

Selling Nazi Germany Abroad: The Case of Hulda Jost

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THE church struggle in Nazi Germany was attended by much negative coverage in the foreign media. Concerned about the impact of a bad press on his foreign policy, Hitler realized that several small American-based denominations could be useful in influencing public opinion abroad. Methodists and Baptists, particularly, wielded considerable influence in America while posing little risk to Nazi totalitarian designs in Germany because of their small membership. These churches, on the other hand, had reasons of their own to collaborate; for in return they could expect toleration by the Nazi state. The following case study of the Jost mission to America illustrates how one American-based church, the Seventh-Day Adventists, worked with German authorities to cultivate a better image for Nazi Germany in America in order to get better treatment at home.

When the Nazis came to power, they quickly initiated Gleichschaltung, an all-out effort to establish the totalitarian state by transforming all spheres of German life according to the National Socialist point of view. While the big churches were not easily overcome, a number of smaller denominations were eliminated early on. Among those banned was the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (26 November 1933).¹ The ban was rescinded after only two weeks (6 December 1933), but it shocked the church into changing its stance toward the state from an apolitical one to one of "positive Christianity," a phrase from the Nazi party platform that was interpreted as being supportive of the Nazi state. The result could be described as a partial Gleichschaltung of the church, affecting its publications and its

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1. Decree of the Gestapo II E 242/126, cited in letter by Gestapo Berlin to H.F. Schubert, 6 December 1933. Archiv für Europäische Adventgeschichte, Darmstadt (AEA), U1-2/0351.

message from the pulpit. One aspect of this Gleichschaltung was the incorporation in 1934 of the Adventist Welfare Society into the NSV, the National Socialist Welfare organization. Hulda Jost, the director of Adventist welfare, had important contacts with high officials in the Propaganda Ministry (ProMi). That the prohibition of the church was lifted appears largely due to intervention by these officials. For a while the Church was able to enjoy certain privileges, which included respect for Sabbath keepers in the army, the schools, and government. This was of great significance to a church whose identity centers in part around keeping Saturday as the day of rest. Moreover, the Adventist publishing house was allowed to publish, and some five hundred colporteurs to sell, select Adventist literature.

Beginning in 1935, however, some of these privileges were eliminated. Adventists working for the government were required to work on Saturdays, and those who refused lost their jobs. Colporteurs were no longer allowed to sell religious literature. A number of additional Adventist publications were banned.² The church lost the right to make currency transfers to support its missionaries abroad. And late in 1935 there were persistent rumors of a new government crackdown in the offing.³ As Hulda Jost observed, "The times get more difficult and more serious by the hour."⁴

It was in this context of increasing difficulties that the German Adventist leadership discovered the value of foreign public opinion for the Church. They noted that the Nazi state rewarded Methodists and Baptists for good public relations abroad. It appears to have been an article in *Der Evangelist*,⁵ the German Methodist journal, reporting on Bishop Dr. J.L. Nuelsen's spirited defense of Nazi Germany during lecture tours in the United States, which convinced the president of the Central European Division, G.W. Schubert, that Adventists must do

2. G.W. Schubert to C.H. Watson, 5 January 1936, Archives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (hereafter cited as GC), RG11/1934-361—Schubert, G.W.

3. W.E. Phillips to J.L. McElhany, 26 January 1937. Phillips quotes from a letter by Jost who had learned of such plans while at Munich. GC, RG21/Special Files—Central European Division, 1937 FLD.

4. Jost to McElhany, 26 February 1936. GC, RG11/1937—Central Europe.

5. "Bishop Nuelsen Lectures in New York About the German Revolution," *Der Evangelist*, 8 December 1935. See also G.W. Schubert to C.H. Watson, 5 January 1936. GC, RG11/1934-361—Schubert, G.W. Jost later claimed that Schubert had conceived of such a visit already in 1934, and worked hard to bring it about. Jost to Thomalla, 5 August 1936. GC, RG 11/1937—Central Europe.

likewise to gain Nazi goodwill. Hulda Jost was the obvious choice. Her disarming personality, her charisma, her professional field, and her connections in government all fit the need.⁶

The occasion for Hulda Jost's visit to America was the quadrennial General Conference session of Seventh-Day Adventists at San Francisco, 20 May-11 June 1936. On her way to San Francisco, Jost was to travel throughout the United States for several months to speak in churches on German welfare services.⁷ An invitation to this effect was issued by Adventist church headquarters in Washington, D.C., which also assisted in planning her itinerary.⁸ Before long the German Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (ProMi) joined in these preparations as well. Jost had approached the head of its Health and Social Services Section, Dr. Curt R. Thomalla, with the proposal to work out a program together.⁹ The ProMi in turn asked the German Foreign Office to collaborate.¹⁰ And soon the German embassy in the United States and its network of consulates in major cities across the country joined the General Conference in sponsoring an impressive itinerary.¹¹

From the time of her arrival in New York City on 17 March to her departure on 20 June, she was to give more than 140 public lectures. According to the ProMi, most of these were before large audiences of one to two thousand people. She would speak to church congregations, college audiences, women's clubs, and German societies, as well as to select community and public opinion leaders at special events hosted by German dip-

6. Well acquainted with the precarious situation of the church in Germany, J.L. McElhany, on the eve of her mission to America, referred to Hulda Jost as "without question the Deborah, or the Esther in this situation." J.L. McElhany to C.H. Watson, 30 January 1936. GC, RG11/1930s.

7. Central European Division Committee, Minutes. Friedensau, 18-25 June 1935. Also voted by General Conference Committee. M.E. Kern to G.W. Schubert, 21 October 1935. GC, RG 21, Box 94.

8. Ibid., M.E. Kern to G.W. Schubert, 21 October 1935. GC, RG 21, Box 94.

9. Jost to Gestapo Berlin, 10 December 1935. GC, RG21/1936—Central Europe.

10. Haegert, ProMi, to Auswärtiges Amt, 7 February 1936. Politisches Archiv, Kulturabteilung, R62293 (hereafter cited as AA). The letter notes that on other occasions Jost had done "impressive" work for the new Germany.

11. In Washington, D.C., the German ambassador, Dr. Luther, met with the president of the General Conference, J.L. McElhany, to coordinate travel plans and speaking appointments. Jost to Hitler, Portland, Oregon, 30 April 1936. AA, R 62293. According to a handwritten note of 18 May 1936 by a Kultur-Referent in the AA, the ProMi retained the coordinating role (*federführend*) throughout Jost's travels. Dr. Goeken, AA, to the Personal Secretary of the Führer, 9 July 1936. AA, R 62293.

lomats.¹² Her lecture tour was to begin in Washington, D.C., then lead across America with major stops in New York, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Denver, Portland, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and back to Washington, D.C.

