

## CHAPTER 7

# Hitler's Spymaster on Beacon Hill

FOR THOSE WHO WERE WILLING TO TAKE SERIOUSLY THE “PARANOID fringe,” there were plenty of warning signs concerning the German consul. In the summer of 1940, around the same time Mary Brandegee shared her suspicions with Virgil Peterson at the Boston FBI Office, no fewer than three government officials involved in national security and foreign policy raised the prospect that Herbert Scholz was up to no good.

The first was FBI Special Agent L. K. Cook. On June 4, 1940, he sent a memorandum to FBI Assistant Director Hugh Clegg explaining that he, Cook, was developing a possible informant who had a close relationship with Scholz. What exactly Cook suspected is unclear. In Scholz's FBI file, which was released in 2017 under the Freedom of Information Act, the Cook-Clegg memorandum is highly redacted: it is not known whether the memo spells out evidence that Scholz was using his position to spy on the United States or engage in propaganda activities. We do know from the memo that Scholz was pressing the potential informant to join a small circle of German Americans who had regular, secret meetings with the consul. Through an intermediary, the potential informant told the FBI he was “anxious to cooperate with American authorities” but at the same time was hesitant to “contact the Bureau himself because he felt it would endanger his life.” US authorities may have thought Scholz benign, but this informant believed otherwise, figuring he could not rely even on the FBI to protect him from the SS man.<sup>1</sup>

Given the sensitivity of snooping around a foreign diplomat, Cook needed permission to pursue his lead. Clegg passed the request along to Hoover, and on June 12 the FBI director wrote to Peterson, encouraging him to interview the middleman who was talking to Cook on behalf of the potential informant. But in closing Hoover warned that Peterson “should not, of course, conduct any investigation in this matter relative to Herbert Scholz, the German consul, without specific authority from the Bureau.” That authorization never came. An unsigned June 26 State Department memo claimed the FBI had opened an investigation into Scholz, but this was a false alarm. The FBI neither took up Cook’s lead nor opened an investigation of Scholz in June 1940.<sup>2</sup>

On the same day the State Department put out its erroneous memo, Lieutenant D. J. Harkins of the Office of Naval Intelligence wrote to his superiors in Washington, urging them to pay attention to “the situation in Boston.” Harkins, who was posted to the Boston headquarters of the First Naval District, deemed “it best to review entirely the facts concerning the Boston situation because present-day happenings indicate that nothing can be considered too far-fetched and fantastic.” The happenings in question were the New York Christian Front’s alleged seditionist activities. Only two days earlier, the fronters had been let off at trial. Harkins did not join the public and the Catholic hierarchy in discarding the New Yorkers as mere crackpots; he considered the New York fronters genuinely dangerous and feared that others like them were operating in Boston, potentially at Scholz’s direction. Writing to Captain Elliott Bodley Nixon, the Office of Naval Intelligence’s counterespionage chief, Harkins described Scholz as “an Obersturmgewandführer in the Schutz Staffel (Colonel of the elite Himmler Black Shirt Guards) . . . who is very clever and thorough” and who “might have approached or been approached by extremist elements” in Boston. In particular, Harkins worried that Scholz was targeting “meetings of persons who are interested in combating Communism.”<sup>3</sup>

Harkins dared to take the paranoid fringe at face value, and his instincts were correct. But Nixon never responded or set any investigations in motion. Instead he shelved the memo for a year. The fact was that Nixon was more concerned about Harkins than Scholz. Under Nixon, Navy intelligence was “plunged . . . into the dark world of spies, surveillance, and secret operations” at home. Mole hunts are common side effects of counterintelligence, and Nixon thought Harkins himself might be a Nazi spy. Only on June 27, 1941, did the Harkins memorandum finally make its way to the FBI.<sup>4</sup>

