1953

Goebbels

Baden

While I had the distinction I think of being hated by all the Nazis from Hitler on down, I was perhaps anathema to Hitler and to Goebbels more than to any of the others in the higher ranks of the hierarchy. Dr. Goebbels was an extremely intelligent man but a man of as devious and as criminal and as dangerous a mind as I have ever known. As propaganda minister from the outset he had control of all public opinion forming means in the country, the universities, the schools, the churches, the newspapers, the magazines, the cinema, in fact every possible means of forming public opinion. On one occasion I had a long conversation with him in his office when I had gone to see him at the request of the motion picture producers of our country and of the motion picture distributors. He had issued an order completely banning the distribution of American pictures in Germany. I had a copy of the order, or rather a photostatic copy of the order in my pocket. I do not know where the American motion picture distributors in Berlin got this photostatic copy of the order, but I always had reason to believe that they got it from Dr. Funk, who was the Under Secretary for Propaganda under Goebbels. Funk had been one of the best newspaper men in Berlin before the Nazi regime came in and had been strongly anti-Nazi. He joined the party when Hitler came in for purely opportunistic reasons, but he became one of the principal members of the regime and one of its most effective members, as he was extremely intelligent. I had known Funk before he became Under Secretary for Propaganda and had had many conversations with him. I had always enjoyed talking with him and had found him a very reasonable and a quite enlightened man.

When I asked for the appointment to see Dr. Goebbels on this motion picture matter it was fixed for the following day. I was in his ante-room at the time fixed. I was kept waiting for at least an hour and a half. Every few minutes some henchman of Dr. Goebbels would be passing through the office and look at me in a staring way. I knew that Goebbels was keeping me waiting with deliberation. While I resented being kept waiting, I determined to wait if it took three hours. I have personally

made it a practice all the time while I was in the government service to receive people promptly. If I could not receive them promptly I stepped out and said to them that unforeseen circumstances made it impossible for me to see them immediately and indicated how many minutes theywould have to wait and said that if they didnot find it convenient to wait I would be very glad to fix an appointment for the next day. All of us have our idiosyncrasies and one of mine has been to be prompt and to expect others to be prompt in keeping their obligations and engagements with me. Goebbels had the kind of mind that he thought he was punishing me and upsetting me by keeping me waiting. I think he also wanted to show his feelings with regard to me and my country by keeping me waiting.

After about an hour and a half I was asked to enter Goebbels' office and I told him very briefly why I was there. I said that I understood that an order had just been issued the previous day or perhaps it was a day or two before prohibiting the distribution and showing further of American pictures in Berlin. Goebbels/said blandly he knew of no such order and that he was sure no such order had been given. I said that I did not wish to enter into the matter but it was my understanding that the order had been issued and that it had been signed by him. Goebbels said that no such order had been signed by him and repeated that no such order had been issued. I took the photostatic copy of the order out of my pocket and simply passed it to him without a word. He looked at it and with his characteristic cynical smile turned to me and said that the order did not exist. I merely said that whether the order existed or not, what I had said with regard to the undesirability of such an order being issued and of its consequences stood. By this time Goebbels and I were both standing. He rang a bell and in less than a moment Dr. Funk came into the room. I spoke to him courteously and he replied very courteously and in a friendly way. Goebbels handed him the photostatic copy of the order which I had given to him and said to Funk, "Funk, no such order has been issued, has it?" Dr. Funk of course replied that no such order had been issued. Dr. Goebbels indicated to Funk that

he could leave the room, which he did. Goebbels and I were still standing, he behind his desk. I said to Dr. Goebbels that I had waited an hour and a half to see him. I had delivered my message. I would have waited three hours to deliver it. I had instructions to deliver such message and I had done so. I had noted his comment. I hoped that he had noted what I had said at the outset of the conversation with regard to this order. I hoped that he would bear it in mind, as it was not our custom to say anything without due deliberation and consideration, I then said that I wanted to say a personal word. I said that when my government undertook a step of this kind and asked a responsible officer of our government to make a communication to a responsible officer of another government, we did it thoughtfully and we meant what we said. We treated about these matters openly, keeping in mind the interests of others. We expected the same kind of treatment in return from the high officers of other governments. I wished to say in this personal way that my government and I did not appreciate the kind of treatment that he had accorded to me, because in according it to me he was according it to my government.

I could see that it made a tremendous impression on Goebbels, who was a man of courage, but he realized that he had gone too far and placed himself in an impossible position. As an intelligent man he was not in the custom of placing himself in an impossible position.

