

## **Fritz Gerlich, publicist and prophet – how did he resist the Nazis?**

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### **Gerlich against Hitler**

Fritz Gerlich is still only mentioned in passing by most of the endless literature about the history of German resistance during the Third Reich. Yet this valiant newspaper editor managed to make his paper *Der gerade Weg* (“the straight Path”) into one of the fiercest opponents of National Socialism. He condemned their false doctrines, often personally attacking Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) (“Does Hitler have Mongolian blood?” was one of his headlines July 17, 1932) and revealed the criminal background of many in Hitler’s inner circle. Gerlich predicted what would happen during the Third Reich; since the spring 1932 he had been expecting to be murdered by the Nazis.

### **Gerlich was murdered at the Dachau Concentration camp**

The last edition of *Der gerade Weg* appeared on 5 March 1933, three days later Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945) (in his role as acting Munich police chief) banned the paper. The day later, on 9 March 1933, in this evening before Hitler took power in Bavaria the newspaper’s offices were cleared by an SA commando, and Gerlich was mistreated and arrested. After 16 months of agonising ‘protective custody’ in Munich, he was brought to the Dachau Concentration camp on 30 June 1934, on the ‘Night of the Long Knives’, and was murdered immediately.

### **I.**

#### **The research into Gerlich was not continuously sustained**

The research into Gerlich, if you can call it that, started early but was not continuously sustained. Already in 1946 a selection of articles by Gerlich and his fellow militant, the capuchin friar Ingbert Naab (1885-1935), were published as “Prophesies against the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich”, Munich. They were published by Johannes Steiner, the former head of the publishing house that had published the *Illustrierter Sonntag* and *Der gerade Weg*. In the meantime all the editions have been published on the Internet. Based on these documents Baron Erwein von Aretin (1887-1952) wrote a small biography of Gerlich in 1949 (Munich). He had also the benefit of his memories as former chief editor of another paper, the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*. His son Karl Otmar von Aretin (\*1932) re-issued it in 1983 (in Munich) and added a helpful epilogue.

## **„Secret File Gerlich/Bell“ written by Richardi and Schumann was misleading already in its title**

Two dissertations were presented in Munich, one by Oskar Bender in 1953, the other by Michael Schäfer in 1998 covered different angles, but have not been printed. Schäfer (\*1965) had access to Gerlich's papers as I (Morsey) did for an essay in 1993. The archive, until then unknown, has been kept up by Max A. Hoefter (\*1939) in Switzerland. The book by Hans-Günter Richardi and Klaus Schumann, „Secret File Gerlich/Bell“ (Munich 1993) was misleading already in its title. It overestimated the political role of Ernst Röhm (1887-1934) and the information that Georg Bell (1898-1933), a “double agent well known by the law courts” (Süss W.: Ueber Röhm's angebliche Pläne “für ein Reich ohne Hitler”, 1995) was sending from Berlin.

## **A fanatical seeker of the truth, Gerlich defended the credibility of Therese Neumann**

Gerlich underwent many metamorphoses in his profession, his politics and in his personal life. He was an almost fanatical seeker of the truth, incorruptible and intellectually independent. In that he did not consider himself to be a permanent part of any political movement. After an awakening experience in 1927 in Konnersreuth, a small town in northern Bavaria, the previously Calvinist historian converted to Catholicism and defended the integrity of the stigmatised Therese Neumann (1898-1962).

## **Four questions:**

In this article I would like to answer four questions: Who was Fritz Gerlich, and what were the preconditions and the driving force for his unforgiving enmity with Hitler and National Socialism? How did it come about that this state archivist on temporary leave since 1920 returned to publishing in 1930? Furthermore, where did Gerlich gain his surprising, even prophetic foresight about the true nature of the Hitler regime? The elections for the Reichstag (July 1932) gave the Nazi Party more than 13.7 million votes (37,3%). And finally, what role did Therese Neumann play in his personal and political conversion from Calvinism to a combative Catholicism? The answers to these questions do not follow one by one, but are embedded in the narrative of Gerlich's life and work. My

comments about Therese Neumann have no bearing on the current beatification process.

