AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL,

Berlin, Germany, November 14, 1933.

SUBJECT: Some observations on the election of November 12, 1933.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to refer to my confidential despatch No. 1714 of November 3 on the action of the German Government in withdrawing from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations, and making certain comment on the election campaign preceding the vote on November 12, 1933. Although the Department has secured from the ample press comment what I believe is adequate information with respect to all aspects of the election, it is possible that the following observations which may not have appeared in the press in the United States will be of interest.

The actual result of the vote on November 12 is probably best conveyed by the translation of an article which appeared on the front page of the "Berliner Tageblatt" of November 13, which follows.

A UNITED GERMANY

40 Million Voters Stand Behind the Chancellor

Yesterday
Yesterday brought to the Government an overwhelming victory. The whole of the German population hurried to the urns and with an unheard of unanimity acknowledged itself behind the foreign policy of the Chancellor and of the National Socialist Party. The aggregate result of the vote is as follows: of 45,141,952 qualified voters, 43,549,652 voted, 40,601,977 voters, that is 95.1%, voted "Yes", while 2,100,765, that is 4.9%, voted "No"; 750,271 votes were declared invalid. For the Reichstag candidates 43,458,213 votes were cast, of which the National Socialist candidates received 39,663,723, that is, 92.2%; declared invalid were 3,549,363 votes, that is, 7.8%. The National Socialist Party therefore elected its 661 candidates.

Following the election Chancellor Adolf Hitler made the following proclamation to the German people: "German fellow-citizens! For fifteen years, filled with the unbreakable trust in the inner worth of the German people, I fought faithfully for its future. To-day I thank the millions of my German fellow-citizens out of a full heart for the historically unique acknowledgment they have made in favor of real love of peace, at the same time also their claim to our honor and to our eternal equal rights. My fellow-workers and I, strengthened with this public acknowledgment, will wish to courageously fulfill our duties. Signed: Adolf Hitler"

At the same time Adolf Hitler addressed a proclamation to his fellow Party members: "National Socialists! My fellow Party-members! An unequalled victory has been won. The German people has to be thankful to you in the first place for your faithful trust and for your untiring work! Members of our organization, of our propaganda, of the S.A., of the S.S. and of the St., supported by the work of our young people, our women, innumerable Party members and by our press, you have in four weeks accomplished the almost unheard of. The unique greatness of the success is for you all the greatest acknowledgment, the saving of the Fatherland will however be your thanks! Berlin, November 13, 1933. Signed: Adolf Hitler."

The election day itself passed throughout entire Germany with extraordinary quiet. I have seen many
elections during the three years that I have been in Berlin, but the election of last Sunday was the quietest. The voters went to the polls early and the great majority of the vote had been cast before midday. On the streets practically every one to be seen wore the little insignia indicating that they had voted and that they had voted "Yes". The quietness of Berlin throughout the day was almost uncanny and unreal.

If the large vote cast and the practical unanimity of the vote was a surprise to any observers outside of Germany, it was no surprise in the country. On the first question submitted to the voters, it was so put that there was no question of anything but unanimity. When the people voted their "yes" to the first question, they were giving expression to sentiments which had been suppressed for years and on which no German could be expected to vote otherwise. If he is in favor of peace he could cast a positive vote. If he felt that Germany had been improperly treated under the Treaty of Versailles, he could vote "yes". If he was voting for "German honor and equality" he could vote "yes". If he was voting to express his resentment over the repressions which every German feels, he voted "yes". If he was a National Socialist and wished to give blanket approval to the policy of his Government, he voted "yes". The issue was confused and clear to few; but it had been so presented in the campaign that practically no German would wish to cast a negative vote even though...
he were completely out of sympathy with the National Socialist Party.

What the leaders of the National Socialist Party and of the Government wished was exactly this. They wished to present an issue to the German people on which there was a unanimous "yes", and which practically unanimous vote they could use before the rest of the world as a blanket approval of their foreign and domestic policy. This vote they got, and the Chancellor's declaration shows that it is to be used as a blanket approval not only of the foreign and domestic policy of the Party, but also approval of all its acts since the 6th of March.

When it came to the Reichstag election, the unanimity was not so apparent; but so far as this election is concerned it means nothing and this was apparent from the outset. There was no list of candidates except those of the National Socialist Party. Every voter who appeared had to cast the Reichstag ballot, for he would under no circumstances have dared to do otherwise. That there were as many as three and one-third millions of invalid votes is the only surprise which this election registered for observers in Germany, for it was not believed that there were that many who would dare to take the risk of not marking their ballot. That a Reichstag should be elected at all when the Party has so clearly proclaimed its adherence to the "Fuehrer" principle and when its leaders
leaders in practically every important address pro-
claimed the uselessness of Parliaments and the destruction
of parliamentary governments in Germany, is sufficient
indication of the hollowness and the insincerity of the
election itself and the campaign which preceded it.

Reports from the consular establishments in the
rest of Germany and from the press indicate that the
most extraordinary measures were taken to bring out the
vote. The sick in many places were taken to the
voting places on stretchers. Every one who could
possibly proceed to the voting booth did so early in the
day. On the morning of the election the Party organiza-
tion in Berlin saw that every voter received a small
slip of paper similar to the one transmitted herewith
(enclosure No. 1) which read:

"TO ALL ENTITLED TO VOTE!

As on the 12th of November we are
concerned with nothing less than the right
of the German nation to live; as the funda-
mental question of "To be, or not to be"
is concerned, I will allow myself to ask
you on Sunday whether you have done your
duty of voting."

Those who were slow in appearing at the polls did not
fail to be visited by an S.A. man who quietly but in
no uncertain terms let them know that they had not yet
cast their vote and it would be desirable to do so im-
mediately. A few hardy souls had undoubtedly made up
their minds that they would refrain from voting; but
the intimations which they received from these visitors
cleared away their last resistance, for they knew that if they would not vote, they would be marked persons.

