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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

To all holders of Intelligence Memorandum No. 281

On page 3, last paragraph, second sentence, should read: "The ability of the Right as a whole to win broad popular support has not been demonstrated."

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

15 August 1950

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM No. 281

SUBJECT: The Bruderschaft and the Right-Wing Nationalist Groups

The Bruderschaft (the Brotherhood), a semi-covert, Rightist organization seeking to control future German remilitarization and to achieve influence and ultimate control over the governmental structure of West Germany, is the successor to similar groups which originated among German prisoners of war interned in England. The Bruderschaft has both a covert and an overt program. The overt program is designed to enlist popular support and divert unfavorable attention from the covert operations. In keeping with this division, the Bruderschaft is itself divided, with an inner council of twelve members apparently responsible for directing the activities of the larger and less secret body, the Bruderschaft.

Although the Bruderschaft has connections, some of them extremely tenuous, with many prominent Germans, its leadership is divided among a small group of men. Karl Kaufmann, former Nazi Gauleiter of Hamburg, is reportedly the undercover leader of the organization. The official chiefly active in political matters and in liaison with political parties is Alfred Franke-Grieksch, formerly in the Personnel Office of Heinrich Himmler's RSHA (Reich Security Office). A former Major in the German General Staff Corps, Helmuth Beck-Broichsitter, is in charge of plans for a future German army and maintains contact with groups of ex-officers. Apparently vying with each other for control on military questions are Oldwig von Natzmer, formerly commanding general of the Grossdeutschland armored division, and ex-General Hasso von Manteuffel. The backgrounds of these men are representative of the great majority of those associated with the Bruderschaft, largely ex-Nazis, or ex-officers.

Neither the covert nor overt program is clearly formulated. The overt program may be said to be a watered-down version of the covert, with the most anti-democratic and anti-US points deleted. The implications of the covert program, however, together with the political backgrounds of the leaders and most of the members, leave little doubt that the organization espouses neo-Nazism, with changes from the Nazi program dictated by an opportunistic appraisal of the present international situation.

The overt Bruderschaft program rejects underground activity and extremism of both Right and Left. It demands a genuine European Union and cooperation with the West, but not at the cost of widening the East-West rift in Europe.

Note: This memorandum has not been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force.

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The overt program specifically rejects German remilitarization. There is, however, ample evidence that leaders of the Bruderschaft will overtly support German remilitarization if they can secure control of the new German army.

The covert political program of the Bruderschaft has not been clearly defined even within the organization itself, but it is believed to contain four major aims: (1) elimination of "narrow nationalism" in Europe; reconciliation and alliance between France and Germany, with this alliance as the nucleus for a European Union; (2) dissolution of the Atlantic Pact; resistance to US and Soviet "interference" in European affairs, and elimination of international Bolshevism; (3) attainment of an independent and unified Germany under one central government, equal to all other nations and with its 1937 frontiers restored; and (4) elimination of German party politics and the proportional representation system, with the eventual goal of a "new state order" based on a so-called administrative decentralization and the acquisition of political power by a small elite group.

The covert program thus projects a united Europe in which Germany would presumably play the leading role by virtue of its size, power, and position. This Europe would withdraw from close political and military cooperation with the US and, although opposing "international" Bolshevism and Soviet interference in European affairs, could take a neutral position between the US and USSR or even enter as an equal partner into alliance with the USSR. The authoritarian form of government envisioned for Germany, despite Bruderschaft claims that it is against Fascism and dictatorship, would presumably be extended to the other European countries through the foreign neo-Fascists with whom the Bruderschaft maintains contact.

Available evidence suggests that the leaders of the Bruderschaft have no intention of forming their own political party, but hope rather to secure support for their program from the existing parties except according to their own account, those on the Left and the most extreme Right. Although the Bruderschaft denies the legitimacy of the Federal Government on the legalistic ground that the surrender of the Reich in 1945 was purely military and did not entail loss of German sovereignty, the leaders of the organization have endeavored to establish contact with federal officials. The most notable case is the Adenauer-Manteuffel exchange, but several instances of lower-level relationships between the Bruderschaft and regional officials of the federal coalition parties have come to light. There is as yet little evidence that governmental policy on either federal or Land levels has been directly affected by Bruderschaft efforts, and greater future success in this direction will depend on the strength of the Rightist parties and Bruderschaft influence over them.

The limited success which the Bruderschaft has encountered in its efforts to gain influence among the moderate government parties may well underly the increasingly open steps its leaders have taken to unite some of the Rightist parties into one group supporting Bruderschaft aims. In most instances, the ties between

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the Bruderschaft and Rightist parties are only loose ones, and the secrecy in which they are usually cloaked makes firm delineation of them impossible. It has been definitely ascertained that in April 1950, prior to the Landtag election in North Rhine-Westphalia, the Bruderschaft sponsored a meeting of several Rightist parties for the purpose of forming a Rightist election coalition in that Land. Several of the parties invited refused to cooperate, however, and the coalition formed did very poorly in the election. Similar attempts by the Bruderschaft may enjoy greater success in the future in view of the many similarities in membership and objectives between the Bruderschaft and the Rightist parties.

The Bruderschaft is also engaged in continuous promotional activity among German war veterans, especially former officers of the Wehrmacht. Although maintaining that its work among veterans is intended solely to organize them for securing greater veterans' benefits from the government, the Bruderschaft is known to be conducting extensive correspondence with former General Staff members on German remilitarization and other current military problems.

Although the leaders of the Bruderschaft apparently intended originally to remain a clandestine group for some time, the publicity they received in February and March 1950 appears to have tempted them to operate openly. The principal advantage of overt activity, broadened support from nationalist and militarist elements, may serve to increase Bruderschaft capacity to influence Rightist political parties, which desire the votes of those elements.

In general, however, the Bruderschaft appears to have lost strength since March, partly because of financial difficulties and partly because of differences among its leaders over future policies. Bruderschaft finances have never been sound. The shortage of funds has recently become acute, however, and this lack of money will increase the difficulties of Bruderschaft leaders in carrying on their activities. The differences between Bruderschaft leaders have arisen not only on the fundamental question of whether or not the Bruderschaft should operate more openly, but also as to whether the political or the military goals of the organization should predominate. In addition, personal rivalries among the leaders of both the military and political cliques tend to diminish the effectiveness of Bruderschaft efforts to create unity among German nationalists and militarists.

The future success of the Bruderschaft in influencing and coordinating the German Rightists depends not only on the ability of its leaders to sublimate their own differences and overcome other internal difficulties, but also, and even more heavily, on the development of the Rightist parties themselves. The ability of the Right as a whole to win broad popular support has been demonstrated. A gradual trend toward the Right has indeed been observable in elections over the past four years, but more noteworthy to date have been the relative moderation of the West German electorate and the limited extent of Rightist gains. The Right is thus not an immediate danger, but rather a long-term one. The degree of the danger is contingent to a great extent on the indefinite continuation or the intensification of the many serious problems facing the German people at present.

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The Bruderschaft appears as less of a threat as an organization than do the ideas and elements it represents. As a movement, the Bruderschaft is symptomatic of current dissatisfaction among German veterans and former Nazis with the established political parties and the present government of West Germany. Unless the allegiance of the bulk of these elements can be won for the Federal Republic and the West, they will continue to support one or another extremist group. This raises the possibility that a single, strong, Rightist party will eventually emerge to capture their loyalty. Even more serious, however, would be attempts by the present government or a successor to gain their support not by efforts to solve the current social and economic problems but through adoption of the program, methods, and personalities advocated by the Bruderschaft.

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