

## **THE NAZI MASTER PLAN**

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## **THE NAZI MASTER PLAN**

### **ANNEX 4: THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES<sup>1</sup>**

*Description.* This study describes, with illustrative factual evidence, Nazi purposes, policies and methods of persecuting the Christian Churches in Germany and occupied Europe.

DRAFT FOR WAR CRIMES STAFF

6 July 1945

#### **I. THE NATURE OF THE PERSECUTION**

Throughout the period of National Socialist rule, religious liberties in Germany and in the occupied areas were seriously impaired. The various Christian Churches were systematically cut off from effective communication with the people. They were confined as far as possible to the performance of narrowly religious functions, and even within this narrow sphere were subjected to as many hindrances as the Nazis dared to impose. These results were accomplished partly by legal and partly by illegal and terroristic means.

#### **II. THE PROBLEM OF ESTABLISHING CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY**

To establish criminal responsibility in connection with this persecution it is sufficient to show that measures taken against the Christian Churches were an integral part of the National Socialist scheme of world conquest. In many cases it is also possible to show that the measures in question were criminal from the standpoint of German or

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<sup>1</sup> *Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion* (2001).  
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of international law, depending on the region in which any given act was committed...<sup>2</sup>

### III. THE BASIC NATIONAL SOCIALIST ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

National Socialism by its very nature was hostile to Christianity and the Christian churches. The purpose of the National Socialist movement was to convert the German people into a homogeneous racial group united in all its energies for [the] prosecution of aggressive warfare. Innumerable indications of this fact are to be found in the speeches and writing[s] of Hitler and other responsible Nazi leaders...

Although the principal Christian Churches of Germany had long been associated with conservative ways of thought, which meant that they tended to agree with the National Socialists in their authoritarianism, in their attacks on Socialism and Communism, and in their campaign against the Versailles treaty, their doctrinal commitments could not be reconciled with the principle of racism, with a foreign policy of unlimited aggressive warfare, or with a domestic policy involving the complete subservience of Church to State. Since these are fundamental elements of the National Socialist program, conflict was inevitable.

Important leaders of the National Socialist party would have liked to meet this situation by a complete extirpation of Christianity and the substitution of a purely racial religion tailored to fit the needs of National Socialist policy. This radically anti-Christian position is most significantly presented in Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century* (one of the great best-sellers of National Socialist Germany and generally regarded, after Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, as the most authoritative statement of National Socialist ideology) and in his *To the Obscurantists of our Time (An die Dunkelmänner unserer Zeit)*. Since Rosenberg was editor in chief of the chief party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Reich Leader of Ideological Training and the possessor of other prominent positions under the National Socialist regime, his ideas are not without official significance. Thus in a declaration of 5 November 1934, Baldur von Schirach, German Youth Leader, declared in Berlin: 'Rosenberg's way is the way of the German youth.'<sup>3</sup> So far as this sector of the National Socialist party is concerned, the destruction of Christianity was explicitly recognized as a purpose of the National Socialist movement.

Considerations of expediency made it impossible, however, for the National Socialist movement to adopt this radical anti-Christian policy officially. Thus the policy actually adopted was to reduce the influence of the Christian Churches as far as possible through the use of every

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<sup>2</sup> For Germany, the writer cites *The Persecution of the Catholic Church* (1940 edn), 516-522, for the Concordat of 20 July 1933.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in *The Persecution of the Catholic Church*, 83.

available means, without provoking the difficulties of an open war of extermination. That this was an official policy can be deduced from the following record of measures actually taken for the systematic persecution of Christian churches in Germany and in German occupied areas.

#### **IV. POLICIES ADOPTED IN THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES**

The nature of the influence exercised by the Christian Churches varied considerably in the various regions under National Socialist control. Policies adopted in an attempt to counteract that influence were correspondingly varied.

##### *A. Policies Adopted in Germany Proper*

Persecution of the Christian churches in Germany proper gave rise to very special problems. Since Germany was destined to provide the central force for the coming wars of aggression, it was particularly necessary that the German people be withdrawn from all influences hostile to the National Socialist philosophy of aggression. This meant that the influence of the Christian churches would have to be minimized as thoroughly as possible. On the other hand, the predominantly conservative and patriotic influence exerted by the larger Christian churches was a factor of positive value from the National Socialist standpoint, and [e]nsured those churches a substantial measure of support from conservative groups destined to play an important part in the National Socialist plans for aggression. Persecution of the Churches in this region therefore had to be effected in such a way as to minimize their effective influence without breaking the unity of the German people, and without destroying the capacity of the churches to fulfil their historic mission of conservative social discipline. This could only be accomplished, at least in the case of the major Christian churches, by a slow and cautious policy of gradual encroachment.

In accordance with this necessity, the Nazi plan was to show first that they were no foes of the Church, that they were indeed interested in 'Positive Christianity', were very good friends of the Churches and did not at all want to interfere in religious matters or with the internal affairs of the different denominations. Then under the pretext that the Churches themselves were interfering in political and state matters, they would deprive the Churches, step by step, of all opportunity to affect German public life. The Nazis believed that the Churches could be starved and strangled spiritually in a relatively short time when they were deprived of all means of communication with the faithful beyond the Church building[s] themselves, and terrorized in such a manner that no Churchman would dare to speak out openly against Nazi policies. This general plan had been established even before the rise of the Nazis to power. It apparently came out of discussions among an

inner circle comprising Hitler himself, Rosenberg, Göring, Goebbels, Hess, Baldur von Schirach, Frick, Rust, Kerl and Schemm.<sup>4</sup> Some Nazi leaders or sympathizers, and some later collaborationists, such as von Epp, Buttman and von Papen, may have been left in ignorance of the real aim of Nazi church policy.

*The Problem of Proof.* The best evidence now available as to the existence of an anti-Church plan is to be found in the systematic nature of the persecution itself. Different steps in that persecution, such as the campaign for the suppression of denomination and youth organizations, the campaign against the denominational schools, the defamation campaign against the clergy, started on the same day in the whole area of the Reich or in large districts, and were supported by the entire regimented press, by Nazi party meetings [and] by travelling Party speakers. As to direct evidence, the directives of the Reich Propaganda Ministry, if they have not been destroyed, would be most authoritative. If they have been destroyed, questioning of Nazi newspapermen and local and regional propagandists might elicit the desired evidence. It is known that Hitler used to discuss the plans of his political action with those members of his inner circle who were especially concerned with the respective problems. Rosenberg, Göring, Goebbels, Frick, Rust, Baldur von Schirach, Kerl and Schemm are the leading Nazis who took a special interest in the relationship of State and Church.<sup>5</sup>

But even though the basic plan was uniform, the opportunities for carrying it into effect, and hence the specific policies actually adopted, differed substantially from church to church. The principal churches to be considered in this connection are the following:

1. *The Catholic Church.* National Socialist relations with the Catholic Church fall into three clearly marked periods.

a. *The Period Prior to the Seizure of Power.* During this period the relations between the Nazi Party and the Catholic Church were extremely bitter. As an opposition Party, the National Socialists had always violently attacked 'Political Catholicism' and the collaboration of the Centre Party with the Social Democrats in the Reich and Prussian governments, declaring that they could find no differences among the so-called *Systemparteien* (parties which collaborated in the system of constitutional government). On 8 March 1933, Göring in a speech at Essen summed up the Nazi attitude toward the Centre as follows: 'each time the red robber was about to steal some of the German People's properties, his black accomplices stood thieves' watch.' On their part, the German bishops, stigmatizing the Nazi movement as

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<sup>4</sup> An interesting, but undocumented, assertion [Ed.].