A third official who was wise to Scholz was Roosevelt's deputy undersecretary of state, Sumner Welles. "Are you sure that the FBI is doing all that it should be doing in this very important matter?" Welles asked Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, the State Department's point person on security. "I have every reason to believe that Dr. Scholz is doing far more than merely giving Sunday night suppers at his house." But Welles, writing on July 5, 1940, was too quick on the draw. America's fledgling intelligence apparatus was not yet ready to focus on the likes of Scholz. Even after the United States entered the war, "Nazi secret service covert penetration . . . was considered a distant priority," according to historian Christopher Vasey. It was the Japanese who attacked the United States and forced Washington to join the conflict, and it was the Japanese who got most of the attention. Nazi espionage in the United States was in fact robust, including successful efforts to recruit conservative Protestants and former KKK members to form an organization similar to the Christian Front. But no one was listening to Welles in 1940, just as no one was listening to Harkins, Cook, and Brandegee.<sup>5</sup>

Moran, however, was listening to Scholz, and the leader of the Boston Christian Front liked what he was hearing. The first known meeting between the two men came in late July 1940, although it is probable that their relationship began earlier. Joining the July meeting was Dr. Heribert von Stempel, a German aristocrat and the first secretary of the German Embassy in Washington. But Stempel, like Scholz, was not just a diplomat. While under interrogation after the war, Stempel admitted that he was also the chief administrator of "the fund called the *Schmiergeld*," which the Nazis used to make payments to their US agents.<sup>6</sup> This made Stempel—again, by his own admission—"one of the major pay-off men for German propaganda activities in the United States." During the July 1940 meeting, Stempel "explained to Moran that he represented a German-American group in New York which was interested in his work." Thus did Moran find his next outstretched hand, emanating from the German Consulate.

Working with diplomats was no doubt intoxicating for Moran. Even better, one of them was a baron. Moran's fluent German, and the firm respect for German culture and nationalism he had learned at the seminary, stood him well. And payments from Stempel's fund would stabilize the Christian Front's finances. In return, Scholz would gain a useful agent in Boston. In his postwar interview, Scholz explained that, before he took up with Moran, he had found it difficult to do serious propaganda work in the city and the wider region.

“I had no German-American Bund or other German societies to help me,” he said. Boston was not a heavily German area, and, in any case, German nationals and societies were the focus of intense surveillance by US intelligence and law enforcement agencies. US officials presumed that only German immigrants and citizens of German extraction would be tempted to spy for the fatherland.<sup>7</sup>

That made Moran an extraordinary asset: a homegrown American who was known for his patriotism. Moran was strongly associated with Catholicism, Americanism, and anti-Communism, but he was not widely recognized as an anti-Semite. It was only Jewish activists, undercover journalists like Derounian, and SS officers like Scholz who seemed to recognize Moran’s latent Nazi potential. And as a US citizen, he benefited from the full range of constitutional protections, making him difficult to investigate. Indeed, because his organization was religious in nature, Moran was powerfully insulated from government scrutiny. Religious freedom may not have inoculated Moran against suspicion, but it did mean that law enforcers and intelligence agents would have a hard time penetrating the Christian Front. This was especially so after the trial had ended without guilty verdicts. To go after the Christian Front again might be perceived by the public as an unconscionable exercise in double jeopardy, which would leave the FBI and others extra cautious.

There was a potential snag, however. Although Moran was a convinced, if semi-covert, anti-Semite, he was not an obvious friend of Nazis. He had publicly denounced aspects of Nazism, even as he justified Hitler’s oppression of Jews. And by 1940 Moran was not looking for anyone or anything to believe in. He knew where he stood: he was as ardent a Catholic as one could hope to find, in lockstep with Church doctrine. Moran was as true a believer in the Mystical Body as Hess and Himmler were in the wisdom of National Socialism. The Swastika could never have replaced the sign of the Cross, Hitler could never have replaced Coughlin, and the German volk mattered to Moran only insofar as he understood them to be Christians under assault from Judeo-Bolshevism.