II.

## **Studies of natural sciences, history and anthropology in Munich**

Karl Albrecht Fritz Gerlich was born on 15 February 1883 in Stettin (now Szczecin), the oldest of four sons of a fish merchant (one died early, another in World War One). When Gerlich was 16, he lost his father Paul (1853-1899). Even before and after that his mother Therese (1849-1919) moulded her children in her Calvinist-reformatory attitude. During his school years at the Marienstift high school Gerlich developed an interest in natural sciences and history. His fondness for rowing and sailing came from the many years he spent at the Baltic Sea. After his high school exam in 1902 he began studying natural sciences and history in Munich, which became his second home. After three semesters he switched to history and anthropology. He chaired the Munich Free Students (competitor organisation to the student corps, fraternities, and against anti-Semitism) and became secretary of the Munich Liberal Workers Union. His political attitude was liberal-left, he was a strong supporter of parliamentarianism.

## **Start of his career in the Bavarian state archives**

In 1907 Gerlich completed his studies with a dissertation with medieval theme, and started his career in the Bavarian state archives, while continuing to study. In 1911 he gained permanent employment. During the same time he worked over three years on a mammoth project: the register of 26,300 articles of the (meanwhile completed) General German Biography (54 volumes), further proof of his unusual capacity for work.

## **His book, “History and Theory of Capitalism” was no basis for a career of university professor for economics**

Out of a friendship with a Munich chemist grew Gerlich’s first literary publication in 1913, a book about “Image idea and painting technique”, showing his wide spectrum of interests. That same year he published a book “History and Theory of Capitalism”(Berlin/Leipzig), however the book did not open up the hoped for career of a professor for economics at the university of technology (Munich). During World War One the archivist was “unfit for military service”. Politically he moved to the right and supported the policy of annexations of the Pan-German Fatherlands

party, in 1917 also in the magazine *Die Wirklichkeit* (“Reality”) that he edited with Count Karl Ludwig von Bothmer (1881-1947). The magazine was proscribed by the censor the same year, but helped Gerlich become a known entity in national-conservative circles.

### **Anti-Bolshevist**

After the collapse of the monarchy at the end of 1918 he was active in different associations as an advocate of civil society, including for example in the Anti-Bolshevist League. When the Soviet Republic was installed in Bavaria at the beginning of 1919, Gerlich fled with the social-democrat Government around Prime Minister Johannes Hoffmann (SPD, 1867-1930) to Nuremberg and later to Bamberg. He had an official mandate to enrol volunteers to liberate Munich, which succeeded at the end of May, albeit with regular troops.

### **His book about Communism was also against anti-Semitism**

After that the archivist continued his active opposition against Marxism, Communism and Anti-Semitism in different magazines, including the *South German Monthly*, edited by Paul Nikolaus Cossmann (1869-1942). In 1920 he published the book “Communism as the Theory of the Thousand Year Reich” (Munich) and showed that Communism – and later also National Socialism – had pseudo-religious characteristics. This book contains a whole chapter against anti-Semitism. He turned against the opinion that the destructive effect of marxism was due to the activities of Jews in its leadership. He also recognised the danger that the persecution of our Jewish fellow citizens could turn into a danger for the public.

In the meantime, Gerlich had gone back to his old political convictions. He became involved in the newly founded German Democratic Party and surprised his party colleagues at their national party conference (Dec 1919) with speeches on natural law. He didn’t, however, gain a seat in the Reichstag or in the Bavarian parliament, at the elections a year after, which proved to be catastrophic for his party.

### **III.**

#### **Main editor of the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten***

However Gerlich's anti-Marxist articles and his integration into bourgeois-conservative networks opened up a gigantic career jump. On 1 July 1920 he was made the editor in chief of the Münchner Neueste Nachrichten ("Munich's Newest News"). The publishing house behind the biggest paper in Southern Germany had just been taken over by a consortium that was secretly dominated by Rhenish-Westphalian heavy industry. Paul-Nikolaus Cossmann (1869-1942) was their confidant, he had recommended Gerlich.