<sup>5</sup> See Hermann Rauschning, in his chapter on Hitler's religious attitudes in *The Voice of Destruction*, and Kurt Ludeke, *I knew Hitler*. Both witnesses, however, are to be used with caution.

anti-Christian, forbade the clergy to participate in any ceremonies, such as funerals, in which the Nazi Party was officially represented, and refused the sacraments to party officials. In several pastorals they expressly warned the faithful against the danger created to German Catholicism by the Party.<sup>6</sup>

b. *The Period from the Seizure of Power to the Signing of the Concordat.* During this period, the main concern of the new regime was to liquidate the political opposition. Their strategy was to convince conservatives that the efforts of the government were being directed primarily against the Communists and other forces of the extreme Left, and that their own interests would remain safe in Nazi hands as long as they would consent to refrain from political activity. Immediately after their rise to power, therefore, the Nazis made unmistakable overtures to the Churches, and tried to convince the Catholic hierarchy in particular that after the dissolution of the Centre Party and some Catholic organizations of more or less political character, such as the *Friedensbund deutscher Katholiken*, no obstacle could remain in the way of complete reconciliation between the Catholic church and the Nazi state. The German Catholic bishops, influenced by the experiences of their Italian colleagues, whose relations with the Fascists under the Lateran Treaty of 1929 had been fairly smooth, accepted the Nazi proposition. Pourparlers for a Reichconcordat started immediately.

Meantime the Nazi government abrogated all laws and regulations of the Republic protecting non-denominational groups of the population and abolished the right to pursue anti-religious and anti-Church propaganda. The Prussian government closed the so-called secular (*weltliche*) schools in which no religious instruction was given and re-established religious instruction in professional and vocation schools. All organizations of free-thinkers were forbidden. When the Reichstag elected on 5 March 1933 convened, the government organized religious ceremonies for the Protestant and Catholic members of Parliament.

And in his speech before the Reichstag, to which he presented his government, Hitler declared: 'while the regime is determined to carry through the political and moral purging of our public life, it is creating and ensuring the prerequisites for a really deep inner religiosity. Benefits of a personal nature, which might arise from compromises with atheistic organizations, could outweigh the results which become apparent through the destruction of general basic religious-ethical values. The national regime seeks in both Christian confessions the factors most important for the maintenance of our "folkdom". It will respect agreements concluded between them and the states. Their

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<sup>6</sup> See declarations of the German bishops on the Reichstag elections of July and Nov. 1932, quoted in the German press, especially in Catholic papers.

rights will not be infringed upon. Conversely, however, it expects and hopes that the national and ethical uplifting of our people, which the regime has taken for its task, will enjoy a similar appreciation. The national regime will concede and safeguard to the Christian confessions the influence due them, in school and education. It is concerned with the sincere cooperation of church and state. The struggle against a materialistic philosophy and for the creation of a true folk community serves the interests of the German nation as well as our Christian belief.'

Under such circumstances, the conference of German bishops, meeting as usual in Fulda, decided on 28 March 1933 to lift all restrictions imposed on members of the Church adhering to the Nazi movement. This opened the door to mass adherence to the Party of practising Catholics. The rush started immediately. All those German Catholics who were inclined to adopt Nazi political views and had hesitated only because of the anti-Nazi attitude of the hierarchy hastened now to join the victorious party of the 'national revolution'. Former members of the Centre Party's right wing, who had always advocated collaboration with the parties to the Right of the Centre and with the German nationalist movements established themselves now as so-called 'bridge-builders' trying to explain ideological affinities between the anti-liberal character of Catholic politics and the Nazi system. They insisted especially on the fact that the Church was guided like the Nazi movement by the leadership principle.<sup>7</sup> They were soon joined by turn-coats from the Left wing of the Centre and the Catholic Youth Movement, persons who insisted that the 'socialist' and anti-capitalist character of the Nazi doctrine coincided marvellously with their own views on the necessity of social reform.

In order to remind the Catholics of the danger of not coming to an agreement with the Nazi state, a certain amount of pressure was at the same time maintained against them. A thorough job was done in purging Reich, State and municipal administrations of officials appointed for their adherence to the Centre or Bavarian People's parties. Former leaders of those parties, including priests, joined Communist and Social Democrat leaders in the concentration camps, and the campaign of hatred against the 'black' was resumed. By April 1933 the bishops were making appeals for clemency toward former civil servants who, they pointed out, were not able to join the celebration of national awakening because they had been dismissed from positions in which they had given their best to the community of the German people. And on 31 May 1933 a meeting of the Bavarian bishops adopted a solemn statement directed against the tendency of attributing to the state alone the right of educating, organizing and

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<sup>7</sup> See the program of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Katholischer Deutscher. See also the declaration of Archbishop Gröber.

leading ideologically the German youth.<sup>8</sup> A few weeks later, on 18 June 1933, the breaking up in Munich by Nazi hordes of a manifestation of the Catholic Journeymen Associations (*Gesellenvereine*) became the starting point of a Nazi propaganda campaign against alleged efforts to keep 'Political Catholicism' alive.

Tension was mounting again when news that a Concordat had been signed on 8 July 1933 in Rome between the Holy See and the German Reich seemed to alter the situation completely. For the first time since the Middle Ages the Reich itself had entered into an agreement with the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, the new treaty was apparently entirely to the advantage of the Church. In return for the retreat of German Catholicism from the political scene, demonstrated by the self-dissolution of the Centre Party, and the synchronization (*Gleichschaltung*) of the Catholic press, an official guarantee was given the Church in the form of an international treaty, of all the church rights that 'Political Catholicism' had fought for: freedom for religious organizations, maintenance of denominational schools, and preservation of the general influence of the Church on the education of the German youth.

Among the 3[4] articles of the Concordat, 21 treated exclusively rights and prerogatives accorded to the Church; reciprocation consisted only in a pledge of loyalty by the clergy to the Reich government and in a promise that Catholic religious instruction would emphasize the patriotic duties of the Christian citizen and insist on a loyal attitude toward the Fatherland. Since it had always been the practice of the Catholic Church to abide by established governments and to promote patriotic convictions among the faithful, these stipulations of the Concordat were no more than legalizations of an existing custom.

The Concordat was hailed by Church and State authorities as marking the end of a period of distrust and suspicion and the beginning of close and fruitful collaboration. Hitler himself advised the State and Party officials to adopt a friendly attitude toward the Catholic Church and its institutions on German soil. He expressed the wish that Catholic organizations, now under the protection of a treaty of friendship between Nazi Germany and the Holy See, should no longer be regarded by his followers as symbols of an effort to remain outside the national community and to form a way of life apart from the official line of the totalitarian Third Reich.<sup>9</sup>

c. *The Period Following the Signature of the Concordat.* During this period, relations between the Nazi state and the Catholic Church became progressively worse. Having gained the support of the Catholic hierarchy in the crucial early days of the regime by signing the Concordat, they took advantage of their subsequently increasing

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<sup>8</sup> *The Persecution of the Catholic Church*, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Statement of 8 July 1933.

strength to violate every one of the Concordat's provisions, gradually stripping the Church of all its more important rights. Specific instances of the various phases of this persecution are presented in section V below.

