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25 October 1945

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Relationship of the German Churches to Hitler.

To : General Donovan.

1.) Introductory Note:

Besides small sects there were and there are only two Christian Churches of importance in Germany, the Protestant and the Catholic church. The Catholic Church was politically represented by the Center-Party (Zentrumspartei), the Bavarian People's Party (Bayerische Volkspartei) and the Christian Trade-Unions (Christliche Gewerkschaften). Since these three groups stood in opposition to Hitler from the beginning, the Catholic Church before 1933 found itself in quite an obvious enmity towards the Nazis. As for the Protestant church, this was not true in the extent it was in the Catholic church. Because there are no politics in the Protestant church. Therefore it may be said that before 1933 there was no relationship, either of a friendly or of an enemy nature, between Hitler on one hand and the two churches on the other hand.

2.) Relationship of the Catholic Church with Hitler since 1933:

Immediately after Hitler had seized the power, National Socialism showed itself as an ideology plainly opposed to Christianity. Only a minority among the princes of the Catholic Church like for example Bishop Berning from Osnabrück and later Cardinal Innitzer from Vienna tried to show a friendly attitude towards Hitler. The majority of the princes of the Catholic Church left no doubt in their declarations and pastoral letters that there was no bridge between Naziism and the Catholic Church. As the years went by, the attitude of the Catholic Church became ever clearer. The rejection of Hitler became more and more obvious. Because of the hierarchic organizations of the Catholic Church, the denunciation of Hitler was propagated by the majority of the Catholic clergy in the land. The result of this was that the enmity towards Hitler was promulgated not only by the high clerics but was also carried to the masses by the low clerics. This decisive credit for this attitude ought to be given to Cardinal von Faulhaber from Munich and whose personal sermons branded Naziism as the enemy of Christendom. Both princes of the church did not shun the gravest danger but managed to voice their opposition to Hitler in such a way so clever that the Gestapo had no opportunity to silence them. By their example, these two dignitaries of the Church have swept along with them those groups within the Catholic Church which still hesitated. On the other hand quite a number of the lower clerics ended up in prison or in a concentration camp. Also in the political resistance movement did the representatives of the Catholic Church play an important role. Here the pater of the Jesuites Delp ought to be mentioned before all others; he participated in the conspiracy that led to the 20th July. Later on Delp was executed by the Gestapo. A particularly important part in the struggle of the resistance movement against Hitler played the lawyer Joseph Müller who lives in Munich, Gedonstrasse 4. He had been the political representative of the Archdiocese Munich. At the beginning of the

war, Joseph Müller became a Captain in the CI-section under Admiral Canaris. In this function Joseph Müller was to influence the attitude of the dignitaries of the Catholic Church against Hitler and also to negotiate with the Vatican. The aim of these negotiations was to find out thru the Vatican under what conditions a Germany liberated from Hitler could make peace. On the part of the Vatican the negotiations were conducted by the personal secretary of Pope Pius XII, Padre Leiber. In the course of years, the negotiations were exceeded also to the diplomatic representatives at the Vatican, the powers at war with Germany. In this the English representative Osborn played a major part. The negotiations were recorded in writing. The documents were finally assembled by Admiral Canaris. Later, a part of them was discovered by the Gestapo. The result was that Canaris and his collaborators were hanged. Joseph Müller escaped by luck. He is the only person who possesses detailed information on the complex of these questions. At the same time Joseph Müller had orders from the Catholic Church to negotiate with representatives of the Protestant Church in order to harmonize their measures in the struggle against Hitler.

3.) Relationship of the Catholic Church with Hitler since 1933:

The Protestant Church in Germany does not have hierarchic but a democratic constitution. Apart from that, it is constituted by 28 provincial churches. Therefore it did not have the congeniality and strictness of the Catholic Church. That is why the struggle of the Protestant Church against Hitler became much more difficult. If it was the clerics that bore the brunt of the struggle within the Catholic Church it was the congregation which became the nest of resistance within the Protestant Church. The man who was the first to see Hitler as what he was, and thru whose example large sections of the Protestant church were incited, is without doubt pastor Martin Niemöller. Many Protestant ministers supported him in this struggle. Here are to be named: Pastor Asmussen, pastor Grüber, General Superintendent Dibelius, Bishop Wurm. All these men had taken up the fight against Hitler in speeches and in writings. But the majority of them was silenced by being put into the concentration camp or by being prohibited to speak or write. That did not prevent their followers from continuing the struggle. Bishop Wurm, in a memorandum to Minister Frick opposed the killings of the insane, ordered by Hitler. In spite of all prohibitions the Protestant Church under the leadership of Pastor Grüber in Berlin created an organization which helped to save the life of thousands of Jews. Initial in this action was Assessor Perels, Justiziar of the Confessional Church entered the political struggle more and more. In this the following personalities played an important role: Pastor Dietrich Bonhöffer, Konsistorialrat Gerstenmeier, Pastor Schönfeld, Pastor Freudenberg, Pastor Bethge, Pastor Lilje and others. While in the Catholic camp Joseph Müller kept up the contact with politics, Dietrich Bonhöffer played the same role in the Protestant camp. They cooperated with Joseph Müller. This way the struggle of the Catholic and of the Protestant Church were coordinated. Dietrich Bonhöffer also entered into the services of the CI-section under Admiral Canaris. Bonhöffer undertook many trips to Switzerland and to the Skandinavian countries. This way he contacted the Protestant churches in Europe outside of Germany, informed them about the events in Germany and so created a common bond between resistance

movements in Germany and Hitler's enemies outside of Germany. By this Bonhöffer became an important figure in the preparations for the Coup d'Etat of 20 July 1944. He was later executed. Dr. George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, possesses information on all the details of their work. 1st Lt. Steltzer worked in the same direction. He held contact with the Norwegian bishop Berggrave, who can certify as to the correctness of this statement.

4.) Conclusion.

The resistance movement of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany has covered the following:

A. The Churches have furnished the political resistance movement with spiritual and religious weapons.

B. The Churches have carried the idea of the resistance against Hitler into the large masses of the people. Many ministers of both churches have become martyrs because of their resistance.

C. The Churches, thru their connections with foreign countries, have informed the world of the events that took place in Germany and have constantly kept contact with non-German resistance-groups.

v. Schlabrendorff

VS/jes