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Re: von Papen

The most intimate friend of von Papen whom I know is Baron von Lersner, a man of appr. 70 years of age. He entered the diplomatic service before the first World War, was representative of the Foreign Office at the Kaiser's General Headquarters during the war and head of the German Delegation at Versailles after Count Rantzau's withdrawal. He then served several years in the Reichstag and was an intimate collaborator of von Papen during his Chancellorship. At Hitler's and von Papen's request he negotiated on the Saar question with the French Government and reached an understanding with Barthou about the plebiscit, if I remember correctly. This was his last diplomatic activity as he told me because he disagreed with Hitler on the policy towards France with which country he recommended close cooperation.

When von Papen went to Turkey as Ambassador he had Baron Lersner made President of the German Orient Society and let him take his residence at Istanbul. He used him for unofficial contacts which he himself was not able to entertain as Ambassador among Turks as well as foreigners. Lersner was, in constant touch with Monsignore Roncalli,

the Papal Delegate at Istanbul. As he told me personally he stood ready for negotiations for peace for which opportunities might arise in which, however, von Papen as Ambassador might not be able, immediately to take a hand. When von Papen returned to Germany in August 1944 after the severance of diplomatic relations with Turkey he arranged for Baron Lersner not to leave the country together with the other Germans but to stay there in the capacity of possible contact-man and - avoiding discussion with von Ribbentrop on this subject - asked and received Hitler's consent for this arrangement. This I have been told by von Papen's secretary, Miss Rose, if I remember correctly, who has been with von Papen for the last 10 years.

Von Papen did not talk to me about events of the past to any considerable extent. The only member of the Embassy staff to whom he did occasionally talk more extensively was Dr. Allardt, now at Camp Gardeland near Neumuenster, Schleswig-Holstein.

Von Papen favored all contacts with the American and English side. When it was reported that General Donovan would visit Turkey he told me that I should seek to see him. In March 1943 the Turkish Foreign Minister Numan

Menemendoglu advised him that Monsignore Spellman, the Archbishop of New York, would travel in the Near East and would be glad to see von Papen as somebody near to him. Von Papen suggested me to the Foreign Office as partner of such a conversation, but von Ribbentrop declined to consent.

About the same time I heard that among American newspapermen it was said to be impossible to cultivate any contact with the Germans because the German press vilified every American name, living or dead; but that there must surely be some historical name to which no objection could be made. Von Papen took this up immediately and said in his Memorial Day Address: "We bow to names like Washington and Lincoln and to the wisdom of Monroe; but what he claimed for the American Continent, we would claim for Europe." This last sentence was phrased to allay suspicions at the Foreign Office. But all the same the speech was not well received at the Foreign Office. Von Papen took care to have it as widely distributed in the United States as would be arranged from Ankara.

It was quite apparent that von Papen did not at all agree with the policy of von Ribbentrop and the correspondence with him is said to have been very unfriendly. Von Ribben-

trop attached his brother-in-law, Mr. Jenke, to the Embassy in the office of the Commercial Attache and later promoted him to be Councillor of the Embassy and Charge d'Affaires in the absence of von Papen.

The Gestapo had the Attache Mr. Moyzisch as its representative at the Embassy. Himmler and his organisation took exception to Mr. and Mrs. von Papen's being devout Catholics. They regularly attended mass at the chapel of the Italian Embassy and did not even cease to do so when relations with Italy had been broken off. If I remember correctly, von Papen and Himmler did not see each other between 1934 and 1943. Then Moyzisch arranged a meeting which, however, was only casual in character, but based on the community of opinion that von Ribbentrop's foreign policy was ruinous for Germany.

I remember von Papen telling on his return from headquarters in April 1943 that he had mentioned to Hitler that Frederick the Great had no more territory after the end of the Seven Years War than at its beginning, thus indicating that after Stalingrad there was no choice left but to end the war by a peace of compromise. He also told Hitler in 1939 that in case of a war with Poland France and England would certainly step in and against Hitler's

order he went to his country seat on the French frontier and brought part of his possessions back to safety.

It was my impression that Hitler allowed von Papen a special position and protected him against the Party and the SS, reserving him for eventual peace negotiations. I doubt whether he really took him into his confidence and familiarised him with his plans.

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