By 1937 it had become clear that the Nazi state was not to be appeased by Catholic efforts to accommodate the Church and the State in the form of a Concordat, and that Hitler's government had no intention to adhere to its part of the document. Convinced, therefore, that the Church had been in error, in the face of the irreconcilability of its teachings with those of National Socialism, in abandoning its earlier opposition to the movement, the Church resumed its controversy with Nazi doctrine, while continuing to suffer from Nazi practice.

The new campaign may be considered to have been inaugurated by Pope Pius XI in his Encyclical of 14 March 1937, entitled *Mit brennender Sorge*,<sup>10</sup> which by underground means was spread by Catholic youth throughout Germany and was first published to the world in the original German text by a reading (21 March 1937) from all Roman Catholic pulpits in Germany. Pope Pius XI denounced the violation of the Concordat by the Nazi state. He described the actions of the Nazi government against the Church as 'intrigues which from the beginning had no other aim than a war of extermination... In the furrow of peace in which we had laboured to sow the seeds of true peace, others... sowed the tares of suspicion, discord, hatred, calumny, a secret and open fundamental hostility to Christ and his Church, fed from a thousand different sources and making use of every available means'.

The support of the Holy See encouraged some of the German bishops, either in courageous sermons, diocesan pastorals, or in their collective pastorals issued usually from Fulda, the seat of their annual conferences, to protest vigorously against both Nazi ideology and practice. Especially notable in this work were Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich, Bishop von Preysing of Berlin and Bishop von Galen of Münster. Among the more notable protests were the Pastoral issued from Fulda on 19 August 1938,<sup>11</sup> the Fulda Pastoral of 1941, which was read from all pulpits on 6 July 1941, the Fulda Pastoral of 22 March 1942 and the Fulda Pastoral of 19 August 1943. In spite of these protests, there is no evidence that the Nazis were in any way deterred from their campaign, in violation of the Concordat, to destroy the position and influence of the Catholic Church in Germany.

2. *The Evangelical Church.* Unlike the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Churches of Germany were organizations whose supreme administrative organs were located within the borders of Germany. Among the Evangelical clergy and laity there was also a substantial

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<sup>10</sup> English translation in *The Persecution of the Catholic Church*, 523-537.

<sup>11</sup> Substantial excerpts in English are to be found *ibid.* 30-4.



group, the more extreme members of which were known as the German Christians, who were entirely in accord with the purposes of the National Socialist government. With regard to the Evangelical churches, therefore, the policy of the National Socialists was not simply, as in the case of the Catholic Church, to limit the activities and influence of the church organization, but to capture and use the church organization for their own purposes. The attempt to accomplish this purpose falls into two main periods.

a. *The Period of German Christian Predominance.* The essential strategy of the first period of the National Socialist government was to impose highly centralized organs of administration upon the German Evangelical Church, and to place the exercise of the powers thus created in the reliable Nazi hands of German Christians. In this way it was hoped to secure the elimination of the Christian influences in the Evangelical Church by legal or by quasi-legal means.

The campaign began with a congress of German Christians, held at Berlin on 3-4 April 1933 which declared itself in favour of a united Evangelical Church organized according to the leadership principle and the tenets of the party (including anti-semitism). One of its leaders was the army chaplain, Ludwig Müller, a friend of Hitler, who on 25 April was appointed the Führer's representative 'with full powers to deal with the affairs of the Evangelical Church' in its relations with the state. Yielding to the clamour for unification, the Committee of the German Church Confederation on 23 April 1933 authorized its president, Dr Kapler, to carry through a reorganization of the constitution of the Church. After the constitution had been accepted by the Council of the Church Federation and representatives of the *Landeskirchen* it was published on 14 July 1933 by the Government of the Reich, together with a law recognizing the new German Evangelical Church as a corporation of public law. The essential purpose of this legislation, while ostensibly leaving the *Landeskirchen* independent in matters of confession and worship, was to create a central administrative organ, headed according to the leadership principle by a Reich Bishop, and vested with complete power to control administrative and legal activities of the Church.

To [e]nsure the use of this powerful new machinery for the accomplishment of Nazi purposes, it was necessary that it be placed in the hands of reliable German Christians. Typical Nazi pressures were therefore used to control the election of the first Reich Bishop. Before the election, German Christian control of the Evangelical Church in Prussia was [e]nsured by the appointment by Dr. Rust, Prussian *Kultusminister*, of a State Commissioner for Church Affairs in Prussia. This official, Dr Jäger, was a German Christian, and through his sub-commissioners for the church provinces of Prussia he took the administration of the church virtually out of its own hands. In preparing the elections for the national synod which was in turn to elect the Reich Bishop, it is said that the clergy were not allowed to

exercise their traditional right to limit the voters to active church members.

The night before the election Hitler intervened with a radio address strongly supporting the German Christians. The result was a victory for the German Christians. On 5 September their candidate Müller was elected to the entirely new office of Bishop of Prussia by a General Synod of the Protestant church of Prussia in a session dominated by a German Christian majority, and in which 75 members of the opposition who desired to protest were not allowed the floor and withdrew from the synod. On 27 September Müller was elected Reich Bishop by the National Synod, and proceeded to fill the central administration with other German Christians such as Bishop Schöffel of Hamburg, and Pastor Rossenfelder of Elberfeld, leader of the German Christians and Vice-President of the Prussian Supreme Church Council.

The new administration proceeded as rapidly as possible to use its powers for the accomplishment of the Nazi Church program. Various measures were taken to impair the freedom of the clergy, and to secure the dissolution of religious associations. In his attempt to integrate the various *Landeskirchen*, Müller was aided by Dr. Jäger, formerly State Commissioner for Church Affairs in Prussia, who in April 1934 was taken into the Spiritual Council as legal member and head of the Church Chancery. On 9 August 1934 Müller summoned a National Synod packed with Nazis to Berlin. It transferred all its powers to Müller and prescribed a form of oath for all pastors and church officials.

In spite of the formidable legal powers vested in the Reich Bishop, the attempt to control the Evangelical Church by these means failed. The Churches of Hanover, Württemberg and Bavaria, under the leadership of their respective bishops Marahrens, Wurm and Meiser, refused to yield to pressure, and were supported by a vast majority of their pastors. When Wurm and Meiser were placed under house arrest, public demonstrations occurred in their support. On 28 October 1934 a civil court declared all of Jäger's acts in Bavaria to have been illegal. Opposition finally crystallized in the so-called Confessional Church, made up the Churches of Bavaria and Württemberg and representatives of protesting Evangelical clergymen in other parts of Germany. On 29–31 May 1934 and 20 October 1934 the first and second Confessional Synods of the German Evangelical Church of Germany were held at Barmen and Dahlem respectively,<sup>12</sup> and succeeded in uniting a large part of the German Evangelical Church in protest against the doctrines and Church policies of the Reich Bishop. Obviously the attempt to make the Church a united agency for the

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<sup>12</sup> Reports of these events were kept out of the press. Details should now be available from Niemöller and other Confessional leaders.

accomplishment of Nazi purposes had failed. Thus Reich Bishop Müller, although never being forced officially to resign his position, was gradually superseded by other agencies of Nazi control, and faded from the scene.