It will be proclaimed in the German press, and on account of the quietness of the election be assumed in a part of the foreign press, that no coercion was used and that the enormous vote which was cast is an expression of the unanimous support of the German people of the present Government. This I venture to say is an entirely erroneous impression, for to appreciate the election itself and the vote which was cast, it is necessary to have been in Germany since the accession to power of the National Socialist Party and to understand how completely cowed even the most sturdy spirits in the country are. The German people have learned during the past eight months what lack of conformity to the Party wishes and discipline involves. An election was to be held and every German was to vote and he was to vote "yea". This was the Party mandate and there was no question of its being carried through. Those who hurried to the polls on Sunday morning went for two reasons. Probably 30% hurried to the polls because they were convinced if not fanatic National Socialists and they wished to register their approval of all that the Party had done, and to do a Party duty. The other 70% went because they feared all kinds of results if they did not show their compliance to the Party mandate. No threats of prison, concentration camp, loss of position, loss of dole or loss of rights were necessary.
The S.A. as the instrument of force of the Party, has shown conclusively that it can and will deal summarily with those who do not conform, and there were very few indeed on November 12 who had the temerity to risk their own future or that of their family by failure to go to the polls, and when they went to the polls there was only one way in which they could vote.

If any one should have any doubt as to whether coercion was used even indirect, and that there was a threat of dire consequences to those who failed to conform, the Chancellor's own paper in an article in the issue of November 12 should bear ample evidence. As the Department is aware, the "Volksischer Beobachter" has been the Chancellor's organ for years although within the last weeks his name no longer appears on the title page. It is the principal organ of the Party in Germany. In the Sunday morning issue of November 12 there was an article which is transmitted herewith (enclosure No. 2) which begins as follows:

"In order to bring about clarity it must be repeated again. He who does not attach himself to us to-day, he who does not vote and vote "yes" to-day, shows that he is, if not our bloody enemy, at least a product of destruction and that he is no more to be helped. It would be better for him and it would be better for us if he no longer existed ...

The curse with which the homeland curses, reaches over the hills and the oceans, it spoils water, bread and bed, it drives on the wild game until its end by exhaustion - it is God's curse, it is the most effective of all curses."

This is the appeal to the electors which appeared on
on election morning in the newspaper which has been
known as the personal organ of the Chancellor and
head of the National Socialist Party.

I do not wish in any sense to appear to make light
of anything that concerns a country of 65 millions of
people. I am far too much alive to the importance of
the 65 millions of Germans who live in the heart of
Europe. I believe, however, that it is essential that
it be realized that the election of November 12 was in
no sense an election and that the claim which will be
made and has already been made by the present Govern-
ment that the overwhelming positive vote is for it a
clean bill of health and a complete endorsement, is
one which is absolutely unjustified by the circumstances
and is a misrepresentation of what is still the will of
the majority of the German population. When the German
people voted "yes" on the first question submitted to
them on the 12th of November, they did express what is their
deep-seated resentment against the unequal treatment which
they feel Germany has had under the Treaty of Versailles
and an overpowering desire for recognition of what they
believe to be equality of treatment with other nations.
Just what they mean by this equality of treatment the
average German is not able to say. However, that this
feeling which found such tremendous expression on the
12th of November exists, is something which must be
reckoned with in European politics and the arrangements
which are made in the next few years. It is to misjudge
the
the German people to believe that the positive vote on the first question was such a unanimous expression of a will for peace, because while the majority of the German people may not desire war, there is no such unanimous desire for peace. Nor can the vote be considered as an endorsement by the German people of either the Chancellor or the National Socialist Party, for there are many well-informed observers in Germany who believe that if it had been a question of a vote on the endorsement of the Chancellor and of his policies as a whole, there would not have been in his favor a response of more than 30% of the qualified voters. This clarification of the real nature of the election is necessary as the German Government will appear before the rest of the world with this vote as a blanket endorsement of its present and future policies, when as a matter of fact it cannot be considered as such.

So far as the Reichstag election is concerned, it has no real significance whatever. If the present Government desires a Reichstag, it merely desires a legislative body which it can call together from time to time to ratify the will of the leader and of the Party. It will in no sense be a deliberative body. Its action will have no significance as a democratic body chosen by an electorate.

The main purpose of the election was and is a gesture for the outside world. This was made very clear in the interview which Dr. Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda,
Propaganda, gave to the Government-controlled Wolff Telegraphen-Bureau on November 9. A copy of this interview as it appeared in the "Berliner Tageblatt" of November 9 is transmitted herewith (enclosure No. 3). It is sufficient to quote the first question and answer. To the question put by the interviewer as to what significance the election for a new Reichstag had after all the parties had been abolished except the National Socialist and the doing away with parliamentary government, Dr. Goebbels replied: "The election of a new Reichstag, just as the popular vote, is an important "Aussenpolitische" decision of the whole German people. Through the declaration of the will of the people, foreign countries will be shown that the German people acknowledge as their representatives the men who carry on the policy of Adolf Hitler."

The sophistry, insincerity and hollowness of the declarations of Dr. Goebbels are characteristic of him and of the great national spectacles which he has staged previous to this election and since the 5th of March, for it is as a huge spectacle that this election must be viewed. It is only by going behind the scenes and seeing the characters close by, that the real significance and nature of the spectacle can be judged, either by those within Germany or by those without who are so eagerly witnessing and interested in what is passing on the German stage.

Respectfully yours,

George M. Messersmith, American Consul General.

Enclosures: With orig. of despatch only:
Copy of appeal to voters:
4 clippings.