Berlin, Germany, November 2, 1933.

SUBJECT: Comment on public and private schools in Germany in connection with the Department's mimeographed instruction of August 10, 1933, requesting a list of such schools for the Department of the Interior.

THE HONORABLE
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to refer to the Department's mimeographed instruction of August 10, 1933, (File No. 860.42/198), stating that the Department of the Interior in a letter dated August 2, 1933, has requested a list of the private and public schools in various consular districts to which American parents may send their children if circumstances may make this desirable. The list from this Consulate General was forwarded under date of October 31, 1933, and similar lists have been prepared by the other consular establishments in Germany covering their respective districts.

As an extraordinary situation prevails in Germany with respect to both public and private schools, a situation which has gradually become accentuated since March 8, 1933, I believe it advisable to make certain observations.
observations to the Department, and through it to the Department of the Interior, which are of particular interest in this connection and which would govern any American parent contemplating sending his children to a public or private school in Germany. In several despatches of this Consulate General commenting on the situation which has developed in Germany since March 5, 1933, reference has been made to the conditions now existing in public and private schools, but I shall briefly set forth in this despatch the principal circumstances which are of interest.

The Department is aware that since the National-Socialist Government is in complete control of the Government in Germany since March 5, 1933, and of every public and private institution in the country, its cardinal principle of "Gleichschaltung" or coordination has been carried into effect in practically every aspect of German life, and the schools have not been any exception to this process. In fact, as it is a cardinal principle of the party that every public opinion forming means must be completely controlled by it, the schools, the Church, the theatre, the film, the press, the radio and all other forms of publicity have been placed under the strict control of the German Government, mostly centralized in the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment. The party has realized that of all these public opinion forming means the schools and the Church are two of the most fundamental
fundamental and important ones as they reach the German in his earliest years when his primary reactions are shaped. This coordinating process it has been possible to carry through with remarkable rapidity and definiteness in the public and private schools as they are subject to state control, and the teachers have fallen in rapidly as their positions depend upon complete conformity with the ideas of the Government. In the Church, greater resistance has been met and the co-ordination is not yet so complete, but has also made rapid progress, as has been brought out in several very complete despatches on this subject prepared by Consul Geist of this office.

It is one of the declared principles and a fundamental one of the National-Socialist party that every German shall be made into a good party member and into a good German, according to the ideas of the new leaders. Being a good German and a good party member is in the idea of the present Government synonymous. By decree and by regulatory measures carried into effect with implacable severity all political parties in Germany have disappeared with the exception of the National-Socialist party so far as their organization and activities are concerned. Without exception, a very considerable majority of the German people remain in their inner consciousness still out of conformity with the National-Socialist party and its principles, but outside conformity is required.

Recognizing
Recognizing that complete conformity cannot be accomplished with all adults and that it can only be accomplished through "Erziehung" or education of the younger Germans, extraordinary attention has been concentrated on the schools, and so far with surprisingly effective results. If the present Government remains in power for any length of time and its present program is carried through, there is no question but that an overwhelming percentage of the German population will be in entire conformity with the principles of the party, and that for a generation or two at least there will be a striking absence of parties or of difference of opinion in the country.

The program in the public schools therefore in effect already has through the activities of the party been such as to create an atmosphere in the schools in which a child of non-German parentage cannot find himself happy and to which such a child should not be subjected. The same process has taken place in the private schools which are subject to complete public control.

It is realized that the text books in the public and private schools must be completely revised in order to carry through the party program, and it was the intention of the party to have prepared immediately new text books for every part of the program in the schools, public and private. These text books are to be written by men who are in complete conformity with
with the ideas of the party, and particularly texts on geography, history, economics, physiology and hygiene are to be revised so that the more liberal views which might be gained through the textbooks now in use will not "poison" the young German minds. Had the textbooks been written immediately they would have been probably the most extraordinary texts ever placed in the hands of the children in any country, and even the most radical party leaders realized that their original ideas could not be carried through and the revision is now going forward more carefully, but even the most objective observer cannot say much more sensibly. In this connection I may quote the following paragraph from a report of the Leipzig Consulate, entitled "The Leipzig Printing Industry" of October 9, 1933, describing the stagnation of the printing industry in that city:

"An outstanding example is the present stagnation in the school text-book printing business. The German Government has decided that many of the school textbooks must be rewritten. As no more editions will be printed of many of the texts used at present, there are more than a dozen Leipzig printing firms in this line which have been forced to curtail production down to one-third of normal. The Government expected to have the manuscripts of the new textbooks written and printed by the Fall of 1934 and had changed the opening of the school year from Easter, as heretofore, to the Fall of 1934. It has now, in a confidential memorandum, informed publishers of schools textbooks that it will not be possible to complete the revisions in time to have the books printed by the Fall of 1934. In addition to the loss of a year's business by the publishers in this line, there is the loss which will be incurred by the scrapping of a large number..."
"number of plates, matrices, cliches, etc. The texts which will undergo radical changes are on the subjects of history and economics chiefly, as well as geography, German literature, ethics, sociology, ethnology, etc. School texts on arithmetic, chemistry, natural sciences will probably not be revised."

The Consulate General is in a position to know that the preparation of the new texts for the public and private schools is in progress, and the indications are that even in their more moderate form their tendency will be to create a nationalistic and a militaristic German spirit presenting grave dangers for the political and economic peace of the world.

In the meantime the school programs, however, are already such that Americans and other foreigners in Germany find it necessary to take their children out of the schools. The eleven year old son of our Agricultural Attache in Berlin, Mr. Steere, attends the Staatliches Arndt-Gymnasium and Real-Gymnasium in Berlin. He was obliged to do constant marching, singing of Nazi songs, and to engage in so-called "Sturmmuebungen", or charging exercises, and during the gymnasium hour he and other children of the same age had practice in throwing dummy hand grenades out of a trench. An American banker in Berlin, who has three of his young children in Germany schools, found it necessary to take them out because they were getting ideas of a militaristic and nationalistic character which the father and mother felt endangered the development
development and the future of the children. I have information from various parts of Germany that this is going on in schools all over the country. One of the officers of this Consulate General, when returning from a court process which he had attended in an official capacity, saw in the school yards of one of the large public schools in Berlin a group of boys under the supervision of their gymnasium leader carrying through an exercise which consisted of throwing dummy hand grenades out of a trench at the cardboard torpedoes of soldiers on the other side of the trench. This also, this office is informed, is quite a common exercise in the schools throughout the country. Some of the National-Socialist songs which are sung in the schools, are of a highly objectionable character. To a very considerable extent the usual sports of school children have been given a military tone.

On every conceivable occasion the school children are obliged to march through the streets. I have personally seen children ranging from the ages of seven to eighteen marching on the Unter den Linden as late as 9.30 o'clock in the evening, and as they come from widely scattered sections of the city, some of them could not possibly have returned to their homes until shortly before midnight. The children are required to go out in all kinds of weather to participate in these parades. The leaders of the
National-Socialist party have indicated on more than one occasion that they prefer to have 600,000 of the stronger of every one million children serve in Germany, as after all the other 400,000 are of no use to the State.

The authority of parents over the children has very largely disappeared and this is causing great perturbation among a great part of the German population. The children come home to their parents expressing the new ideas which they have learned in the schools, and no matter how abhorrent these ideas may be to the parents, they are afraid to say anything, for if they did it might lead only to serious consequences and the concentration camp for them.

A friend of mine with whom I was dining in the outskirts of Berlin, informed me that his children arrived home that evening at 10.30 o'clock, after having been away all day (they range from eight to fourteen), and one of them calmly told him that she had been so tired that she had lain on the grass in the Tiergarten for several hours until she was able to join the procession there again. These children live in the Grunewald and had taken part in a procession in the center of the city, about four miles away. The father and mother informed me that they under no circumstances would dare to make any objection.

The situation in the private schools is in no sense better, for the program and the activities are just as completely controlled as in the public schools.
schools, and identical conditions prevail.