Moran was willing to do Scholz’s bidding because he recognized that what was good for the Nazis was also good for the front and because he was able, ultimately, to reconcile Nazism with his faith in Christ. This is a critical point to remember, as we dive into Moran’s career as a Nazi propagandist: he was never a double agent. Although he took orders from an SS officer, his allegiance remained firmly with Christ and with a Christian-nationalist view of

America. He was able to square the circle thanks to certain developments in Catholic thought. Perhaps counterintuitively, the most important of these developments was the Catholic embrace of the nascent doctrine of human rights. Indeed, Father Coughlin was one of the most forceful exponents of human rights in the United States at a time when the overwhelming majority of the public had never heard of the concept. Catholic human rights taught Coughlin, and Coughlin taught Moran, that all people could be saved by joining Christ's body. No one was so intrinsically tainted as to be beyond communion with the divine. Thus Moran could not align with Hitler in seeking to eliminate Jews as a race, for doing so denied the innate capacity of every Jew to become a Christian and therefore to be saved. But nor could humanity be saved in the absence of Christ's body, which Communists wished to destroy. Moran understood that Nazi racism was antithetical to his religion, but he also understood that, without his religion, there was no future for humanity. The Nazis were the enemy of Moran's enemy, and so became his friend.

### **A Catholic Makes Peace with Nazism**

As we have seen, Moran strongly opposed certain elements of Nazi policy. In particular, he scorned Nazi efforts to tailor the human population with an eye toward "racial hygiene." Moran was pro-natalist, favoring policies that encouraged childbearing. But his interest here was spiritual rather than political. Raising a family was a religious good, not a matter of concern to the state—although Moran had no complaints about the state using its power to promote his preferred spiritual ends. In any case, the goal of his pro-natalism was to build Christian societies, whereas the goal of Nazi pro-natalism was to build Aryan societies, an objective that was meaningless to Moran. And as a doctrinaire Catholic, he could never have supported Nazi eugenic policies that allowed abortions on racial grounds. Most broadly, while the Nazis were driven by a particularistic interest in the fortunes of the German *volk*, Moran thought of himself as something very different: a humanist, concerned for the spiritual lives of all people rather than the political ambitions of any one nation.

Moran's humanism was not without complications, of course. His Judeo-Bolshevist anxieties made him profoundly anti-Semitic. But his anti-Semitism was religious and cultural in nature, not racial. Moran's anti-Semitism occupied a separate space; it was neither Nazi racism nor the old Catholic

anti-Judaism. Catholic anti-Judaism reflected suspicion and condemnation of Christ killers, while Nazi anti-Semitism considered Jews racially impure. Moran's anti-Semitism, in contrast to both of these, was grounded in what historian Kenneth Stow calls "the centuries-old fear of Jewish pollution." On this view, the Jews were an ongoing challenge, not merely the unapologetic heirs to deicide. But the pollution Moran had in mind was not the genetic pollution the Nazis stamped out by means of the Final Solution. The problem from Moran's perspective was the Jewish propensity toward Communism, which he saw as an ontological deficiency within Judaism, not a biological deficiency within individual Jews. Recall Father Coughlin's distinction between good Jews, who upheld the covenant with God, and bad Jews—atheists who tried to destroy that covenant, and all religion, using the weapon of Communism. As always, Moran was in Coughlin's camp. Unlike Nazis, Moran thought Jews were redeemable, even if, in practice, many did not want to be redeemed and sought to prevent the redemption of others.<sup>8</sup>

Moran's refusal to countenance racial anti-Semitism was in keeping with "modern" Church positions that emerged from the revolutionary development of personalism in the nineteenth century. Within Catholicism, personalism was a response to scientific rationalism, evolutionary thought, and enlightenment political movements toward liberalism, on the one hand, and collectivism, on the other. Personalism encompasses a complex of views, full of nuance and driving toward diverse conclusions. Rather than explore personalism deeply here, it is enough to establish that the Catholic embrace of human rights and attendant anti-racialism followed from a theological focus on the person.