b. *The Period of Direct Administration.* Around the middle of 1935, a new attempt was made to establish unity within the German Evangelical Church, this time by the use of Government authority rather than through the agency of the German Christians operating within the Church Government. To this end the powers of the government in Church affairs were strengthened. On 26 June 1935 a Law on the Settlement of Legal Questions Arising in the Evangelical Church deprived the Evangelical churches of their right to sue before the regular courts, and set up a special administrative court (*Beschlussstelle*) with the power of final decision in such matters. This deprived the Churches of the rights of self-administration and protection in the civil courts to which as corporations of public law they were entitled under Article 137 of the Weimar Constitution. On 16 July 1935 Hitler announced the creation of the post of a Reich Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs. One of the first acts of the new minister, Dr. Hanns Kerrl, was to transfer the *Beschlussstelle* from the Ministry of the Interior to his own jurisdiction. On 27 July 1935 he made himself president of this special court. On 24 September 1935 the organization of the ministry was further developed by a Law for the Safeguarding of the Evangelical Church, by which 'the Reich Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs is empowered, for the restoration of orderly conditions in the German Evangelical Church and the Regional Evangelical Churches, to issue ordinances with binding legal force'. On 20 March 1937 the Minister for Church Affairs delegated the administration of the Church to Dr. Werner, president of the Church Chancery of the German Evangelical Church. On 10 December 1937 the appointment was made permanent, and he was authorized to promulgate ordinances on all church matters except questions of faith and worship. Thus the exercise of control over the entire Church administration was placed in the hands of government appointees. In this way formal legal validity was given to all subsequent acts directed against the German Evangelical Churches.

The principal victims of the ensuing persecution were members of the Confessional Church. At first an attempt was made to conciliate them by the appointment on 14 October 1935 of church committees, on which friends of the Confessional Synod were represented, for the government and administration of the Churches. Although some of the protesting *Landeskirchen* were thereby reconciled, many of the Confessionals refused to accept the authority of these committees. This was met with a series of repressive measures against the Confessional Church. On 2 December 1935 the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs declared their central organs (Provisional Church Government and the Council of Brethren of the Confessional Synod)

illegal. On 2 December 1935 the authority of the Church Ministry was expressly denied by Dr. Niemöller, leader of the Confessionals.

In May 1936 the leaders of the Confessional Church addressed a memorandum to Hitler denouncing the anti-Christian acts of the government. When this was met with further acts of repression, the failure of the church committees to effect a reconciliation was admitted by Ecclesiastical Minister Kerrl in a report to Hitler. From that time onward the official attitude was that the Confessional Church was illegal, and its activities were persecuted to the point where they became almost completely ineffective. For specific instances of this persecution, see the following section.

3. *The Christian Sects.* Certain of the smaller Christian sects, especially the Jehovah's Witnesses (*Ernste Bibelforscher*) and the Pentecostal Association (*Freie Christengemeinde*) were particularly objectionable from the Nazi standpoint because of their advanced pacifist views. Since they were without important influence at home or abroad, it was possible to proceed against them more drastically than against the larger Christian Churches. Both groups were therefore declared illegal and there were times when almost no adherent of either group was outside a concentration camp. For specific instances of this persecution, see below.

#### *B. Policies Adopted in the Incorporated Areas*

In areas like Alsace-Lorraine or western Poland, and to some extent in Austria, where the Nazis were attempting to incorporate a substantial non-German population into the body of the Reich, local church organizations were feared primarily as potential centres of national resistance to German domination. The policies adopted against the Churches in these regions were therefore particularly severe, the most seriously afflicted being western Poland. A summary statement of the measures taken in these regions, together with a vigorous protest against them, is to be found in the memorial of 15 December 1942 addressed to the German Minister for the Interior and the Chief of the Chancery by the German Catholic bishops assembled at Fulda. For specific details see Section V below.

#### *C. Policies Adopted in other Occupied Areas*

In other occupied areas, which were designed to support but not take a leading part in the Nazi campaign of world conquest, the need to impose a unified Nazi philosophy was less great than in other regions. Thus there was no general motive for persecution in these areas. In regions like Slovakia, where the Churches proved generally cooperative with the occupying authorities, they were officially favoured. But in countries where the spirit of national resistance was widely supported by the local churches, the Nazis felt no compunction about persecuting them vigorously. The countries to suffer most in this respect were the General Government of Poland and occupied Norway.

For specific instances of persecution in these areas see below, Section V.

## **V. METHODS USED TO IMPLEMENT THE POLICY OF REPRESSION**

In order to implement their general policy of persecution, the National Socialists interfered at every possible stage in the activities of the Christian Churches. Sometimes they accomplished their purposes by direct intervention of the Reich or Land governments under their control or, in the case of Norway and other occupied but unincorporated areas, by intervention of a native puppet government. At other times they preferred to accomplish their purposes through the use of the SA, the Hitler Youth and other Party organizations. The principal forms of intervention were the following.

### *A. Interference with the Central Institutions of Church Government*

The easiest way to achieve rapid results in the destruction of the Christian Churches was to paralyze their central institutions, and thus deprive them of the advantages of central leadership. This was accomplished either by the direct seizure and exploitation of those institutions by Nazi or pro-Nazi personnel, or by interference with the effective operation of those institutions which could not thus be subjected to seizure and exploitation.

1. *The Direct Seizure of Central Institutions of Church Government.* This could be most easily accomplished in the case of Christian Churches which had a long tradition of dependence upon state authority. This aspect of the persecution was generally carried out through the forms of law, without the necessity for any important admixture of illegal action. The most important cases of this sort were the following:

a. *The Seizure of the German Evangelical Church.* The steps whereby legal control over the central governing institutions of the German Evangelical Church was established, first on behalf of German Christian supporters of the Nazi government, later on behalf of the Nazi government itself, are outlined above.

*THE PROBLEM OF PROOF.* The major steps in this process are a matter of legal record. The principal laws and ordinances by which the seizure was accomplished are cited above.

b. *The Seizure of the Norwegian National Church.* The Evangelical Lutheran State Church, to which 98.6% of the population adhered, was a state church established by royal decree. Church affairs were handled by the Department of Church and Education. When the Germans invaded the country and set up a Reichskommissar for the occupied Norwegian territories, they gained control over this central organization. Pro-Nazi Norwegians were placed in charge of the Department of Church and Education, subsequently replaced by the

Ministry for Culture and Enlightenment. These powers were exercised in such a way that the entire Norwegian pastorate, with insignificant exceptions, decided on Easter Sunday, 1942, to make joint resignations of their public offices and salaries, thus proclaiming their conviction that the central institutions of the state church were no longer available for the accomplishment of Christian purposes.

*THE PROBLEM OF PROOF.* Although native Norwegian collaborators played the principal role in the persecution of the Norwegian church, it is a matter of legal record that final control over and hence final responsibility for their actions rests with the German Reichskommissariat for Norway. All necessary evidence with regard to the course of the church conflict in Norway can no doubt be obtained from the Norwegian church authorities.

2. *Interference with the Normal Operation of Central Institutions of Church Government.* In the case of the Catholic and some of Protestant Churches [in Germany] the Nazis were unable to gain control of the central institutions of Church government. In these cases they tried as far as possible to prevent those central institutions from operating. The methods used were more or less drastic, depending on the circumstances.

a. *Legal Abolition of Central Institutions of Church Government.* In accord with the generally cautious policies adopted by the Nazis in their campaign for the persecution of the Christian Churches, this device was sparingly used. The principal cases are the following.

i. *Prohibition of Certain German Sects.* Under the Nazi regime the organization and activities of the *Ernste Bibelforscher* and *Freie Christengemeinde* were declared illegal. They were rigorously suppressed by the police.

