

Some months ago **Cardinal Francis George**, Archbishop of Chicago and a past Parade Marshall of the Von Steuben Day Parade, commented, "I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison, and his successor will die a martyr in the public square." Some time before that, the Catholic Church in Illinois, the largest provider of adoption services in the state, closed all of their adoption facilities rather than allow same sex couples to adopt children in their care. The archdiocese is also suing the federal government over the Health and Human Services mandate that Catholic institutions provide their employees with contraceptive and "morning after" abortifacient pills in violation of Catholic teaching and the free exercise of religion clause contained in the Bill of Rights of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. George related that the HHS mandate will fine the Church \$500,000 a day for non compliance, and further stated that the Church will close down every Catholic hospital in the US (1/4 of all hospitals) rather than comply. Is History repeating itself? First Soviet Russia, then Nazi Germany, later Communist China. . . Is increasingly secular America now becoming the most recent domain of the godless???

Continued from Nov/Dec 2012

Ideological Standoff

Within days of Hitler coming to power in late February, 1933, the Nazis quickly dispatched their primary political threat, the Communists (Jewish Bolsheviks), to the concentration camps. Outspoken Christian clergymen were also soon targeted for much remained to be done, especially in regards to integrating Nazi racial doctrine into German law. Christian morality remained as the Nazis foremost ideological obstacle in furthering Hitler's gospel of German racial superiority. The problem was not only that the vast majority of Germans were, in fact, Christians, but that Christianity holds that all men regardless of race or creed are born in the image and likeness of God and are therefore entitled to the respect and dignity of their fellow man as commanded by their Creator, God. Thus the Christian conscience of the German people would have to be substantially marginalized, if not destroyed, in order for them to accept the necessity of ridding Germany of the "untermenschen" (sub humans) in their midst: the "useless eaters" such as the senile, mentally ill, the physically debilitated, the non arians such as the Jews and the Gypsies, who were considered parasites on German energy, and the sterile homosexuals who weren't able to procreate for the Fatherland. As the Nazis ascended in popularity, however, Rupert Mayer did not

Speaking Truth to Power!

Rupert Mayer,

The Apostle of Munich

Part II



hesitate to take increasingly courageous stands against their ideology whether from the pulpit, the street or other public forums. Mayer recognized,

Hitler is a great speaker and is very popular, but he stirs up the people by distorting the truth. . . I'm going to tell you, here and now and unequivocally, that no German Catholic can ever be a National Socialist. When the rights of God are defied and interfered with, we have an obligation to defend them even if it entails fighting. There can be no peace where the things of God are trampled underfoot.

"The Cross must vanish from Germany"

Alfred Rosenberg, Reich Minister of Ideology

In July of 1933 Hitler quickly signed a "Concordat" with the Vatican supposedly guaranteeing the Catholic Church full freedom in its faith, property and organizations in return for the Church's adherence to the Reich and its constitution. "In secret he told his confidant Hermann Rauschning: The parsons will be made to dig their own graves. They will betray their God to us. They will betray anything for the sake of their miserable little jobs and incomes. . . I can guarantee that they will replace the cross with our swastika." (*Time Magazine*, 23 December 1940). Not Rupert Mayer nor

countless other clergymen and lay Christians of other denominations who refused to rollover and play possum for the Nazi Leviathan. Often overlooked in the histories of Nazi Germany is this reign of terror the Nazis waged against Christianity during the '30s. Not only Catholics but Evangelicals (Lutherans) and other denominational

Christians were persecuted when refusing to conform their consciences to the dictates of the Nazi state. When Evangelical Pastor Martin Niemöller proclaimed, "Not you, Herr Hitler, but God is my Führer!" Hitler replied, "It is Niemöller or I!" *As Time magazine reported (23 Dec 1940):*

More than 80 percent of the prisoners in the concentration camps are not Jews but Christians. And the best tribute to the spirit of Germany's

Christians comes from a Jew and agnostic, the world's most famous scientist, Albert Einstein. Says he,

"Being a lover of freedom, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no the universities immediately were silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks. . . . Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly."

