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AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Berlin, Germany, May 12, 1933.

STRICTLY
CONFIDENTIAL

SUBJECT:

Comment on various developments in the situation in Germany during the past ten days.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to present in this despatch comment on various developments in the situation in Germany during the past ten days, this to supplement the information which has been transmitted to the Department in previous despatches.

PROPAGANDA:

According to the "Berliner Tageblatt" of May 4, 1933, evening issue, the Foreign Minister has nominated in an honorary capacity Dr. Hans Draeger to study anti-German propaganda in foreign countries, and to this end he has been assigned to the Press Division of the Propaganda Ministry. Dr. Draeger is a man of about forty who has been one of the leading spirits, if not the leading spirit, in the Carl Schurz Vereinigung which concerns itself principally in promoting friendly relations between Germany and the United States. It is

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not unlikely that Dr. Draeger has been chosen for this work particularly because the Government is interested in developing pro-German propaganda in the United States, and as he has favorable connections in various circles in the United States he has been deemed particularly appropriate for this purpose. He is a quite sensible, reasonable and understanding person.

The newspapers of May 5 throughout the country generally carried an announcement of the Chancellor to the effect that now that the first national celebration to give proper dignity to labor in Germany is over, something definite must be done so that this historic day shall not be forgotten and that this deep expression of feeling of the people must be given a permanent form. He called attention to the seven miners who lost their lives in a mine accident on the evening before May 1, the first German holiday glorifying the dignity of labor, and that widows and orphans have lost their support; that the death of these heroes shall be the occasion for the whole nation to establish a foundation for the benefit of the "soldiers of work" who fell on the battlefield of gaining daily bread. He stated that it must never happen again that such victims of work shall have to depend upon public support, but that it is the duty of all Germans, particularly of those of means, to do everything possible to prevent suffering on the part of the victims. He therefore called for

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the establishment of a foundation the proceeds of which are to be used for the widows and orphans of "all German workers who in the exercise of their daily duty meet death ". He emphasized that this fund cannot be too large. Indications are given in the publication as to whom contributions can be made.

The Department is aware that in the address which the Chancellor made on the 1st of May at the Tempelhof Field and which was to be the occasion for his giving his economic program, he laid great stress on the death the day before of these seven miners. The establishing of this foundation for the widows and orphans of workers is another one of the evidences of the way in which the Government is using every means to give the people something to think about and to make them feel that something is being done to alleviate the general situation. So far as can be learned the contributions up to this date to this fund have not been coming in rapidly and only a few of any size can be reported.

There has been no recent reference in the press to the intention of the Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels, to make a trip to the United States to be present at the opening of the Chicago Fair. The real reason for the visit was the desire of Dr. Goebbels to make various propaganda speeches in the United States. It is not unlikely that it was brought to the attention of Dr. Goebbels from various sources that of all the members of the present German Government he was the one

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who would probably have the least sympathetic hearing in the United States and that it was undesirable for many reasons for him to make this trip. Although there is no definite information available at this time it is not unlikely that the trip has been abandoned.

THE BURNING OF JEWISH AND MARXISTIC BOOKS:

In a previous despatch I have reported the plan of various student organizations in the German universities to burn publicly on the evening of May 10 all books "against the German spirit", these including books by Jewish and Marxist authors. According to the "Berliner Tageblatt" of May 10 the students in Berlin collected some 20,000 books to be burnt. The "Berliner Tageblatt" of May 11 carried a notice of the ceremony which took place on the great square between the State Opera House in Berlin and one of the main university buildings. Some 20,000 persons were present. The Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels, made a speech in which he said: "A revolutionary must be able to do everything. He must be as energetic and as great in tearing down the unworthy as in building up the worthy." The students of the University of Frankfurt held a similar ceremony at which the rector of the university was present and at which the Bavarian Minister of Culture, Schemm, made the address. Similar ceremonies were to take place in all the university cities in Germany.

Separations

SEPARATIONS FROM OFFICE OF WELL-KNOWN JEWISH AND OTHER PERSONS:

Professor Borchardt at the request of the authorities has given up his position as the director of the surgical division of the Moabit Hospital. He is one of the leading surgeons in Germany. Professor Dr. Haber, the head of the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institut for Physical Chemistry and a Nobel prize winner, has asked the Minister of Culture to grant him his retirement on September 30. Dr. Oskar von Miller, who is the head of the Deutsches Museum in Munich, has resigned. Dr. von Miller is known throughout the world as the leading authority on museums. Max Liebermann, the "dean of German painters" has resigned from the Prussian Academy of Fine Arts of which he was the honorary president. Dr. Hamm, a former Minister of Commerce and one of the leading economists in Germany, has resigned as a member of the governing board of the Deutsche Industrie- und Handelstag. The "Berliner Tageblatt" of May 6 carries an announcement of the resignation from the Academy of Writers of some ten of the leading authors in the country, and also the announcement of the admission of a number of others to the Academy all of whom are directly or indirectly connected with the National-Socialist movement.

The newspapers all over the country carry announcements almost every day of long lists of voluntary or forced retirements from public and semi-public positions.

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The number of suicides among well-known persons has greatly increased since March 5, 1933. Most of these are due to either physical distress and misery brought about by loss of employment or office or through mental depression resulting from the existing situation. The one which has aroused the most comment is that of Dr. Ernst Oberfohren who was formerly the leader of the Deutschnationalen Reichstags-Fraktion and who was reported in a previous despatch as having been placed under temporary arrest some time ago. The newspapers carry no reason as to why Dr. Oberfohren may have committed suicide.