*THE PROBLEM OF PROOF.* For general references, see above. The dissolution of the Jehovah's Witnesses was declared in violation of Article 1937 of the Weimar Constitution in a case decided on 26 March 1934 by the Special Court of Darmstadt. Most courts, however, upheld the decision of the government. For cases illustrating some of the ways in which members of this sect were persecuted, the following court decisions should be consulted... [4 cases cited.]

ii. *Prohibition of the Central Governing Organs of the German Confessionals.*

[Ruling of Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs declaring illegal the Provisional Church Government and the Council of Brethren of the Confessional Synod, 20 December 1935 mentioned above.]

b. *The Imposition of Financial Controls upon the Operation of Church Governments.* The principal Christian Churches of Germany had long derived their main financial support from state collected taxes. To

maintain effective control over these organizations it was therefore sufficient to deprive them of all other sources of revenue, and to impose state restrictions upon the expenditure of state collected funds. The *Sammlungsgesetz* of 5 November 1934, which placed severe restrictions on the right of churches and other organizations to solicit contributions was an important hindrance to the financial independence of all churches.

i. *Financial Control of the German Evangelical Church.* The establishment of machinery for financial control played a major part in the Nazi capture of the German Evangelical Church organization. Under earlier German law local church authorities had exercised considerable authority in determining the rate of and allocating the revenues from church taxes. On 11 March 1935 the Prussian government deprived the Prussian church of this power by setting up state controlled finance departments for the management of the finances of all Evangelical churches in Prussia. By ordinance of 25 June 1937 state controlled finance departments were set up for the German Evangelical Church and for each of the Provincial Churches, with the right to regulate the conditions of service of all officials of the general church administrations, of the pastors and of the local parish officials and employees. By an ordinance of 9 June 1937 it was provided that all church collections had to be subject to the approval of the central church authorities. Since the control of the central authorities of the German Evangelical Church was in Nazi hands this meant that all Protestant congregations, including those Confessional congregations which had been maintained by voluntary contributions, could be deprived of all financial support at the discretion of the Nazi authorities.

*THE PROBLEM OF PROOF.* The legislation by which this control was exercised is a matter of record. [A specific case is given, the financial coercion of Dahlem Parish, the pastor of which was Dr Niemöller.]

c. *Interruption of Official Communications within the Church Government.* The effective operation of any large organization depends on the maintenance of free and confidential communication between officials. This right was guaranteed for the Catholic Church in Germany by Article IV of the Concordat, which reads... Violation of this right played an important part in the total Nazi scheme for the persecution of the Christian Churches. As early as 1935 the bishops were made to realize that their correspondence and telephone calls were subject to constant surveillance by the police.<sup>13</sup>

*THE PROBLEM OF PROOF.* [Eight cases are cited, seven of which are taken from *The Persecution of the Catholic Church*, 41-2. An

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<sup>13</sup> *The Persecution of the Catholic Church*, 42. Ibid. 517, for article V of the Concordat.

additional case in the incorporated lands (Austria) is cited, with evidence *ibid.*]

*B. Interference with the Persons of the Clergy and Lay Workers.* Insofar as it was not possible or prudent to control the Churches through their central administrative apparatus, it was possible to cripple their work by intimidating or eliminating those clergymen or lay workers who were attempting to carry out church policies... This was accomplished by the following means:

1. *The Murder of Church Leaders.* In line with their generally cautious policies of Church persecution, the Nazis were somewhat sparing in the use of these means. The official Nazi policy was expressed by Robert Wagner, Gauleiter of Baden, when he said, 'the Catholic church need not imagine that we are going to create martyrs. We shall not give the church that satisfaction – she shall have, not martyrs, but criminals.'<sup>14</sup> Even within the borders of Germany proper, however, there were some instances of the murder of Church personalities, and in the incorporated areas, where the reactions of public opinion were less to be feared, the numbers of such cases was quite substantial.

a. *Cases in Germany Proper.* The cases in this category most worthy of investigation are the deaths of the Catholic leaders Klausner, Beck and Probst. They are considered in detail on pages 8–10 of the report on 'Criminal Responsibilities in Connection with the Purge of 1934', R&A No. 3113.1.<sup>15</sup>

b. *Cases in the Incorporated Areas.* The murder of large numbers of Catholic priests is reported by the Polish Ministry of Information in London as having occurred in the incorporated regions of western Poland. Since no sufficient details are given, it would be necessary to get in touch with the informed Polish authorities in order to prepare specific cases. The possibility that patriotic Polish priests may actually have been engaged in acts against the occupying authorities will somewhat complicate the problem of proving persecution in these instances.

c. *Cases in the Occupied Areas.* The murder of numbers of Catholic priests is reported by the Polish Ministry of Information in London as having occurred in the incorporated regions of western Poland. The problem of proof is the same as above.

2. *The Assaulting of Church Leaders.* In order to hamper the church leaders in carrying out their work, they were frequently subjected to actual or threatened personal violence. The SA, the SS, the Hitler Youth

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<sup>14</sup> In a speech delivered at Lörrach (Baden) in the autumn of 1935, as quoted *ibid.* 309.

<sup>15</sup> Klausner and Beck are mentioned in the 'Open Letter to Dr. Goebbels' of 1937 by 'Michael Germanicus' [= John Kraus (1890–1974) and Dr. Joseph Lechner (1893–1954) of Eichstätt], *ibid.* 324.



and other Party organizations were most frequently used in carrying out this aspect of the persecution.

a. *Cases in Germany Proper.* [A number of cases are cited, including three demonstrations organized against Bishop Sproll of Rottenburg in 1938, reported *ibid.* 254-7; that against Archbishop Klein of Paderborn: *ibid.* 252; two attacks against Bishop Bornewasser of Trier: *ibid.* 253; against Cardinal Faulhaber: *ibid.* 252, 254; *ibid.* 262 with facsimile of poster on the opposite page ('away with Faulhaber, the friend of the Jews and the agent of Moscow').]

b. *Cases in the Incorporated Areas.* [Demonstration against Cardinal Innitzer: *ibid.* 262.]

3. *Defamation of the Clergy.* In order to reduce the influence of the clergy, systematic propaganda campaigns were carried out to depict them in a favourable light. The most vigorous of these campaigns were the press campaigns in connection with the 'Currency trials' and the 'Clerical immorality trials' of 1935 and 1936, which tried to discredit the Catholic clergy as financial manipulators and moral degenerates. The Catholic church was the principal victim of these tactics...

4. *Arrest of the Clergy.* The activities of the clergy were frequently interrupted by arrest and imprisonment. Catholics and Protestants were equally affected by this form of persecution.

a. *Cases in Germany Proper.* In 1933 Dr Jäger as head of the Church Chancery had the Gestapo place Bishop Wurm of Württemberg and Bishop Meiser of Bavaria under house arrest. The latter act was held illegal by court decision... [Other cases include the arrest of Martin Niemöller, Confessional leader, on 1 July 1937, imprisonment, freedom after eight months in prison but subsequent arrest and imprisonment in a concentration camp. Other cases, including that of Fr Rupert Mayer S.J.: *The Persecution of the Catholic Church*, 68, 538-543.]...

5. *Removing Clergymen from Office.* Without being arrested, clergymen were occasionally removed from office by order of the Nazi authorities. In the case of churches whose central organs of administration were under Nazi control, this could be done by order from the higher church authorities. In other cases, alleged violations of State laws were sometimes punished in this fashion. The use of essentially ecclesiastical penalties for violation of State law would seem to be of doubtful legality.

a. *Cases Involving Protestant Clergymen.*

[Dismissal of Niemöller by the Reich Bishop from his pastorate in Dahlem on 1 March 1935. Measures against the Confessionals who prayed for peace during the Munich crisis of 1938.]

b. *Cases Involving Catholic Clergymen.*

[Expulsion of Mgr. Dr. Sproll, Bishop of Rottenburg, from his diocese in the summer of 1938 for not participating in the poll on 10 April. Two other cases: *ibid.* 44.]