In New York she was met at the pier by J.L. McElhany, general vice president (and soon-to-be-elected president of the General Conference), and Louise C. Kleuser,¹³ whom church headquarters had chosen to be her interpreter. In their company Jost traveled to Washington, D.C. There they met with General Conference officers and Ambassador Dr. Hans Luther to go over the proposed itinerary. In a briefing at the German embassy, Jost was advised to avoid political controversy by lecturing only on the achievements of the new Germany in the social service sector. Since Americans were still mired in the Great Depression, she was told, they were in a position to appreciate what Hitler had done. In every major city she was to meet with the German consul.¹⁴

While in Washington, D.C., Hulda Jost spoke in various Adventist churches, and at least twice to the staff at church headquarters. Returning to New York, she preached and lectured in numerous Adventist churches and at meetings with church workers. Typically, she spoke about ministering to the needy as the essence of Christianity, and the progress of social welfare in Germany under Hitler. In New York she also met with prominent women such as the leaders of Settlement Work and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Traveling in New England, she spoke in Boston-area churches, lectured at Atlantic Union College and Northeast Sanitarium, two Adventist institutions, and visited the Goodwill Memorial Settlement and other institutions.¹⁵

By the time she reached Chicago, Hulda Jost and her interpreter had settled into a busy routine that was little marred by controversy. In Chicago, however, that changed when Jost addressed a meeting of the Friends of the New Germany, a pro-Nazi organization. The event had been arranged by the Ger-

12. ProMi to AA, 7 July 1936. AA, R 62293. The ProMi exaggerated somewhat when it claimed that Jost was interviewed by "almost all American newspapers." So did Jost when she wrote to Hitler that "everywhere" she was eagerly interviewed by the press. Jost to Hitler, 30 April 1936. AA, R 62293; also Bundesarchiv Koblenz, R 43II/1467 (hereafter cited as BA).

13. Kleuser was Education and Youth Secretary of the South New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

14. Luther to AA, 27 June 1936. AA, R62293.

15. Kleuser to McElhany, 8 April 1936. GC, RG 11/1936(II), Jost, H.

man consul, and quickly turned into a celebration of Nazism. While Miss Kleuser was a bit nervous about possible negative publicity for her church in the event the press would hear of it, Jost was elated at the enthusiastic response of the audience of more than one thousand, and considered her mission "a success."¹⁶ Evidently the press did not report on this meeting, but *The Chicago Daily News* ran an article about a different lecture. Under the headline, "Hitler Doesn't Want War, Says Woman Leader,"¹⁷ it portrayed Jost in pro-Nazi terms. "A message of hope and charity was brought to Chicago today by Miss Hulda Jost, director of welfare under the Nazi government. There will be no war, she asserted." Hitler's intentions were good, Jost assured her listeners, for "der fuehrer is a good man. He wants the best for his people. He doesn't want war. We are arming because we are afraid of Russia. The Rhineland belongs to Deutschland." As to the Jewish question, she said that "Americans have misinterpreted us. Hitler has merely wanted to take leadership away from the Jews but he doesn't want to hurt them. The Jews who are left in Germany are getting along very well," and, "no discrimination has been made between helping Jews and helping Aryans." Under Hitler's government, the article claimed, Hulda Jost, as director of Adventist welfare, was "directly associated with Joseph Paul Goebels[sic], minister of propoganda." Hence, she asserted, she knew well whereof she spoke.

Jost's next stops were St. Louis, then Denver, and Boulder, Colorado. In Denver, Jost lectured at the Adventist Porter Sanitarium with the German consul in attendance. According to several church leaders, she alienated many of her listeners by speaking out too boldly about Hitler and the Jewish question. According to Kleuser, "it was a real political rally."¹⁸ A report in *The Denver Post* caused considerable consternation among local Adventist leaders. It featured a picture of Jost with the caption, "A Loyal Backer of Hitler." Under the headline, "German Welfare Leader Lauds Hitler's Work On Denver Visit,"¹⁹ the article stated: "In Denver Saturday as a guest of the Porter Sanitarium, . . . Frau Jost. . . spoke her mind regarding the views held by foreign nations on Hitler and his policies. As a close friend of Hitler, Herman[sic] Goering and Joseph Goebbels, she is confi-

16. Kleuser to McElhany, 5 May 1936; *ibid.*

17. *The Chicago Daily News*, Monday, 13 April 1936.

18. Kleuser to McElhany, 5 May 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

19. *The Denver Post*, 19 April 1936.

dent that when the fuehrer demands world peace and his aids[sic] say amen, that is exactly what he and they mean.”

Germany was being restored “to prosperity and happiness under the leadership of the fuehrer,” she was quoted as saying. While “widespread propaganda of the opposition would make other nationals believe that the people are discontented,” recent election results proved quite the opposite. “Contrary to reports spread thru an adverse press of other countries, voters were free to express their will thru the secret ballot.” The longer Hitler worked on his program, she maintained, “the more friends he makes for it.” While she claimed not to be a member of the Nazi Party, she said she saw “with open eyes.”

Before her lecture at the Boulder Sanitarium, according to Kleuser, Jost “was taken in hand on account of her political propoganda” by a hospital administrator who was upset about the press coverage of the Denver meeting, and told they “wanted the gospel preached and no Hitler propoganda.”²⁰ Jost was not able to address a Hitler birthday party at the Denver Turnverein the next day because, as the consul reported to the German embassy, “she had to leave unexpectedly, early in the morning of the twentieth for the state of Washington.”²¹ Evidently Adventist leaders in the Denver area did not wish further embarrassment.

The next stop was Walla Walla, Washington. Forewarned, President William Landeen of Walla Walla College kept close reins on Jost’s activities. And the German community at Walla Walla, as Kleuser noted, was “so amusingly non-national” as to give little opportunity for political propoganda.²²

On the way from Walla Walla to Portland, Oregon, Hulda Jost rode the train in the company of E.L. Neff, president of the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. During the five-hour ride Jost dominated the conversation. Kleuser described it as quite a “Hitler program,” and it persuaded Neff to “stay by [Jost] constantly.”²³

Among her speaking engagements in Portland, Jost’s lecture

20. Kleuser to McElhany, 20 April 1936, and 5 May 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

21. Consul Godel to the German General Consulate in San Francisco, 21 April 1936. BA, R43II/1467. The Consul was disappointed that Jost’s travel plans were changed on such short notice, for in his view things were going very well. The change in her travel plans was made by denominational leaders. Kleuser to McElhany, 20 April 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