Gerlich was granted leave of absence from his post of archivist, initially for 3 years and later extended for a few more times of 3 years until 1928. Under his contract as chief editor he was paid a handsome salary, and was granted the right to determine the direction of the paper in terms of his "national" conviction, furthermore he had a say over the employment and dismissal of journalists. Four months later he married Sophie Botzenhart (1883-1956), born Stempfle, from the Swabian village of Babenhausen. She was divorced and had a daughter. His marriage remained without children, his wife, later largely paralysed, had no recognisable influence over his journalistic work.

### **In 1923 he met Adolf Hitler three times**

The 38 year old editor in chief had comprehensive knowledge, a mind of sharp, even cutting intelligence, but was also opinionated and had a violent temper. He tried to get to the bottom of every problem, and had an explosive nature. As he had no experience in newspapers he first wrote his leading articles in series. Gerlich could dictate freely for hours. He quickly brought the liberal-left and business-friendly paper to the German-national line expected by its new owners. Later he declared decidedly that he had not, as was said about him, made all the nationalist errors of the once democratic paper. One of the journalists in 1920 wrote down a saying by Gerlich "democracy is my religion". He meant parliamentary democracy, not democracy as a formal regulatory element. However, in the politically charged pressure cooker that Munich was in those years he didn't always keep his distance to the nationalist Right in the "administrative cell" Bavaria, where Hitler's party was gaining influence. In 1923 (springtime or summer) he met with Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), once in Gerlich's apartment, once in his newspaper-office, once together with Eugen von Knilling (1865-1927, Bavarian Prime-Minister 1922-1924) and Eduard August Scharrer (1880-1932), member of the board of Münchner Neueste Nachrichten. Hitler didn't impress Gerlich.

## **„Beer Hall Putsch“: Gerlich became an avowed enemy of Nazism**

Only the failed putsch of 9 November 1923 (the „Beer Hall Putsch“) clarified the confused situation also for the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*. From one day to the other Gerlich became an avowed enemy of the Nazis. From then on he supported the conservative-federalist line of the Bavarian Peoples Party under Heinrich Held (1868-1938, Bavarian Prime-Minister 1924-1933). In 1924 he left the German Democratic Party and started to support for the policy of international understanding of Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929). He became an “angry defender” of the Weimar Constitution (1919) against its radical enemies (K.O. v. Aretin). Gerlich’s editorial support in his paper for the Bavarian Concordat with the Vatican in 1924/25 gained him the gratitude of Munich’s Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber (1869-1952), Papal Nuntius Eugenio Pacelli (1876-1958, the later Pope Pius XII), and also Held.

In 1926/27 Gerlich had a nervous breakdown, caused by overworking and too much alcohol. For some time he also lived separated from his wife. This crisis appears in hindsight as a harbinger of his exit from the paper, which happened in 1928, after a veritable falling out with the management of the publishing house. A generous redundancy payment allowed him to concentrate on one sole topic: Konnersreuth.

## **With the intention to “unmask the fraud” in Konnersreuth he experienced an “internal transformation”**

Because despite his original intention to “unmask the fraud”, the opposite happened. The critical Pomeranian Protestant experienced after the first meeting with Therese Neumann (1898-1962) an “internal transformation” (E. v. Aretin, Munich 1949). The previously mentioned awakening experience changed Gerlich’s personality and his way of life in a catholic direction. Since then he defended without compromise and with unerring certitude the plausibility of the stigmatised Therese Neumann. Already in 1929 he intervened in the broad public discussion around the topic of Konnersreuth with a book in two volumes (The stigmatised Therese Neumann, Munich). However, despite Therese’s predictions the book didn’t reach the level of readership he had hoped for.

## **Cardinal Faulhaber with Held: “great merit for peace”**

In November 1929 Gerlich returned to the Bavarian archive service for financial reasons, facilitated by an intervention of Cardinal Faulhaber with Prime Minister Held, to the astonishment of his superior. Held's justification was that Gerlich's journalism had earned him "great, unalienable merit for peace and calm in Bavaria, and the welfare of its citizens". However, the 1<sup>st</sup> Class State Archivist wasn't able to find his way back to the dusty tomes and his usual desk work. In the meantime he had adopted a fundamental belief that natural law as human rights predated the state and was therefore the basis for society and political life. He was looking for an opportunity to communicate this belief (which is in line with Catholic social teaching) to a wider audience with the aim to "lead the German people out of its current desolate situation".