Moran imbibed his humanist ethic from Father Coughlin. What has gone unexamined by Coughlin's numerous biographers and in the 350-plus books written about him is that Coughlin was the first prominent priest in the United States to champion human rights. His human rights discourse started as early as 1934, with his "Sixteen Points of the National Union for Social Justice." In the last of these points, Coughlin announced, "I believe in preferring the sanctity of human rights to the sanctity of property rights." The "chief concern" of government should be the poor, whereas "the rich have ample means of their own to care for themselves." Or, as Coughlin put it in another context, "human rights must prevail over commercial rights greedily guarded by a few."<sup>9</sup>

These words are startling both because few today would associate a strident anti-Semite and Christian chauvinist like Coughlin with human rights

discourse and because that discourse was virtually nonexistent in the 1930s. But Coughlin was consistent in his views. For instance, he fought a long rhetorical battle with the American Liberty League, a group of conservative businessmen, on the basis of human rights. "They minimize the sanctity of human rights," Coughlin said of the league bankers, who cared about only their "bonds and their assets." Under the Liberty League's philosophy, Coughlin argued, ordinary people "own no property, possess no human rights, [and] are economic slaves." So resolute was Coughlin in his human rights thinking that he even turned against his betters in the Catholic hierarchy, when he insinuated that William Cardinal O'Connell of Boston deserved criticism for allegedly supporting the league.<sup>10</sup>

Moran and the Christian Front repeatedly demonstrated their humanistic worldview and the anti-racialism this worldview inspired. One straightforward example is Moran's response to Max Bradley, a Boston-area pro-Nazi speaker who wanted to debate Moran on the question, "What, if anything, besides religion, do you hold against Hitler?" At the Christian Front meeting of July 1, 1940, Moran declared that he would never let Bradley take the stage. Moran "wanted to show his disapproval of Hitler's intolerance." As far as Moran was concerned, Roman Catholicism was a vehicle of salvation for all humanity and all humanity had the opportunity to accept Christ; as a Christian religious organization, the Christian Front was bound to promote this worldview. Nazi racists like Bradley would not be welcome because they eschewed the common humanity that true religion incorporated.<sup>11</sup>

Two weeks later, on July 15, an aggrieved Bradley showed up for the Christian Front meeting at Hibernian Hall and demanded to speak. He had come with what he called "definite proof that Teuton blood is whiter than any other kind of blood." But Moran refused even to discuss the issue. "The beliefs of the Front are diametrically opposed to those of Mr. Bradley," he thundered. An African American woman seated in the back of Hibernian Hall "stood up to state that she was living proof that Mister Bradley's theories were false." "Colored blood flows in my veins," she announced proudly. Bradley was hustled out of the hall without finishing his diatribe.<sup>12</sup>

It is worth lingering a moment on episodes like these, for they reveal much about the intellectual currents in which Moran and the Christian Front swam. Some historians have taken for granted that the Christian Front was grounded in white supremacy, but such assumptions betray a presentist mindset that fails to account for the kinds of nonracial bigotry exercised in 1930s and 1940s

America.<sup>13</sup> Certainly the front expressed views that overlapped with those of white supremacist organizations like the Klan. The front and the Klan were united against Communism, for instance. But the front did not join the Klan in mourning the Confederacy and promoting white supremacy. The front's anti-Semitism was a product of Catholic doctrine rather than racist beliefs; the front was anti-Semitic because it equated Jews with Communists and Communists with enemies of Christ, not because it saw Jews as insufficiently white or as race traitors. In fact, while American racists were lynching and sterilizing African Americans, agitating against "race mixing," and seeking to return African Americans to plantations—whether via forced prison labor or the renewal of slavery—the front allowed African Americans in their ranks. Joseph McWilliams, who was sometimes called "Joe McNazi," even recruited in Harlem. On one occasion he stormed into the neighborhood and inveighed against "the slave market of the North Bronx, where the Negro women stand around as if on a slave block and fat, lazy, kikes come around and offer them 15 cents an hour to clean their apartments." McWilliams claimed that the Christian Front would "mobilize all the Negroes" in Harlem and that, "on the day of reckoning, the Negroes will join with the Christians in annihilating the common enemy." Chillingly, McWilliams promised African Americans who responded to his call that they "would get first choice on his extermination squads."<sup>14</sup>