C. *Interference with the Activities of the Clergy.*

When clergymen were not molested in their own person they were frequently prevented from fulfilling the normal functions of their office...

1. *Closing of Church Buildings.* This most drastic form of interference with clerical activities was used primarily in the Incorporated and Occupied territories...

2. *Interference with Freedom of Speech and Writings.* As organizations devoted to the teaching and propagation of Christianity, the Christian Churches are peculiarly dependent upon freedom of speech and writing for the accomplishment of their normal mission. When constitutional guarantees of freedom and speech and writings were suspended by the Law for the Protection of People and Reich [1933] official assurances were given that the position of the Churches would not be affected. Actual measures of repression started almost immediately. In the autumn of 1934 Dr. Frick, Minister of Education, prohibited all discussion of the Church question in the press, in pamphlets or in books. Early the next year Dr. Frick repeated this order, and Dr. Rust, the Minister of Education, ordered the professors of theology in the universities not to participate in the church dispute. On 28 October 1935 the Propaganda Ministry imposed censorship before publication on all church periodicals,<sup>16</sup> and on 30 November 1935 this was extended to all writings and picture material multigraphed for distribution. After 1937 the German Catholic Bishops gave up all attempts to print their Pastorals, and had them merely read from the pulpits. They were confirmed in this attitude by a letter from the Reich Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs who threatened any printing of Pastorals 'with confiscation by the Gestapo or complete prohibition, as well as further measures on the part of the Reich Minister for Popular Education and Propaganda'... [In the case of the Catholic Church, this contravened article IV of the Concordat.]

a. *Cases Involving the Catholic Church*

On Palm Sunday, 14 March 1937, in most of the parish churches of the Third Reich, the Papal Encyclical letter about the situation of the Catholic Church in Germany (*Mit brennender Sorge*) was read from the pulpits. Immediately the state proceeded with severe measures of retaliation. Twelve printing offices which had printed the Encyclical

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 76-77.

were closed without compensation. Parish magazines and diocesan gazettes which had copied the text were banned for three months. All the copies which the police could get hold of were seized. People who had transcribed or even circulated the text were arrested. In the village of Essen in Oldenburg seven Catholic girls who had distributed the Encyclical were taken into custody and released only because of the threatening attitude of the inhabitants...<sup>17</sup>

b. *Cases Involving the German Evangelical Church.*

In January 1935, Niemöller's memorandum 'The State Church is Here' was confiscated by the Secret Police before it could be distributed... On 4 December 1935, Dr Niemöller, Confessional leader, was forbidden to speak anywhere in the Reich... On Reformation Day, 31 October 1937, Bishop Marahrens, representing the leaders of the 'intact' *Landeskirche*, Pastor Müller of Dahlem, representing the Council of Brethren of the Confessional Church, and Dr. Breit of Munich, representing the Council of the Lutheran Churches of Germany, issued a declaration in which they protested against Rosenberg's demand that the German nation give up the Christian faith, and enquired whether the leadership of the Nazi Party intended to permit the churches to continue as places of worship, where the gospel of Christ could be preached without exposing preachers and hearers to the danger of being suspected as traitors and enemies of the state. Printed copies of this declaration were confiscated by the police. Parsonages all over Germany were searched. The printing shop of Köhler in Elberfeld, where the declaration had been printed, was closed...

On 21 February [1938] the Provisional Church Government (Confessional) issued a manifesto against the New Paganism of Alfred Rosenberg. When the Confessional pastors read this Manifesto from their pulpits, some 700 of them were arrested, 500 to be put in prison and 200 under house arrest. When the ministers continued nevertheless to read the Manifesto, fanatical Nazi governors made use of the concentration camp...

3. *Interference with the Educational Functions of the Clergy.* Clerical participation in the processes of education had been a traditionally important means for the spreading of Christian doctrines and for the maintenance of Church influence. The National Socialists were interested in securing a monopoly on education for the propagation of their own aggressive philosophy. The campaign to eliminate the clergy from the educational field was therefore a major element in the persecution of the Christian Churches. The following were the principal elements of that campaign.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 59. For other cases cited: *ibid.* 60-61.

a. *The Closing of Theological Seminaries.* As educations for the teaching of the clergy itself, the seminaries are particularly important for the continuing influence and vitality of the Christian Churches. So far as the Catholic Church is concerned, this interest was recognized in the first sentence of Article XIX of the Concordat... In spite of this, the Nazis were eager to weaken and eliminate them as far as possible. Direct evidence of the Nazi attitude toward Catholic seminaries is provided in a recently captured Gestapo document (Top-secret Survey of the Fulda Bishops Synod, circulated by Heydrich in January 1941, as published by the Supreme Headquarters, Psychological Warfare Division, Intelligence Section, Reference: DE 384/DIS 202) which gives the reduction of the educational level of the Catholic priesthood as a deliberate Nazi objective. The Nazi attitude can also be inferred from the following cases of suppression directed against Catholic and Protestant theological seminaries in all parts of Nazi-controlled Europe... [Cases include persistent harassment of the Confessing Church seminaries from December 1936; and the closure of the theological faculty of the University of Munich by Rust and Kerrl in May 1939.]<sup>18</sup>

b. *The Closing of Denominational Schools.* Private and public denominational schools under the supervision of the Churches were permitted and played a substantial part in elementary education under the Weimar Republic. So far as the Catholic Church is concerned, the right to maintain such schools was guaranteed by Article 23... , Article 24... and Article 25... of the Concordat.

Summing up the meaning of all these articles the Nazi Minister for Public Instruction, Rust, declared in July 1933 at a Party district congress in Guben: 'we have conceded the denomination school in a Concordat. What we have promised that we shall observe.' Two years later the same minister declared (June 1937): 'the exercise of denominational influences in the education of the young is from now on, and for all time, impossible. From that it follows as a consequence that denominational distinctions between German schools should be brought to an end as soon as possible.'<sup>19</sup> This purpose was implemented by a systematic and protracted campaign, combining legal and illegal pressures.

Early in 1935 a sort of trial attack on the Catholic schools was staged in Munich with the result that at the beginning of school on 13 February only 65 per cent of the children (as against 84 per cent in 1934) were entered for denominational schools. Meeting of Catholic parents were forbidden.<sup>20</sup> Violent propaganda was immediately launched throughout the Reich. In some districts, such as the dioceses of Hildesheim and Paderborn, the authorities even dared to convert

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 119.

denominational schools into National Community Schools by decree and without consulting the parents.