### **Naab, Wutz and Waldburg-Zeil, the circle in Eichstätt**

In the meantime Gerlich had met in Konnersreuth three men with whom he shared his principles and political beliefs. They were the capuchin friar Ingbert Naab (1885-1935), a youth chaplain and writer, Franz Xaver Wutz (1882-1938) professor at the Catholic university in Eichstätt and, introduced by this biblical scholar, Prince Erich von Waldburg zu Zeil (near Leutkirch) (1899-1953). They remained since then closely connected as the nucleus of a circle of friends and colleagues in Eichstätt.

### **Therese Neumann: Gerlich would "once more in his life get back into a paper".**

The 30-year old Prince Waldburg-Zeil was a landowner and entrepreneur from Upper Swabia and practiced a Catholic "Christianity of deeds". He sought to win over young aristocrats to this cause and train them in conferences. Gerlich's radicalism in advocating his political beliefs impressed him so much that in spring 1930 he proposed Gerlich to "go back to the world of newspapers and politics" (20 Oct 1932). Waldburg-Zeil was willing to spend a quarter of a million Reichsmark on acquiring a newspaper. Gerlich was happy to accept the plan especially as Therese Neumann, during the time when he was leaving the Münchner Neueste Nachrichten, had predicted that he would "once more in his life get back into a paper".

## **Acquisition of „Illustrierter Sonntag“, but no purchase of „Welt am Sonntag“**

An opportunity presented itself in April 1930, when a fairly insignificant and loss-making paper, „Illustrierter Sonntag“ (Illustrated Sunday) was offered for sale in Munich. Gerlich and Waldburg-Zeil founded a publishing house under a disguise, Naturverlag (“Nature Publishing House”). The prince contributed the capital of 50,000 Reichsmark, whilst Gerlich was to publish and lead the paper. For his intellectual capital he received half the shares, in order for him to remain independent. The intentional name of Naturrechtsverlag didn’t seem opportune, because there were separate negotiations to buy another Munich paper, the “Welt am Sonntag”. Because this paper was financially healthy, combining it with the Illustrierter Sonntag (combined circulation of 70-80,000) would have made the project viable. However, Waldburg-Zeil couldn’t push himself to make the necessary sums available, “in an attack of fear and distrust against the project” 20 Oct 1932, which he regretted later.

## **The same printing house also printed the „Völkischer Beobachter“**

The Naturverlag bought the Illustrierter Sonntag in September 1930 from Münchner Buchgewerbehaus M. Müller & Sohn (Müller & Son Bookbinders, Munich) who owned the pledge on it. Gerlich gave the lacklustre paper the sub-title “the paper of common sense” and had his editorial freedom signed into contract, because the same printing house also printed the „Völkischer Beobachter“

## **Gerlich asked Therese Neumann for every commercial decision**

Waldburg-Zeil and Gerlich were so taken in by the mission “given to them” to educate the wider population that they “signed their cheques over to God”, starting “the undertaking only in the confidence and with the approval of Konnersreuth” (25 Aug 1930). This approval was sought continuously, Gerlich asked for answers for every commercial decision of the publishing house, especially before buying the paper, but also on private matters. He didn’t ask this “supernatural information desk” (M. Schäfer 1998) about the content of his articles, which were based solely on his wide knowledge, political experience and analytical mind. The answers from Konnersreuth, often based on questionnaires, were given after Therese Neumann’s ecstasies (“in a heightened state of calm”), at the end of these she could not remember any of the conversations.