22. Kleuser to McElhany, 20 April 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

23. Kleuser to McElhany, 5 May 1936; *ibid.*

at the Portland Sanitarium is particularly noteworthy. In the audience were the German consul and a number of Adventist leaders. While the consul was immensely pleased by what she said, it alarmed church leaders. She “staged some rank German propaganda,” complained one church administrator,²⁴ and then asked Consul Clostermann to speak, which he did for nearly thirty minutes, “lauding Hitler to the skies.” While church leaders struggled to hide their embarrassment, all the while “Miss Jost sat there with her face beaming, nodding assent to it all.”²⁵

In a letter to Consul Reichel of Seattle, Jost described Clostermann’s speech as “particularly valuable,” and “in very strong and irrefutable words [he] tore apart the web of lies of the American press.” People stood around in groups afterward “to discuss this dramatically altered image of Germany.”²⁶

From Portland, Jost wrote to J.L. McElhany a glowing report in which she called her work a “great blessing for all,” citing comments by the German consuls as evidence. “You know,” she wrote, “that I have my mission from God. . . . I have been able to achieve much for Germany. The consuls have already made their reports. To the Lord be honor and thanks. . . . Today at the consul’s I will dictate my first report to the Fuehrer and to Goebbels.”²⁷

Hulda Jost must have been particularly pleased with this meeting, for she felt now ready to make a general report about her efforts in Germany’s behalf. She sent it to Hitler, Ambassador Dr. Luther, the *Auswärtiges Amt*, and the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official organ of the Nazi Party, and attached copies of her letter in praise of Consul Clostermann.

Consul Clostermann assisted Miss Jost in drafting the following letter addressed to Hitler personally:²⁸

Portland, Oregon, 30 April 1936

My Dear Herr Fuehrer:

On 17 March 1936, I arrived in New York on board of the “Europa.” The Reich Propaganda Ministry together with the *Auswaertiges Amt* had prepared my trip well. Immediately after my arrival in Washington, D.C., I was met by Dr. Hans Luther, our German ambassador. The reason for my trip to America is an invitation to attend the World Conference of

24. Neff to McElhany, 5 May 1936; *ibid.*

25. E.K. Slade to J.L. McElhany, 3 May 1936; *ibid.*

26. Jost to Consul Reichel, 30 April 1936. AA, R 62293.

27. Jost to McElhany, 29 April 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

28. Jost to Hitler, 30 April 1936. BA, R43II/1467, Nr.K461890-91 (original copy, bearing stamp “Privatkanzlei Adolf Hitler”), trans. by the author; copy also at GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

Seventh-Day Adventists in San Francisco, California. There will be approximately fifteen thousand delegates representing 120 nations to whom I will lecture about German social welfare. Dr. Luther and I have planned my entire travel itinerary together. The president of our denomination in Washington, D.C. was present, and he supports our denomination and my lecture tour as best he can. All German consulates are informed about my visits by the embassy. Up til now I was able to visit all consuls, and everywhere I have been welcomed most warmly. Thus far I have been in Washington, D.C., New York City, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Denver, and Walla Walla. I am now in Portland, Oregon. From here I travel to Los Angeles and San Diego, and on to the General Conference session at San Francisco. To date I have lectured at forty large meetings, and at least twenty smaller ones. I was able to speak to many young people and students, to Americans and also to many Germans. Everywhere I was interviewed and in much demand by the press, so that in addition to my lectures I was able to reach many thousands through the press. The main questions were always the same: first, the Jewish question; second, does the Fuehrer want war; is he a nasty man; how does the Fuehrer relate to the religious denominations; are the Seventh-Day Adventists not outlawed; were the Germans not compelled to vote.

It is to me a very great pleasure that in every case I was able to stand up for Germany's honor, justice for Germany, and German interests. The attached news clippings are evidence that in every case I have testified to our Fuehrer's love for peace. I can tell you, most esteemed dear Herr Fuehrer, that all lectures were a great success, and many thousands whose minds had been poisoned by the American press, have changed their opinion on Germany. It has not always been easy work, but I do it with conviction, and am very much supported in it by the leading men of the denomination in America and in Germany, and by all German consulates as well. Our ambassador, Dr. Luther, has arranged an appointment for me with Mrs. Roosevelt, the wife of the American president, as the last one on my itinerary. In closing, may I voice a request which I trust will be granted. I would like to visit you personally, highly esteemed Herr Fuehrer, in July when I return to Germany, and report all the details of my trip. That will be of great interest to you, Herr Fuehrer, and to me the most beautiful reward for this great effort in behalf of our beloved fatherland. Tomorrow evening, 1 May, I am invited by Herr Consul Robert G. Clostermann to meet with the Germans, and I am looking forward to it very much.

With the best wishes for you, Herr Fuehrer
I am always your much devoted
Hulda Jost

cc. to:
Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels,
Ambassador Dr. Hans Luther,
Auswaertiges Amt, Dr. Thomalla,
Mr. Hilgenfeld,
Reich Minister Dr. Frick

Consul Clostermann did his best to be a good host and make the most of Jost's visit to Portland. He invited her to his home;

he took her on a trip to Mount Hood; he took great pains to fit out "a nice scrapbook for all her articles to take back to Mr. Hitler"²⁹; and he arranged for several interviews with the press.

Meanwhile, church officers had become alarmed enough to cancel further meetings in the Portland area.³⁰ Among several reports that appeared in the Portland press, it was the one in *The Oregon Daily Journal*, which appeared under the headline "German Church Emissary Denies Hitler Jew Hater,"³¹ which proved most damaging in the eyes of Adventist leaders:

Jolly, round, red-cheeked Frau Oberin Hulda Jost, German emissary to the Seventh-day Adventist church convention at San Francisco next month, waxed indignant here Thursday at mention of a persecution of the Jews in her homeland.

Speaking through German Consul Robert G. Clostermann as interpreter, she likened acts of violence against the Jews in Germany to lynchings of American Negroes.

"President Roosevelt does not want the Negroes lynched," she said, "and neither does Hitler want the Jews persecuted. There are bad men who do wrong in every land, but their misdeeds are not taken as the acts of the government. Hitler has removed the leadership from the Jews and restored it to the Germans, to whom it rightfully belongs. Our people are 100 per cent for Der Fuehrer."

While Hulda Jost considered her work at Portland "one of her greatest accomplishments for God," clearly she had become a liability to Adventist leaders in the Pacific Northwest. What Jost recounted as "marvelous providences," Kleuser wrote to McElhany, "our brethren considered most questionable propaganda."³²

Several letters by Adventist church administrators confirm Kleuser's observations. "It hasn't helped us at all," wrote E.L. Neff of the *Journal* article. "I haven't found any one yet that really felt that she did anything in behalf of our Cause. Some say that she is being paid something by the German government. She made a statement that was taken that way in one or two of her meetings here."³³

In another article that appeared in *The Oregonian*,³⁴ Jost de-

29. Kleuser to McElhany, 23 April 1936; *ibid.* Also, Jost to Konsul Gysling, 30 April 1936. BA, 43II/1467, Nr. K461892-93.

30. Kleuser to McElhany, 5 May 1936; *ibid.*

31. *The Oregon Daily Journal*, 1 May 1936.

32. Kleuser to McElhany, 3 May 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

33. Neff to McElhany, 5 May 1936; *ibid.* Her statement probably refers to Adventist welfare (NSV) funds. Later in a letter to Thomalla of 25 August 1936 Jost uses the argument of internal funding to bolster her case against the authorities. GC, RG21/1936—Central Europe.

34. "Frau Hulda Jost Defends Hitler," *The Oregonian*, 30 April 1936.

fended Hitler's Jewish policy, blaming mostly communism for the condition of the Jews. "This may be helping to create the good will in Germany for our work," commented E.K. Slade, president of the North Pacific Union Conference, "but I am certain that it is not helping the situation here in America. We want the good will of the Jews and . . . the American people"35

Louise Kleuser, who reported frequently to McElhany, shared these concerns as well. Of German ancestry herself, she had at first been quite enthusiastic about Hulda Jost.³⁶ Jost was an impressive, charismatic speaker. Her message, especially when she spoke on Isaiah 58, provided much inspiration, and carried the tremendous power of conviction.³⁷ In time, however, Miss Kleuser wondered whether Isaiah 58, which speaks of social justice, compassion, and humanitarian action as true religion, was indeed the cardinal point Jost made it out to be. Ever since Chicago, she began to question the wisdom of Jost's political propaganda. When she talked to Jost about it she was "scolded properly for making such a poor German," told to mind her own business, and simply to translate. Her concern led Kleuser to be very careful in her translation, but Jost would interrupt at critical points in her lecture and insist that she translate exactly as Jost had said it.³⁸ Kleuser's caution was noted by a reporter from *The Oregonian*: "Miss Kleuser [was] extremely careful in her translation of the queries and answers dealing with the subject of the persecution of Jews."³⁹ Kleuser wrote to McElhany that if it got too bad she might have to resort to "balking."⁴⁰ There was nothing to be done, of course, when the translator was the German consul. Yet Kleuser did much to limit the damage, and Adventist leaders in Portland felt that "the good, staunch, sensible" interpreter saved them from a "world of trouble."⁴¹

By the time Miss Jost arrived in Southern California, General Conference leaders were well aware that they had a potential problem on their hands. Several top leaders, including J.L.

35. Slade to McElhany, 3 May 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

36. An example is her comment in an interview with a *New York Times* reporter: "Sr. Jost gave him a fine story but not enough Jewish propaganda (?) to demand space to date." Kleuser to McElhany, 1 April 1936; *ibid.*

37. Kleuser to McElhany, 1 April 1936; *ibid.*

38. Neff to McElhany, 5 May 1936; *ibid.*

39. *The Oregonian*, 30 April 1936.

40. Kleuser to McElhany, 20 April, 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

41. 41. Neff to McElhany, 1 May 1936; *ibid.*

McElhany, L.H. Christian, and W.H. Branson cautioned her to be more careful in her statements. Thus it was that Jost gave no reason for criticism at Loma Linda and San Diego. As Kleuser put it, Jost "was wise enough to know who was in [the] audience."⁴²

At Los Angeles, Dr. Gyssling, the German consul, had tried in vain to interest the German community in the "Adventist" visitor from Germany. His countrymen's prejudice was overcome after the consul invited approximately 150 leaders of the German community to a lecture in his villa. Jost proved "fascinating," prompting the consul to remark on her "rare ability to speak as one human being to another." A public lecture at the Deutsches Haus was quickly arranged.⁴³ According to the *California Staatszeitung*,⁴⁴ which devoted a major article to her first lecture, Jost refuted the lies regarding recent events in Germany. She stressed the support of all Germans, even of communists, for Hitler. "The German people were nearing collapse which was the result of war, hard times, poor leadership, and exploitation. Somebody had to come and make an end of those intolerable conditions. . . . Adolf Hitler appeared, and he cleansed Germany of those elements who had placed their own interests above commonweal. He has achieved what even a Bismarck could not do. The German people are convinced that Hitler intends only the best for all; that is why he is sustained by our confidence, and we pray to God that He might sustain him for a long time to come." Her lecture was met with "overwhelming applause."

The main event of Jost's visit to the United States, of course, was the quadrennial session of the General Conference, 20 May to 11 June 1936. General Consul Dr. August Ponschab took advantage of her presence in San Francisco to schedule several lectures for her as well. One of these was at the Deutscher Verein, the German Club, where she spoke to an overflow crowd. The other was at the diplomat's residence before a select group of German-speaking people, which included the members of the German delegation to the church convention.⁴⁵ *The Cali-*

42. Jost to McElhany, 5 May 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II), Jost, H.

43. Gyssling to the German Embassy, 4 June 1936. AA, R62293.

44. "Vortragsabend bei Dr. Gyssling," *California Staats-Zeitung*, 18 May 1936.

45. Ponschab to German Embassy, 11 June 1936. AA, R 62293. Also, Jost to Thomalla, 8 August 1936. GC, RG11/1937—Central Europe.

*fornia Demokrat*⁴⁶ described her lecture as a “virtual revelation” for American listeners. She spoke with enthusiasm and “from an inner conviction” about the incredible achievements of Nazi Germany in the welfare sector. “The personality of the lecturer, her simple yet self-assured demeanor, lent her revelations the convincing quality [*Herzton*] and value of truly German conscientiousness.”

At the church convention Hulda Jost lectured twice about the German welfare system which she held up as a model for other nations to emulate. She explained how German Adventist welfare was incorporated into the National Socialist Welfare organization (NSV), and was able to function under the protection of the Reich. She considered it important that the government be convinced of the church’s support, as otherwise there might come a time when all property would be confiscated. This, according to Jost, was “one purpose of our welfare work.”⁴⁷

The leader of the German delegation, G.W. Schubert, focused his address on religious liberty and the German welfare work. He emphasized the importance of being good citizens and being subject to the authorities. Germany had shown the way in feeding and clothing the poor, he said, and he recommended the German model where the church worked closely with the state in the area of welfare. “It has been the plan of God that there should be from time to time a special connection between His people and the state authorities for the blessing of His children.” Citing examples from Scripture, he referred specifically to Joseph, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Esther. “The increasing difficulties that will come with the close of probation make it necessary that the people of God cooperate closely with state authorities in times of distress.”⁴⁸

It is interesting that the German church journal, *Der Adventbote*, in reporting on Schubert’s address, left off his remarks on religious liberty. Yet the *San Francisco News*, which reported on his speech under the headline, “Adventists Hear of Nazi Toleration,”⁴⁹ quoted him as saying that “enlightened statesmen of certain nations, including Germany, see plainly the

46. “Wohlfahrtspflege im neuen Dritten Reich,” *California Demokrat*, 5 June 1936.

47. *Adventbote*, 9 September 1936 (hereafter cited as AB). Cf. also “Report of Third World Council of the Home Missionary Department, 20 May-11 June 1936,” GC, Printed Items, Record Group 57.

48. 1936 General Conference Report Nr. 8, 1936. “The Central European Division,” *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 5 June 1936.

49. “Adventists Hear of Nazi Toleration,” *San Francisco News*, 3 June 1936.

importance and influence of religious liberty and the protection of religious minorities.” Comparing Germany favorably with other European countries, Schubert pointed out that in Germany Adventist and Jewish children were exempt from required school attendance on the Sabbath, and Adventist soldiers did not have to report for duty. “The special recognition by Germany of Christians who are maintaining the law of God shows that religious liberty is no empty or meaningless matter.”

The general consul, who was among the listeners, sent a glowing report to Washington.⁵⁰ “The presence of the German delegation,” he wrote, “has proven very useful politically.” There was not one word about problems with religious liberty in Germany, he wrote, even though there was much talk of religious repression in other countries. This was to be credited to the German delegation, “which from the start has stood firmly by the German government.” Hulda Jost particularly was singled out for high praise: “From the German point of view her statements were excellent. They culminated in the statement that in today’s Germany . . . the church was free to develop and do its work as long as it did not meddle in politics. She declared that she felt well protected under the umbrella of the German government.” Summarizing his impression, he wrote: “The general impact was excellent, and it is no exaggeration to claim that Frau Oberin Jost by her at once assertive and gracious manner won the hearts of all not only for herself but to a degree for the new Germany as well.”

From San Francisco Jost returned to Washington, D.C., where she was debriefed at the German embassy. The ambassador was very cordial, and he requested to see G.W. Schubert as well. He expressed to them both his personal satisfaction, and declared their visit a “more than one hundred percent success.” As a token of his pleasure he invited them on a drive through Washington to show them the city.⁵¹

The ambassador’s report to the Foreign Office reflected his satisfaction. “By her natural, confidence-inspiring appearance,” he wrote about Hulda Jost, “she was able . . . to elicit goodwill towards the new Germany and to dispel many prejudices.” After her reports on Germany’s achievements in the social sector, “one saw National Socialism in an entirely different light.” That

50. Ponschab to German Embassy, 11 June 1936. AA, R62293.

51. G.W. Schubert to McElhany, 20 June 20, 1936. GC, RG11/1936(II)—Schubert, G.W.

the speaker was a woman was doubly important, considering the prominent role of women in American public life. He concluded that this was an excellent means by which to correct the distorted image of Germany created by the politically sensationalist press.⁵²

The purpose of Hulda Jost's mission to America had been accomplished well. Once back in Germany, Hulda Jost went in pursuit of her "most beautiful reward," a visit with Adolf Hitler. To this end she enlisted the help of her friends at the ProMi, who in turn secured the support of the Foreign Office.⁵³ Each of the ministries made a well-documented case to the personal secretariate of the Fuehrer at the Reich Chancellery. To her great disappointment, an audience was denied due to the Fuehrer's busy schedule.⁵⁴

Returning to Germany after yet another trip abroad (this time to attend the International Women's Congress at Ragusa), where she again "was able to do very much in Germany's behalf," Jost repeated her request for an audience with the Fuehrer.⁵⁵ Evidently she was not any more successful.

Instead of reaping her "reward," she felt insulted as her church faced growing difficulties from the state authorities. While the German Adventist leaders were in America, on 18 May 1936, a new decree required that all schoolchildren attend school on Saturday. Soldiers also reported increasing difficulties with Sabbath keeping.

Disappointed, Hulda Jost complained bitterly in a letter to Dr. Thomalla at the Propaganda Ministry. She documented the various repressive measures against her church and appealed for help. She reminded him of all her accomplishments for Germany, which she wanted to be taken as evidence of "the loyal attitude of Seventh-Day Adventists and of their united effort in behalf of the German government and Volk." At San Francisco, as she pointed out, "I especially emphasized the spirit of tolerance shown by the German government in matters of faith and conscience. This fact was equally stressed by Mr. Schubert and other speakers at this world gathering." The leading men of her denomination, in fact, were using every opportunity to "cham-

52. Luther to AA, 27 June 1936. BA, R43II/1467.

53. ProMi to AA, 7 July 1936. AA, R62293. AA to Dr. Goeken, Persönlicher Referent des Fuehrers, 9 July 1936; *ibid.* The AA confirmed that Jost did "excellent work for the new Germany."

54. Ministerialdirigent Dr. Meerwald to Jost, 15 July 1936. BA, R43II/1467.

55. Jost to Dr. Meerwald, 23 October 1936; *ibid.*

pion the German cause.” While thus laboring for the German cause in America, they were being betrayed by their government at home. Even so, she stressed, when their delegation learned of this while in America, “we remained silent about it so as not to spoil or destroy the good impression that had been made.”⁵⁶ Even though Joseph Goebbels himself interceded with a letter to the Reich Church Ministry,⁵⁷ her appeal was without evident success.

On 15 November 1936, an article appeared in the *Washington Post* in which a Takoma Park, Maryland, cleric railed against the persecution of Christians in a Nazi Germany which denied freedom of conscience. It specifically mentioned that children of a denomination that recognizes Saturday as the Sabbath were compelled to attend public school. Secret police, he said, attended church services, taking notes on all that was said. “No evangelist would dare expound Biblical prophecies dealing with events of today,” and would be “jailed if he read from the Bible that Christ was coming with power and great glory, and would destroy the nations by the brightness of his coming.” While the article did not identify the religious affiliation of the clergyman, it clearly pointed to an Adventist as the source, and so Ambassador Luther concluded that Vernon K. Scopes, the clergyman, was an Adventist preacher.⁵⁸ He reported on the unwelcome anti-German propaganda to the Foreign Ministry, suggesting that Hulda Jost be asked to write a counter article for the *Washington Post*. Hulda Jost was contacted via the ProMi.⁵⁹

The German Adventist leadership was well aware that the Nazi government took a very dim view of such offenses. The “Scopes Affair” seemed a serious setback to all their efforts for better relations with the Nazi authorities. There was great relief, then, when it could be established that Rev. Scopes was not an Adventist clergyman, after all. Now the Scopes case, rather

56. Jost to Dr. Thomalla, 5 August 1936. A copy was also sent to National Socialist party headquarters; *ibid*.

57. Goebbels argued that the “effective and inconspicuous propaganda abroad” which was the result of “propagandistic collaboration of the Adventist Welfare Work” needed to be continued. Goebbels to Kerrl, 29 August 1936. RKM 51.01/23387, #00359.

58. “Hitler Muzzles Reich Church, Takoma Park Cleric Asserts. Evangelist Who Recently Returned from Germany, Says Nation Has Turned Its Back on Christianity Under Nazi Control,” *Washington Post*, 15 November 1936.

59. Jost to Dr. Luther, 26 February 1937. Copy to J.L. McElhany. Also Jost to McElhany, 26 February 1937. GC, RG11/1937—Correspondence. Central Europe.

than an embarrassment to the church, could be used as yet another opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the state and the church's usefulness in promoting the Nazi cause abroad. Nazi authorities might be convinced yet that granting freedom of conscience to Adventists was the wiser course after all.⁶⁰

Hulda Jost consented to cooperate. She received from the office of Dr. Thomalla the draft of an article she was to send out under her own name. Because it was worded too strongly and propagandistically, however, and contained significant inaccuracies, Jost rewrote it in consultation with Schubert.⁶¹ She used this opportunity to make some telling observations. She reminded Thomalla of the problems her church was facing that were still unresolved: "This does not look as though the people of Germany enjoyed religious liberty and freedom of conscience."⁶² Once again she pressed Thomalla to use his influence on behalf of her church. Given the bad publicity abroad for Germany, she asked, "is there really no possibility of our having peace at last?"⁶³

In the end, two articles were sent to America: one for the *Washington Post*, the other for the *Review and Herald*, the leading Adventist journal. The General Conference Committee, however, considered it "unwise to enter into any defense of the Government," and refrained from submitting the articles. As E.D. Dick reasoned in his letter to Schubert, "It has . . . been our denominational policy to be loyal to whatever government we find ourselves located in, and since we are engaged in a worldwide work it behooves us to be careful that we do not cast any unkind aspersions against any actions of any nation. Our work is fundamentally spiritual, and it is not our business to become entangled in the political life of the nation."⁶⁴

The Scopes affair led to a new initiative by the ProMi in behalf of Jost and her church. On the advice of Dr. Thomalla, Jost requested an appointment with the aide de camp of the Fuehrer, Captain Wiedemann. To her surprise, it was granted the next day. The captain, evidently briefed by the ProMi, was

60. G.W. Schubert was even willing to take the initiative in contacting the editors of major American newspapers provided the Reich Church Ministry was willing to support the restoration of Sabbath privileges. G.W. Schubert to Hagelstein (Jost's secretary), 3 February 1937 (unsigned copy). GC, RG11/1937—Central Europe.

61. G.W. Schubert to the General Conference Committee, 7 February 1937. GC, RG21/1937—Central Europe.

62. Jost to Thomalla, 1 February 1937; *ibid.*

63. Jost to Thomalla, 2 February 1937; *ibid.*

64. E.D. Dick to G.W. Schubert, 29 March 1937.

quite familiar with Jost's work.⁶⁵ To bolster her case for religious liberty, Jost made good use of her scrapbook of clippings and letters documenting her work for Germany in the United States. The captain promised to bring the matter before the Fuehrer.⁶⁶

The day after the audience, Jost met with Dr. Thomalla and others at the ProMi. They "confirmed" their "old friendship," and "discussed a lot." There was much collaboration between them in the following months, and the ProMi provided valuable assistance to Jost and her church in their struggles with the authorities.⁶⁷

One case in particular demonstrates the value to the church of this powerful ally. The Gestapo was investigating a case where nurses belonging to the Adventist nurses association had been dismissed because they were considered politically unreliable. An unfavorable Gestapo report, which was likely in this case, might result in the dissolution of the entire nurses association, or worse. Alarmed, Jost asked the ProMi to launch an investigation of their own. This was quickly concluded with a report that found the nurses "politically cleared." Hulda Jost had cleverly foiled a strike by her church's enemies. The Gestapo could not very well contradict the findings of the ProMi.

Ever ready to oblige her friends at the ProMi, when Jost was asked to join in the activities of Anticomintern, the Nazi-sponsored organization, she gladly did.⁶⁸ In this role she wrote the booklet, *Ich rufe euch, Mütter der Welt (I Call You, Mothers of the World)* against the growing menace of Bolshevism. The

65. Jost to G.W. Schubert, 6 April 1937. GC, RG21/1937—Central Europe.

66. G.W. Schubert to E.D. Dick, 27 April 1937; *ibid.*

67. Jost to G.W. Schubert, 6 April 1937; *ibid.* Also, Schildhauer to G. W. Schubert and Minck, 30 July 1937. GC, RG21/Special Files—Central European Division, 1937 FLD. On negotiations with the authorities and first success in the Sabbath question, see G.W. Schubert to E.E. Dick, 27 April 1937. GC, RG21/1937—Central Europe. One letter the Propaganda Ministry sent to the Ministry of the Interior is typical of the many that were sent to other government agencies, such as the Gestapo and the Reich Church Ministry. Referring to the close cooperation between the Propaganda Ministry and the Adventist Welfare work, it stated that "effective cultural-political enlightenment work abroad" had been performed for the new Germany. Moreover, "in the course of the collaboration with the Denomination of Seventh-day Adventists I have become convinced that this denomination affirms the National Socialist state, and serves it as best it can." ProMi (Mahlo) to Reich Ministry of the Interior, 23 July 1938. RKM 51.01/23388, Nr. 00062.

68. Jost to McElhany, 26 February 1936. GC, RG21/1937—Central Europe. As she wrote to McElhany, she considered this a privilege, and saw "the hand of the Lord in this."

publication was translated into many languages, and further buttressed her credentials with the government.

Among Jost's "assignments" from the ProMi was to participate in two world congresses. One of these was held in Paris and dealt with the welfare of small children. The other was the World Congress of Nurses in London. While there, she was twice the guest of the German ambassador, Joachim von Ribbentrop, who was soon to become Hitler's foreign minister. She was also invited to receptions hosted by some of Britain's political and social elite.⁶⁹ The benefits for her government and her church were apparent. She WAS an excellent spokesman for German interests. She was effective because she always spoke with conviction, and already had important international contacts. Her powerful presence also benefited her church. In the eyes of the German authorities, her service for the Third Reich and her contacts with important persons abroad and officials at home made her a formidable person to tangle with.

This was made clear in yet another episode in which she played a key role. Through one of her friends in the Church Ministry who had connections with the Gestapo, Jost learned in 1937 of plans to dissolve her denomination. "The situation is very much like in the time of Esther," wrote G.W. Schubert. "A high official took Hulda Jost to this post of the secret police where all the material lay against us. The official was quite surprised to find Hulda Jost before him with an order that he was commanded to listen to her. Sister Jost was still trembling when she told me about the experience."⁷⁰

It was solely due to her connections in government that Jost had received the warning early enough to act. Her friends in government then made it possible for her to reach higher Gestapo officials, who used their influence "in the highest places" to abort the effort to dissolve the church. Thus Hulda Jost was able "to throw her steadily increasing influence among government officials into the scale" and save her church.

Hulda Jost meant to do much more for her country and her

69. Jost to J.L. McElhany, 5 September 1937. GC, RG11 (Correspondence: Central Europe). Jost claims that in her reporting on these activities she was able to say "many valuable things in the interest of our church."

70. G.W. Schubert to R. Rühling, 15 March 1937. GC, RG21/1937—Central Europe. According to Schubert, Jost learned "about all the letters and photographs and plans that were being laid to dissolve our denomination." Every preacher was "under police surveillance." The church leadership prepared for the worst, and took "all kinds of financial preparations as we do not know what the outcome might be."

church. In a letter to McElhany in the fall of 1937, she was hopeful “that my efforts over the past years will soon be crowned with a great blessing for the church.”⁷¹ In an effort to put a stop to all harassment, Jost and her friends in the ProMi went nearly all the way to the top with a petition to the Fuehrer’s deputy, Rudolf Hess.⁷² Perhaps she expected that Hitler would intervene and the Nazi authorities would finally see the wisdom of religious tolerance, and her church would find peace. That was not to be, and the Adventist church in Germany continued to exist in the shadow of insecurity until the fall of the Third Reich.

During a visit to Scandinavia, Hulda Jost fell ill and died in Denmark at Skodsborg Sanitarium, in March 1938.⁷³ She did not live to see the true face of Nazism as it was revealed in the Kristallnacht of 9 November 1938, and in the Holocaust during the War.

“I can’t help wondering where we as a church might be if in the near future Germany decided to turn on Hitler,” Louise Kleuser had written to McElhany midway through their lecture tour of the United States, warning him against the policy of collaboration with Nazi authorities. “Our sister is positively playing with fire. Getting a perspective on Sister Jost’s whole propaganda, I feel she may bring to us in the future far more embarrassment than we can trust our brethren right close up to the problem in Europe, to now see.”⁷⁴ To understand the significance of Hulda Jost’s mission to America, it is important to understand that it was only a small part of a complex policy of collaboration with Nazi authorities designed to win the favor of the National Socialist state. There can be little doubt that the main purpose of the lecture tour in the United States was to court the goodwill of Nazi authorities and to convince them of the church’s loyalty and support. Hulda Jost was effective because she spoke with the power of conviction. And so the question should be raised whether her salesmanship on behalf of Nazi Germany was indeed no more than a ploy to please Nazi authorities.

Those who had the opportunity to be with her in private for some time while she was in America came away convinced that

71. Jost to McElhany, 9 September 1937. GC, RG11/1937—Central Europe.

72. *Ibid.*

73. AB, 15 April 1938.

74. Kleuser to McElhany (written after the visit to Portland), n.d. Forwarded to McElhany, attached to a letter by H.J. Elliott, 23 April 1936.

she acted out of patriotism, and that her enthusiasm for Hitler and the new Germany was genuine. E.L. Neff, who traveled with her for five hours on the train, noted that “these national things appeal to her in a very strong way. You do not talk with her very long until you know she is backing Hitler about 110 percent and her animosity of the Jewish people is very marked.”⁷⁵

Louise Kleuser confirmed Neff’s assessment. When she and Jost argued about the Jewish question, Jost took the position that the Jews got what they deserved, even justifying it by quoting the Scriptures.⁷⁶ “In the Spirit of Joan of Arc!” wrote Kleuser, “and most conscientiously, too, Sister Jost is helping Hitler to bring back a crushed Germany. She boasts of rendering this service.”⁷⁷ Kleuser, who was “first and foremost an Adventist,” as she told Jost, found the latter’s nationalism offensive and at odds with Christian commitment. “I tried to give caution,” she wrote to McElhany, “but was scolded properly for making such a poor German.”⁷⁸ Foreigners, it seems, tend to pick up on nationalism more readily than one’s countrymen. A modern-day Esther or Joan of Arc, Hulda Jost evidently saw no problem in serving at once God and country in the way she did, and she did so with a passion.⁷⁹ Like other God-and-country Christians, she may have never consciously struggled with this question enough to realize the conflict between the claims of nationalism and the teachings of Christ.

Nor was Hulda Jost alone. G.W. Schubert’s patriotic stance is particularly noteworthy since he was not a native-born German.⁸⁰ On the other hand, G.W. Schubert was not blind to the

75. Neff to McElhany, 1 May 1936. RG11/1936(II)—Jost, H.

76. Kleuser Memo, San Francisco (n.d.); *ibid.*

77. Kleuser to McElhany, 18 May 1936; *ibid.*

78. E.K. Slade to McElhany, 3 May 1936; also Kleuser to McElhany, 5 May 1936; *ibid.*

79. Jost frequently refers to her work for Germany as the work of God. Among the examples is her assessment of her accomplishments in Portland, Oregon. Kleuser to McElhany, 5 May 1936; *ibid.* In her travel report to German Adventist readers she wrote of her work in the U.S.: “If now . . . such great blessings have come from my lectures it is because the gracious hand of God has been with this work;” AB, 15 August 1936.

80. No doubt Schubert’s German patriotism was genuine, as evidenced by many internal memos and correspondence. One such is his letter to Ms. Hagelstein, Jost’s secretary, written 4 February 1937 in the context of the Scopes affair. Schubert wrote: “Now as before I take the position—even though I am a foreign-born German—that we have ample reason to act in behalf of our country of birth; for things are not perfect anywhere else, either, . . . and when I think of the atrocious lies they used against Germany during the Great War, and the articles which misrepre-

anti-Christian menace inherent in Nazism. In a letter to Emil Gugel, secretary of the German Division, dated 20 July 1934,⁸¹ he compared the situation of the Church in Germany to that in Bolshevik Russia. While Adventist believers in the Soviet Union faced increasing restrictions, discrimination, and then outright persecution, Schubert remarked cynically, “yet religious liberty was not touched,” according to public statements by Russian Adventist leaders.⁸² His German Adventist brethren, Schubert felt, were naive. “Most of our workers and colporteurs, and even some of the leading brethren do not recognize the seriousness of the situation, . . .” he wrote, “and many of our brethren are slow of understanding, and greatly lack in discernment.” He predicted that the situation would worsen.⁸³

While Schubert thus protested against what he considered misguided policies of adaptation and collaboration to placate Nazi authorities, in the end he seemed to have been won over as an active participant in this very policy himself. The course followed by Methodist and Baptist leaders, and the benefits their churches enjoyed in consequence, may have convinced him to do the same.

More serious, perhaps, than the question of motives is the issue of ethics. Hulda Jost and G.W. Schubert told their listeners in America that the Nazi authorities respected liberty of conscience as a matter of principle, and that their church enjoyed complete religious freedom, knowing all the while that was not true. While it is possible that Hulda Jost indeed believed, as she wrote to Dr. Thomalla,⁸⁴ that hostile Nazi measures were those of misguided officials and not in keeping with Hitler’s intentions, the reality was that her church found it increasingly difficult to

sent Germany abroad, I cannot but be convinced that the great evil of the World War (lies and deceit) have remained to this day.” And: “Dr. Thomalla, the Foreign Office, and the Church Ministry should help us to continue our quiet but effective world propaganda for the Third Reich in the same way as we have done with inner conviction in San Francisco before the great world conference” GC, RG11/1937—Central Europe.

81. G. W. Schubert to E. Gugel, 20 July 1934. GC, RG21/Box 91(CED). Schubert expressed alarm over the growing heathenism in Germany which paralleled similar developments in the Soviet Union.

82. Schubert probably refers to two highly controversial statements issued by the church in the Soviet Union in 1924 and 1928, respectively, which were designed to placate Soviet authorities. See Alf Lohne, *Adventists in Russia* (Review and Herald Publication Association, Washington, D.C., 1987), 99-100; 104.

83. Schubert to E. Gugel, July 20, 1934. GC, RG21/Box 91 (CED).

84. Jost to Thomalla, 1 February 1937. GC, RG11/1937—Central Europe. Also, cf. her remarks quoted in the *Oregon Daily Journal*, 1 May 1936.

carry out its mission. Both Schubert and Jost knew all too well the long list of infringements on the church's liberty.⁸⁵

Jost also deceived her listeners about her relations with the "higher-ups" in Germany when she boasted of personal friendship with Goebbels, Goering, and Hitler. Moreover, in misrepresenting the actual state of religious liberty in Nazi Germany, Jost and Schubert deceived not only Americans but, in their reports published in the *Adventbote*, their German church members as well. And we may question Hulda Jost, as did Nazi authorities, when she claimed that she and other German Adventist leaders stood firmly behind Nazism and desired nothing more than to use their influence abroad in the interest of the "new Germany."⁸⁶ There can be no doubt, however, that Jost and Schubert were willing participants in Nazi propaganda.⁸⁷ In doing so, they became party to Nazi deception about the true identity and intentions of National Socialism.

Lastly, this episode raises questions about the relationship between church and state. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, like other American Protestant churches, has long stood for the principle of separation. The church bases its position vis-à-vis the state on Romans 13, where Paul enjoins Christians to be subject to the authorities as ordained by God. This was interpreted that ALL governments were ordained by God and needed to be supported in active citizenship. While this view made them loyal and law-abiding citizens, Adventists also looked for the

85. Among these were the prohibition of Adventist youth organizations, of numerous religious publications, of distribution of free religious literature as well as the sale of religious literature by book evangelists, and the subjection of all editorial policy to pro-Nazi rules. In addition there was the past ban on the church, and the continued intimidation and surveillance by Gestapo and SD of church members, ministers, and church officials. Schubert was also well aware that the struggle of the Confessing Church was not simply due to meddling in politics.

86. Gestapo and other Nazi authorities sometimes commented cynically on these efforts by small denominations to convince them of their loyalty. Cf. the Annual Situation Report of the Sicherheitshauptamt, vol. I, in Heinz Boberach, ed., *Berichte des SD und der Gestapo über Kirchen und Kirchengemeinden in Deutschland, 1924-44* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1971), 325.

87. As early as 29 March 1933, R. Rühling, field secretary of the Central European Division, sent a letter to church headquarters in Washington, D.C., followed by a radiogram on 30 March requesting that action be taken to "counteract agitation against Germany." Letter, RG21/Box 89—Secretariat Files, 1933. CED. Also, RG21/1933—Central Europe. Radiogram, RG21/1933—CE Folder. Hulda Jost even boasted that her church paid all expenses of this great service rendered to the Nazi cause in America. Jost to Thomalla, 5 August 1936. RG21/1936—Central Europe. It is possible, however, that her other assignments by the ProMi were underwritten by that ministry.

Second Coming and a kingdom that was not of this world. They did not expect much improvement from any political order, and thus were politically uninvolved, or apolitical, except when the demands of the authorities were clearly in conflict with God's manifest will as revealed in Scripture. That was true of Adventists in Germany as well. The shock, however, of the dissolution of the denomination in 1933 led church leaders to place more emphasis on "support." Thus the church's "Memorandum,"⁸⁸ which was issued to clarify the church's position after it was banned, while citing Christ's familiar "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," fails to list the responsibility towards God. The memorandum also boasts of what in fact is a significant departure from Adventist tradition. The leadership had issued an appeal calling on church members to vote, and also told them to vote in support of Hitler. This practice was to be repeated in the future. There are numerous other examples of "support." They must be the subject of a separate study. By endorsing the National Socialist state, and by becoming the carrier of its ideology, the church had crossed over the boundary of separation and betrayed its special mission.

German Adventist leaders argued after the Second World War that, given the harsh realities of the Third Reich, the course they had selected was the only acceptable choice.⁸⁹ It was collaboration—particularly in the welfare sector—which kept the Church legitimate and out of serious trouble.⁹⁰ This was understood well enough at the time by Adventist leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. The alternative was not simply the prohibition of the church and its institutions, but untold suffering and even death for thousands of Adventists. What former members of a banned organization could expect at the hands of Nazi authorities is illustrated by the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, of whom virtually all suffered persecution, and an estimated one thousand to five thousand lost their lives in prison or concentra-

88. "Memorandum" addressed to the Reich Ministry of the Interior, 20 December 1933. GC, RG21/Documents:1920's-1950's—Central Europe and Northern Europe.

89. Minck in his defense before the president and vice presidents of the General Conference, San Francisco, 18 July 1950. Cf. Minck's notes on the meeting. Private archive of the author.

90. A 1940 letter by the Gestapo to the Reich Church Ministry states plainly that the denomination was allowed to continue to function "only" because of its work in the welfare sector. Müller to Haugg, 1 October 1940. RKM 51.001/23388, Nr.00177. Jost's friends in the ProMi continued to work in behalf of the denomination long after her death.

tion camps.⁹¹ Because of their collaboration with the state, German Adventists were spared such a fate. The question is whether a church preserved at the expense of conscience is a church saved. As Louise Kleuser put it in a letter to McElhany, "On some points, principle must be above expediency."⁹²

91. Estimates of Jehovah's Witnesses who lost their lives range up to five thousand; those imprisoned are estimated at up to ten thousand. Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The German Churches Under Hitler* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University, 1979), 561, n.66.

92. Kleuser to McElhany, 18 May, 1936. RG11/1936(II)—Jost, H.