I saw Goebbels very little during my stay in Germany. There was very little occasion for me to have contact with him in an official way and we carried on most of our contact with the Ministry of Propaganda through Mr. Geist of the Consulate General or some of the officers of the Embassy. This contact I should say was very limited. We knew it was useless to deal with him about any substantive matters and that they had to be dealt with at a higher level. That he hated the very mention of my name I knew from others high in the hierarchy who spoke smilingly to me of the feelings which Goebbels had concerning me. I always said when these observations were made to me that I was very much flattered and my hearers always smiled. Goebbels had the unique distinction I think of not being liked by any of his asso-

ciates in the government except perhaps by Hitler.

The complete system of espionage which prevailed in Germany almost from the first days of the Nazi regime is so well known that I do not go into any detail. Those in the higher echelon of the regime spied on each other. Those in the second and third echelons spied on each other. The whole machinery had its apparatus for knowing practically what every individual, inconsequential as he might be in Germany, was thinking. I doubt whether there was ever any government or regime which was more fully informed as to what was going on in the country and what people were thinking and what individuals were thinking than was the Nazi regime. I will go into this in another memorandum because it was an interesting and effective way that they worked out this matter. There was of course the most complete control of telephone conversations, not only between officers of the regime itself but of chiefs of mission and all kinds of persons. I was one of those who was honored in having my telephone listened in on. As a matter of fact, I got so accustomed to hearing the familiar click that I did not think of having an outside call without waiting for the click. It was a most convenient way of saying the things that one wanted to say. If the higher officers of the regime knew how useful it was to some of us to have our telephone controlled they would have put us off the list.

Late one evening, it must have been about 11:30, I had just returned from my office to the house in the Drakestrasse when George Gordon, the Counselor of the Embassy who lived next door to us, came in. He said that he had just been at a party at the Italian Embassy. He had been asked by the Ambassador and Mrs. Cerrutti especially to come to the party. He had gone knowing that there would be a good many of the members of the government there. Both the Italian Ambassador and Mrs. Cerrutti were in close touch with higher officers of the regime, as was quite natural in view of the relationships between the Italian and German regimes. Gordon said that Goebbels had been at the party and that he had come up to him and told him that he was going to Chicago as head of the German delegation to the opening of the Chicago World's Fair. Gordon remarked that he thought it would be a very

bad thing if Goebbels would go as his life would be in danger, as he was one of the most cordially hated men in the regime in the United States. I said that I doubted very much whether Goebbels would go. I told Gordon that I thought also that the best thing to do was to see how it could be stopped. I thought it would be rather simple. I suggested that the following morning he call me on the telephone when he got to the office and tell me about the conversation which he had had with Goebbels the preceding evening. I would then go on to talk about how dangerous and how impossible it was for him to go. I would stress the personal dangers to Goebbels himself, no matter what protective measures might be taken by our government. Gordon thought it a good idea.

The next morning Gordon called me on the phone and I heard the familiar click. Gordon briefly told me about the conversation with Goebbels the preceding evening. I immediately took up the ball and I said to Gordon that I couldn't understand how Dr. Goebbels would even think of such a thing. I said that if he knew anything about our country he must know that he was the most cordially hated and despised person in our country, not only because of what he had done to Jews but to all kinds of people. It was realized there that he was one of those who was most implacable in these persecutions and executions. I said that naturally if the German government wanted to send a delegation to the Chicago Fair I did not think that our government would do anything about it. The delegation would be received courteously. If Dr. Goebbels came as the head of the delegation or as a member of it, he would be accorded every protection that our government could give. I said that personally I did not see how anything that our government could do would accord him adequate protection. There were so many people who had such deep feelings about him that there were fanatics in our country just as there were in Germany, only we had only a few of them and some of our people had reasons to be particular fanatics so far as individuals such as Goebbels were concerned. I said that if we assigned practically a whole army to protect Goebbels I did not see how he could be safe. I said to Gordon over the phone that I did not think that there was very much that we

Could do but

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would of course inform our government that it would be desirable to take all possible means to give protection to Dr. Goebbels while he might be in the United States, difficult as it would be to take such measures.

The morning papers had carried an announcement in big headlines that Goebbels would head the German delegation to the Chicago World's Fair. The afternoon papers carried ~~xxhigx~~ an announcement with big headlines stating that the reports in the morning papers with regard to Dr. Goebbels going to the Chicago Fair had been made without any authorization and had no foundation, that he had no thought whatever of going to the United States. I am sure that Gordon read the afternoon papers with the same amusement that I did. I think in view of the character of the conversation which had taken place between Gordon and me in the morning, it had not been more than an hour or two thereafter that the disks were being replayed to Goebbels in his office. Goebbels was not one to risk his life.