Germans Use Student Exchanges as Weapon in Propaganda Drive

By Paul Scrivene

The German Student Exchange Service which exports several hundred Nazi students each year to universities abroad and imports an equal number of foreign students into Germany, has always been a pet project of the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda and Enlightenment. The Nazi master minds, who never overlook a bet where propaganda is concerned, have found in student exchanges in excellent medium and are lavishing upon them an enormous amount of money and care.

The liberal universities of England, France, the United States and other countries, some of which have unwittingly become the instruments of a powerful campaign of Nazi agitation. In the belief that they are helping to promote international understanding, they have sent their students to Germany to “study” under Nazi propagandists, sitting in professional chairs. On the other hand, they have admitted to their own campuses other Nazi propagandists masquerading as students.

The international exchange of students, designed to foster the free interchange of ideas as an aid to international amity, has, in the hands of the Nazis, become a double-edged weapon with which they have managed to cut their way into the most liberal institutions of the democratic countries.

Early this month another contingent of young Nazis left Germany to spend the next year at various foreign schools. The group represented the usual type only trained in Nazi ideology, and their satellites, became a double-edged weapon with which they have managed to cut their way into the most liberal institutions of the democratic countries.

No Discussion is Permitted

The master of ceremonies at this rally was Dr. Burmeister, head of the German Student Exchange Service, who, in delivering his final benediction, informed the students that they were now “fully fledged political soldiers” in the Reich’s foreign service on campuses.

It was their task, he declared, to present the National Socialist ideology to the student bodies of foreign universities in the most effective way possible. “But,” he advised, “there is no point in trying to force the German standpoint upon the foreign partner by discussion. The German spirit is mobilized to hold its ground in the world warfare of ideology.”

In another American, Dr. Burmeister’s statement makes little sense. These Nazi students being enlivened abroad make converts to the Nazi cause.

A German student is an honor. Injured honor can only be redeemed with blood. Your honor is your devotion to the German nation and to yourself.

To be German means to have character. You are entrusted with the battle for the Germanic spirit. Seek the truth that lies concealed within your own people.

Lack of aim and constraint do not mean freedom. There is more freedom in service than in such decisions. Germany’s future depends on your faith, your enthusiasm and your fighting spirit.

Whoever lacks imagination cannot grasp real life, and you cannot spread the imagination, when you lack the spark. Be brave enough to admire and respect.

One is born to be National Socialist. One becomes more firmly so by education and generally one educates one’s self for it.

If anything is more powerful than fate it is courage which carries everything before you. Whatever you can weather can only harden you. Be brave to those things that harden.

Learn to live an orderly life. Discipline and behavior are the essential foundations of community life and education.

As a leader, do not spare yourself in fulfillment of your duty; be helpful and avoid trifles in your judgment of human weaknesses; be generous in judgment and reserved toward yourself.

Be a good comrade. Be chivalrous and unassuming.

The duties of the German student traveling abroad, they are very well outlined in the decree of the minister of education issued December 24, 1936. The decree states:

It has frequently been observed of late that German and especially professors and students, when traveling abroad for cultural or scientific purposes, have failed to establish contact with their local national official representatives. There is especially important in countries where Jewry occupies a predominant influence in political affairs, and where emigrants seek to press into the foreground in questions concerning German cultural life. In these countries, it is particularly necessary that German national guests, local or official, shall be informed of these local relationships by the official national representatives abroad.

Work Made Compulsory

“I therefore order that all under control of my Ministry who travel abroad for study, research or lectures, or for any congress or similar purposes, shall on their arrival in a foreign country forthwith get in contact with the competent local representative of Germany, with the Foreign Organization of the Nazi Party and with the Branch Office of the German Academic Exchange Service, whenever possible. If this be not done a short report of the reasons must be furnished to me.”

A few days ago, in New York, a number of American educators formed a Board of a German exchange students just arrived in the country to spend a year in various American schools. The group consisted of 14 young Nazis who formed the advance guard of a larger delegation to follow within a few weeks. The reception accorded the visitors was in keeping with true American hospitality. The young Germans were welcomed and dined and given the place of honor at a celebration marking the tenth anniversary of American participation in the international student exchange movement. In the oratory that was part of such occasions they heard themselves praised as the finest type of American youth. They were told that the student exchange is a truly democratic institution; the finest instrument for the promotion of peace and understanding between nations; and that they themselves, as exchange students, are the envoys of peace and ambassadors of goodwill. They heard speaker after speaker describe in glowing phrases the benefit to both countries, America and Germany, of a free interchange of ideas between their students.

