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New Bavaria Chief Promises To Unite All Political Levels

By Cpl. KLAUS MANN
Staff Correspondent

MUNICH, June 4—"My greatest ambition is to help in restoring gradually the honor of the German people."

The man who made this statement was Dr. Fritz Schaefer, whom the American Military Government authorities appointed temporary minister-president of Bavaria on May 28. Herr Schaefer has the appearance and bearing of a typical German bureaucrat, but also makes an impression of being a trustworthy honest citizen. Fifty-seven years old, by profession a lawyer, he has been playing a role in the public life of his country since 1918 when he entered politics "forced by circumstances" (as he put it, somewhat apologetically, in his autobiographical sketch).

From the beginning of his political career he was a member of the Bavarian Peoples' party—A Catholic group which he represented in the Landtag (state parliament) from 1920 to 1933 and president of which he became in 1930.

Being a devout and active Catholic, the new minister-president said he felt very definitely that Christian ethics should be the fundament of the future German democracy in general and of his own government in particular. He emphasized, however, that his concept of Christianity was broad and comprehensive—not limited to the doctrines of the Catholic church.

In the near future three ministers, in addition to Dr. Schaefer, will be appointed by AMG to run the departments of interior administration, finance and education. Dr. Schaefer said that among the men whom he suggested for these posts and other positions are former members of various political parties.

NON-PARTISAN REGIME

"Our administration," he said, will include former Social Democrats and former Communists. There will be Protestants and Jews and Catholics.

It will be a difficult task, he said, to reeducate the German people in a truly democratic spirit, but he believed that it could be done.

"The Germans are not essentially or incurably evil," he declared. "When they elected Hitler, and when they hailed him as their savior, they were not really aware of his program and his purpose. Later, when they found out, it was too late to oppose his regime. You, as a free American, can hardly imagine how thoroughly organized, how powerful and how ruthless the terror was in this country."

When Dr. Schaefer discussed the terroristic methods of Nazism he spoke from personal experience. He was arrested twice by the Gestapo, once in 1933 when the Nazis kept him in jail for several weeks, and the second time in 1944, soon after the attempt on Hitler's life.

It was only a few months ago that the man who is today minister-president of Bavaria was a prisoner in the notorious Dachau concentration camp.

'CIVIC COURAGE LACKING'

"That was the risk everybody ran who dared criticize Nazism," Dr. Schaefer said. "There were thousands of Germans who sounded off all the same. The concentration camps were full of such courageous citizens. But of course one has to admit that active anti-Nazi constituted a comparatively small minority within the whole of the nation. In general there was a regrettable lack of civic courage."

The minister-president suggested that any future German constitution or legal code should expressly differentiate between former Nazis or Nazi sympathizers on one hand and reliable anti-Nazis on the other.

"The whole nation will have to be gradually filtered through a kind of ideological sieve," he said.

"Every citizen will have to prove his political reliability. The privileges of democracy must not be extended to any person with an anti-democratic record or anti-democratic tendencies. No such person should be allowed to vote or to hold any important office."

The percentage of anti-Nazis in Bavaria—Herr Schaefer believed—may be somewhat higher, thanks to a strong Catholic influence, than it is in northern Germany. Yet he does not advocate a separation of Bavaria from the rest of the Reich. Rather, he hopes that the center of German political and cultural life may be gradually shifted from the north to the south—with Prussia reduced to a number of smaller states.