1923-01-14 US NARA M336 Roll 18 pages 538-552 Report of R.D. Murphy, U.S. Vice Consul in Munich on Bavarian Political Review of 1922

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“The German National Socialist Workingmen’s Party (Deutsch Nationale Socialist Arbeiter Partei) under the leadership of Herr Adolf Hitler (the self-styled Bavarian Mussolini) has been most in the public eye and its development has been most interesting. It is not represented in parliament. The party was founded through the agitation of Hitler who made his cause known by the use of enormous red placards posted in conspicuous places throughout the city announcing a meeting with speeches on current problems, and ending with the statement “No Admission for Jews.” While Hitler’s platform is anti everything, the principal plank seems to be anti-Semitism. He has denounced the Entente, the capitalists, the profiteers, the Federal Government, and the Bavarian Government, the Communists and the Socialists, as enemies of the people. He was not generally taken seriously until carried along on the wave of political and economic discontent and misery, the people began to look up to him as the man who was always in the right. Most of his immediate supporters are young men, as he is himself, and have shown themselves well disciplined and aggressive in their frequent street collisions with Socialists and Communists. Hitler has succeeded in making an impression on those classes who have most to fear from Bolshevism. He has unquestionably raised funds from industrial circles who look to hm to assist in suppressing strikes.

“Before Mussolini’s coup d’etat in Italy, Hitler began to be looked up to as the man from whom the Bavarians and possibly the German nation could expect deliverance from present distress. As an indication of his popularity he was recently able to hold ten over-flow meetings in a single evening. He is not necessarily regarded as a monarchist, but rather as standing for a dictatorship or powerful government along the lines of the Mussolini model. He has so far avoided pinning himself down to say definite details of constructive programs.

“Those who are personally acquainted with Hitler contradict many of the press accounts of his personality. He was the son of a petty Austrian employee who made his home in what is now Czecho-Slovakia near the Bavarian border. He fought in the Bavarian army during the war and is said to be self-educated. He appears entirely devoted to his cause, and apparently desires to avoid the sensational and theatrical. He is said to have declared that his anti-Semitiic views are merely for advertising purpose, which is no doubt true since the Jewish question cannot justifiably be called acute in Bavaria.

“His party includes all classes of society, with workmen in the minority as compared with students, government employees including policemen, officers, and the middle class generally. His well organized bands of disciplined young men are much in evidence, but it is difficult to estimate as to how many of these who crowd his meetings are moved by more than vaguely sympathetic curiosity.

“In the beginning of 1922 Count Lerchenfeld was head of the Government of the Center, composed of the Bavarian People’s, Peasants, and Democratic Parties. Himself a man of liberal tendencies, he would have preferred to maintain the government as it was and thereby keep it less obnoxious to Socialists both in Bavaria and in North Germany than had been that of his predecessor, Dr. von Kahr. The majority of the Bavarian People’s Party, however, desired to introduce the Nationalists (Middle Party) into the coalition. . . .

“This swing of the Government towards the extreme right proved fatal to the Prime Minister, whose personality had also not endeared him to his nominal supporters. Count Lerchenfeld had to resign, and was succeeded in November as Premier by Dr. Euge von Knilling the last Minister of Religion in the Bavarian Monarchy, and subsequently a prominent member of the Bavarian People’s Party. The Government which was then forced is still in power and is constituted as follows:

Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs – Dr. von Knilling.

Department of Justice – Dr. Gürtner (Middle Party).

Department of Interior – Dr. Schweyer (People’s Party)

Department of Education – Dr. Matt (People’s Party)

Department of Finance – Dr. Kraweneck (People’s Party)

Department of Social Welfare – Oswald (People’s Party)

Department of Agriculture – Wutzlhofer (Bauernbund)

Minister of Commerce – Dr. von Meinel (officially non-partisan but actually Bavarian People’s Party).

Dr. von Knilling is a capable leader and his government, though more conservative than its predecessor, represents without undue exaggeration the views held by the majority of the Bavarians.

A very serious conflict with the Reich was provoked by the measures which the German Government were compelled to take after the murder in June of Dr. Rathenau. . . .

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“A grand demonstration on the war responsibility question, from which great things had been expected, was held on the 28th of June but failed in its purpose and prved the last serious effort of the Nationalists. It was not until the last of August that they dared to make an attempt to renew the campaign by parading von Hindenburg through the streets of Munich, but by that time a new factor was beginning to make itself felt.

“The economic situation arising out of a continuous increase in the cost of living, and the inadequacy of salaries and wages, was turning the thoughts of the population ever and more from purely political questions. This applied especially to those middle classes who had hitherto been the backbone of the military reactionaries. Their loyalty to the Monarchists and other patriotic societies became endangered with the conviction that the salvation of the economic machine was the most pressing need and was not to be looked for in those quarters. The stars of Hitler seemed to outshine the medals of Ludendorff. As Hitler himself did no positively come out as a Monarchist or a militarist, the patriots accepted with certain reservations the inauguration of his group into their general league and the extreme leaders worked out schemes for using Hitler at least as a pawn in their own game. Their hopes are founded on that portion of Hitler’s agitation which inflames the workmen against the capitalist. It is also obvious that the Communists, who are said to obtain considerable financial aid from Russia, count on Hitlerite action to start a thorough-going Red movement. This consideration was in the mind of the Government which would not have hesitated to use force against any dangerous outbreaks by the national Socialists although these have adherents in the army and police, and friends in the government, the latter’s discipline would have probably remained unshaken. The occasion did not arise for Hitler kept quiet until the end of the year. He is, however, so far as can be judged, now at the zenith of his popularity, and unless conditions take a startling turn for the better he may find it impossible to resist the call of his followers for an active policy in the first few months of 1923.

“Bavaria has properly no Foreign Relations. She has sunken to a mere German province and her chauvinism has little scope beyond . . . As, however, she regards herself as the only province where are to be found the virtues which made Germany great in the past and will have the same desirable effect in the future, the Bavarian attitude toward foreign countries is of some interest.

“Austria. Austria is scarcely regarded as a foreign country. Her inhabitants are South German brothers. The Austro-German union will probably come but the Bavarians do no regard the energy and ability of their neighbors with much respect.

“France. France is the object of fanatical hatred fed by press reports of French outrages in the Bavarian Palatinate. The hatred is particularly caused by the maintenance of negro troops of occupation by France, termed the Black Shame. A Munich society – Der Deutsche Not Bund Gegen Die Schwarze Schmach – has been organized in protest. The presence of these troops unquestionably leaves an opening to the Bavarian press for the criticism thereof, of which full employment is made. There is no doubt that the demands of the occupying troops and of their hosts of camp followers press hardly on the population in the matter of dwelling accommodation and food. The French minister lives the life of an outcast and he has apparently been compelled to abandon his first hope of separating Bavaria from Germany. His presence in Munich seems pointless for the present.