

1187

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Berlin, Germany, March 14, 1933.

SUBJECT: Further information concerning attacks on  
American citizens in Berlin by persons  
wearing uniforms of a political party.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to refer to my despatch No. 1184  
of March 14, 1933, reporting 10 cases of attacks on  
American citizens in Germany and one case in Munich  
by persons wearing the uniform of the National-Socialist  
party, and to transmit the following further information  
which I find it is possible to send under the confidential  
cover of the pouch leaving this afternoon.

There is transmitted herewith the affidavit executed  
by Edward Dahlberg, also an American citizen and a Jew,  
who was subjected to an entirely unprovoked attack on  
~~Sunday afternoon~~ <sup>Saturday evening</sup>, March 12<sup>th</sup>, on the Kurfürstendamm, one  
of the leading streets of Berlin. Mr. Dahlberg is an  
author and temporarily in Berlin and was walking along  
the street when without any provocation he was attacked  
by a man in S.A. uniform who beat him around the head  
with a stick. The bystanders gathered and a policeman  
took

took Mr. Dahlberg and the National-Socialist to the nearest station where the attacker was placed in custody, and so far as we are able to learn has not yet been released. It is significant to note that this incident took place on ~~Sunday~~<sup>Saturday</sup> and is the only one in which we have direct evidence of police intervention and action.

The action of the police in taking into custody and detaining for further examination and punishment Mr. Dahlberg's attacker who was in National-Socialist uniform indicates quite clearly what was brought out in despatch No. 1184, that the admonitions of Mr. Hitler to his adherents are having their effect.

The representatives of the foreign press in Berlin succeeded in getting in touch with various Americans who had been attacked since the elections on March 5, and their stories were published in England, France and the United States. These stories were particularly disconcerting to the leaders of the National-Socialist movement who had already endeavored to take steps to intimidate the foreign correspondents through public declarations that correspondents who sent out news which they could not prove would be summarily proceeded against. In addition to these attacks on American Jews, however, attacks were also made against Jews of other nationalities, but from certain indications which I can gather the representations made by their diplomatic representatives did not make much impression. I understand, however, from well-informed sources that the representations made by our Embassy to the Foreign Office and by this Consulate

General



General to the Police Praesidium, and the complete information given with regard to every single attack, greatly disturbed the Government and that this, coupled with the publicity in the American newspapers, brought about the decisive action taken towards the end of last week.

The press bureaus of the Government in their bulletins indicated that these attacks on Americans and other foreigners were being made by Communists masquerading in National-Socialist uniforms, but when persons in smaller cities known to be members of the National-Socialist party interfered with business houses and closed large and small shops, stopped theatrical performances and in various ways took the law in their own hands, it was evidently obvious to the Government that it could no longer naively disclaim responsibility. It was necessary, therefore, that energetic action should be taken. Mr. Goering had made his inflammatory speech at Essen, as has already been reported in my despatch No. 1184, indicating that the police were not employed to protect Jewish merchants, the night before Mr. Hitler made his plea for discipline and order to National-Socialists all over Germany. His declaration counteracted that of the Chancellor. The increasing lawless acts of persons who it could not be denied were National-Socialists made even leaders of the party feel that the movement was getting beyond control. This undoubtedly impelled Mr. Goering to give publicity in the newspapers of

Tuesday

Tuesday, March 14, to the following declaration:

" The Reichskommissar for the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, Reichsminister Goering, declares: In the last days on urgent grounds national organizations have taken direct action in communal administrations, jurisprudence, cultural institutions, particularly theatres. On account of the decree of the Chancellor dated March 12 such direct action is no longer necessary. The cleaning-up action necessary in my own Ministry will be undertaken by me in a regular way. Should there be any danger in sight I can be reached by telephone so that I can give the necessary orders. I am convinced that the population will give the necessary faith and credit to my measures and that direct action for this reason will not be considered necessary in the future. "

This declaration of Mr. Goering who holds as Minister of the Interior in Prussia the responsibility for the maintenance of order is a direct recognition of what has been stated in the foreign newspapers and what has been denied in the controlled press in Germany, that these lawless acts have been committed by National-Socialists and that to a certain extent some of them were committed with the knowledge and consent of the leaders of the organization. It is only when things went too far and when the unfavorable repercussion from abroad was felt that Mr. Goering changed from his inflammatory tactics at Essen to the above mentioned direct orders to National-Socialists to cease direct action and to leave that to him. The peculiar tensivity of the situation, however, can still be seen from his statement that if any danger threatens anywhere he can be reached by telephone.

An article in the "Berliner Tageblatt" of March 14 which is transmitted herewith goes on further to say:

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" The Government directs itself in an official announcement against the rumors which have appeared in a part of the foreign press. According to these, arrested persons have been treated cruelly and foreigners attacked. These rumors have been spread with a mischievous intent in order to undermine the reputation and authority of the Government. All such announcements of cruelty in the Reich are fables. Besides that, the Chancellor, as he has already said in his radio declaration, has decided that the former discipline must again be maintained and upheld. The direct action of single persons which are due to agents provocateurs will in the future be controlled by the strongest action. "

Here again the Government refers to the so-called rumors of attacks on foreigners which in the cases of the Americans are without any question based on fact. Reference in this declaration, however, is also made to certain reports which have been published with regard to the manner in which Communists and persons alleged to have been Communists have been handled in more or less secret meeting places of the S.A. in Berlin and other parts of Germany. I have seen the sworn declarations of Communists who claimed to have been mishandled in these places by men in S.A. uniform which, if the stories were correct, represent treatment of victims which it is difficult to conceive could have taken place in a civilized country. I am personally not able to say anything as to the correctness of these statements some of which have appeared I understand in the foreign press. It has, however, been substantiated that one of the most notorious of these places where Communists were put through all sorts of mistreatment, was closed by the police on Sunday, and the S.A. men in uniform

were

were taken into custody. It is said that the evidence of physicians is available as to the condition in which they found persons whom they were called upon to treat either in these S.A. stations or outside thereof when the victims were put on the street. Whether these excesses by National-Socialists against Communists and those believed to be Communists were committed or not, it is obvious that during late Saturday, March 11, and Sunday, March 12, orders were transmitted through Berlin and all over Germany that S.A. men who indulged in individual direct action would be dealt with themselves in a most summary fashion.

I am informed from a reliable diplomatic source that the Italian representative in Berlin and his Government were very much exercised towards the end of last week as to the turn of events in Germany, that while looking upon the access to power of the National-Socialist party with a certain amount of favor the Italian Government was disturbed as it seemed that the uniformed men were getting beyond control, and that the excesses in Germany might have serious repercussions elsewhere.

Whatever may be the reasons for which the action was taken, it is quite clear that orders were transmitted on March 11 and 12 which had a very decisive effect. With a few more days' license it is impossible to tell what might have happened. Sufficient time now has passed to form at least a preliminary judgment. During the past 48 hours there has been greater quiet so far as

attacks



attacks are concerned than for weeks and no attack on an American has been reported since Sunday. There is every indication that the police throughout Germany are again exercising police authority and are no longer under the control or orders of the "Hilfspolizei" in National-Socialist uniform who for several days apparently directed their actions.

Respectfully yours,

George S. Messersmith,  
American Consul General.

Enclosure:  
Copy of affidavit,  
Newspaper article.

310/800  
GSM:HP

