

184
NO. 1326

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL,

Berlin, Germany, May 22, 1933.

SUBJECT: With reference to the arrest of Dr. Paul
Keeskeneti of the United Press.

CONFIDENTIAL.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to inform the Department that on Friday evening, May 19 at about 7 o'clock, Mr. Oechsner, the head of the United Press Bureau in Berlin, informed the Consulate General over the telephone that Dr. Paul Keeskeneti, a member of the United Press Staff in Berlin, had been arrested, and he requested the use of our good offices in securing his release. I suggested to Mr. Oechsner that he come immediately to the Consulate General which he did, and he stated that the only information which they had with regard to the arrest of Dr. Keeskeneti had come over the telephone from an unknown person who simply stated that Dr. Keeskeneti had been arrested and wished the United Press Bureau to be informed. Mr. Oechsner was not able to get from his informant over the telephone any further

news

news as to when and where the arrest had taken place, as the person telephoning was obviously afraid of getting into difficulty for transmitting this news.

Mr. Oechsner informed us that Dr. Kecskemeti was a Hungarian subject who had been with them for over six years, and is a Jew. He stated that this man's work for the United Press had been entirely on articles on economic subjects and that he was quite sure that he had sent out nothing of his own independently, but had only had published the articles which passed through the United Press Bureau in Berlin. He felt confident that Dr. Kecskemeti had done nothing as a correspondent or in a purely private capacity which could bring him in conflict with the authorities, as he is a very quiet, reserved person. We informed Mr. Oechsner that although Dr. Kecskemeti was not an American citizen, in view of his long employment with the United Press we would use our good offices on his behalf.

Consul Geist who was present during the interview with Mr. Oechsner, thereupon got in touch with Oberregierungsrat Dr. Diels who is the head of the political, now the secret, police, and in spite of the late hour he received the assurance that every effort would be made to find Dr. Kecskemeti and to have him released without delay. The political police informed this office at that time that they

doubted

doubted that Dr. Kecskemeti had been arrested on their orders as they knew of no charges against him, and the arrest of any newspaper man would undoubtedly come from them or be made through them. It was not necessary to emphasize to the police the importance of promptly releasing Dr. Kecskemeti unless there were well substantiated charges against him.

In view of the fact that the information which we could give to the police was very meager, I suggested to Mr. Oechsner that he himself go to the private address of Dr. Kecskemeti to learn whether he had been arrested there, which he did, and learned that the arrest had taken place there apparently through several S.A. men and one man who was in civilian clothes but was supposed to belong to the political police. Consul Geist remained in touch with Mr. Oechsner during the evening and at 10 o'clock the political division of the police informed Consul Geist that Dr. Kecskemeti had not been arrested by them; that he was not in the central police station at the Alexanderplatz, and that it had not been possible to locate him in any of the police stations throughout the city. This led to the obvious inference that he had been arrested by S.A. men without proper authority, and the political division of the police assured us that the necessary inquiries would be continued throughout the night in order to find Dr. Kecskemeti.

On

On Saturday morning, May 20, it had not yet been possible for them to locate him, but at 2 o'clock that day the political division informed Consul Geist that Dr. Kecskeneti had been found and had been immediately released. This information had also been transmitted to the United Press.

The Consulate General has not yet had an opportunity to talk with Dr. Kecskeneti who will, however, appear at the Consulate General shortly; but in view of the fact that he is not an American citizen it is not our intention to do anything further. The effective use of the good offices of this Consulate General brought about his release in less than twenty-four hours and the action which we took was entirely on the basis of his long connection with the United Press. It appears that Dr. Kecskeneti was denounced by certain people as having aided a fellow-countryman in getting money illegally out of the country and that he might be an "intellectual Communist". The police found that there was no basis whatever for these charges and released Dr. Kecskeneti practically as soon as they were able to find him.

I am transmitting this full report with regard to our intervention on behalf of Dr. Kecskeneti partly because it shows that denunciations are still in progress and that independent action by S.A. men is still to a certain extent practiced. The

strictest

strictest orders have been issued by the leaders of the S.A. that they must abstain from all independent action and that S.A. men who carry out such independent action will be severely punished. It is believed that to a very considerable extent such independent action has ceased and it is not improbable that in this case S.A. men who received the denundiation of Dr. Keeskemati on the ground that he helped a fellow countryman to get money out of the country, got in touch with special officers charged with the control of "Devisenschlebung" and made the arrest in cooperation with such officers.

I have also transmitted this complete report to show the extreme energy with which the political division of the police is now proceeding in cases of this kind. It is the desire of the Government and of the Party that foreign correspondents should be annoyed and interfered with as little as possible and that no steps shall be taken against any foreign correspondent except on the basis of orders from the top. When the arrest of Dr. Keeskemati, therefore, and his connection with the United Press was brought to the attention of the political division, they realized the importance of the matter at once and made every effort to find him and to effect his release without delay.

A great deal of the credit also for the prompt

release

184

- 6 -

release of Dr. Keeskemeti is due to Consul Geist who has established very close touch and a basis of real cooperation with Oberregierungsrat Dr. Diels and Oberstaatsanwalt Dr. Volk, who are the heads of the political police. I think it is proper to say and should be said here, that since the position of the police is again re-established vis-a-vis the S.A. men, we have been securing the most effective cooperation from them, a cooperation which in reality experience in the last few weeks shows leaves nothing more to be desired.

The United Press through Mr. Oechaner, the head of the Berlin office, has been most appreciative of the effective use of its good offices which the Consulate General has made in this matter.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith,
American Consul General.

320/800

OSM:P

A true copy of
the signed orig-
inal. *EW*