

Scientist German
Public Ambassador
Embassy
of the
Federal Republic of Germany
Washington, D.C.

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THE AMBASSADOR

Dear Rabbi Lamm:

You recently wrote me a letter in which you expressed your concern over the activities of German citizens in the armaments industry of the United Arab Republic. I would like to assure you that I not only appreciate your concern but that I, as well as my Government, share it. The Federal Government has declared in a statement on the 27th of March, 1963, that it condemns the participation of German citizens in the development and production of weapons in areas of tensions.

Before I point out the efforts which the German Government has taken in this regard, I would like to clarify several facts which have been grossly distorted and exaggerated by newspapers and other reports:

- 1) It is not true that German scientists in the UAR work on the development of nuclear, bacteriological or chemical weapons. This has been confirmed by investigations made by the German Government as well as by the American Government. They take part, however, in the development and production of jet engines for airplanes and rockets.
- 2) The number of German scientists working in the UAR has been very much exaggerated. There are hardly more than half a dozen of them; all the other Germans mentioned in this context are merely technicians and workmen.
- 3) Not only German scientists and technicians but also nationals of other countries are involved in these projects.
- 4) None of the German citizens in the UAR work there on behalf or with the acquiescence of the German Government, but they do so entirely on their own initiative. As I have already pointed out, the German Federal Government condemns their activities.

It is true, however, that a number of German scientists and technicians are working in the UAR on the development and the production of modern weapons. I agree that - after the horrible events of the 1940s - it is particularly inappropriate for Germans to participate in the production of weapons which ultimately could be used to the disadvantage of the nation of Israel. This poses the question: What could the German Government have done, and what can it now do to prevent such undesirable activities or to recall the Germans involved from the UAR?

I can assure you that this problem has been studied thoroughly by the German Government as well as by the German Parliament. You know that during the Nazi regime the German citizenship of numerous Jewish citizens was revoked and their passports withdrawn. As the new democratic Germany is firmly resolved to prevent the recurrence of such events, ironclad guarantees were included in the new Constitution prohibiting the revocation of citizenship or the withdrawal of passports, unless a Court of Justice, in due process of law, has previously found the citizen

guilty of one or several of certain crimes. This constitutionally-guaranteed right of free movement now - unfortunately - also works to the advantage of German citizens residing and working in the UAR. The German Government cannot arbitrarily deprive them of their citizenship and cannot invalidate their passports. Any attempt on the part of the Federal Government or the German Parliament to do this would without doubt be declared illegal and unconstitutional by our Supreme Court.

It may be of interest for you to know that in a similar situation the Government of the United States, too, would be powerless to force the return of one of its citizens to the United States as long as the host country permitted his stay. There is no legal possibility to force such return without the cooperation of the host government.

The same holds true for the German citizens working in the UAR. Even if the Federal Government were to revoke their citizenship and invalidate their passports - which, as was pointed out, it cannot do under our Constitution - even then the Germans concerned could not be forced to return to Germany. In all probability, they would remain in the UAR and acquire UAR citizenship.

The German Government, however, does not consider this matter settled; it is trying in other ways, particularly by persuasion, to prevail upon the German citizens in the UAR to return to Germany. It is evident that the Federal Government can and will use only legal means and that it will, under no circumstances, resort to methods used by totalitarian or communist states, such as the exertion of pressure on the family. I am convinced that you, too, would not approve of such methods.

On the other hand, I would like to draw your attention to the substantial assistance which the German people and the German Government have been able to make available to Israel, not only in economic aid, development aid and research, but also in the area of national defense. While this subject is too far-ranging to be discussed in detail in this letter, you may be assured that the assistance received by Israel from the German Government in this area is substantial and effective.

If you weigh all these arguments, then I am sure you will arrive at a just assessment of the attitude of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the legal and constitutional limitations it confronts in the matter of those of its citizens now in the UAR.

Sincerely yours,


Heinrich Knappstein