

Proceedings against the Bishop of Meissen, Peter Legge, for Foreign Currency Exchange Violations (1935)

Abstract

In the so-called Reich Concordat of July 20, 1933, the Catholic Church had committed itself to a withdrawal from the political arena. In return, the Nazi regime had promised to preserve the church's special institutional rights and to guarantee its freedom of religion. But before the year was out, the state had begun to put pressure on the church by systematically hindering its group- and welfare-work, suppressing its publications, and arbitrarily harassing clerics.

With the domestic and international consolidation of the Nazi regime, the persecution of Catholics escalated dramatically. The church's cultural infrastructure was increasingly undermined, police supervision of church services and sermons was intensified, and cloisters and Catholic schools were closed. Furthermore, working in tandem with the police and the propaganda ministry, the Nazi regime led a regular campaign of harassment and defamation against clerics. Hundreds of monks, nuns, and priests were arrested and charged with corruption or moral offenses. Their show trials were intended to prove to the public that the church was riddled with avarice, treachery, homosexuality, and perversion. In the context of the Nazi persecution of Catholics, about one-third of all clerics in Germany were subjected to some kind of police or judicial disciplinary measures.

The photo shows the Bishop of Meissen, Peter Legge (sitting in the dock to the right of the door) in a show trial. He was charged with breaching foreign currency exchange control regulations in the repayment of a Dutch loan taken out by his predecessor in the diocese. His brother, Theodor Legge, is seated next to him, and Vicar General Wilhelm Soppa, administrative officer of the diocese, is seated at the end of the row of seats. Bishop Peter Legge was found guilty, sentenced to a fine, and forced out of his diocese for several years. Theodor Legge and Soppa were also found guilty; in addition to a fine, they also had to serve time in prison. The Nazi regime used accusations of foreign currency exchange violations, homosexuality, and pedophilia to get rid of troublesome clerics and defame the Catholic Church.

Source



Source: Trial for foreign currency exchange violations against the Bishop of Meissen before the 4th Criminal Division. View into the large jury courtroom of the Regional Court in Berlin/Moabit . In the dock to the right of the door (from left to right): The Bishop of Meissen, Peter Legge, his brother Theodor Legge, Vicar General Wilhelm Soppa. Unknown photographer.

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Recommended Citation: Proceedings against the Bishop of Meissen, Peter Legge, for Foreign Currency Exchange Violations (1935), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:image-2066>> [July 10, 2025].