### **The circle of friends in Eichstätt had a sense of security and of working together for a higher aim**

Her replies came, often communicated through the Konnersreuth parish priest Josef Naber (1870-1967), were sometimes direct, sometimes in vague phrases. Many times there were general pieces of advice such as “keep up”, “trust in The Saviour”, and “patience” – often aimed at Gerlich’s desperation about the paper’s ongoing financial difficulties. The remarks were however always accompanied by a (sometimes expressed) view that “it really is his business” that he should draw his own conclusions. The important thing was to take part in the “grace” by harnessing all one’s powers (28 March 1931). Always it said “we need much prayer”. That way the answers from Konnersreuth reached beyond life on earth. They gave the circle of friends in Eichstätt, where Gerlich often spent the weekends, a sense of security and belonging together and the knowledge of working together for a higher aim. Gerlich and Waldburg-Zeil described themselves as “tools” and “scouts of god” (25 August 1930).

### **Predicted during the ecstasies: needs the best deliberations and exertion of power to acquire merit**

Gerlich once expressed it like that: “The whole Konnersreuth circle knows that everything that is predicted during the ecstasies will succeed. We also know that for this success needs the best deliberations and exertion of all our powers. Obviously in order for those who participate to be able to acquire merit” (16 Dec 1930).

### **Waldburg-Zeil could not provide the required subsidies**

However, already after a few months after the start it became clear that due to the continuing economic crisis in Germany Prince Waldburg-Zeil could not, or only at the last minute, provide the required subsidies from his estate and industrial activities (mainly by selling land). Already in 1930 Gerlich wanted to apply for bankruptcy. Dr. Johannes Steiner (1902-1995) could only prevent him from doing so by pointing to their “trust in Konnersreuth”. Following that Gerlich was often close to a “desperate collapse” (18 March 1931).

## **Search for financing in Switzerland and meetings with the bishop of Chur**

Repeated attempts at gaining credit through financial backers in Switzerland, whom he visited together with Professor Wutz, were without success. Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich helped him on 9 May 1931 with a letter of recommendation for a trip to Chur to see the chair of the Swiss bishop's college, Georgius Schmid von Grüneck (1851-1932). He wrote in his letter that "the highly esteemed journalist and courageous advocate of natural law felt a calling to a new project". After that Gerlich also failed in his time-consuming attempts, also undertaken "at the behest of the ecstasies", to take over a small book and art publisher in Cologne.

## **Gerlich signed his political articles about liberalism, Marxism and socialism**

In spring 1931 negotiations to buy the Welt am Sonntag were taken up, but failed. After that Gerlich turned the Illustrierter Sonntag into an opinion and polemics paper. With encouragement from Konnersreuth he now also signed his political articles with his own name, which he had already done in popular science articles about liberalism, Marxism and socialism. A few weeks later he also appeared as the editor, however the financial backing of the paper remained unknown to the public. The journalistic "side job" of the archivist Gerlich had only been approved by his superior on two conditions – his service in the Bavarian archives would not suffer and his articles had to have "state supporting content".

V

## **Gerlich began his campaign with "Hitler and Wilhelm II"**

Gerlich began his campaign against National Socialism to illuminate his readers with a bang. Under the title "Hitler and Wilhelm II" (1859-1941), former German emperor (1888-1918), which was printed in red for the first time, he compared the two as megalomaniac politicians. The Völkische Beobachter (Hitler's own paper) thereupon commented on Gerlich's change of direction since 1916 on 2 Aug 1931 under the title "From pan-German to the advertising chief of Konnersreuth", and polemized against his pan-German and anti-Prussian view of history. The article further mentioned the "outrageously choleric tapeworm article writer".

## **“After years of heavy wrestling” Gerlich found the “way to his heart’s peace”**

Against this broadside Gerlich published his own „curriculum“ in an unusual way: Currently a “Catechumen of the Catholic Church”, he had been through “many aberrations” and had through his passionate temperament “certainly been lacking more than most of my contemporaries and had to make good all sorts of things”. He closed it with a confession that “but our Lord and Saviour...will much forgive the man who will come to him one day for the last judgement with a rope around his neck because of having openly articulated his convictions”. In the same article Gerlich also described himself as a follower of Aquinas’ and Aristotle’s philosophy of state and society. He had “after years of heavy wrestling” finally found the “way to his heart’s peace”, apart from the “intellectual insight” that Aquinas’ teachings were right.