McWilliams's story is especially complicated because he had previously been associated with the Klan. But he must have bought into Coughlin's and the Catholic Church's turn toward human rights. By the time he was in New York, McWilliams was suffering the Judeo-Bolshevist fever, and he was prepared to spread the virus even among the Klan's racial enemies. African Americans were little interested in heeding the call, though. McWilliams's attempt to recruit Harlemites into the Christian Front came to nothing, according to a report for the NAACP by the Baptist minister and future US congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Powell also found no evidence of Christian Front organizing in Harlem beyond McWilliams's exhortations.<sup>15</sup>

Like McWilliams, Moran was happy to work with African Americans who shared his anti-Semitism, a position blessed implicitly by the modernizing, human rights-oriented Church. One of these African Americans was Lawrence Dennis, the Harvard-educated author of *The Coming American Fascism* (1936). Dennis has been called "a black voice in the right-wing wilder-

ness,” and Moran was proud of his autographed collection of Dennis’s books. Moran told one FBI informant that he thought Dennis had “class.”<sup>16</sup>

It is not my aim here to suggest that Moran held liberal positions on civil rights or that he was even representative of his community. Interactions like Moran and Dennis’s were extraordinary in 1930s Boston, where white Catholics were noted for their “unhappy social prejudices.” As historian William Leonard put it, “Very little truly interracial activity existed between white and black Catholic Bostonians during the first half of the twentieth century.” My point, rather, is that we will misunderstand the Christian front’s motivations if we insist that currently popular logics of racism and anti-Semitism held universally during the Christian Front’s heyday. For Moran, Coughlin, and others in their camp, Catholic human rights simultaneously rejected racism and required anti-Semitism.<sup>17</sup>

It is via anti-Semitism that Moran and some other Catholics reconciled with Nazism. The humanism that rejected racial thought could also inspire an anti-Communist frenzy, which the Judeo-Bolshevist myth refracted into anti-Semitism. This much was clear in the work of German theologians such as Robert Linhardt, a Jesuit priest and author of the 1933 treatise *Constitutional Reform and Catholic Conscience*. Linhardt argued that Catholic political theory should welcome “the inalienable human rights of the person,” as historian James Chappel recently put it. Linhardt also stressed “human dignity” as the backbone of Catholic political thought. Such statements led some to presume that Linhardt was a democrat, if not a socialist. But historian Kevin Spicer has confirmed that Linhardt “support[ted] the NSDAP in his preaching and teaching.”<sup>18</sup>

This reckoning was possible, for Linhardt and others, because both Nazism and Catholic humanism were deeply opposed to Communism and because the Nazis, despite a fractious relationship with established churches, were not overtly hostile to Christianity itself. As Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler’s most influential religious theorist, argued in *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, Christianity needed to be “reformed and saved from the ‘Judeo-Roman’ infections of its clerical representatives.” Reformed, not scrapped. Rosenberg was careful never to attack Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup> Given the options—Fascism or Communism—the choice for Catholic humanists was clear. A theology of personalism and human rights could flourish only if Christ were present; under Communism there would be no such presence, whereas under

Fascism at least some form of the Mystical Body of Christ would survive. As a result, “anti-Communism was paramount.”<sup>20</sup>

Nothing could be more important for the new, human-focused Catholicism than stemming the Communist advance, and so nothing could be more important than a war on Jews—even if the most able allies in that war were Nazi racists. Moran discovered this just as Lindhardt had.