As the Department is aware, the National-Socialist party is kept in power through its military branch, the S.A. and the S.S. These are composed mostly of young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty. As a training school for the S.A. and S.S. a new organization of the youth in Germany has been formed, known as the "Hitlerjugend", and all German boys and girls are supposed to be members. It is quite natural that this should be a popular organization, for both the boys and the girls have a uniform and are given opportunities for all forms of amusement, and the discipline of the leader is substituted for that of the home. While there is no compulsion in joining the Hitlerjugend, the circumstances in the country are such which make participation practically compulsory.

In this connection it is interesting to note that the son of one of the leading diplomats of Germany, now retired, and whose last position was one of the most important ambassadorial ones in the service of the country, is in a Bavarian private school, considered one of the best in the country. He is seventeen years of age. He was asked by his comrades to join the Hitlerjugend organization in the school. As his father is not a National-Socialist and is a conservative, and as the young man is a well-developed and splendid character, as I happen to know from my personal acquaintance with him, he told his comrades that
that he wanted to "think it over for a week or two". That night, and this took place only about ten days ago, five of his comrades came into his room in the school and subjected him to such a beating and physical maltreatment that his liver and kidneys have been injured and he is still in a hospital, the doctors not yet being able to state whether the injuries he received may not affect his health definitely. The Hitlerjugend are accepting the manners and procedure from their older brothers, the S.A., and I think no further comment is necessary to indicate the spirit which prevails in this organization. It is just as though at Taft or at Lawrenceville the comrades of one of the students had beaten him because he would not join the football squad or the debating society or a fraternity, or on account of a difference of opinion.

On a number of the islands just off the Danish coast in the North Sea, belonging to Germany, there are private schools. A friend of mine, who is one of the leading business men in the country, has informed me that in a private school on one of the islands there are the children of some of the leading people in Berlin whom I happen to know. The conditions in this school grew so intolerable through the extraordinary activities of the boys brought about by their exaggeration of the ideas of the Hitlerjugend, that it was necessary for S.A. men from Berlin to go to the island to set the situation straight.

In addition to the foregoing considerations which are really only a few which might be brought
to the attention of the Department, American parents must definitely recognize that foreign children in German schools cannot be very comfortable. They are constantly being made to feel by the teachers that they are not German and therefore on an inferior plane. If some of the teachers have retained a good sense of judgment so as not to be in accord with such treatment, they are not in a position to do anything as they would soon lose their positions.

The natural consequence is that the number of American and foreign students in German private schools has greatly dropped off, and American parents are to the knowledge of this Consulate General whenever possible taking their children out of public schools and placing them in American or English schools. There is, for example, an American school in Berlin which has always been a struggling organization and small, but to which now every American is sending his children. I know that some of the leading Americans in Berlin have thought it advisable to consider whether they should remain in Germany as they do not feel that the facilities of the American school are adequate and as under no circumstances can they send their children to German schools.

It is still too early to determine what the present situation will develop into. If the present Government remains in power and carries into effect its
ideas in the schools, I doubt whether any American parent will wish to send his children to a public or private school in Germany. For the present this Consulate General could certainly not advise any American parent to send any children to Germany to a private school.

I have made no mention in this despatch of the discrimination against the children of Jews or who have any Jewish background. These are being placed in an intolerable position in the schools, public and private, not only by the teachers but by their associates, and this is one of the most painful and distressing features of the situation. Jewish parents are not able to leave the country with their children in most cases and yet the children have to go to a school, where daily by their teachers and their associates they are subjected to humiliating experiences. They have the back row of seats. They cannot become members of the Hitlerjugend. They are excluded from most of the school activities and are generally in the position of pariahs. The effect which this has on the young minds need not be gone into. In the universities hereafter a blue card is to be given to Aryans and a yellow one to Jewish students.

While it is not possible to give publicity to the contents of this despatch, I have felt that it is the duty of this Consulate General to bring these observations
observations, based on fact and experience, to
the attention of the Department. The Department may
find it possible to transmit a copy of the despatch
to the Department of the Interior for the confidential
information of the Bureau of Education and such persons
in the educational world at home to whom it may be
possible to give it.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith,
American Consul General.