Concerning boycott of Jewish stores in Berlin on April 1, 1933

Shortly before 10:00 A.M. on April 1, 1933, Vice Consul Sawadzki and I started to walk through the main business section of the inner city. We were standing opposite Wertheim's large department store on Leipziger Strasse at 10 o'clock and saw that the boycott was started promptly at the hour set. We then proceeded on our way and walked for over two hours, observing what was taking place and trying to register our impressions.

At this time it was the opinion of both of us that the boycott action was a tame affair, quite unimpressive, rather badly organized, and carried on in a half-hearted fashion. Later in the day, however, I had reason to modify this opinion somewhat as will be explained farther on. During the course of the morning, in the business section of the inner city, it appeared as if only about 10 to 20% of the stores were being picketed. This was astonishing inasmuch as previous press reports had led one to expect such action in regard to a much higher percentage of business concerns. As a result, the impression was created that the number of Jewish establishments was smaller than the newspapers had reported.

The picketing consisted of one or two S.A. men standing before the entrance of a Jewish store and carrying a large placard (purple with black letters) reading, "Deutsche! Wehrt Euch! Kauft nicht bei Juden! (Germans! Defend yourselves! Do not buy of Jews!) The pickets said nothing, merely stood there, unless someone wished to enter, when they remonstrated with the prospective purchaser and urged him not to buy of a Jewish concern. However, if the latter insisted, he was permitted to pass without molestation, at least in the several instances which I personally observed. Later on I heard reports of one or two Jewish shopkeepers having suffered physical violence but I saw no indications of such an attitude. Of course, the streets were crowded but the crowds consisted of curious sightseers merely. The temper of the crowds was good natured. I saw no arguments. In fact the S.A. uniform was not very much in evidence.

At this time there was really no outward definite indication that certain stores had Jewish proprietors. The much heralded black shield with yellow spots, which was to have been placed on the front of every Jewish establishment, was not at all visible. (In the late afternoon I saw not more than six or eight of them.) In addition to the above mentioned purple placard, practically
practically nothing was used except an interesting large white poster with black lettering, pasted on the windows of the Jewish stores, which could just as well have been exhibited by non-Jewish concerns. This poster carried the same text in both German and English, as follows: "Deutsche, verteidigt Euch gegen die juedische Greuelpropaganda, kauft nur bei Deutschen!", followed by, "Germans defend yourselves against Jewish atrocity propaganda, buy only at German shops!".

A few of the Jewish concerns did not open for business; among which were the department stores of Tiets and N. Israel. They were picketed nevertheless. Most of the Jewish shops, however, did open; but almost without exception closed again at about the middle of the afternoon. The organization of the movement was not as efficient as previously advertised because in the case of three groups of Jewish chain stores which I observed, some of the stores were picketed and placarded while others of the same groups were doing business as usual. A lightening-like blow had been advertised, to strike everywhere promptly at 10 o'clock sharp; it required the whole day for the movement to gather more momentum. One had the impression, either, that not all of the S.A. men were participating, or that there were not enough of them to go around.

As stated above, I later had reason to modify somewhat my previously formed opinion. Late in the afternoon small groups of S.A. men with paint pots proceeded to paint inscriptions on shop windows; some of them humorous, others insulting, but for the most part in large letters, simply the word "Jude". The painting was mostly done after the shops had already closed. The paint used was plain white-wash, or the same material colored red or yellow. It was easy to remove.

It was now (between 6 and 7 o'clock) that I first saw the much advertised black shield with yellow spots. It turned out to be a very modest looking, rather small sized, inconspicuous, rectangular black poster (pasted on the windows) with one circular yellow spot in its center having the size of the top of a two pound tin fruit can. As stated before, I saw only six or eight of those posters. My new impression was formed by a walk (between 6 and 7 o'clock) through the business section of the so-called "Western" part of Berlin (Tauntenzien Strasse and the first two or three blocks of Kurfuerstendamm). Here about 80% of the shops were either picketed or placarded, but here also, in one or two instances, I saw customers enter in spite of the pickets. Of course the crowds on the street had grown larger but were still very good-natured. I heard no arguments. Here also I saw the offices of Jewish lawyers, physicians and dentists being picketed; their "shingles" were either covered with posters or paint. I now had the impression that there were more Jewish establishments than I had at first assumed; that the S.A. men had developed a livelier activity; and that
the boycott movement had perhaps become somewhat more effective, for the time being, than during the course of the morning. However, I still feel that the majority of the people on the street was inclined to treat the matter as more or less of a joke (if they were not personally involved!) and that they will continue to buy at their favorite stores regardless of the boycott.

Sunday morning, another three hour walk convinced me that nearly all of the outward signs of the boycott had already been removed; including the paint.

Respectfully submitted,

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