



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Berlin, Germany, March 24, 1938.

Personal and Confidential.

Dear Mr. Messersmith:

I had a long talk last night with Pierre Huss of the Hearst press who has just returned from Vienna. I will not attempt to recount the distressing tales of what has been going on in that city. You have no doubt received many reports from newspapers and other sources. It is a harrowing picture and I believe the atrocities committed have been far worse than we experienced in 1933. If I had time I should be very glad to give you some of the details. I know that Baron Rothschild was dragged out of his house at night and his palace immediately taken into possession by the S.S., bonfires were built in the yard, the wine cellars ransacked, feasts, drinking bouts were held in the premises which were looted and taken over as headquarters. Huss himself saw Jewish women in evening dress at night scratching posters off of walls with their fingernails, which indicates the degree of barbarity which was allowed to run riot.

The main purpose of this note, however, is to tell you that the correspondents here anticipate the development of a serious situation concerning themselves. The situation is as follows: Dietrich, the Reichspressechef, who is endeavoring to establish prestige on a par with Goebbels, believes that he can compel the newspaper correspondents to acquiesce in a so-called "new policy". This policy contemplates coercing newspaper correspondents to such an extent

that

The Honorable  
George S. Messersmith,  
Assistant Secretary of State,  
Washington.

that they will only send out of Germany such news as is agreeable to the German Government. They are warned against reporting on matters without consulting the Propaganda Ministry. In other words, the German Government is claiming the right to tell correspondents what they shall publish. For instance, news favorable to the German Government is news; information with regard to Niemoeller or statements made in his church are not news, and if a correspondent persists in reporting on matters displeasing to the German Government, i.e. if he persists in not allowing himself to be coordinated with the controlled German press, he may be expelled. The situation is partially aggravated through the fact that Aschmann, of the Foreign Office, is trying to outdo Dietrich in putting across this "new policy". Strangely enough, Goebbels advocates continuing as in the past so long as untruths are not published, i.e. the test remains as it has been heretofore: whether or not the news rest on facts. Guido Enderis at the present time is having a serious struggle with the Propaganda Ministry and I understand that they are trying hard "to get" Tolischus. Huss has already been threatened. The situation is particularly troublesome because Hitler has a personal interest in controlling the foreign correspondents and this policy proceeds from him, with Dietrich and Aschmann endeavoring to carry it out.

I was present a few nights ago at Rosenberg's reception at the Adlon Hotel where Dietrich announced the basis of his new policy and took the occasion to speak very insultingly of the American press. After the speech he received many congratulations from scores of people and I took the occasion to tell him that I was very sorry that he saw fit in his speech to make such uncomplimentary reference to the American press. This embarrassed him, but I spoke with such resolution and decisiveness that he became immediately apologetic and suggested that I come to see him in the near future to talk over matters concerning the press. I am reserving this occasion for a moment when it may be necessary to take some kind of serious action in the protection of our correspondents. I thought, however, this background might be interesting to you in case expulsion orders are forthcoming.

Faithfully yours,

Raymond Geist