Nazi Inquisition to suppress Free Speech

To be sure, most Germans were neither ardent Nazis nor ardent Christians but merely content or intimidated to go along with the status quo. That Hitler had the economy moving again, people were back to work, and some semblance of political order had been restored was reason enough for most Germans to get swept up by the Nazi propaganda. Indeed, just as the Jews were excluded from German society on racial grounds, a somewhat more subtle terror would attempt to eradicate any trace of a Christian conscience in almost every aspect of German life itself. This proceeded under the guise of forbidding any semblance of "political Christianity" to interfere with the demands of the Nazi state. Not only did it begin with the arrest and imprisonment of thousands of Catholic priests and Protestant ministers for "encroachments in the political sphere," meaning those clergy who used the pulpit to defend Christian truth

against Nazi slander. Often denounced to the Gestapo by sympathetic Nazis or paid informants sitting in their own churches, many of these clergymen vanished without a trace, being secretly murdered and buried, their remains unknown even to this day, while others were sent to concentration camps such as Dachau, 2,270 priests, lay brothers and seminarians, as well as ministers of various other religious denominations were interned in Dachau alone. Of these 1,034 were martyred

for their faith after either being beaten to death, summarily shot or succumbing to disease brought on by inhumane labor and unsanitary camp conditions. (*Christ in Dachau*, Rev. John Lenz, 1968) Over 10,000 pastors, priests and monks were jailed for shorter and less severe sentences.

The Christian press and Christian schools were shut down because they disseminated "subversive propaganda"

Gestapo file on Rupert Mayer, Bundesarchive

against the Reich, meaning Christian teaching was found incompatible with Nazi racial doctrine. Decrees in 1936 authorized the removal of the Crucifix in Catholic schools. Employment applications probed prospective job applicants' religious beliefs along the same ideological lines. Those employed in the public sector were pressured to join the Nazi Party or apostatize by renouncing their Christian beliefs if they wanted to keep their jobs. Those unwilling to compromise their Christian consciences when called upon, in essence, became "enemies of the Reich." Those unable to conform their consciences to Nazi ideology were to be simply atomized as citizens. (*The Persecution of the Catholic Church in the Third Reich, Facts and Documents* translated from German, Roger A. McCaffrey Publishing, 1941)

No Prayers for Nazi Victory

Though in 1939 the Nazis closed down over 700 monasteries and convents, they also knew that somebody was going to have to fight Hitler's upcoming war, just to make good on the *Führer's* promises. As the Nazis could not fight the war alone, the "Final solution" to the "Christian Question" would have to wait until the war was most surely won. While the Nazis, themselves, did not believe in God, what especially rankled them was the



refusal of almost all the Christian churches to pray for Nazi victory. As noted by the above *Time* article, The Gestapo can silence all open attacks from the pulpit, can imprison all outspoken pastors and forbid bishops to write pastoral letters, but it cannot make them pray for Nazi success. That situation is unparalleled in a nation at war. . . . In Cologne the Nazis were able to get Catholic churches to pray not for victory but 'for our soldiers'. . . . In Muenster, . . . Bishop Clemens August von Galen, instead of telling his diocese to pray for victory, ordered daily recitation of the prayer: 'Lord, grant us peace! Queen of Heaven, pray for us!' Actually, many a churchman inside Germany prays privately for a Nazi defeat. . . . Said a Catholic news dispatch from Geneva last month, 'It is generally anticipated that in the case of a victorious war, the Nazi regime would no longer hesitate to wipe out all vestiges of Christianity in Germany and try to establish a 'national church' under Nazi supervision. . . .

Another favorite Nazi device is confiscating the salary of pastors and priests whom they (only) suspect of opposing them. The Nazis mobilized over 55 of Germany's pastors as privates (not chaplains) and in some districts 75 of the recalcitrant pastors were drafted for front line service. (Ed. Note: Pope Benedict XVI, Josef Ratzinger and his fellow seminarians were all drafted into the Wehrmacht.)

Political Christians

Outspoken as he was Rupert Mayer was closely monitored by the Munich Gestapo. In 1937 when he began to preach against the closing of Catholic schools from the pulpit of St. Michaels in Munich, the Gestapo attempted to ban him from all public speaking. When he continued to disregard this prohibition, the Gestapo arrested him. At his trial, Mayer defiantly told the presiding judge,

It gives me far more pleasure to be here as the accused than as judge. They say there are no longer any martyrs, but here I am being unjustly accused. My detention speaks far more loudly than a thousand sermons could. Methods of your kind have already signed the death warrant of the Kulturkampf (Culture

War). . . I have recently read that marvelous sentence in St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, 'I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel.'