The main assault, however, started in 1936. Attacks were concentrated against the many schools which were directed by religious orders, especially in the field of secondary education. The Catholic orders and congregations had altogether 12 secondary schools for boys and 188 for girls.<sup>21</sup> Sixty-four per cent of the Catholic girls attending secondary schools were studying at private Catholic institutions. Gradually these schools were eliminated. Nazis authorities exerted strong pressure on the Reich, state and municipal officials to send their children only to public schools.<sup>22</sup>

The main base from which pupils for the private schools were recruited was thus removed. It was further decided that the so-called preparatory classes would be suppressed.<sup>23</sup> Most private schools had derived the majority of their pupils from the preparatory classes of Catholic convent schools. Finally, the lower classes of the Catholic secondary schools were suppressed, a death sentence for the schools themselves.<sup>24</sup> In 1939 the Bavarian Ministry of Public Instruction forbade the clergy to exercise any function or activity in secondary schools.<sup>25</sup> In the official Gazette of the Reich Ministry of Education, early in 1937, a notice was published stating: 'in about 400 public elementary schools for girls the instruction of the pupils was confined to the Catholic religious orders or congregations of women. The dispersal of such teachers is provided for in the by-law of 16 November 1936 to the School Provision Law. Of about 1,600 teaching posts occupied by members of religious orders at the beginning of this year, 300 have already been made over to lay teachers. The remaining posts are to be vacated in the course of this year, so that the entire elimination of teachers belonging to religious orders is in prospect.'<sup>26</sup>

On 19 July 1930 the Ministry of Interior in Vienna deprived all the private schools in Austria of public recognition and rights.<sup>27</sup> The final closing of these schools followed almost immediately. Such famous institutions as the Schottengymnasium in Vienna, directed since the 13<sup>th</sup> century by members of the Benedictine Order and Stella Matutina, the Jesuit College in Feldkirch, were among those eliminated. By a decree issued in the summer of 1939, by the Minister of Education, all

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 130.

<sup>22</sup> Ordinance of the Reichministry of the Interior, September 1937 quoted *ibid.* 131.

<sup>23</sup> Decree of the Minister of Education, 4 April 1936.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 130-131.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 132.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 135.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Catholic private schools, including mission schools, had to be closed down by 1 April 1940.

Meanwhile, the actual conversion of the denominational primary schools was carried out, either by means of the so-called 'parents' vote' or by means of official ordinances. Controlling the parents' elections the Nazis converted most of the denominational schools in Bavaria, Württemberg and the districts of Trier and the Saar territory into National Community schools. Although they succeeded by propaganda and pressure in collecting vast majorities, they usually met with determined minorities among the parents and finally with private polls conducted among the faithful by Church authorities, which brought large majorities in favour of the maintenance of denominational schools.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore in 1938 and 1939, the Nazis fell back on the decree as a means of converting denominational schools into National Community schools. They started in the smaller states like Oldenburg and in rural communities and finally extended over the whole of Greater Germany. At the time of the outbreak of the war, the abolition of the Catholic denominational schools was complete.<sup>29</sup>

*c. Elimination of Religious Instruction from Other Schools.* A certain amount of religious instruction was provided, for those who wished it, in the public schools of Germany under the Weimar Republic. The continuance of this system was guaranteed, so far as the Catholic Church is concerned, by Article 21... and Article 22... of the Concordat. In spite of this guarantee, steps were taken to eliminate instruction of this sort as rapidly as possible. The purpose of the Nazis was indicated on 14 June 1939 in a statement by Bauer, Munich city school inspector, who declared: 'religious instruction must disappear from the schools. We make our demand: instruction in the German faith by German teachers in German schools. The man who is tied to the dogma of the Churches need look for nothing from us in the future.'<sup>30</sup>

Implementation of this objective started with the curtailment of religious instruction in the primary and secondary schools, with the squeezing of the religious periods into inconvenient hours, with Nazi propaganda among the teachers in order to induce them to refuse the teaching of religion, with vetoing of Catholic religious textbooks, and finally with substituting Nazi *Weltanschauung* and 'German Faith' for Christian religious denominational instructions.<sup>31</sup> The name 'religious instruction' was maintained, but its aims were completely altered. At

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 156.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 158-9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 164.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 163-186.

the time of the outbreak of war denominational religious instruction had practically disappeared from Germany's primary schools.

#### *D. Interference with Christian Organizations.*

Much of the work of the Christian Churches ha[d] been done through organizations existing along[side] the regular ecclesiastical hierarchy. Dissolution of the political organizations favoured by the Churches, such as the Catholic-dominated Centre and Bavarian People's parties was demanded from the outset by the Nazi regime as part of its general policy of eliminating all political organizations other than the Nazi party. The right of other Church organizations to exist and operate was guaranteed, however, so far as the Catholic Church [wa]s concerned, by Article 31 of the Concordat... The significance of this enactment was underlined on 7 July 1933 in a statement by Adolf Hitler himself: 'the conclusion of the Concordat between the Holy See and the German Government appears to me to give sufficient guarantee that the Roman Catholic citizens of the Reich from now on put themselves wholeheartedly at the service of the new National Socialist State. I therefore decree: 1) the dissolution, carried out without directions from the Central Government, of such Catholic organizations as are recognized by the present treaty, is to be cancelled immediately. 2) All measures taken against clerical and other leaders of these Catholic organizations are to be annulled. Any repetition of such measures will in future be unlawful and will be punished through the normal legal procedure.' In spite of these assurances, attempts to cripple or suppress the activities of Church organizations, both Catholic and Protestant, quickly began. Thus after the occupation of Austria all Catholic associations there were dissolved. In Germany proper similar results were produced, though more gradually. The organizations particularly affected were the following:

1. *Religious Orders.* The position of religious orders was specifically guaranteed by Article 15 Section 1 of the Concordat... [and] Article 13... There are many cases in which these guarantees were violated. [Case concerning the Jesuits in Bavaria: *ibid.* 64; and other cases.]

2. *The Youth Movement.* One of the principal means whereby the various Christian Churches exerted influence over the youth of Germany was through the activities of the various Christian youth organizations. As rivals to the Hitler Jugend they were particularly obnoxious to the National Socialist authorities, who sought to abolish them completely. On 17 December 1933 this was effectively accomplished so far as the Protestant Church was concerned by the order of Reich Bishop Müller, who placed the entire Evangelical Youth Movement, with more than 700,000 members, under the leadership of Baldur von Schirach, leader of the Hitler Youth. Although the Catholic Youth movement was protected by Article 31 of the Concordat, the campaign for its destruction was rapidly begun. As early as January

1934 the staff leader of the Hitler Youth, Lauterbacher, declared in Koblenz: 'the Hitler Youth will not compromise but will go on its own way, which must necessarily lead to the destruction of all other youth organizations.'<sup>32</sup> On 27 March 1934 the Reich Youth Leader, Baldur von Schirach, declared: 'the incorporation of the Protestant Youth associations will some time or other be followed, and necessarily followed, by that of the Catholic Youth. At a time when all are abandoning their private interests, Catholic youth no longer has any right to lead a separate existence.'<sup>33</sup>

These declarations heralded a difficult period for the Catholic Youth Associations, which tried with all means of diplomacy and endurance to retain their rights as guaranteed by the Concordat, confirmed in the decree of Hitler, and now curtailed almost daily through new restrictions and persecutions. A decree of Schirach forbade on 30 July 1933 simultaneous membership in the Hitler Youth and in denominational youth organizations.<sup>34</sup> Two years later all activity which was not of [a] purely ecclesiastical or religious nature was forbidden to denominational youth associations. Every method of propaganda and coercion was employed in order to bring all German youngsters into the Hitler Youth and to prevent them from joining denominational organizations. Finally the Catholic Youth Associations were simply forbidden in entire districts of the Reich.<sup>35</sup> Physical terrorization did the rest. The number of incidents increased rapidly and the police and courts were always on the side of the Hitler Youth.<sup>36</sup> By 1938, in almost all districts of the Reich, the Catholic Youth Associations had been dissolved.