In the face of the evidence at hand democratic American educators are deploring themselves. It takes two to make a bargain. This time the bargain seems to be German, which sends to America propagandists not students, and offers American students not education but propaganda.

Article: “Germans use Student Exchanges as Weapon in Propaganda Drive” 1937

Materials from the Western Reserve Historical Society Collections. www.wrhs.org

Western Reserve Historical Society, 10825 East Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44106
May 8, 1937

Mr. Paul Hutchinson
440 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois

My dear Mr. Hutchinson:

I am sorry that you could not be with us Monday night. The situation in Cleveland is a particularly bad one because the Nazis have evidently chosen Cleveland as a center for their propaganda activities.

The German-American Steamship Line negotiated a student exchange of High School students between the ages of 15 and 19 with one hundred Cleveland students of about the same ages. The German students arrived last Sunday and will live in the homes of the Cleveland students for six weeks. I am sending you a few clippings so that you will get an idea of the kind of publicity they are using. It is ridiculous to call this a student exchange because when the American students arrive in Germany, the schools will be in session only two days.

One of the difficulties in our situation is that the Nazi propaganda has been very smart. They play up all the time these innocent children who have come to America to learn about Democracy. That has built up a very sympathetic public attitude toward the children and quite blinded them against the real purpose of the presence of the Nazi students. For instance, there are ten leaders with the Nazi students and parties are given at which the leaders make speeches. There is plenty of evidence that it is a propaganda gesture.

I am enclosing a letter which was given out to the Nazi students when they arrived and which we are having printed and distributed through the schools.

When this exchange was first announced, we tried to organize a campaign, the aim of which was to do two things: one, to prevent the Public School Boards of Education from cooperating in the exchange, and to arouse public sentiment against the exchange. We were partially defeated in both plans. No School Board endorsed the plan in full. What they did was to discuss whether the visiting students should be received without paying fees as guests.
May 8, 1937

Mr. Paul Hutchinson
Page 2

I wish that you could carry an editorial or an article on this situation as I believe that you could render a real service in bringing to light this particular kind of propaganda. I will be glad to send you any more information needed for the article. I would rather provide information for you than write the article because I have been so involved in the situation that I am afraid the influence of my article would be weakened.

Very sincerely yours,

Director
Telegram to Bishop Francis J. McConnell signed by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, 1937

COPY OF
WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

Bishop Francis J. McConnell
361 Fourth Avenue
New York, New York

CLEVELAND SELECTED BY NAZIS FOR SCHEME OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT EXCHANGE OF ONE HUNDRED NAZI STUDENTS ARRIVED CLEVELAND SUNDAY ONE HUNDRED CLEVELAND STUDENTS RETURN WITH THEM GERMANY SMOOTH PROPAGANDA ALREADY IN PROGRESS WE ARE HOLDING MASS MEETING MAY TENTH AIMED AT REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE TEACHERS AND PUBLIC TO TALK ABOUT WAY EDUCATION HAS BEEN PROSTITUTED IN GERMANY UNDER NAZI REGIME WE NEED STRONG ARYAN SPEAKER ON EDUCATION EXPENSES AND NECESSARY HONORARIUM GUARANTEED WIRE COLLECT IF YOU CAN ACCEPT

RABBI A H SILVER

Bishop McConnell expected at this address tomorrow 5/8/37 - Please hold
TO THE VISITING NAZI STUDENTS:

It has been your rare privilege to obtain a taste of real democracy. You have been fortunate in being born in an atmosphere of complete freedom.

You have been looked upon with suspicion. Do not blame your hosts. If you think that Germany is a vast prison then read the articles in the newspapers and learn the truth.

It is your task to disprove this conception of Germany which americans have gained. You cannot do this by making denials. Nobody will believe you.