Despatch No. 998 of May 1 from Consul General Dominian on National-Socialist influence on the German universities will be found particularly interesting as it describes clearly the state of disorganization which exists in the German universities. He closes with the statement: "For the first time in centuries doubt may be reasonably entertained as to whether the education imparted under the conditions now prevailing in German universities is of sufficient value to prove attractive to foreigners." There is reason to believe that the actual situation justified for the present at least this comment of Consul General Dominian.

CONCENTRATION CAMPS:

The number of concentration camps for political prisoners, Communists, etc. is increasing and although there have been statements in the press recently that a

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considerable number of persons are to be released from the camps, the information available up to the present indicates that the number of persons in these camps has steadily increased instead of decreased. The maintenance of these camps and of the prisoners therein is a heavy charge on the State, and with arrests increasing and very few persons let out this charge is evidently becoming greater steadily. There is no reason to believe that the persons in these camps are either mistreated or undernourished. As they are becoming increasingly important, however, it is the intention of the Consulate General to have one of the consular officers in Germany prepare a report on this subject giving all available information as to the number of camps, the number of prisoners in each and, so far as possible, statistics covering the types of persons kept therein.

THE "ARBEITSFRONT":

There has been founded under the leadership of Dr. Robert Ley an organization known as the "Deutsche Arbeitsfront" which will have its central offices in Berlin. Just what this organization is to be is rather difficult as yet to understand, but it is evidently the desire of the Government to bring together into this central organization all the workers of all occupations under one head. There is in Germany an organization known as the "Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie" which is the powerful central organization

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which is at the head of all the various and many organizations in particular trades and industries. It has played a very important part in German economic and political life. This new organization evidently is to bring together all organizations of workers of all kinds in a central organization and to give it a proper start, a so-called Congress was held in Berlin in the afternoon of May 11, presided over by Dr. Ley and at which the Chancellor made a speech. A newspaper announcement carries the statement that Dr. Ley intends to form a so-called "Arbeitssenat" or Labor Senate, which is to be made up of a maximum of sixty members from various parts of Germany and representing all classes of German labor. I have found no one who has a real idea as to what the organization is really to do or what it hopes to accomplish. It has all the earmarks of being the personal work of Dr. Ley, and that it will be a lasting organization is not likely. Dr. Ley is said to be a man very much interested in pushing himself to the front and this so-called Labor Senate is said to be a personal idea of his and a means of gratifying his vanity. It may be merely another one of the ways in which the Government and the party are making the worker think that something is being done for him.

THE ALLEGED INCREASE IN THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY:

The Department is aware that the difficulties between the S.A. and the Stahlhelm have, so far as the

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public is concerned, been ironed out by the passing over of Minister Seldte, who is also the leader of the Stahlhelm, into the ranks of the National-Socialists. While the Stahlhelm retains its integrity as an organization, Minister Seldte has called upon the members of the Stahlhelm to follow his example and to enter the National-Socialist party for the sake of unity. The Department is aware that Duesterberg resigned from the Stahlhelm practically under compulsion as he would not follow Seldte into the National-Socialist party. It is said that very considerable numbers of the members of the Stahlhelm have enroled as members of the National-Socialist party, but how far this movement has gone I am not able at this time to definitely state. Warotsky, one of the leaders of the Deutschnationale party and a Burgomaster of the city of Berlin, has gone over into the ranks of the National-Socialists and as a result of his action many of the higher officials in the city government have followed his lead. The principal pre-occupation of every German to-day is to hold his job or to get one, whether he be of high or low station. To get a job it is now the general opinion it is necessary to be a National-Socialist, and the mentality has become pretty definite that to hold a job one must also belong to this party. The result is that every day in the Government service those who for reasons of particular talent or ability have been retained are declaring their adhesion to the National-Socialists in order to retain their positions. It is impossible to tell to-day what

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the strength of the National-Socialist party is and whether it has actually gained in strength. All surface indications, however, are to the effect that the party has grown very rapidly since March 5 and that the movement of its leaders to make all Germans National-Socialists has so far met with considerable success. Whether a secret ballot or a vote where the population could give free expression to its opinion would show the same, is a question which at this time it is not possible to determine. While leading members of the party have indicated to me that they are not using any pressure on officials to join the party they express great satisfaction at the number of applications they receive for membership.

GREATER EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY BY THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY LEADERS:

The pressure from the bottom which is often selfish in character and directly against the public interest, but carried on under the protection of the party, has increasingly caused preoccupation to the heads of the Government. All sorts of organizations have been formed which have been disturbing business and practically every form of German life. These organizations are generally known as "Kampfbuende" or fighting organizations for this or that. There was recently organized a Reichszentrale fuer das Deutsche Theaterwesen which was presuming to determine what could and what could not be done in the theatre. On the evening

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of May 8 Ministerpresident Goering of Prussia declared that his Ministry alone controlled all matters of the theatre, and he ordered the dissolution of the newly organized "Reichszentrale". In a speech he declared ^{not} "that/the interests of a single business or a single profession, but the interests of the people and of the country as a whole had to be put in the foreground". This was taken as an expression of a general attitude on the part of the party and of the Government against many of these organizations, and the dissolution of a considerable number which have been making trouble may probably be looked forward to in the near future. This action will require a good deal of courage on the part of the Government for on the whole these organizations are fighting for things which were in reality promised to them by the party while it was struggling for power. Ministerpresident Goering has also announced that many of the Kommissare who have been placed in businesses and other organizations with or without the authority of the party, must be removed and that only under very special circumstances and with special permission will Kommissare be placed in the future.

Ministerpresident Goering has issued new regulations to the effect that there must be no politics among the police and that those of the police who have joined the S.A. or S.S. or the Stahlhelm shall have to resign immediately.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith,
American Consul General.