## **Conversion to Catholicism, assisted by Naab, in the presence of Therese Neumann**

This long begun journey ended in September 1931 with his conversion to Catholicism, assisted by Fr. Ingbert Naab. It was held in a quiet ceremony in Eichstätt, in the presence of Therese Neumann. Gerlich’s marriage was also blessed by the church. After that cardinal Faulhaber gave him the confirmation, again in a private ceremony attended by Therese Neumann.

## **Hitler was reading the Der gerade Weg**

In August 1931 Gerlich noticed with satisfaction that the German papers were taking “an increasing interest“ in his articles. Especially the Nazi ones, whose repeated “angry declarations” he took very seriously. He expected “that we will be among the first to be hanged when the day of ‘liberty’ for the German people comes” (13 Dec 1931). As Hitler was noticing the attacks against him, Gerlich considered it an “achievement” that the Fuehrer was confronted “with common sense at least every 8 days” (Gesunder Menschenverstand, or common sense was also the subtitle of the paper). A photograph taken in the Berlin hotel Kaiserhof confirms that Hitler was reading the Der gerade Weg. On the desk next to him is the 17 Jan 1932 edition of the paper.

### **The “Eichstätt circle” was unhappy about the inordinate level of aggression in Gerlich’s articles**

Gerlich’s fellow campaigners in the “Eichstätt circle” were unhappy about the inordinate level of aggression in Gerlich’s articles, especially his attacks on Chancellor Heinrich Brüning’s policies (1885-1970), which he saw as a concealed dictatorship. Fr. Ingbert Naab warned his friend on 14 Oct 1931 against continuing these attacks, because Therese Neumann had stated (“without any prompting”) that “we should pray a lot for Brüning and President Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934) , for them to remain in government. Law and order will hold as long as they are at the rudder. After that we will have political mayhem”.

### **Hitler threatened the printing house with cancelling the contract to print the Völkische Beobachter**

From January 1932 Gerlich also expressed the political direction of his weekly paper by changing its name to Der gerade Weg (The straight Path) with the new subtitle Deutsche Zeitung für Wahrheit und Recht (German paper for truth and the law), the old name Illustrierter Sonntag (Illustrated Sunday) only remained as second subtitle. The publishing company changed its name from Naturverlag (Nature Publishing House) to Naturrechts-Verlag (Natural Law Publishing House). Six weeks later his manager was given the welcome (and financed) opportunity to cancel the print contract. Hitler had threatened the printing house with cancelling the (more lucrative) contract to print the Völkischer Beobachter . From then on (14 Feb 1932) Der gerade Weg was printed in the catholic publishing house J.G. Manz AG. The paper also moved its offices to Hofstatt 4-6.

### **Against the “spiritual pestilence” of the Nazi Movement, supported by Fr. Naab**

Gerlich warned without letup against the “spiritual pestilence” of the Nazi Movement, supported by Fr. Ingbert Naab. On 31 July 1932 he wrote that it signified for him “lies, hatred, fratricide and boundless want”. Because Gerlich had understood from early on that the brown doctrines were at their root a religious phenomenon, he was able to accurately predict their resulting inner dynamics and danger. This freed him from the assumption

that the Nazis could be encountered or even tamed with the usual political means, an assumption that was popular also in catholic circles. From his analysis he deduced why and how Hitler and his party leadership (in which a “mix of criminal and pathological elements was strongly represented”) would push the German people into disaster.

### **To renew political life, based on human rights**

However Gerlich didn't stop at the analysis of and resistance to these modern false doctrines and totalitarian surrogate religions. He was actually planning an “ideological counter-attack” to renew political life in Germany, based on Catholicism and human rights. The hope that this renewal would come from a “restitution of the Holy Roman Empire of German nation” with Austria at its centre, and from a creation of a “European peace-federation of states”. Often he would refer to the social encyclical of Pope Pius XI *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931): subsidiarity and solidarity as the basis of the state and civil society.

