. Unless there is some explosion in Germany directed against Austria or some overt act by Germany against Austria, I think things will be comparatively quiet here for some months, although Papen is carrying on so far as he can an insidious campaign here. He made a speech

before the German Chamber of Commerce here yesterday which was full of veiled allusions and certainly not the sort of speech which the German Minister to a friendly country should make. It was, however, in line with all the rest that he does here. There is no getting away from it that he is an impossible person and has become a most willing and servile instrument of the present regime in Germany. Just the other night after dinner in a private home I was in a group close to one gathered around Papen and could not help but hear the things which he said to his Austrian hearers and was astounded to note that he made statements which he absolutely knew to be incorrect. I realize that you may think my comment on him may be rather severe, but I assure you that even the picture which I have painted in my despatches and letters may not altogether and adequately cover the insidious and dangerous character of this individual.

I shall be able to spend a few days in Berlin on my way home and hope to bring you some additional background when I see you. You know that when the invitation went to Simon originally to visit Berlin he was asked to stay in the house of the Chancellor. This has its significance for it shows how strong Hitler's hopes were in England, and he was very definitely told that if Simon came to Berlin he would stay at the Adlon. The disappointment in Berlin is intense, but the debate in the House of Commons on March 11 defeated any hopes which they had left. The atmosphere is now cleared for the English conversations in Berlin and Goering has further clarified it by his announcement of their air rearmament. This latter came as no surprise to me for he had always indicated that when ready to do so or when forced to do so he would not hesitate to make such a declaration as the one he has just made.

Hitler by his own statements to Major Henessy, by his putting off the Simon visit, and Goering by his declaration with regard to German air rearmament have gone pretty far towards lifting the veil and those who did not realize where the regime stood must do so now. Europe is faced by the bare and stark facts and I am one of those who believe that if the firm attitude of the powers is maintained the situation can yet be saved. The regime in Germany has been faced by the same sort of situation as that which it likes to create and in which it believes. It is no time for

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weakness by the powers, for in spite of what may be said concerning the situation in Germany, the regime knows that its situation within the country is weaker than it has been at any time. There are too many who judge the situation in Germany merely by its outward aspects and there is no question that on the face of things it looks better, while in reality it is so much worse.

I look forward very much to seeing you, and with all good wishes remain

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.