Given Mayer's high profile as a one legged, popular street priest and as a former *frontkaempfer* awarded the Iron Cross in WWI, the Nazis were

hesitant to make a martyr of him. This was a Nazi reprieve reserved usually for high ranking clergymen. Unlike their fellow godless counterparts in the Soviet Union who forced what was left of the Russian Church they almost completely destroyed underground, the Nazis appeared hesitant to arrest outspoken bishops or cardinals, resentment of which might harm their war effort. Instead anonymous priests and monks would bear the brunt of Nazi outrage against 'political Christianity.' A telling example is provided subsequent to a stirring sermon preached by Cardinal Clemens von Galen (of Muenster) on 3 August 1941, against the Nazi euthanasia program code named 'Aktion T4,' in which he stated in no uncertain language:

Have you, have I the right to live so long as we are productive, so long as we are recognized by others as productive. If you establish and apply the principle that you can kill 'unproductive' fellow human beings then woe betide us all when we become old and frail! If one is allowed to kill the unproductive people then woe betide the invalids who have used up, sacrificed and lost their health and strength in the productive process. If one is allowed forcibly to remove one's unproductive fellow human beings then woe betide loyal soldiers who return to the homeland seriously disabled as cripples, as invalids. . . . Then as a matter of principle murder is permitted for all unproductive people. . . . the incurably sick, the people who have become invalids through labor and war; woe to all of us when we become old, frail and therefore unproductive. . . . Then none of our lives will be safe anymore. Some commission can put us on the list of the 'unproductive,' who in their opinion we have become worthless life. And no police force will protect us and no court will investigate our murder. . . . Who will be able to trust his doctor anymore? . . . It is impossible to imagine the degree of moral depravity, of general mistrust that would then spread even through families if this dreadful doctrine is



Pastor Martin Niemöller on cover of Time, 20 Dec 1940

tolerated, accepted and followed. Woe to mankind, to our German nation if God's Holy Commandment 'Thou shall not kill,' which God proclaimed on Mount Sinai amidst thunder and lightning, which God our Creator inscribed in the conscience of mankind from the very beginning, is not only broken, but if this transgression is actually tolerated and permitted to go unpunished.
(Great Speeches Collection, *The History Place*)

This sermon so thoroughly outraged the Nazi hierarchy that, though they stopped short of arresting von Galen to avoid making him a martyr, they did arrest and behead three parish priests who had merely distributed his sermon to parishes across the Reich.

Standing Fast

Rupert Mayer also because of his high profile received only a suspended sentence, though he was told by his religious superiors to refrain from public speaking. Mayer went along until the Nazis began to taunt him publicly in the press. Seeking and given permission to resume his public preaching, he returned to the pulpit and continued to speak against the Nazi regime. Six months later, however, the Gestapo rearrested him and sentenced him to five months in Landsberg prison, behind the same bars from which Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* in 1924. He was then amnestied and again prohibited from public speaking. Knowing he would not comply, at the age of 63 he was rearrested yet again and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp where he met and became good friends with Lutheran Pastor Martin Niemöller who occupied the cell next to him. Dainty rations and a cold damp cell took a debilitating toll on Mayer's health. Fearing he might die, he was transferred to a former monastery in Ettal in Upper Bavaria where he spent the rest of the war in solitary confinement until liberated by American troops in 1945.

Returning to Munich Mayer picked up where he did after the First World War. He was celebrating Mass

in the heavily damaged St. Michael's on 1 November 1945, All Souls Day, when just after beginning his sermon, he began stammering, "Der Herr, der Herr" ("The Lord, the Lord") when his heart stopped. Interred in the *Beergerersaal* in the most heavily traversed area of Munich, 300,000 people lined the streets of Munich as his coffin passed by. It is said even today about a thousand

people pray daily at this site. In 1987 he was beatified by Pope John Paul II and is awaiting sainthood pending Vatican documentation and recognition of a miracle that can be attributed to his intercession.

100 years before him, St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, proclaimed,

Let us stand fast in what is right and prepare our souls for trial. Let us be neither dogs that do not bark nor silent onlookers nor paid servants who run away before the wolf!

When the Nazi wolf growled, Rupert Mayer seared right back and picked up his Cross, as did Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and thousands of other Christian victims of the Nazi terror who might remain unknown, if not nameless, to us today.

Prayer of Blessed Rupert Mayer
Lord, what You will, let it be so.
Where You will, there we will go.
What is Your will, help us to know.
Lord, when You will, the time is right.
In You there's joy in strife,
For Your Will, I'll give my life!

Cardinal George recently described the *secularism (man is just a soulless, higher form of animal) that now pervades our public policies as 'Communism's better scrubbed bedfellow.'*

George also sharply related that *"The world divorced from God who created and redeemed it inevitably comes to a bad end. It's on the wrong side of the only history that finally matters! In God We Trust!*

Mike Haas, GADA Editor



Hans & Sophie Scholl (on left) of the White Rose German Resistance who were both guillotined once found out by the Gestapo.



Stoll & Iron Cross of Rupert Mayer