### VI.

#### **Naab “Mr Hitler, who voted for you?”, printed on 20 Million flyers**

Despite or because of Gerlich's often exaggerated criticism and his federalist-anti-Prussian stance his paper could not get out of the red. The circulation of *Der gerade Weg* rarely surpassed 40,000 copies. Even an article by Fr Ingbert Naab on 20 March 1932, “Mr Hitler, who voted for you?”, printed on 20 Million flyers after the first round of elections for Reich President, didn't bring any relief. Even the heavily promoted ‘secret reports’ from Moscow, which *Der gerade Weg* printed in 41 series from early 1932, were without echo. The reports were meant to prove that the Bolsheviks were supporting the rise of the Hitler movement. These ‘Russian reports’ consisted of excerpts from the minutes of sessions of the executive committee of the Communist International in Moscow (the authenticity of these reports has not been verified, the sources unknown).

#### **Bought two pistols and deposited 4,500 Swiss Francs in a Swiss bank**

Gerlich wouldn't be intimidated by the repeated death threats from the Nazis. After an attempt on his life he applied for a gun licence at the police directorate in Munich and bought two pistols, which he since then always carried with him. Furthermore he took precautions in case of civil war sparked off by the “Nazi-Sozis”. In order to stay able to publish he

deposited 4,500 Swiss Francs in cash at a bank in Switzerland (in 1934, while in prison, he had to hand over the money to the Reichsbank).

### **Der gerade Weg was banned**

After the Reich government of Franz von Papen (1879-1969) on 20 July 1932 had put the state of Prussia under political co-ordination of the Reich government (Gleichschaltung), Gerlich called for the deposition of the Reich President and for putting members of the government in Berlin on trial for condoning the daily killings. There upon Der gerade Weg was banned for four weeks. Moreover, Gerlich received a fine of 100 Reichsmark from his boss at the archive for “abusing the Reich President and denigration of Reich ministers”. The fine was accompanied by a warning: in the next case of a conflict between his political activities and his “more narrow official duty” he would have to “decide between one and the other career”.

### **Criticised negotiations between the Centre Party with the Nazi Party**

After the paper’s restriction period had passed (his 30-pages long defence was rejected by the Reich court), an unabashed Gerlich again took up his “dirty business” (12 March 1932) in September 1932. He sharply criticised the coalition negotiations that were happening between the Centre Party and the Bavarian People’s Party with the Nazi Party (11 Sept 1932). Gerlich predicted that after the seizure of power, the National Socialists would “ruthlessly push” the two denominational parties “against the wall”. He saw that the “absoluteness of evil” was expressing itself in Hitler.

### **Faulhaber: “Gerlich provided the Völkischer Beobachter with a superior adversary in the battlefield”**

Gerlich was supported in his conviction by Faulhaber. The archbishop of Munich advised an Episcopal critic that this journalist had “raised a previously barely known paper to become a people’s paper, which stormed into the ranks of the National Socialists and which for the first time had provided the Völkischer Beobachter with a superior adversary in the battlefield”, this had caused “in the circles of the Völkischer Beobachter mad rage whilst the local clergy was ecstatic”.

### **Gerlich supported Waldburg-Zeil in negotiations with his business partners**

However, such ‘enthusiasm’ wasn’t enough to reduce the structural deficit of *Der gerade Weg*, which had begun to appear twice-weekly in December 1932. Until then Prince Waldburg-Zeil had put around “400,000 Reichsmark into the paper”, as calculated by a bank director instructed by him. The restructuring of the paper would cost another 100,000 Reichsmark. The donor, who like Fr Ingert Naab and Prof Wutz found Gerlich’s polemics too harsh, was also battling with problems in his family and with the beneficiaries of his trust. He was “close to ruin” (R. Beck, *Widerstand aus dem Glauben*, 1993). Gerlich supported his friend through complicated negotiations with his business partners and showed remarkable economic and banking knowledge. The archivist could not get himself to drop his “professional re-insurance with the dying father state” as Waldburg-Zeil had encouraged him to (26 Dec 1932).