### The Propagandist

In October 1940 Moran described to Arthur Derounian the anatomy of the Christian Front’s anti-Semitic message. “I never come out with the Jews,” Moran explained, meaning that in his public speeches, he was careful not to explicitly attack Jews as such. “I always put it this way: Of course, it is too bad that Jewish leaders are leading astray the Jews of America . . . I consider most of them good people, but the leaders, tsk, tsk.” Moran characterized this method as “slyly hitting at the Jews,” and his experience suggested that “it works amazingly well.” Indeed, “it is the ONLY approach in a town like Boston, where the people are conservative, yet resent open persecution of any minority,” Moran said, admitting that his goal was indeed persecution. This sort of language was justified, Moran said, because the Christian Front was “sincerely engaged in fighting for Christianity, and against Communism.”

Derounian, who at this point had been covertly following Moran for some two years, was alarmed. “The impression one gets is that this man is highly calculating, highly dangerous, a ruthless personality.” While most governmental observers viewed Moran as nonthreatening and consistently downplayed the effectiveness of his activism, Derounian’s opinion was the exact opposite. “This man strikes in the dark. He strikes like a rattler without warning. And his sting is apt to be deadly. Subversively, undercover, smiling in public, conniving in private, he is capable of shaking your hand and at the same time stabbing you in the back.” Derounian’s final assessment was perhaps his most astute. “He is far advanced as a propagandist,” outdoing even “those in New York.” “By every standard,” Derounian concluded, “Moran’s office, and Moran’s position is that of propagandist.”<sup>21</sup>

What Derounian did not know at this time was that Moran had taken on his propaganda role at Scholz’s request and with the consul’s assistance. In an astonishing 1943 interview with Derounian, again reporting undercover,

Moran confessed that he and Scholz had designed the propaganda strategy together:

Scholz and I worked out this plan: you can't win this fight with terrorism—with storm troopers, or risk just yelling 'Jew.' You've got to lay the groundwork first. You've got to be subtle about it so that they can't pin an anti-Semitic label on you. We're all working for the same end. It's the tactics that are important. You can lose this fight with the wrong tactics.

Incredibly, this interview, which was published in the *New York Post*, prompted neither investigations nor legal action. Moran was admitting to being a foreign agent, even though he had not registered with the federal government under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Somehow this too escaped the FBI.<sup>22</sup>

In aligning his religious anti-Semitism with Scholz's propaganda goals, Moran was agreeing to work for the fulfillment of one of Hitler's major war-time objectives, which was laid out in the Führer's Order of September 8, 1939, one week after Germany's invasion of Poland. The idea behind the Führer's Order was to prioritize a propaganda campaign "to persuade neutral states to take Germany's line." This approach was a good fit for Moran's style. He had never gone in for terrorism, thuggery, and intimidation. He was not a fist-fighter like Carridi, a paramilitarist like Cassidy, or an aspiring executioner like McWilliams. Scholz was urging Moran to do what he was naturally good at. The consul saw Moran's gifts as clearly as Derounian had in the course of their 1940 interview.<sup>23</sup>

These gifts were on full display in June 1940, when Moran made his first propaganda ploy on Scholz's behalf. Whether Moran was at this point an agent working in Scholz's employ is unclear. The first documented meeting between the two men would not arrive for several weeks, when Moran visited Scholz and Stempel at the consulate on Beacon Hill. It is entirely possible that Scholz and Moran had communicated prior to this meeting, but if Moran was instead freelancing in June 1940, he was putting on quite a display. Either his propaganda effort was coming at Scholz's direction or it was an impressive audition, leading in short order to Moran's recruitment.

The precipitating event was the publication by the *Boston Herald-Traveler* of a scathing editorial about the führer. This was an unusual move by the newspaper. The staid and steady afternoon edition of the *Boston Herald*, the

*Herald-Traveler* had a reputation for taking positions on the nitty-gritty of local affairs, not geopolitics. But on May 28, 1940, two weeks after the Nazi blitzkrieg had overwhelmed Belgium and the Netherlands, the paper came out swinging. The editorial referred to Hitler as “a wild beast” possessing “satanic” methods. “Hitler is merely an ex-guttersnipe, a mediocre little man with a mediocre mind.” Not mincing words, the editorial argued, “This creature Hitler will never be beaten by the rules of civilized warfare. Somebody needs to get right down in the gutter with him and fight the way he fights, only more cruelly.” In conclusion, the newspaper waxed religious: “If a beneficent God cast an archangel into eternal fire, why should we be choosy about what we have to do to Hitler the Horrible and his horde?”<sup>24</sup>

In response Scholz made a formal *démarche*. The consulate’s official word, issued in a letter to the editor by Consular Secretary Kurt Bohme, was that the *Herald-Traveler* had impugned “the head of a nation, with whom the United States of America entertains diplomatic relations.” Hitler had been “insulted in such uncivilized expressions, that this Consulate in the future must refuse to give [the] paper any information in whatever matter it may be.” The rejoinder backfired, earning condemnation all over Boston, as elites accused the consulate of trying to punish the newspaper for exercising rights protected by the constitution. Boston City Councilor Maurice Sullivan petitioned US Secretary of State Cordell Hull for the “immediate recall” of Scholz. The German consul “manifested an absolute disregard for the rights conferred upon the press through the American Constitution,” Sullivan roared. He also urged the Boston City Council to classify “Scholz as a *persona non grata* in our city and in a nation where Americans still cherish their constitutional freedom.” *Time* got hold of the story and reported that “some half-dozen New England Congressmen” and “three Senators rose to defend the freedom of the press.”<sup>25</sup>

Moran immediately came to Scholz’s defense. On June 5 he wrote a long letter to the *Herald-Traveler*, a strange but agile apology. “For Hitler we have no sympathy nor condemnation,” he wrote ambiguously, but the paper was in the wrong employing language “meant to stir up hatred.” Turning around the editors’ religious rhetoric, Moran wrote, “No Christian is justified in fighting for hatred.” The author of the editorial must have been “controlled” by an outside force, Moran asserted—the Jews, presumably. Are American newspapermen, he asked, “being forced to write against their will?” Returning to the theme of Christianity, Moran closed by excoriating the editorial writer

for “placing yourself on par with Almighty God; comparing your ability to judge with His, and thus justifying yourself: Unspeakable!”<sup>26</sup>

The *Herald-Traveler* made no reply and did not print the letter. So Moran repackaged his missive as a handsomely styled handbill titled, “An Open Letter for Every American with a Sense of Fairness.” He printed hundreds of copies and on June 8 dispatched Christian Front members to distribute them during the annual parade commemorating the Yankee Division homecoming of 1919—the return of the Boston-based 26th Infantry Division at the close of World War I. A major affair, the 1940 parade featured 25,000 World War I veterans and 5,000 National Guard troops with slung rifles, marching through the city to Boston Common. More than a hundred thousand Bostonians braved downpours to celebrate their veterans and guardsmen. And some of these attendees went home with Moran’s flyer defending Hitler and his Boston consul.<sup>27</sup>

It is difficult to gauge whether the handbill effort was effective, but what is clear is that in the spring and summer of 1940, as the New Yorkers were on trial and the future of the front appeared uncertain, Moran was developing a pro-Nazi mindset. He was not persuaded of Nazi ideology, but he was all in for the defense of Christ and Catholicism against the Judeo-Bolshevist menace and the Nazis were natural partners in this cause. This position might have been hard to square with the reality that, at the time, the Nazis were still treaty allies with the Soviets, the ultimate Judeo-Bolshevists and chief enemy of Christianity globally. But the anti-Semitism Moran shared with the Nazis was enough to dissolve any doubts that might have crept into his mind. And by July Moran was empowered to take essentially any political action he wished, as long as he could find support—which Scholz and Stempel provided. Working under the auspices of a religious organization, Moran could shield himself and his patrons from scrutiny. He was not Scholz’s only man in Boston—several others, involved in more traditional espionage, rounded out Scholz’s stable of agents. But Moran became the most successful. The second half of 1940 and first half of 1941 would be heady days for the Boston Christian Front, thanks to the partnership with Scholz, Hitler’s spymaster and Boston’s highest-ranking Nazi.