There is only one way in which you can prove to Americans that you are sincere friends. You must fight for a democratic Germany. If necessary, you must be willing to lay down your lives in the struggle for a free Germany.

Only in this way can you expect us to believe that you are friendly to our adopted land.

America's distinguished senator, William E. Borah, has said that a man cannot love Fascism and Democracy. He must hate one of them. Americans believe you hate Democracy.

False leaders and false prophets have taught you to glorify war and racial and religious intolerance. They are your enemies. They would see you murdered on foreign battlefields so that rich munitions makers can become richer. They would teach you to hate your fellow-Germans so that you will forget to fight for a free Germany.

When you return to the Fatherland, yours and ours, resolve to fight for liberty. That is the only road to personal happiness. You have tasted freedom in your short stay in this country. Freedom is a wine whose taste will remain with you.

For a Free Germany.

The Exiled Children of Germany.
STUDENT STRIKE CALLED TO PROTEST
NAZI EDUCATIONAL ATROCITIES

The League for Human Rights against Nazism,
is calling a strike of all students in the elementary schools, high schools,
colleges, and universities of Greater Cleveland next Monday, May 10th, to
protest the presence of the unwelcome Nazi propaganda students in the high
schools of Greater Cleveland, and the exploitation of these students for
Nazi propaganda in this community. Students of all ages are asked to
demonstrate for the American ideals of free education, and against the German
theory of suppression of free education, of the expulsion of teachers and
professors from their posts by the Brown Shirt tyranny, and the humiliation
and degradation of tens of thousands of innocent school children because of
their race and religion.

A Government which has destroyed freedom of thought in Germany,
turned its schools into military barracks, forced the teaching of the most
vicious racial doctrines upon its youths, persecuted its churches, and robbed
labor unionism of its rights, has had the audacity to send a legion of hand
picked youth propagandists, in charge of three Nazi ruffians, into our com-
munity to arouse Nazi sympathies, and, by their presence, to foster Nazi dem-
onstrations and meetings, and generally to serve as centers of Nazi agitation
in our midst.

The youth of Cleveland rises in protest against this unconscionable
piece of offensory. The appeal of youth cannot be employed as a camouflage
for the motive of the Nazi regime, which is to destroy every vestige of human
freedom, and is in direct contrast to all principles of democracy.

Therefore, we summon the student population of Cleveland and its
suburbs to a strike of protest and indignation. Let every student abstain
from school attendance on Monday, May 10th, 1937; and on the evening of that
day at 8:00 P.M., a mass protest meeting will be held for the striking
students and their friends at the Public Music Hall in the City of Cleveland.
There will be no admission charge and no collections made.

Do not accept your democracy placidly. Fight for its continued
existence.
February 27, 1937.

Shaker Heights Board of Education,
South Woodland and Woodbury Roads,
Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Attention: Dr. Bowers, Chairman

Gentlemen:

I have been a resident of Shaker Heights at 5526 Elmoro Road for a period of nine years. My two children are students in the Shaker School system.

This letter is written because I feel a very deep concern over the plan announced in the papers to exchange German and Shaker Heights High School students. The educational values which we cherish most, namely, (1) freedom of inquiry, (2) freedom of speech, (3) social and religious tolerance, have always been held in high regard by the Shaker School system. Our school system has always been, if not the most outstanding public school system in America, certainly among the top rank.

With that as the tradition for our schools, I cannot understand how the Board of Education could give its stamp of official approval upon the educational system of Germany, where the above three principles are completely ignored and violated, by admitting these students to our schools.

The children from the Shaker Heights Schools who are going to Germany will be subjected to the same teachings of religious hatred and bigotry as is now handed out daily to the German students in their classes. Our children are taught to fight for peace. When they go to Germany, they will be in a complete militarized atmosphere. I understand, of course, that these questions are ones for the parents of the Shaker Heights children to determine for themselves, but our Board of Education makes it possible for these children to be subjected to such influences by officially throwing our schools open to the exchange students from Germany.

I, therefore, earnestly urge the Board, at its meeting to be held this Monday, March 7th, to reconsider its decision to cooperate on this exchange of students, and I request the opportunity of being present at your meeting so that I may state my views on this situation.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) I. R. Morris