

292  
NO. 1542

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL,

Berlin, Germany, August 25, 1933.

SUBJECT: Call of Gruppenfuehrer von Detten.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,  
WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to inform the Department that on Monday, August 21, Gruppenfuehrer von Detten indicated over the telephone his intention to call on me on official business. I stated that I would be very glad to see him the following day at 11 o'clock. Gruppenfuehrer von Detten called at this time on Tuesday, August 22 and stated that he came to express on behalf of the higher leadership of the S.A. the regrets of the S.A. that one of its members should have committed the assault on Dr. Daniel Mulvihill which has been reported to the Department in my despatch No. 1520 of August 21. Gruppenfuehrer von Detten stated that he would like me to understand that the higher leadership and the officers of the S.A. did not approve or condone such action by members of the S.A., regretted deeply that American citizens had suffered from attacks by their members, and that every effort was being made in

order

order to prevent a recurrence. He stated that in view of what had happened recently, the higher authorities of the S.A. would reinforce in every possible way the efforts which they had been making to prevent further incidents.

I replied to Gruppenfuehrer von Detten that I appreciated very much his visit and that I had recently become convinced that he and the higher leadership of the S.A. not only did not approve of such attacks, but were making every effort to prevent their recurrence. I pointed out, however, that the punishment which had heretofore been meted out to S.A. men was hardly sufficient to assure the ~~repetition~~ <sup>cessation</sup> of such incidents. I stated that I could appreciate that exclusion from the S.A. was considered by them as a severe punishment in view of the pride which the higher officials had in this organization; but that from a judicial point of view and to the outside world such punishment which merely meant exclusion from a semi-military organization did not mean the same thing. I said that I was very happy to know that in a confidential meeting which Minister President Goering had had of the S.A. Gruppen- and Ober-Gruppenfuehrer, he had made it clear that offenders in the S.A. would hereafter be turned over to the judicial authorities for punishment in addition to their being excluded from the S.A.

Gruppenfuehrer von Detten is a personality in striking contrast with Gruppenfuehrer Ernst who called to see me some time ago in connection with the case of Dr. Schachno and the interview with whom was duly reported

to



to the Department. Gruppenfuehrer Ernst is very young, very energetic, direct, enthusiastic, and exudes an atmosphere of brutality and force which is characteristic of the S.A. Gruppenfuehrer von Detten on the other hand, is a man approaching fifty years of age, who knows the ways of the world, is very much at his ease, quiet, somewhat reserved and obviously a man of education.

The regrets which Gruppenfuehrer von Detten had expressed, obviously caused him a good deal of effort, and as I thought it worth while to use this opportunity to talk with him at some length concerning the American cases which remain unsettled, I put him at his ease and over cigars we discussed at some length the difficult situation which had arisen on account of the attacks on American citizens. I pointed out to him that the expression of regrets over these incidents by leaders of the S.A. such as he, and the official regrets which might be expressed by the German authorities and the exclusion of S.A. men from the organization, would not be satisfying to the American public and to our Government. I pointed out that it was one of the fundamental obligations of a Government to protect the nationals of other countries temporarily under its protection and that obviously the German Government had not been able to do this recently and that the situation was particularly aggravated by the fact that the attacks on Americans and other foreigners came from the military organization of the Party completely dominating the country. I made it clear

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that no apologies or no explanations could satisfy other countries for outrages committed on their citizens. I explained that not a single S.A. man had been brought before a judicial tribunal for an attack on an American citizen and that this was something which public opinion in the United States could not understand. In this connection I said that the rapid arrest of the S.A. man who had attacked Dr. Mulvihill and his being turned over to the judicial authorities had had a good effect abroad as it would be accepted as an indication of good faith on the part of the S.A. leaders to really submit to judicial punishment offenders in their ranks. However, in this connection I took occasion to call attention to the farcial trial of Joost, the German who had been condemned to a fine of 50 marks for twice assaulting an American citizen together with S.A. men (in this connection please see my despatch No. 1463 of July 23). I said that under no circumstances would my Government or American public opinion be able to understand what he would appreciate was a travesty on justice and an indication that the courts were afraid to deal adequately with a member of the S.A. or a Party member. Gruppenfuehrer von Dotten stated that he appreciated these situations very thoroughly and would not fail to bring the obvious inferences to the attention of his colleagues. I also told him that although Mr. Zuckerman, an American, had been gravely assaulted in Leipzig on July 16 by a group of S.A. men in uniform, and in spite of the fact that I had brought the attack to the

attention



attention of some of the highest civil authorities of the Reich, I had not yet had any satisfactory action, indicating that the police hesitated to arrest the S. A. men. He stated that he would immediately look into this also, to facilitate the finding and the arrest of the S.A. men involved.

I took occasion also to point out that while I realized that the S.A. and its leaders felt themselves so powerful in Germany, it must be obvious at least to the leaders that outside of Germany where public opinion was so important to his country, the S.A. was absolutely powerless and that while in Germany the S.A. was able for the present to exercise its complete will in any form it desired, it was not possible for it to exercise any control beyond the borders of Germany, and that so far the activities and acts of the S.A. had been largely responsible, from what I was able to learn, in alienating so much of the sympathy of the rest of the world from Germany. I indicated that one of the most important functions of the higher leadership of the S.A. particularly of men like himself, would obviously be to impress upon the lower leaders and through them upon the young men in the S.A., the international and external effect of their actions in Germany.

I said that while my Government did not as yet contemplate any such step and while to my knowledge it had not yet seriously considered it, the continuance of these attacks could only lead to a statement by my own

Government

Government to its people that in going to Germany they undertook certain risks. I said that he would appreciate what an effect such a statement would have, particularly through all its implications, and that it would be in many respects one of the most serious misfortunes which Germany could suffer. He agreed entirely that unless these attacks stopped our Government would be entirely justified in making such a statement to prospective travellers to Germany, and again gave assurances that he and his associates would strain every effort to prevent further incidents.

I am inclined to believe that the interview may have a very useful effect. Cruppenfuehrer von Detten stated that he had come on behalf of the highest leadership of the S.A. to express his regrets over the Mulvihill attack and that he appreciated very much the frankness with which I had discussed the general situation with him and that he would not fail to bring to the attention of his associates and his superior, the substance of our conversation. He seemed to appreciate the manner in which he had been received and the frankness with which I had spoken with him and expressed the hope that on our next meeting the subject of our conversation could be of a purely personal and happier nature.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith,  
American Consul General.

A true copy of  
the signed original  
*[Signature]*

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