3. *Other Church Organizations.* Like the youth organizations, those of a professional character for adults, such as the Catholic Workers Associations and the Catholic Journeymen Associations, were the first to be put under almost unbearable pressure. [On 28 April 1934] Dr. Ley, head of the German Labour Front, forbade simultaneous membership in the Labour Front and in denominational professional organizations, which was tantamount to the loss of one's job.<sup>37</sup> After some years of desperate struggle, these Catholic organizations too were forbidden, district by district. Numerous other Catholic organizations ended by self-dissolution, e.g. the Catholic Teachers' Organization, the Catholic student fraternities and the organizations of their alumni. Others shared the fate of the youth and workers organizations. Among these were the Association of Catholic Women Teachers, the Catholic Civil Servants Union, the Albertus Magnus Union

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 89.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 108-9.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 91-108.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 188-9 for the regulation and more generally *ibid.* 187-199.



for the Support of Catholic Students and the Christian Union of German Railwaymen.

## **VI. ORGANIZATIONS BEARING PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY IN CONNECTION WITH THE PERSECUTIONS**

As a necessary step in preparation for the National Socialist scheme of world conquest, the persecution of the Christian Churches becomes part of the responsibility of all those who participated in that scheme. Responsibility for specific criminal acts can be assigned to certain individuals and groups in connection with the specific acts of persecution described in the preceding section. There are also certain groups, which, because of their central position in the planning and execution of Nazi Church policies, may be ascribed a more general responsibility for the persecution as a whole. The more important of these groups are the following.

### *A. The Reich Bishop and Spiritual Council of the German Evangelical Church.*

Prior to the creation of the Reich Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs on 19 July 1935, the Reich Bishop, Ludwig Müller and his chosen collaborators on the Spiritual Council (Forsthoff of Koblenz, Engelke of Hamburg and Otto Weber of Göttingen) played the principal part in the persecution of German Protestantism. The sweeping nature of their powers and responsibilities is set forth in the legislation cited above. The illegality of measures taken by their authority in Bavaria was attested by a civil court decision of 28 October 1934.

### *B. The Reich Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs.*

From the time of its creation on 19 July 1935, this Ministry was the principal agency for the persecution of the German Evangelical Church. From 1935 to 1941 the position of Reichsminister was held by Hanns Kerrl. Thereafter Muhs headed the ministry as acting minister. The sweeping nature of its powers and responsibilities is set forth in the legislation cited above. Through the *Beschlussstelle*, transferred to it from the Reich Ministry of the Interior on 27 July 1935, it exercised supreme judicial power over the Churches, and thus prevented any test of the legality of its actions being taken before the ordinary courts. Although relatively little concerned with the management of Catholic affairs, the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs was officially associated with a number of acts in violation of the Concordat. Its responsibility for persecution in the annexed areas was the subject of a memorial of protest addressed to it, and other authorities, by the Catholic bishops at Fulda on 27 July 1935.

### *C. The Church Chancery of the German Evangelical Church.*

As chief legal and administrative department of the German Evangelical Church, the Church Chancery played a leading part both in

the earlier and in the later phases of the persecution of the German Evangelical Churches. In 1934 Dr Jäger, as head of the Church Chancery, was a principal collaborator of Reich Bishop Müller, and gave orders for the acts of persecution in Bavaria subsequently declared illegal. On 20 March 1937 the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs delegated its powers of administration over the Evangelical Church to Dr. Werner, president of the Church Chancery. This delegation was made permanent on 10 December 1937. On 8 March 1938 all the provincial churches were forbidden by Werner to make any regulations except in matters of faith without his consent. Clearly this was one of the principal agencies of National Socialist control over the German Evangelical Church.

#### *D. Finance Departments of the German Evangelical Church.*

By ordinances of 10 and 29 June 1937, state controlled finance departments were set up for the German Evangelical Church and for each of the Provincial Churches, with full power to make regulations with force of law concerning the condition of service of all officials of the general Church administrations, pastors and other Church officials. These departments were responsible to the Ministry of Church Affairs, and were its principal agency in the maintenance of financial controls over the German Evangelical Church. The chairmanship of the Financial Department of the Chancery of the German Evangelical Church was held first by Dr. Werner, later by Dr. Coelle.

#### *E. Reich Education Ministry.*

Principal agency for measures against the Protestant and Catholic churches in the field of education.

#### *F. Reich Propaganda Ministry.*

As chief agency for the control of Nazi propaganda, it bears chief responsibility for the systematic campaign of defamation waged against the German clergy. It was also the direct agency for the issuance of certain orders for the censorship of Church publications. Sections or persons particularly responsible for carrying out this phase of the work of the Ministry cannot be determined here.

#### *G. Reich Ministry of the Interior.*

Prior to the creation of the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior was the principal agency for direct government action in Church affairs. Certain orders curtailing freedom of discussion were directly issued by it during this period. From 26 June to 27 July 1935 the *Beschlussstelle* was located in this ministry. Since the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs had no executive agents of its own, its orders were carried out primarily through the police forces controlled by the Reich Ministry of the Interior, or by its dependent

organs, the Ministries of the Interior of the several Länder. Among the ministries most compromised in this connection were those of Bavaria, Württemberg and, in the period following the Anschluss, of Austria. Sections or persons particularly responsible for carrying out this phase of the work of the several Ministries cannot be determined here.

#### H. *The Gestapo.*

Among the police forces at the disposal of the various ministries of the interior for the carrying out of acts of persecution, the political police were naturally, in view of the political nature of the issue, the favourite agents. Evidence of their use is to be found throughout the specific instances of persecution presented in Section V above. Sections or persons particularly responsible for this phase of Gestapo activities cannot be determined here.

#### J. [*sic*] *The German Christians.*

The important part played by this group, particularly in the earlier phases of the persecution of the German Evangelical Church is set forth above. The head of the association of 'German Christians' to 1938 was Dr. Rehm. Since 1938 the name has been changed to 'Luther Christians', and the headship was assumed by Dr. Petersmann.

#### K. *The SS, SA and the Hitler Youth.*

Acts of intimidation and violence taken against the clergy and laity, insofar as they were not entrusted to the police itself, were largely left in the hands of these organizations. Instances in which the planned nature of these demonstrations can best be shown are presented above. The Hitler Youth was also particularly active in the breaking up of the Church youth movements, and in the work of anti-Church indoctrination of German young people.<sup>38</sup> Sections or persons particularly responsible for this phase of their activities cannot be determined here.

#### L. *The German Occupation Authorities in Norway and Poland.*

Evidence presented above in Section V shows that these were the occupied regions in which the persecution of the Christian Churches was most severe. Sections or persons of the occupation regimes which were particularly responsible for this phase of their work cannot be determined here.

Among the List of Chief Witnesses at p. 92: Karl Spiecker, former Ministerialdirektor, former chief of the Reich Press service, author of the book *Hitler gegen Christus* (Paris, 1937 sv. Miles Ecclesiae), probable author of the book *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in*

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. the speech of Baldur von Schirach at Berlin on 5 Nov. 1934: 'the way of Rosenberg is the way for the German youth'. Quoted *ibid.* 83, 86-7 [Ed.].

*the Third Reich* (London, 1940),<sup>39</sup> former director of the weekly press bulletin *Kulturkampf*, published in Paris 193[6] to 1939; now residing in London, scheduled to go to Germany by the British authorities.

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<sup>39</sup> It is now known that this supposition was incorrect: see introduction [Ed.].