## VII.

### **The day Hitler became chancellor, Gerlich saw as the beginning of “Germany’s via dolorosa“**

The 30 Jan 1933 (the day Hitler became chancellor) Gerlich saw as the beginning of “Germany’s via dolorosa“, which he accordingly commented critically. On 18 February he entered the Bavarian People’s Party to show his solidarity with the catholic parties. Five days later he wrote to a friend in Switzerland: “The situation here is dismal....We don’t know from today to tomorrow whether we have to flee the country or will be slain.” Until 5 March, the day of the elections to the Reichstag, another five editions of *Der gerade Weg* could be published.

### **Trying to convince the Wuerttemberg statepremier Eugen Bolz to intervene with Hindenburg**

In the evening and morning of 8 and 9 March Gerlich and Waldburg-Zeil undertook a relief action that seemed already surreal. They went to Stuttgart to convince the Wuerttemberg statepremier Eugen Bolz (1881-1945) that he should intervene with Hindenburg against the feared forcible co-ordination (*Gleichschaltung*) of Southern Germany. They carried with them documents that incriminated the Nazi Party leadership, starting with Hitler. The documents were provided by the agent Georg Bell (1898-1933), who had come with them from Munich. Bolz had however already resigned. Waldburg-Zeil asked his brother, Count

Konstantin, to bring the documents involved (whose authenticity is not established) to a Swiss bank. To this day they have not surfaced again.

### **No move to Switzerland, because “I am ready to stand for what I have written with my life”**

Shortly after Gerlich's return to Munich began his previously mentioned suffering. He rejected the urgings of his colleagues to move to Switzerland, because “I am ready to stand for what I have written with my life”. His arrest also sealed the fate of his paper.

### **Gerlich beaten by Amann and incarcerated for 16 months**

March 9, 1933, a SA-Troop undertook his first attack against a Munich paper to the offices of the Gerade Weg. Gerlich was severely beaten by Max Amann (1891-1957, later responsible for the complete NS-Press). Gerlich had been taken into ‘protective custody’ (Schutzhaft) and had been mistreated again mid May 1933. The Nazi government in Bavaria started disciplinary procedures against the archivist. Even before it began he was dismissed from the civil service on 1 September. Gerlich endured his agonising incarceration of 16 months with the conviction of a martyr, his example uplifted many of his fellow sufferers. Sometimes he thought of founding an international catholic news agency. He immersed himself in the life-of-Jesus research by reading theological literature and he occupied himself with the fate of stigmata in previous centuries. His wife, like Waldburg-Zeil, Wutz and Steiner, was only allowed to visit him briefly in long periods. Letters to Therese Neumann from his time in prison are not known.

### **Gerlich murdered at the Dachau Concentration camp without indictment**

After 16 months of agonising ‘protective custody’ in Munich, he was brought to the Dachau Concentration camp on 30 June 1934, on the ‘Night of the Long Knives’, and was murdered immediately.

Only on 26 July 1934, more than three weeks after his murder, could Gerlich's wife make his death known “to all dear friends” in two Munich newspapers (“instead of cards”). She was not allowed to give the day, the manner nor the place of his death and was not allowed to point to the requiem in the St Boniface church, which took place two days later.



**As one of the first the insurrection of his conscience, fulfilling the mission given to him through Therese Neumann's mediation**

Gerlich didn't fear man. He had recognised like almost no other the dangers coming from the heresies of the 20th century, the totalitarian movements. He warned about them in every way, but without success. This Munich archivist, publisher and prophet dared as one of the first the insurrection of his conscience, fulfilling the mission given to him through Therese Neumann's mediation. He was conscious of the consequences of his resistance against the National Socialists, and in its consequences ready for martyrdom.

**Gerlich and Naab defeated in their struggle for "freedom and law"**

Gerlich and Fr Ingbert Naab (who had to emigrate and died near Strasbourg on 28 March 1935) were defeated in their struggle for "freedom and law" (as in the subtitle of *Der gerade Weg*). Wutz and Waldburg-Zeil survived the Hitler regime without any political persecution. The prince already set his friend and comrade a memento in his memories in 1941, which have hitherto not yet been printed.