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Vienna, August 8, 1935.

No 513.

Subject: RECENT PROGRESS WITH RESPECT TO THE  
DANUBIAN PACTS.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to previous despatches with reference to the proposed Danubian pacts, which have for their principal object the maintenance of the independence of Austria as a major factor in the conservation of peace in Europe, and to transmit the following information concerning the present status regarding these pacts. Reference is made to my

telegram . .

telegram No. 58 of August 5, 4 p.m., in this connection, in which the main outlines of the situation as it now stands are set forth, and the following details are intended to amplify this telegram.

Notwithstanding the interest of France and Italy in pushing forward the consideration of the Danubian pacts, the Abyssinian question so absorbed the governments of these countries recently that the Danubian pacts received little attention. The French Government, concerned by the possible developments in Abyssinia and their repercussion in Central Europe, in spite of its other preoccupations turned its attention to the Danubian pacts, as a measure necessary to maintain stability in Europe. A draft pact was, therefore, drawn up by the French Government and transmitted to the Italian Government early last week. On the receipt of this draft in Rome, it was given careful study, and clarification of several phrases in the draft was requested from Paris. The Italian Government, following out its usual practice of keeping the Austrian Government informed with regard to matters of concern to it, immediately transmitted a copy of the draft to Vienna for comment. I am informed that the draft provides for non-interference, non-aggression and consultation, but omits completely mutual assistance provisions as an essential part of these pacts. The Austrian Government, has, I am informed, given careful study to the draft pact and has decided to refrain from making any comment to Rome until the latter has received from Paris the clarification which it has requested of several points and until Rome has  
been . . .

been able to transmit to Vienna the complete text of the proposed French-Italian draft. I am informed on good authority that the Austrian Government has already decided, however, that in spite of the draft not containing the mutual assistance provisions, it considers it satisfactory and acceptable, as it establishes the principle of the pacts, which it considers the most important factor.

It is apparently the opinion of the French Government now that it should proceed more slowly with these pacts than was originally intended, in view of the difficulties which have arisen. It desires that the proposed pact should have a form which will be acceptable to the Little Entente, so that no difficulties whatever may arise from that source. It is realized that the German effort has been definitely directed in various capitals towards making any pact aiming to guarantee the independence of Austria impossible. To this end, the efforts of Berlin have been directed principally against the mutual assistance provisions originally contemplated in the pacts.

The opinion of the French Government has apparently veered to the view that the most important step is to establish the principle of Austrian independence through the Danubian pacts and that the contents of the pacts are for the present not so important as the fact itself that the pacts are negotiated and accepted. It believes, I am informed, that the elimination of the mutual assistance clauses will not make the pacts mere  
acceptable . .

acceptable to Germany, or in any degree assure German cooperation or participation in such pacts, but that it will defeat the German manoeuvre which is intended to completely sabotage them. The Austrian Government, I am informed is particularly interested in the mutual assistance clauses being maintained in the pacts, but agrees with the French and Italian thesis that for the present the pacts themselves are more important as the establishment of a principle rather than the specific content thereof. It inclines to the view that once these pacts have come into existence they can be amplified into more satisfactory form.

The most interesting development, however, in connection with the pacts is the inquiry which the British Government directed to its missions in Paris, Rome, Vienna and, probably, Berlin also, towards the end of last week. The British Foreign Office inquired from these missions what the specific status with respect to the pacts is and indicated that in view of the Foreign Minister's declaration respecting Austria and the pacts in the House of Commons recently, and the absence of developments, it looked as though the Foreign Minister was being let down. I think it is quite clear that both Paris and Rome had indicated in London that a greater interest on the part of England would be necessary in order to bring these pacts into being. There is reason to believe that various of the British missions abroad had pressed on the Foreign Office the importance . .

importance of the British Government taking an attitude with respect to the pacts and that their recommendation was that it should do all in its power to facilitate the negotiations. It is frequently commented in certain well informed circles that the former Foreign Minister, Sir John Simon, from time to time made statements in Parliament indicating a lukewarm interest in the pacts, but did not follow these up with any definite action. In these same circles it is commented that the present Foreign Minister, Sir Samuel Hoare, is a man who makes up his mind slowly, but once he makes it up follows a line of action laid down very definitely.

I am informed that the recent inquiry which the British Foreign Office directed to its missions has had a most encouraging effect, and it is believed that it will stimulate the action on the pacts and prepare the way for a favorable attitude by the Little Entente. So far as I am able to determine, the Little Entente meeting has been fixed for August 29, and it is believed that the pacts in their present form will be found acceptable, particularly in view of the real British interest which is now being shown in them.

Here in Vienna this last British step is viewed with particular gratification, for it is taken as an indication that the British Government has abandoned its lukewarm attitude towards the pacts and that it is the most definite recognition that the British Government has shown that it has a real interest in the maintenance of the integrity of Austria and con-

siders . .

siders it a major factor in the maintenance of peace.

A further indication of the increased interest in the Danubian pact is what appears to be well substantiated press reports that the Danubian pact will also be considered during the three-power conference to be held in the immediate future on Abyssinia as a result of the recent League meeting.

While the pact in the form so far proposed and as known to this Legation is a very different document from that which was originally intended, it is believed that from the tactical point of view it is the most feasible approach to this problem, in view of the definite efforts which Berlin is making to make any form of pact impossible. There is reason to believe that the British Government supports the view held in Paris, Rome and Vienna that for the present the principle is more important than the content. The probabilities are that this tactical move will successfully counteract the efforts which have been made by Berlin to prevent these pacts from coming into being in any form. My own opinion is that even an emasculated Danubian pact will be an important contribution towards the maintenance of peace in Europe and that all those who are interested in the maintenance of peace in Europe will lend all possible assistance to the early negotiation, conclusion and acceptance thereof.

I shall keep the Department informed of any developments in this connection which may be of interest.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith.