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CHRISTOPH KRESS: NÜRNBERG'S FOREMOST
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DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Jonathan Walter Zophy, B.A., M.A.

* * * *

The Ohio State University
1972

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<td>A. Brettschneider et al. (eds.). Corpus Reformatorum. 28 Vols. Halle, 1834-1860.</td>
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<td>Familien archiv Kress, located in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg.</td>
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INTRODUCTION

In recent years Reformation historians have begun to examine the political, social, and economic dimensions of the sixteenth century which helps explain the rapid expansion of the movement. Yet much work remains to be done. One area that has been given only limited treatment is the diplomatic activities of the townsmen during the Reformation. This is true even for such an important political center as Nürnberg.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to examine one aspect of Nürnberg's diplomatic activity in the early decades of the sixteenth century. Nürnberg's foreign policy can perhaps best be approached by studying the career of one of her chief diplomats, Christoph Kress. Kress serves as a useful focal point because he was the only Nürnberg diplomat to attend every important imperial diet between 1518 and 1532, the critical years for the spread of the Reformation. In addition, this patrician served as Nürnberg's chief delegate to the Swabian League as well as the city's representative at the imperial court and at numerous other important political gatherings. He was
particularly active in the important evangelical negotiations leading up to the formation of the Schmalkaldic League. Special attention will be paid to Nürnberg's relations with the Holy Roman Empire and with other German cities, estates, and principalities.
CHAPTER I

NÜRNBERG AND THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

The cittie of Nuremberg (commonly called in English Norenborow) being well knowne to foraine nations: and by some of them (by reason of the great traffike there) named The Dutch Venice; byeth as it were in middest of high Germany, betwene Franconia and Norica. And Noremberg as the principallest Imperiall Cittie therein [Franconia]: yielde all dewties to the Empire accordingly.¹

Thus wrote the Englishman, William Smith, in the first known description of Nürnberg by a foreigner in the sixteenth century. Smith is correct in calling Nürnberg an "Imperiall Cittie" for in the political hodgepodge that was the Holy Roman Empire of the late Middle Ages, Nurnberg enjoyed the special status of a "free and imperial" city. The relations between the city and the Empire were an integral part of the story of Nürnberg's foreign policy during the first decades of the sixteenth century.

Nürnberg was one of about sixty-five cities in the Empire that had won political independence in the sense that it was an immediate subject of the Empire and not subject to a local territorial lord.² Not all the cities of the Empire had this status; not even all the major
centers were free, imperial cities. Erfurt, for example, belonged to the electorate of Mainz and Leipzig to the duchy of Saxony. However, Nürnberg and such other great southern German cities as Augsburg, Strassburg, Frankfort, and Ulm enjoyed the free, imperial status and, because of their wealth, considerable influence within the Empire as well.

Indeed, the astute Italian political writer, Niccolo Machiavelli, wrote in his Report on the Affairs of Germany that the "power of Germany certainly resides more in her cities than in her princes." Machiavelli argued that the cities "are the real nerve of the Empire" because they have plenty of money, stable governments, political independence, and are free to act. Although the great Florentine's assertions are exaggerated, there is no doubt that the free cities that made up the third house of the imperial diet (Reichstag), were in an enviable position in the sixteenth century.

Despite the strength and importance of some of the great imperial cities, it must be remembered that the Empire like all of Europe was overwhelmingly rural. Nürnberg, which was one of the Empire's largest cities, had a population which has recently been estimated at about 50,000 for the sixteenth century. This was a very large urban population for late Medieval Europe for millions in the Empire still lived in small farming
villages. It must also be pointed out that the cities formed only a part of the thousands of political entities which made up the Holy Roman Empire. These ranged from the great secular and ecclesiastical lords who elected the emperor to little spiritual lords and country gentlemen.

While France, England, and Spain were developing strong centralized monarchies, the Holy Roman Empire continued in its feudal decentralization. The elected emperor's authority never rivaled that of his fellow European sovereigns in the late Middle Ages. The elective process not only lessened the emperor's prestige, but forced the candidates to make bribes and concessions which further diminished their office. The emperor lacked not only a regular income but a military force with which to enforce his will. Even to defend the Empire, he was forced to call upon his subjects to furnish money and troops.

Indeed, the real government in Germany was in the hands of about 2,500 local and regional authorities. These included about fifty ecclesiastical princes, thirty secular princes, over one hundred counts, seventy prelates, and sixty-five cities of substantial power. In addition, there were still close to 2,000 imperial knights such as Franz von Sickingen and Ulrich von Hutten, who, like the imperial cities, owed their allegiance directly to the emperor. However, by the sixteenth century they
owned less than 250 square miles of land and because they were not tenants-in-chief were not allowed to attend the imperial diets.

However, there were factors that did give a certain vitality to the Empire. Perhaps foremost among them was the presence of the Hapsburg family to give the Empire a sense of continuity. A Hapsburg was first elected emperor in 1273 and after 1438, with only one brief exception, no one but a Hapsburg was elected until the termination of the Empire by Napoleon in 1806. Yet this same factor often worked against the creation of a strong Empire because often the Hapsburg emperors were more concerned with the position and prestige of their dynasty than with territorial unity.

As a result of a considerable clamor for constitutional reform during the fifteenth century, a number of political institutions had been created which offered some promise of stability for the Empire. In addition, the age witnessed a reassertion of already existent institutions such as the imperial diet made up of the six electors (the King of Bohemia attended only the election of the emperor), the lesser princes, and the free cities. The imperial diet was in large part an instrument of the German princes who used it to secure their own positions. As Professor Hajo Holborn has pointed out, "they kept the lower nobility out of the diet, subordinated the counts
and prelates to themselves in their own Curia, and opposed the equal rank of the cities. 7 Nevertheless, in no other period of German history did the imperial diet play so prominent a part as in the years between 1495 and 1555. 8

At the imperial Diet of Worms in 1495, the Reichskammergericht, or imperial Supreme Court, had been created for the settlement of conflicts between the estates by peaceful means. The emperor appointed the chief justice, two presiding deputies, and two associate judges. The other twenty associate judges were nominated by the imperial estates. The princes again dominated this institution by financing it and supervising its operation. The court followed Roman law and succeeded very quickly in stamping out many of the feuds among the German estates. 9

It was also planned at the Diet of Worms of 1495 to establish a Reichsregiment, or imperial Council of Regency, for the purpose of co-operating with the emperor in selecting imperial officials and formulating and executing domestic and foreign policies. Emperor Maximilian I at first resisted this encroachment on his authority but finally relented in 1500 at the Diet of Augsburg. The council consisted of the electors, of whom one was always to be present for a three month period, while the others would delegate a councillor. In addition, one secular and one ecclesiastical prince had to attend
for a period of three months, plus one deputy from each of the Imperial Circles, Austria and Burgundy, and from among the prelates and counts. The imperial cities were allowed two members. The council was to be presided over by the emperor or by his deputy.\textsuperscript{10} Although claiming full authority in ruling the Empire, it was dissolved in 1502 as a complete failure. In the same year Maximilian created his own Hofrat (Privy Council) to which gravitated most of the imperial administrative functions.

The organization of the Empire was further improved when in 1512 at the Diet of Cologne the territories under imperial control were divided into ten Reichskreise, or "Circles of the Empire," for administrative and military purposes.\textsuperscript{11} Nürnberg was, of course, in the Franconia Circle. The military defense of the Empire was to be provided for by the various estates who would make assessed contributions. The individual estates were free to determine the method of tax collection and administration. It was then the emperor's responsibility to raise the armed forces with the funds placed at his disposal.\textsuperscript{12} In practice the system failed to provide adequate revenues to combat the Turkish threat of the sixteenth century and the emperor was continually pleading with the estates for additional financial and military help.
The city of Nürnberg has always occupied a special place in the history of the Holy Roman Empire. Although the city's origins are obscure, it may have been founded about the time of the Emperor Henry III in the middle of the eleventh century. The area was prized because of its strategic location. Therefore, when it became imperative to gain firm control of the imperial possessions in East Franconia, a military stronghold was erected on a high hill overlooking the Pegnitz river. Around this imperial castle the city of Nürnberg developed.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Nürnberg's history was closely tied to that of the Empire. It was there that Frederick Barbarossa in 1187 proclaimed peace in the Empire. The famous Golden Bull of 1356 was proclaimed in Nürnberg by the Emperor Charles IV. One of its provisions granted the city the privilege of holding the first diet after the election of each new emperor. Indeed, the city eventually acquired enough freedoms and privileges to become independent of the margraves of Brandenburg who had been the city's imperial overlords.

Nürnberg was also honored by numerous other favors and distinctions. The city received frequent visits from many of the emperors. It also became the "jewel box" of the Empire as the custodian of the imperial regalia, or Reichskleinodien. It has been argued that "the presence of the imperial regalia in Nuremberg..."
strengthened the feeling of her citizens that their city and the empire and Christendom were one.\textsuperscript{17} The traditional importance of Nürnberg in the Empire was continued by Charles V when, at the Diet of Worms of 1521, Nürnberg was made the seat of the revived imperial Council of Regency. Both the Council of Regency and the imperial Supreme Court were installed in a chamber of the city's town hall.\textsuperscript{18}

The close relationship between Nürnberg and the emperor was based on mutual self-interest. They often needed each other in disputes with the rival power of the territorial princes. As Gerald Strauss has written:

\[\text{The partnership was real enough; of this there is abundant evidence. Citizens never forgot, nor wanted to forget, that their liberties and rights were, legally and historically, privileges and that the emperor was the sole source of this bounty. Only the emperor could establish or guarantee the nationwide conditions of peace and order, the pax imperialis, on which the city's economic growth depended. Indeed, the very existence of the independent city was linked to the survival of the Empire. For the alternative to the Empire was the territorial state with its ambitious and aggrandizing prince, its more or less centralized bureaucracy, its leveling laws, and its nascent mercantilism. The demise of the Empire would mean the triumph of the territorial state and the end of the autonomous cities.}\textsuperscript{19}\]

It is little wonder that Nürnberg was so careful in its relations with the emperor.

One of the main reasons for Nürnberg's importance to the Empire and its commercial success was its excellent
location. Since the thirteenth century overland trade in Europe was confined to a few main routes: the route from the Balkan Peninsula via Vienna to Antwerp; the road from Venice via the Brenner Pass to Hamburg; the road from France via Strassburg to Prague; and finally the route connecting Switzerland with Saxony and Poland. All these important trade routes intersected at Nürnberg. Besides these main roads there were other less important ones, a total of twelve in all, which converged at Nürnberg.\(^{20}\)

However, the city would not have flourished had it been content merely to allow commercial traffic to pass through its territory. Nürnberg wisely took active steps to control that traffic and add its own products to the stream of commerce. Already in the fourteenth century commercial treaties existed between Nürnberg and many other important cities and territorial states in central Europe. The purpose of these agreements was to secure exemptions from duties and other trade privileges. Nürnberg's astute and aggressive commercial diplomacy played a vital role in securing her position as an important trade center.\(^{21}\)

Another factor which helps account for the city's strength was the stability of her government. "This cittie is gouerned by a prudent and sage Counsell. . . through whose politik and wyse gouernment, the people are kept in quyetness," wrote William Smith.\(^{22}\) Historians
interested in sixteenth-century Nürnberg's governing institutions are also fortunate in having as a source of information the expert description of Dr. Christoph Scheurl. Scheurl, a native of the city, was a doctor of civil and canon law, a former professor of jurisprudence at the University of Wittenberg, and since 1512 one of Nürnberg's most respected legal advisers. His description, written in a Latin letter to his friend Johann Staupitz, the Vicar General of the Augustinians in Germany and the man who played so pivotal a role in Martin Luther's development, is a thorough appraisal of Nürnberg's government.

Nürnberg's supreme political body was the Little Council, which consisted of forty-two men, of whom thirty-four were patricians and eight were commoners chosen from the populace. Within this body lay all executive, legislative, judicial power. "The 34 patricians are further differentiated into 8 Alte Genannte and 26 Mayors [Bürgermeister]." The Alte Genannte are of only minor importance, as were the eight commoners, who held no particular offices and could not vote in the Council sessions.

Therefore, within the Little Council power was actually restricted to a smaller body of men. Scheurl writes, "Of the 26 Mayors, 13 are called Jurors [Schoffen], the other 13 are called Mayors; but these same 26 Mayors
also fall into two other groups of 13 Senior Mayors and 13 Junior Mayors. Every four weeks different sets of two (one junior, one senior) would be chosen as Governing Mayors. They serve as a type of executive officer.

The two Governing Mayors are obliged to spend nearly all their time in their office or on the streets. They must hear complaints, settle arguments, urge debtors to pay, make peace between litigating parties. The Senior Governing Mayor receives ambassadors and emissaries, opens all official letters and reads them the moment they arrive. . . . He convenes the Council, . . . informs its members about current business, puts the question and counts the votes, orders decisions put in writing, and adjourns the sessions. 27

However, the key figures in Nürnberg's government were the Seven Elders (ältere Herren) chosen from among the thirteen Senior Mayors. Three of the Seven Elders are appointed to the office of Captains General (Oberste Hauptmänner) and of these three men, two have charge of the treasury and are called Losunger. "The Senior Losunger, that is to say, the man first named to this post, is the highest officer of the whole Council and is regarded as the first man in the city." 28 The real power in the city's government rested with the Seven Elders, "for these men meet daily to discuss confidential and grave matters before appraising the members of the Council. The real power is therefore theirs alone; their junior colleagues in the Council know and can do relatively little." 29
Nürnberg also had a Large Council \([\text{Grosse Rat}]\) of some two hundred citizens. The members, called the Genannte, were "honorable men who earn their living in respectable businesses, not lowly manual work, except for a few, whose skills are specially useful to the city..."\(^30\) It is by this body that the members of the Little Council were elected. "The Genannte are consulted whenever a new tax is to be imposed, war declared, or the subjects warned of impending dangers."\(^31\) The Large Council was mostly a rubber stamp body used to ratify the decisions already made by the Little Council.

Although the most important decisions were made by the Seven Elders, they were made in the name of the Council as a whole. Every Council member had to swear an oath to follow the will of the majority, regardless of what his personal opinion might be. Dissenting arguments or minority opinions were not made public. It is, therefore, difficult to establish specific responsibility for Council decisions. The decision-making process itself was somewhat cumbersome. First of all, the Council would listen to opinions from various experts and the city's five or six legal advisers. Then both the Elders and the full Council would deliberate carefully and finally a vote would be taken with the will of the majority prevailing.\(^32\) The business of the Council was so varied that in a single session it could move from matters of international
significance "to deliberate how the extravagance of children [in dressing] during Holy Week might be pre-
vented."33

The cohesiveness and stability of Nürnberg's government was further enhanced by the fact that the city
was ruled by a patrician oligarchy. Government was restricted to "the hands of ancient families."34 Only
forty-three patrician families were eligible to become members of the Little Council. The families and fortunes
of these patricians were often linked by marriage and business partnerships. It is hardly surprising that this
closed corporation could function with so little known dissension and so much continuity.

Despite the fact that the city was governed by wealthy men, all officials received salaries.

The Losunger receive the highest salaries, because they have no time to engage in any commercial business whatsoever while in office. The Seven Elders receive 50 gulden each, but all hold in addition several other offices from which they draw income. . . . Each time a member attends Council he receives a token worth 50 Pfennige when he cashes it in at the end of the month. However, if tardy, he is fined 4 Pfennige, and if absent without excuse he forfeits one of his tokens. Senior Mayors have a salary of 8 gulden a year, Junior Mayors receive 4 gulden.35

For our purposes we need not discuss the specific duties of the various city officials, the system of poor relief, or the court system. However, let us return to
Scheurl for his evaluation of two areas of governmental activity closely allied to our principal concern, Nürnberg's foreign policy.

There are nowadays so many dangers to the security of our city that we have a total of seven Military Captains [Kriegsherren], though it is rare for more than three to be serving at one time. . . . The senior member of the group bears the title of War Captain [Kriegsherr]. They have an office in the Town Hall, called the War Room; there they meet to deliberate in time of war or danger of war. Each member is paid 100 gulden a year. Their jurisdiction covers everything of military significance; for this reason they have at their disposal a detailed register of all villages, peasants, horses, carts, and so on, in the entire Territory.36

Let us conclude with Scheurl's report by quoting his description of the Chancellery:

We have two First Secretaries [Oberste Stadt schreiber] who are privy to all the secrets of Council. They are in attendance whenever the Council meets; when the Seven Elders sit by themselves one secretary is always present. They record every decision made by the Council, draft letters to be sent, and read incoming correspondence. In sum: they are the eyes of our government. Each receives 200 gulden a year in salary. The Chancellery employs in addition six clerks; these men are kept busy writing all day long. Each has about 100 gulden a year.37

The Chancellery played an important role in foreign affairs not only by its handling of correspondence but by its issuance of passports as well.38
Nürnberg's foreign policy in the early decades of the sixteenth century was for the most part formulated and carried out by the City Council itself. The city did not maintain a professional diplomatic corps nor did it maintain permanent embassies abroad. Rather the Council relied upon its own membership for the bulk of its diplomatic personnel.

Although the Council as a whole participated in foreign affairs, certain councillors either because of aptitude or preference were more active than others in this area. The following Council members were among the most active in the period under consideration: the brothers Bernard and Hieronymus Baumgartner, Leonhart Groland, Jacob Müffel, Leo Schürstab, Christoph Tetzel, and Clement Volckamer. In addition, the syndic Michael von Kaden, Dr. Christoph Scheurl, the ex-Council member and eminent humanist Willibald Pirckheimer, and the Council Secretary (Ratschreiber), Lazarus Spengler, must be singled out for playing effective roles even as non-Council members. However, if Nürnberg had anyone who approached the status of a professional diplomat, that man might well have been the patrician and councillor Christoph Kress.
NOTES


4 Quoted in Strauss, Nuremberg, pp. 4-5.

5 Rudolf Endres, "Zur Einwohnerzahl und Bevölkerungsstruktur Nurnbergs im 15/16 Jahrhundert," MVGN, LVII (1970), p. 57. 30,000 was the figure most commonly cited for Nürnberg's population prior to Professor Endres' work. There is no question that Nürnberg was along with Cologne and Augsburg among Germany's most populous cities in the sixteenth century. See Hajo Holborn, A History of Modern Germany: The Reformation (New York, 1970), pp. 38-39. Hereafter cited as Holborn, The Reformation.


7 Ibid., p. 40.

8 Holborn, Ulrich von Hutten, p. 13.

9 Holborn, The Reformation, p. 43.

10 Ibid., pp. 44-46.

12 Holborn, The Reformation, p. 44.


16 See for example Albert Kircher, Deutsche Kaiser in Nürnberg (Neustadt, 1955).


19 Gerald Strauss, Nuremberg, p. 46.


21 For a discussion of the economic institutions of German cities see Jean Schneider, "Les villes allemands an moyen age: Les institutions économiques," Recueils de la société Jean Bodin, VII (Brussels, 1955), pp. 403-482. For Nürnberg's commercial diplomacy see Strauss, Nuremberg, pp. 131-133.

22 Smith, "A Description," p. 216.
A recent account of Scheurl's activities is provided by Philip Norton Bebb, "Christoph Scheurl's Role as Legal Adviser to the Nürnberg City Council, 1512 to 1525," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, The Ohio State University, 1971.


Strauss, Nürnberg, p. 58.

Ibid., pp. 58-59.

Ibid., p. 63.

Ibid., p. 59.

Ibid., p. 63.

Ibid., p. 59.

Ibid.


Strauss, Nürnberg, p. 61.

Ibid., p. 62.

Ibid., p. 64.

Ibid., p. 67.

CHAPTER II

THE TRAINING OF A DIPLOMAT

Of the forty-three patrician families who controlled the political destiny of the city of Nürnberg in the sixteenth century, few have had as distinguished a history as the family of Christoph Kress. The Kress family, whose origins can be traced to the early Middle Ages, has enjoyed an illustrious record of achievement in commerce and public service which extends to the present day.

This tradition is illustrated by Christoph’s great-grandfather, Conrad Kress, a successful merchant who became a member of the Nürnberg City Council in 1418. Under Conrad’s direction the family prospered to such an extent that by 1422 their business worth was estimated at about 47,770 gulden. Conrad’s son, Hieronymus Kress, continued the tradition of combining business acumen with civic responsibility. It was Hieronymus who purchased the family estate at Kraftshof which was to be the family home for several centuries. Today Kraftshof, which is located a few miles north of Nürnberg, contains St. George’s church which the family
built in the fourteenth century. Adjacent to Kraftshof is the village of Neunhof in which is situated one of the Kress family homes and the Kress Family Museum. In 1452 Hieronymus Kress became a member of the City Council of Nürnberg as a Junior Mayor. In 1474 he was elected a Senior Mayor, an office he maintained until the end of his life. In addition to his duties as a councillor, Hieronymus held such other offices as master of buildings, steward of records for the clerical estates, and warden of the provostship of Our Blessed Lady at Nürnberg and of the nunnery at Pillenreuth. When, in 1471 Emperor Frederick III entered Nürnberg for the first time, Hieronymus along with the other members of the Council bore the imperial canopy. He also added to the family's land holdings by receiving imperial fiefs and lands from the Margrave of Brandenburg.

Hieronymus's son, Anton Kress I, was the father of Christoph Kress and a man who successfully carried out the Kress family traditions. He was first elected to the City Council in 1474 and became judge of the building court in 1489, superintendent of pharmacies and steward of the revenue books of the church lands in 1495, and in 1502 warden of the spinsters' alms. Anton remained active in council affairs until his death in 1520. In 1473 he married Katharine Löffelholtz, the daughter of an eminent Nürnberg patrician family. Together they had six sons
and five daughters.

Although Christoph is our main concern, all of his surviving brothers and sisters were successful in their various vocational callings. Christoph's older brother, George, was renowned as a great warrior and hunter. He had campaigned against the Swiss in 1499 in the service of Emperor Maximilian I. Both George and Christoph participated in the Bavarian War of 1504 at their own expense and both distinguished themselves at the siege of Neumarkt. In his later years, George, who remained a bachelor, was content with a life of hunting and residing at Kraftshof. Christoph was very fond of his brother and shared many of his interests in hunting and military affairs. It was to George that Christoph willed many of his most prized possessions, including his beloved armor.

Another older brother, Anton, was a doctor of Canon and Civil Law who became a canon at Regensburg and later a provost of St. Lawrence Church in Nürnberg. Anton had received an excellent humanist education and had studied at Ingolstadt, Pavia, and Padua. He served his native city as one of her skilled legal advisors. He became a familiar figure in the city's leading intellectual circles and a good friend to many of the city's most famous men including Albrecht Dürer, Willibald Pirckheimer, Christoph Scheurl, and Lazarus Spengler. It was Scheurl who wrote a famous obituary letter about him following his early
death in 1513.7

Christoph's older sister, Magdalena, also followed a successful religious career. She became a nun at Pillenreuth in 1500 and canonica regularis there in 1511. On July 4, 1533 she became a lady superior. During the Schmalkaldic War, she suffered at the hands of imperial soldiers and died in 1548. Her sister, Catharina, followed a secular career by marrying into the prominent Volckamer family.8

However, of all the children of Anton Kress I none had a more illustrious career than Christoph Kress, who has been called "one of the most distinguished statesmen of his time. . . . highly esteemed by Emperor Charles V."9 The written accounts of Christoph's early life and career all contain roughly the same information.10 The reason for this is that they all rely on the same source for their information, Christoph Kress's "Manualpuchleyen allerley handlung, schulden und ander interessant res und was ich zerlich handl angefahen."11 The "Manualpuchlyn" which Kress began composing in 1513 is mostly a record of business affairs but it does contain a brief biographical outline of his early life. Although the "Manualpuchlyn" is not a complete record, it does tell us what Christoph considered to be the main events of his life prior to 1513 and in so doing provides us with a special insight into the man.
Christoph Kress was born in Nürnberg on May 3, 1484. The next event recorded in the "Manualpuchlyn" is his journey to Milan in 1497. The thirteen-year-old Kress was sent to learn Italian from Giovanni Antonio de Lytta, leaseholder of customs for the Duke of Milan. Apparently an educational stay in Italy was regarded as a necessary experience by Christoph's father for both Anton and George had gone to Italy during their formative years. In Milan Christoph witnessed the troubles which took place there when King Louis XII of France dispossessed Duke Ludovico Sforza by annexing the duchy in 1499.\textsuperscript{12} Thus at an early age Kress must have been made aware of the whims and insecurities of Renaissance politics.

In 1500 Christoph left Italy and traveled to Antwerp in the Netherlands. That great entrepot maintained active commercial relations with Nürnberg. After a stay of a year and a half, he was sent to London to further his education and to learn English.\textsuperscript{13} Upon reaching age twenty, Kress returned to his native Germany. He had traveled widely and obviously was far more sophisticated about the ways of the world than most young men of his time. His travel experiences, education, and language training would all serve him well in his future career.

In that same year, Christoph continued his political education by participating with his brother George in the
Bavarian War of Succession. The war had broken out in 1504 after the death of Duke George the Rich of Bavaria-Landshut. In his will Duke George had by-passed Duke Albrecht of Bavaria-Munich in order to bestow his throne and lands upon his daughter, Elizabeth, and her husband, Ruprecht of the Palatinate. The Bavarian dukes, Albrecht and Wolfgang, with the support of Emperor Maximilian and the Swabian League, challenged Ruprecht's claim and hostilities began. Ruprecht and Elizabeth were supported by his father, Elector Philip of the Palatinate. Nürnberg became involved on the side of the Bavarian dukes when the emperor assured the city that it could have all the lands it conquered in the course of the war.

The campaign afforded young血液 like Christoph and George Kress an opportunity for knightly service. They did so gladly and at their own expense, Christoph serving with two horses for nine months. The brothers distinguished themselves in the war and earned imperial recognition for their gallantry. The war was also worthwhile for Nürnberg as the city acquired the towns of Lauf, Altdorf, and Hersbruck in addition to the castles Reichneck and Stierberg and some lesser properties. These conquests increased Nürnberg's power and wealth but they also created further jealousy and problems especially with the city's neighbors.
Christoph retained his interest in weapons and things military throughout his life. He also enjoyed war-related sports such as hunting and jousting. We know from his will that Kress loved his hunting birds and dogs and often used them with his brother George. Some of his efforts in the joust have been recorded. For example in 1506 in a tournament of young patricians, Kress fought against Christoph Fûrer in a tilt with sharp weapons. According to Johann Müllner,

So Christoph Fûrer and Christoph Kress pledged to each other to have a tilt with sharp weapons, only in order to spite Thummer, whom they scorned because of the tournament in which he failed, and also because of the peasant panache, which he wore on his helmet. However, they unhorsed each other.

Müllner further records a tilt in 1514,

Thomas Löffelholtz and Christoph Kress had a short tilt with sharp lances this year. Löffelholtz, who had grown old, and was soon unhorsed. When Kress saw this, he dismounted at once. Löffelholtz, however, complained about a strong blow he had received from his cousin.

Christoph Kress also received additional military training in 1507 when the count-steward of Württemberg, Count Wolf von Fürstenberg, recruited an army for Maximilian's intended journey to Rome. Kress enlisted for eleven months with two horses. The life style of the young patrician with its obvious imitation of the ways of the feudal nobility would also help Christoph in his
later diplomatic career. Not only was he making valuable personal contacts, but he was learning the manners and values which allowed him to function smoothly in the company of Europe's nobility.

The year 1513 was one of the most important in the life of Christoph Kress for in that year he married Helena Tucher and also entered into the service of his native town. Helena was nineteen when she and Christoph were married on January 16, 1513. She was the daughter of the deceased Stephan Tucher, commissioner of woods and forests, and of Ursulla Muffel, who was known for her very graceful bearing and mental faculties. The marriage which took place in Nürnberg received a special solemn dignity because Hippolytus von Este, Cardinal of St. Lucia, took part in the ceremony. Helena, to whom Christoph referred as his beloved "hausfrau," proved to be a loyal wife and efficient household manager. Indeed, she outlived her husband by twenty-seven years and was successful in running her husband's estate after his death. Her competence allowed Christoph to be away from home frequently on diplomatic missions without fearing for the mismanagement of his affairs.

Because of his marriage, Christoph became eligible for election to the City Council which accepted only married members of patrician families. He was, therefore, elected at the annual Easter elections of 1513. We do
not know exactly why he decided to devote his talents to public service. We can conjecture that it was expected of him as a young man of talent and rank. We do know that he was aware of his family's traditions and enjoyed being a part of that tradition. Since George seemed more suited for the life of a country gentleman and retired warrior, Christoph was the natural choice.

Although Christoph Kress served Nürnberg in a number of offices, his primary importance lay in his political and especially his diplomatic services. One of his favorite activities was in military affairs. In 1519 he was named not only Senior Mayor but also military captain. He later became Nürnberg's military commander-in-chief. Since the problems of war and peace are so closely related, Christoph's detailed knowledge of Nürnberg's military position must have aided him in his diplomatic efforts. This seems to have been especially the case during the crisis of the Peasants' War of 1525 when he helped co-ordinate the military efforts of the Swabian League as Nürnberg's ambassador.

Regardless of his concern for military matters, it was as a diplomat that Kress made his largest contribution to his city's welfare. Certainly he was well prepared for his profession by his travel and educational experiences, his language training, and his pronounced personal abilities. Christoph Kress must have made an effective
personal impression. The surviving portraits and medallions reveal a rather handsome man of medium build and height. He is always shown as clean shaven with his hair worn in what is now called a page boy style. Christoph is portrayed either in armor or in costly dress, usually wearing a large hat given to him by Emperor Charles V. In addition, Kress was known for his personal calmness and iring spirit. Perhaps, this is why the Council frequently paired him on diplomatic missions with more volatile spirits such as Hieronymus Baumgartner.

His early diplomatic missions were usually matters of minor importance in which he was often joined with more seasoned diplomats. The Council generally preferred to work with teams of diplomats. Also embassies were not to stay away from the city longer than absolutely necessary. Depending on where the embassy was sent, the missions seldom lasted longer than three months and most missions usually lasted less than a week. The diplomats received their expense money in advance and kept itemized records of their expenditures. Upon their return these records were filed with the city treasurer. Horses, lodging, food, and wine are among the items frequently found in the account records. Presents and bribes were also items which added to the cost of sixteenth-century diplomacy. Then and now the expense of diplomacy was relatively high but still a bargain when
compared to the cost of war.

In his first diplomatic mission in 1513, Kress was sent with Leonhart Groland to the district court of justice at Ansbach, where in 1514 and 1516 he represented the Council a number of times. In 1513 Kress had several discussions with the margrave's councillors regarding the administration of forests. Quite often during these early years of service Christoph found himself paired with the veteran diplomat, Groland, from whom he must have learned a great deal about Nürnberg's foreign affairs and the diplomatic profession.

Kress was given more responsibility in 1514 when he replaced the veteran Caspar Nützel as Nürnberg's chief ambassador to the cities. Nützel had been named as one of the Seven Elders. Reflecting his new status, Kress was sent with Groland and Dr. Marsilius to the meetings of town delegates at Ulm and Bamberg in 1515. Among the problems discussed was the issue of who had the supreme jurisdiction over the villages of Trubach and Betzenstein. The question of authority over the forests and feudal tenure of Wiesenthau was also debated. Christoph Kress and Martin Tucher were sent to Veldenstein to end the dispute with the knight, Ludwig von Eyb of Hartenstein, over hunting rights. These matters although relatively insignificant reflect typical problems which concerned Nürnberg's diplomats.
However, during this same period Kress was active in his first really important diplomatic mission. It concerned the long and complicated case of Anton Tetzel. The Nürnberg City Council in 1514 had arrested Tetzel, the city's chief revenue officer, for violating official secrets and other criminal offenses. The case became even more involved when Margrave Frederick of Brandenburg-Ansbach personally intervened and, threatening to appeal to Emperor Maximilian I, demanded his release. The Council responded by sending Melchior Pfinzing, provost of St. Sebal'd's, to the imperial court in order to explain the real facts of the case.

The city's government had become afraid that because of Tetzel's influence, the emperor might interfere in the matter unfavorably. Tetzel's wife and daughter had traveled to the imperial court to petition for his release. The Nürnberg Council soon became disenchanted with Pfinzing's handling of the problem. He did not express much personal interest, did not send reports of his activities, and was even suspected of secretly aiding with the Tetzel faction. Thus in the years from 1515 to 1517, Christoph Kress was dispatched several times to the imperial court to press the matter more vigorously than had Pfinzing.
Maximilian, although already deeply in debt to Nürnberg and many other cities, asked the Council for a loan of an additional 6,000 gulden. This behavior was typical of an emperor who had spent a good part of his reign running from one creditor after another. Kress took advantage of the emperor's pecuniary difficulties by giving generous presents to the imperial chancellor on behalf of the City Council. We know of one present of 200 gulden and a later one of 100 gulden. The Council told Kress that he had done well in spending the money and that he "should not feel troubled about the costs of the presents and his own living expenses at the court." In fact the Council repeatedly expressed its satisfaction with Christoph's handling of the case.

Nürnberg obviously considered it essential that the emperor be prevented from encroaching upon their municipal jurisdiction. It would have been a severe blow to the Council's authority had Tetzel and his adherents won. The Council further wrote Kress that "they will stand by him for whatever he had done at the imperial court, with regard to Tetzel and other matters, and will never forget his achievements." However, Christoph was eager to return home. The Council asked him to remain at his post and persevere in his efforts until he should receive a decision, either in writing by the emperor or his chancellor or at least a verbal judgment in the presence of
witnesses. It appears that Kress received the required decision for he was soon back in Nürnberg and Anton Tetzl remained imprisoned until his death in 1518.41

During his embassies to the imperial court, Christoph Kress was also called upon to help settle other affairs. He was asked particularly to bring a claim against Hans Balthasar von Endingen, called "zum Bundstein" in Alsace, who, pretending that he had received imperial authorization, confiscated and taxed the goods of merchants who were trading with France. His seizures had included merchandise worth 700 gulden belonging to a Nürnberg merchant, Hans Kretzenhauser.42 He had also threatened to deal in the same manner with the merchants of Augsburg and Ulm and the subjects of other areas.

Endingen also made it known that he had twice received information about the passing of Niclas Sil, a Nürnberger, who, however, had managed to escape both times.43

Throughout the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, Nürnberg had frequently been in conflict with robber barons, many of whom were part of the Franconian nobility. Leopold von Ranke has written a brilliant description of a typical raid:

We still see the warlike knights and their mounted retainers, in helm and breastplate and with bent crossbow before them—riding up and down... lying in ambush day and night in the woods, until the enemy whom they are watching appears; or till the train of merchants and their wares, coming from the
city they are at war with, is seen winding along the road: their victory is generally an easy one, for their attack is sudden and unexpected; and they return surrounded by prisoners and laden with booty to their narrow stronghold on hill and rock. 44

The most tenacious of the robber-barons who attacked Nürnberg merchants was Götz von Berlichingen, immortalized in story and song by Goethe among others. It is doubtful whether Nürnberg viewed Götz as a romantic figure for the city had been involved in a bitter feud with him and his supporters. 45 In one raid alone thirty-one persons were carried off and damage was done amounting to 880 guldens. 46 These raids threatened Nürnberg's existence for the city desperately needed safe roads for her merchants and commerce.

Suppressing these noble outlaws proved a difficult task. When the imperial Supreme Court proved ineffectual, Nürnberg in 1500 joined the Swabian League in order to obtain special imperial privileges and for the preservation of the Landfrieden, or peace in the country. The situation was made even more complex by the fact that many of these Franconian knights such as Götz von Berlichingen had served in the army of the Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach. 47

In mid July, 1512, Emperor Maximilian issued a declaration of outlawry against Götz von Berlichingen, Hans von Selbitz, and Leonhard Pirkamer, three of the
knights who had attacked Nürnberg merchants. The Council tried to get the outlawry extended to include other robber knights. A series of meetings of the Swabian League were held to discuss procedures to be used against the knights. Nürnberg pressured the Confederation to use force against them and especially von Berlichingen. However, Maximilian hoping to avoid further bloodshed intervened by ordering further discussions. The result was that those who had aided the knights (such as Würzburg) were required to pay a sum of 14,000 gulden for the damages from the various feuds.

Kress was present at a number of the sessions dealing with Götz von Berlichingen and others. The legal feud with von Berlichingen had presumably been ended at an earlier session of the League on June 3, 1514. However, in 1515 he again despoiled Nürnberg merchants along with those of Augsburg, Salzburg, and Ulm who were escorted by soldiers from Mainz. The Council commissioned Kress to intervene with regard to these events at the court of Maximilian. He did so several times, even traveling with the court to the Netherlands in 1517.

Another important affair which involved Christoph Kress concerned Stephan Vischer, a merchant and citizen of Nürnberg. Vischer had suffered a series of business reverses and blamed his native city for his failures. In a spiteful mood he sent some libelous and defamatory
letters from Augsburg to his friends attacking Nürnberg. Vischer also claimed to know all the bale markings used by Nürnberg's merchants and "was determined to deal with them in due course, according to his liking." This caused the Nürnberg City Council to have him arrested at Augsburg. However, the court in Augsburg refused to proceed against him. Instead, he was released upon the requests of the estates of the Swabian League.

This peculiar man could not restrain himself from malevolent behavior even when set at liberty. He soon ventured upon such fraudulent transactions as buying a great quantity of silver from the Welsers and other merchants from Nürnberg and Augsburg without paying for it. One marvels at the gullibility of the merchants who had extended credit to such a man. Later he made a treacherous attack near Liège on ten wagons which had been dispatched to Bergau with goods belonging to Augsburg and Nürnberg merchants as well as a Welser shipment of silver. Vischer failed in this attempt and was imprisoned at Wilfurt by order of the Emperor in 1511.52

Since that time, Augsburg and Nürnberg had kept him under arrest at their own expense and even when Maximilian asked for his release, they refused to set him free. Therefore, the Council of Nürnberg dispatched Christoph Kress to propose to the emperor that Vischer remain in prison until he gave sufficient security for his future
behavior. In a short time Kress was able to settle the matter to the complete satisfaction of the City Council.\textsuperscript{53}

Kress dealt with other problems while at the imperial court. Among them was the transfer of 200 gulden out of the Nürnberg city rates from Sixt Oelhafen to the imperial historian, Johann Stabio.\textsuperscript{54} Kress was also involved in a discussion about a raid by Franz von Sickingen near Mainz as the robber knights continued to upset the peace of the Empire.\textsuperscript{55} Although Christoph was ill at the time, he nevertheless handled these matters satisfactorily. The Council soon expressed great anxiety over the condition of his health.\textsuperscript{56} In another letter sent in May, 1517, the Council wrote him that "he might go to Cologne for some time, or any other suitable place, to have a change of air."\textsuperscript{57}

His health improved to such a degree that on June 12, 1517, the City Council asked him to travel to a meeting of several members of the Swabian Confederation. In addition to Nürnberg, Kress was also asked to represent the towns of Rothenburg, Dinkelsbühl, Windsheim, and Weissenburg. This request was concluded by the Council as follows, "and we hope you will not complain about our demands but gratify our respective wishes and we will consider your kindness at all times and never forget it."\textsuperscript{58} It was not unusual for a Nürnberg diplomat to be asked to represent other, smaller imperial cities such as Windsheim
and Weissenburg for often in foreign policy Nürnberg guided her lesser neighbors. 59

However, this time Christoph was unable to complete his mission. His longing for his family and his need for recreation made him request his recall. This the Council quickly granted expressing a deep concern for his welfare.

He should take his way home and in consideration of the troublesome times he should arrange his affairs in such a way that whether he travel by land or by water, no discomfort might happen to him, which the Council otherwise would regret and grieve at. 60

Kress was not as active in diplomatic affairs in 1518 as he had been the previous two years. Yet he still made several trips, including embassies to the episcopal see at Würzburg and the court of the Margrave at Ansbach. Leonhart Groland and Kress also represented Nürnberg at the meeting of town delegates at Ulm and at the Diet of Augsburg. 61 Kress was also present at Maximilian's court at Linz shortly before the emperor's death.

In 1518 Maximilian had created a problem for Nürnberg by giving the brothers Casimir and George of Brandenburg-Ansbach a new wine toll privilege in return for their support for the imperial candidacy of Charles of Ghent. The brothers had, in 1515, deposed their father, Frederick, charging him with senility and placing him in protective custody. 62 The new privilege allowed them to raise the toll on each load of wine passing through their
territories from three pennies to one half of a gulden. This tax fell quite heavily on Nürnberg's merchants and violated an earlier treaty between the city and Margrave Frederick. When Casimir refused to stop collecting the toll from citizens of Nürnberg, the city was forced to attempt to secure diplomatic help against him.

Meanwhile Emperor Maximilian had died and his grandson, Charles, succeeded in bribing his way to the imperial throne in 1519. Therefore, Nürnberg sent Dr. Christoph Scheurl and the city councillor, Nicholas Haller, to the court of the new emperor in Spain to congratulate him, and to assure him of the city's continued friendship and loyalty. The Scheurl mission was also instructed to obtain a decision in regard to the conflict over the wine toll. Charles agreed to suspend the toll and to have the conflicting claims investigated. Nürnberg's privileges and status were also confirmed by the new ruler and it appeared the city was starting off well in its relations with Maximilian's successor.

In that same year Christoph Kress had been named Senior Mayor and military captain. In addition, on April 29, the City Council appointed him as their chief representative to the Swabian League. As an ambassador to the Swabian Confederation, of which Casimir also was a member, Kress had to defend Nürnberg's interest in the wine toll controversy. However, the primary question
facing the League was the safeguarding of the public peace in Swabia and Franconia. Kress was kept extremely active by his involvement in League affairs. In so doing he served his native city well, especially in his efforts to break the power of the robber knights.

It was Kress, along with the Augsburg delegate and the Count of Oettingen, who urged the town members of the Swabian League to strike a decisive blow against the mischief of the robber barons whose disturbances interfered with trade and traffic. Joachim, Count of Oettingen, had been treacherously ambushed in 1520 by Thomas von Absberg at Donauwörth and severely wounded. Nürnberg had also suffered continued problems with the robber knights and was eager to put an end to their harassment.

Unfortunately, it took a long time for activities to begin. In June, 1523, the Swabian League held a meeting at Nördlingen to which all the Franconian knights accused of a breach of the Landfrieden were summoned to a hearing. Some of the knights managed to clear themselves, others did not, and still others refused to attend. Against the latter two groups, an army of 1,500 horse soldiers and 15,000 foot troops was assembled at Dinkelsbühl under the command of George Truchsess von Waldburg. Christoph Kress served as a councillor to the commander-in-chief, Truchsess. Nürnberg, Augsburg, and Ulm provided artillery for the campaign. Nürnberg
gave two cannons, two cannonades, two nightingales, two culverins, six rabinets, six mortars, and sixty pole-axes. Kress was in his glory being able to combine his roles as a diplomat and a military man.

The army upon the advise of Christoph Kress directed its attention first to Boxberg near Mergentheim, considered to be the strongest castle in Franconia. The castle belonging to the von Rosenbergs promptly surrendered when faced with the overwhelming strength of the League's army. Others quickly followed the example of Boxberg and the campaign which lasted only sixty days was a complete success. A number of castles, including that of Thomas von Absberg, were destroyed. During the campaign, Kress entertained the army's leaders at his home in Kraftshof. It must have been a very pleasurable effort for him.

At the conclusion of hostilities, the army's leaders received presents from the Swabian League. Kress was given a cradle-rifle, which was embellished with the von Rosenberg coat-of-arms, and four new arquebuses, which he had repaired and brought to Kraftshof with a full complement of accessories. The city of Nürnberg showed its gratitude to him by giving him a gold cup, on the outside of which a maiden was holding the escutcheon of the Kress coat-of-arms, while on the inside the Kress and Tucher coat-of-arms and at the bottom that of Nürnberg were engraved. Kress was further honored
by Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, the brother of Charles V, who presented him with a covered hat because Christoph and the Bavarian chancellor, Dr. Eck, had tried to get a war indemnity for the Swabian League. This effort had succeeded and at Christmas of 1523, the first installment was paid. The estates of the Confederation showed their appreciation by paying Christoph a gift of 150 gulden.

Christoph Kress had in a few short years become one of the leading statesmen in Germany. He had been honored by the Empire, the Swabian League, and by his native town. Most important of all, he had received the necessary background and training to allow him to play an effective role in the great crisis of the Reformation.
NOTES

1 See Karl Friedrich von Frank zu Döfering, Kress Family History (Vienna, 1930). Hereafter cited as Frank, Kress Family.

2 Smith, "A Description," p. 212. Genealogies of the Kress family can be found in Frank, Kress Family, as well as in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, Familienarchiv Kress, XXX, D, No. 173. Hereafter cited as FA Kress.


5 Frank, Kress Family, p. 168.

6 "Testament des Christoph Kress," FA Kress, VI.

7 See George Kress von Kressenstein, Brief des Dr. Sixt Tucher Propst bei St. Lorenz in Nürnberg an seinen Nachfolger Anton Kress (Nürnberg, 1690) and Friedrich Herzacher, "Dr. Anton Kress, Propst von St. Lorenz (1478-1513)," MVGN, LVIII (1971), 121-38.

8 Frank, Kress Family, pp. 167-170.

9 By J. E. Jörg, Deutschland in der Revolutionsperiode von 1522-26 (Freiburg, 1851), p. 156.

11. FA Kress, III, D, No. 175.

12. Ibid. The Kress family had maintained an active import business with Milan, Venice, and Genoa which in part accounts for Anton's desire to have his sons learn Italian. Strauss, Nuremberg, p. 80.


15. Ibid.

16. FA Kress, VI.

17. Quoted in Frank, Kress Family, p. 172.

18. Ibid.


21. FA Kress, VI.

23FA Kress, VI.


25See BB 89 and 90, passim.

26Medallions of Christoph Kress are in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, and the Stadt-
museum, Nürnberg (Fembo House). A photograph of Chris-
toph's tomb sculpture can be found in Gerhard Pfeiffer,
Geschichte, I, 169. Frank's, Kress Family, pp. 171-189
is richly illustrated with photographs of Kress medall-
ions and portraits many of which are in the Kress Family
Museum, Kraftshof-Neunhof.

27Frank, Kress Family, p. 171.

28For examples of data concerning the length of
diplomatic missions see the tables in Spielvogel,

29StAN, Nürnberger Stadtrechnungsbelege, 54A,
I-III.

30Frank, Kress Family, p. 173.

31See BB 79, 61r-62v, 80r; BB 80, 73r-73v, 79r-83v,
239v-240v; and BB 81, 108r, 131r-132v, 139r-139v.


33The extensive correspondence involving the Tetzl
case can be found in BB 74, 120r-121r, 129v-130r, 132v-
133r, 150r-151v, 155r-156v, 194v-195r and BB 75, 63r-65r,
71r-71v, 76v-77v, 163r.

34BB 74, 120r-121r.

35Ibid.

36BB 75, 76v-77v.

38. BB 74, 133r.

39. Ibid.


41. BB 75, 103r.

42. BB 74, 164r-165v.

43. BB 74, 165r.


51. Ibid.

53 BB 76, 183v-185v.

54 BB 76, 215r.

55 BB 76, 165v-166r, 229r.

56 BB 76, 221r.

57 BB 76, 228v-229r.

58 BB 77, 1r-2r.


61 BB 79, 80r; BB 80, 80r-83v.


65 Frank, Kress Family, p. 176.

66 For examples see Klupfel, Urkundenbuch, II, 270-271, 303-305 and BB 84 and 95, passim.

67 BB 85, 91r and Frank, Kress Family, pp. 176-177.
68 BB 81, 108r, 228r-229r; BB 83, 273r; and BB 84, 50r-51v.

69 Ranke, Reformation, p. 305.

70 BB 85, 84v-85r.

71 The Nürnberg City Council was especially eager to have Boxberg attacked. BB 85, 91r-93v, 99v-101r, 111r, and 144r.


73 Ibid.

74 Klupfel, Urkundenbuch, II, 182.

75 Mummenhoff, "Kress," p. 381.
CHAPTER III

NÜRNBERG'S REFORMATION CRISIS

When Christoph Kress rode into Worms on January 25, 1521, to attend the imperial diet, he entered fully into the crisis of the Reformation. The Reformation crisis for Nürnberg involved not only the religious question and its political ramifications, but also the social problems manifested in the Peasants' War of 1525. It is to these problems and Kress's involvement with them that we shall now address our attention.

Accompanying Kress to the diet were Caspar Nützel, Leonhard Groland, Dr. Marsilius Prenninger, and Lazarus Spengler. Spengler was in a particularly sensitive position for both he and Willibald Pirckheimer had been threatened in the papal bull, Exsurge Domini, along with Dr. Martin Luther. Shortly before the Diet of Worms opened the Nürnbergers found themselves excommunicated with Luther in the bull, Decet Romanum Pontificem.¹ In fact it was only after long and difficult negotiations that the names of the two citizens of Nürnberg were dropped from the papal bulls.² Spengler's diplomatic colleague, Caspar Nützel, had already translated
Luther's Ninety-five Theses into German for publication. Both men were members of a humanist circle in which Luther's ideas received a favorable reception.

The diet opened on January 28, 1521, with a speech by the imperial chancellor, Gattinara, to which the new emperor, who was making his first appearance in Germany, added a few remarks in German. In his speech Charles V attempted to elevate the languishing prestige of the Holy Roman Empire, a theme which persisted throughout the assembly. At one point in the diet, Charles stated, "our own honour and dignity is the honour and dignity of you all; it is not our desire and will that there be many lords, but one lord alone as is the tradition of the holy Empire." There were many matters which vied for the attention of the assembled estates. The chief objects of deliberation, in addition to the religious question, were the voting of subsidies for the imperial journey to Rome, the organization of imperial government, and the payment of the judges in the imperial Supreme Court. There were also several minor matters connected with public order as well as negotiations with Swiss, French, and Hungarian emissaries.

Charles had requested that the estates provide him with sufficient men and material for his expedition to Rome. He estimated that he would need 4,000 cavalry and
20,000 foot soldiers for one year's service. He promised to contribute 16,000 foot soldiers, 2,000 heavy cavalry, and a large body of light cavalry at his own expense. After some debate the estates eventually agreed to grant the required number of troops but only for a half year. It was also announced that, although the estates would furnish sufficient men, they would not provide the money for raising them. In addition, the estates further stipulated that their German troops would march only under German officers and that the emperor was only to appoint the commander-in-chief, who also must be a German. Charles was fast becoming acquainted with the compromise nature of imperial politics.

The diet also decided to revive the imperial Council of Regency and the imperial Supreme Court and to locate both in Nürnberg, a distinction the city did not refuse. The diet decided to hold the next meeting of the estates there. Nürnberg's assessment was raised from 100 to 600 gulden to support the Council and the courts of justice. For a time the city seemed on its way to becoming something resembling the capital of a revived Holy Roman Empire.

The plan to finance the imperial Supreme Court by collecting a general customs duty at the imperial frontiers on wool and cloth was of a more controversial nature. Because this customs duty would adversely effect
the commerce of the imperial cities, they vigorously pro-
tested its adoption. The Nürnberg City Council
instructed Nützel, Groland, and Kress to "work diligently
against it." The cities declared that if a frontier
customs duty were imposed, in addition to so many internal
customs duties between the individual territories, they
would be unable to compete with foreign countries. Their
protest succeeded and for the moment the customs plan was
dropped.

At the diet the Turkish issue, which was to become
a crucial problem, was also raised. Emissaries from
Hungary had arrived to plea for aid against the impending
danger of Ottoman aggression. In an age which featured
such youthful rulers as Henry VIII of England, Francis I
of France, and Charles V, the Ottoman Empire was governed
by a young ruler soon to be known as Suleiman the
Magnificent. While the Germans deliberated at Worms,
Suleiman busily prepared for an attack on Belgrade. His
activities were not considered a serious threat to Germany
and the Hungarian request for aid was rejected. The
estates held out the possibility of future help should
the situation become more critical. In August Belgrade
fell to the Turks, months after the Diet of Worms had
ended.

Christoph Kress was not present at all the discus-
sions leading up to Martin Luther's appearance at the
diet. He had been dispatched to Augsburg for discussions of problems concerning the Swabian League. However, his colleague, Lazarus Spengler, helped to keep him informed about what took place at Worms in his absence. Several of Christoph's biographers claim that he was at Worms when Luther made his appearance. This is doubtful since one of the City Council's letters to him at Augsburg is dated April 13, 1521, and another is of an even later date.

Martin Luther's hearing before the Diet of Worms on April 17, 1521, had been the result of a long and difficult series of negotiations. The sources clearly show that long before the diet opened Charles V had made up his mind that no form of heresy would be tolerated in his dominions. Indeed, the emperor appears to have been much more preoccupied with the plans for his first war against Francis I than with the question of Luther.

Despite the efforts of the papal nuncio, Alaeander, to have the rebellious monk condemned without a hearing, Charles at last relented to the pressure of Frederick the Wise, the Saxon chancellor Brück, other members of the estates, and even certain members of his own council. The details of Luther's appearance are sufficiently well known so that we need not recapitulate them here. It must, however, be pointed out that he made an exceedingly favorable impression upon Spengler who reported his
reactions and observations to the Nürnberg City Council. Spengler had been impressed not only by the courage of Luther but also by the duplicity of his enemies. He remained a life-long supporter of the Lutheran Reformation and its first important lay leader. Because of Spengler’s influence in Nürnberg, his position with respect to Luther would have a profound effect on the city’s subsequent religious and political destiny.

As for the emperor, he made his position on the subject perfectly clear when he declared:

After the impertinent reply which Luther gave yesterday in our presence, I declare that I now regret having delayed so long the proceedings against him and his false doctrines. I am resolved that I will never again hear him talk. He is to be taken back immediately according to the arrangements of the mandate with due regard for the stipulation of his safe-conduct. He is not to preach or seduce the people with his evil doctrine and is not to incite rebellion.

Both Luther and the emperor had made their irreconcilable stands at the Diet of Worms.

The edict which Alexender had prepared against Luther was confirmed by the emperor’s council on May 8. However, it was not actually signed by Charles V until the day after the Diet of Worms had officially closed. The emperor had no intention of allowing the religious controversy to interfere with the impending war with France. Therefore, the edict was not signed until after
the estates had granted the desired military aid. 19

The Edict of Worms reads in part:

We strictly order that...you shall refuse to give the aforesaid Martin Luther hospitality, lodging, food, or drink; neither shall anyone, by word or deed, secretly or openly, succour or assist him by counsel or help; but in whatever place you meet him, you shall proceed against him... In like manner you shall proceed against his friends, adherents, patrons, maintainers, abettors, sympathizers, emulators and followers... Consequently we command you, each and all, under the penalties already prescribed, that henceforth no one shall dare to buy, sell, read, preserve, copy, print, or cause to be copied or printed, any books of the aforesaid Martin Luther... Neither shall any dare to approve his opinions, nor to proclaim, defend, or assert them, in any other way that human ingenuity can invent, notwithstanding he may have put some good in them to deceive the simple man. 20

After the Diet of Worms the Nürnberg City Council found itself in an extremely awkward position. The city would soon become the seat of the imperial Council of Regency and the imperial Supreme Court. Nürnberg had become almost overnight the leading city in an Empire which had just outlawed Martin Luther and condemned his followers.

Yet some of the Nürnberg City Council's leading members and most respected advisers had become supporters of the proscribed Wittenberg professor. Even many of the city's ordinary citizens supported him and were opposed to the enforcement of the decree against him and his
adherents. The humanist circle, which had received Luther's ideas so enthusiastically included not only Spengler and Nützel, but the city's two Loßunger Anton Tucher and Hieronymus Ebner, the brothers Martin and Endres Tucher and Christoph and Sigmund Führer, Hieronymus Holzschuher, Albrecht Dürer, and Christoph Scheurl. Before the Diet of Worms Scheurl had written that "the patriciate, the multitude of the other citizens and all scholars stand on Luther's side." It is hardly surprising that although the Worms Edict had been dutifully posted at the town hall, in September, 1521, no action was taken on its provisions for collecting Lutheran books and prosecuting Luther's followers.

The situation became more delicate as the Governing Council and the Supreme Court took up their activities in Nürnberg and it remained so throughout the three imperial diets which took place in the city between 1522 and 1524. In a very real sense the Nürnberg City Council had helped to make the situation difficult. The Council had aided the process of the Reformation by its appointment to important church offices of young men who had been either Luther's students at Wittenberg or had been instructed in his writings. Many of these appointed preachers had popularized the Reformation in the city. Undoubtedly the most significant of the new church appointments was that of Andreas Osiander as preacher at
St. Lawrence. His sermons were so well received that a large number of the princes and envoys, who were staying in the city for the meetings of the Council of Regency and the imperial diets, went to hear them.  

During the 1522-23 period, Kress found himself primarily occupied with the problems of the Swabian League and its activities against the robber barons. He had been elected to the League's executive committee and had played host to the League's leadership on behalf of the City Council. Twice he had given parties for the League at his Kraftshof home and on a later occasion Kress entertained the delegates at the freemen's inn (Herren-trinkstube) as well as at the city hall and the city's shooting trenches. Even in times of crisis, the role of the diplomat required certain basic social amenities.

Kress also represented Nürnberg at the imperial diet which opened in the city in February, 1522. He shared this task with Jacob Müffel and Christoph Tetzel, while Caspar Nützel served as Nürnberg's chief delegate to the imperial Council of Regency. The three Nürnberg diets were not attended by the emperor. Instead his younger brother Ferdinand, whose appointment as Statt-halter, or regent of Germany, had been confirmed at the end of the Diet of Worms, presided over them. Archduke Ferdinand did not arrive in Nürnberg until September 20, 1952. He was welcomed by Hieronymus Ebner and
Jacob Müffel who, representing the city government, presented him with five barrels of Rhine wine, six vats of fish, and three cart loads of oats. Before his arrival Ferdinand had been represented by Sigismund von Herberstein, a veteran Austrian diplomat.

Nürnberg's welcome to Ferdinand was symbolic of the desire of the imperial cities to obtain political support from the Empire's ruling house. Ever since the cities' demand for full political rights had been rejected by the princes in the 1490's, the townspeople had turned to the emperor for political help. The political position of the cities seemed to be improving because at the Diet of Worms the princes' customs duty scheme had been blocked and upon the initiative of the emperor the cities were given two seats on the imperial Council of Regency.

In 1522 this favorable trend was reversed and the problem became further complicated because of the religious question. Hans Baron has summarized the threat to the position of the cities:

In 1522 the customs project was again taken up by the government, in 1523 a frontier customs duty was imposed, not only on wool and cloth, but also on the more important luxury articles. At the same time, the measures taken by the Empire against the raising of prices on the part of the larger commercial companies and 'rings', and against their forestalling of monopolized articles... so increased in severity that they seriously threatened the economy of the cities. A maximum tariff for all important wares and a prohibition
of all monopolies were decreed, and an attempt was made entirely to prevent the further increase of civic capital on a large scale by fixing a comparatively low maximum sum as the working capital of commercial companies. . . . Even the right to vote at the Imperial Diets, claimed by the cities since the days of Berthold von Henneberg, and occasionally exercised, was formally repudiated by the princes at the Nuremberg Diet of the year 1522-3.31

When the cities raised certain questions with respect to aid against the Turks, they were told that "the usage in the empire was, that when a thing was determined on by the electors, princes and other Estates, the cities should be content to abide by it."32 The cities argued that if they were to share in the expenses with other states, they should also take part in the deliberations. Despite the seriousness of the Turkish situation, von Herbertstein's plan for a German joint-defense was rejected and the estates agreed to send only 3,000 men against the Turks.33

In desperation, the cities decided to hold a meeting at Speyer late in March, 1523. Christoph Tetzel represented Nürnberg at this special meeting.34 It was decided to send an extraordinary embassy to Charles V to inform him of the estates proposals and the cities' reactions to them. The cities hoped that once again the emperor would intercede on their behalf.35 Dr. Christoph Scheurl and Clement Volckamer were appointed to represent
Nürnberg along with envoys from Augsburg, Metz, and Strassburg.36

Charles received the embassy at Valladolid on August 9, 1523, before a brilliant assemblage of grandees, bishops, and ambassadors. Scheurl delivered the cities' opening speech in Latin to which the imperial chancellor responded in the same language. The emperor proved to be especially kind to the city delegates. A commission received the grievances of the embassy which were under six headings: administration of justice, tolls, subsidies, public peace, monopolies, and lesser matters. Nürnberg regarded the toll and subsidy questions as the most crucial.37

Several embarrassing issues were raised by Balthasar Merklin, provost of Waldkirch and an important imperial adviser. He asked what the cities were prepared to do if the emperor discontinued the imperial Council of Regency and took government into his own hands? He reminded the delegates that although previous emperors had received gifts from the cities upon their accession, Charles had not. Furthermore, the papal nuncio had complained that in Augsburg, Strassburg, and Nürnberg, Luther's doctrines were received and his works had been printed. This the embassy denied.38

However, despite a few anxious moments, the mission proved to be a triumph for the cities. Charles, although
at first inclined to favor the imposition of an imperial tax, realized how close his interests were to those of the towns and how dangerous a revival of princely power would be to his own authority. He instructed Merklin to inform the delegates that he would direct the regent and the imperial Supreme Court not to enforce the toll; the Council of Regency would be instructed not to proceed against the monopolies or the commercial companies without his authorization. He also declared that he was in favor of the constitutional claims of the cities. These instructions were relayed by his personal envoy to the Diet of Nürnberg, Jean Hammart.

The religious question was in the forefront of the problems concerning the diets at Nürnberg. Pope Adrian VI, a former tutor of the emperor had sent the nuncio Chieregati to insist upon the execution of the Edict of Worms and to demand prompt action against Martin Luther. Chieregati openly admitted the partial guilt of the Vatican for the decline of the church and promised a thorough reform of the church hierarchy. Archduke Ferdinand supported Adrian's program and expressed disappointment when the estates made it clear that the Edict of Worms would not be carried out. The estates said that it would be dangerous to enforce the edict because of the large increase in Luther's followers and because of the discontent of the Germans over papal exactions.
They asked why Luther should be arrested for pointing out clerical abuses which the pope himself had recognized.\textsuperscript{41}

The estates responded to papal pressure by drawing up a list of 100 Gravamina, or grievances, against the church. They listed complaints about papal taxation, the expense of appealing law suits to Rome, clerical exemption from civil jurisdiction, and the immorality of the clergy. Even many estates not sympathetic to Luther had complaints against the church. Plans for a forthcoming general council to be held in Germany under the presidency of the emperor were also drawn up. Archduke Ferdinand's plan to proceed against Luther by using the imperial Council of Regency was also thwarted by the diet. He was warned that "the arrest of Luther and subsequent suppression of evangelical truth by means of tyranny would provoke a mass revolt against the secular and ecclesiastical authorities and provide for further perpetuation of unchristian abuses."\textsuperscript{42}

In the meantime Pope Adrian had died and Cardinal Giulio de' Medici had succeeded him as Pope Clement VIII. Clement appointed Lorenzo Campeggio as legate in Germany. Cardinal Campeggio had been Christoph Scheurl's former tutor in law and a personal friend at Bologna.\textsuperscript{43} Fearing abuse he entered Nürnberg on March 16, 1524, without the usual fanfare accorded a papal legate. His somewhat exaggerated description of religious conditions in the
city reveals how far the reform movement had come.

In these parts the sincere faith of Christ is utterly canceled; no respect is paid either to the Virgin Mary or the saints. on the contrary, it is said that those who employ their aid sin mortally. . . . They generally communicate under both forms. They make a laughingstock of the Pope and Cardinals, and other ambassadorial ecclesiastics, by means of paintings and other caricatures. In short, they consider Martin their illuminator, and that until now they have been in darkness.44

Campeggio renewed the pope’s request for the enforcement of the Edict of Worms at the third Diet at Nürnberg which opened in January, 1524. When asked about the pope’s intentions concerning the free council and the grievances, the legate replied that the pope was determined to pursue such measures as would be for the greatest good of the church. He assured the estates that their grievances had been laid before Clement but would give no more specific answer.45

The assembly’s final decree on the religious question was equally evasive. The estates promised to comply with the Edict of Worms only “as far as possible.”46 Once again the Grayamina were endorsed and the diet called for a general church council to meet at Speyer in November. The diet decreed that the holy Gospel was to be preached in accordance with the old and established interpretation until such time as a council had settled the religious question. The diet’s recess of April 18,
1524 stressed that "the necessity of an ecumenical assembly is perceived daily more and more, in order to arrest the disorders which overwhelm Christendom."\(^{47}\)

The decrees only served to postpone the settlement of the religious question. Their vague wording encouraged a wide latitude of interpretation. Lazarus Spengler clarified Nürnberg’s position on the controversy by arguing that until a free council meeting on German soil had settled the matter, Luther should be allowed to preach and his writings should continue to circulate.\(^{48}\)

The religious question was not settled at the Speyer meeting because the emperor felt that a general council of the church was necessary for a proper solution.\(^{49}\)

Important decisions were made by the third Nürnberg Diet with respect to the machinery of imperial government. The imperial Council of Regency had been attacked for not maintaining public peace or controlling Franz von Sickingen or his opponents. Nürnberg shared in these concerns as the city had a strong vested interest in public order.\(^{50}\) Yet the Council was in serious trouble because few members of the estates wanted to finance such a weak organization; even fewer were willing to increase its powers. In fact the three ecclesiastical electors wanted its abolition. The cities were divided on the issue of financing the imperial government as a whole.\(^{51}\)
Ferdinand handled these negotiations much more skillfully than he did those on religion. He prevented a temporary union of the cities by meeting with them only in small groups and by making special concessions to them. The archduke eventually agreed to change the membership of the Governing Council and to transfer it from Nürnberg to Esslingen, a small free city closer to his Austrian possessions. The imperial Supreme Court was also moved from Nürnberg.

The city seemed glad to have the imperial government leave its walls. The honor had become a burden for the city and added to the strain imposed by the Reformation crisis. Although Nürnberg had always been wary of princely power, too much imperial power could also present problems. The city preferred its autonomy.52

Following the final Nürnberg diet, Ferdinand announced a special meeting to be held at Regensburg in June, 1524, for a further discussion of the religious question. Nürnberg sent Kress, Clement Volckamer, and Dr. Christoph Scheurl to this session which was also attended by Cardinal Campeggio.53 Earlier Scheurl had discussed the city's innovations in religion with his old friend. He denied that Nürnberg had attempted to alienate itself from the papacy or was in league with Luther. He stated that the city government did not countenance heresy because it had published the Edict of Worms, prohibited
the sale of Lutheran books, and inhibited certain preachers who caused disorder because of their sermons. 54

The instructions of the embassy to Regensburg stressed the city's obedience to the emperor and his representatives in obeying the Edict of Worms as far as they were able. However, the Council found it could not enforce all the provisions and needed Ferdinand's advice. The ambassadors were instructed that if asked about the changes in church ceremonies in Nürnberg's parish churches, they were to say that the Council "had neither commanded, advised, nor agreed to these changes." 55 The Council maintained that to rescind the innovations was to risk bloodshed and rebellion.

Ferdinand and his advisers received Kress and the other delegates on June 25. He recognized the city's continued obedience and appreciated the efforts to carry out the Edict of Worms. However, he made it clear that the city would have to answer to the imperial viceroy for the Council's failure to carry out the rest of the edict. His advisers told the mission that Ferdinand could do nothing legally to delay proceedings against the commune but that the archduke might try and help if the Council so desired. 56

Before the ambassadors left Regensburg, Scheurl had another discussion with Campeggio which paralleled their earlier talk. The nuncio wanted specific information
about religious innovations and the treatment of priests in the town. He also warned Scheurl that past privileges could be withdrawn if the city was disobedient. Scheurl assured the cardinal that Nürnberg remained loyal to God, the pope, and the emperor. Any changes in the town’s religious practices had been introduced by the provosts, not by the government.

This line of defense appeared again in the orders given to Kress, Scheurl, and Martin Tucher for a mission to Bamberg in July, 1524. They were ordered to report to Bishop Weigand von Redwitz, who had replaced Bishop George on May 31, 1522, as Nürnberg’s ecclesiastical overlord, on the religious innovations in the city. Nürnberg’s relations with the bishops of Bamberg had never been smooth as both vied for control over the city’s religious establishment. The embassy was told to say that these changes had been introduced by the provosts of St. Sebald and St. Lawrence by themselves "and these had not been agreed to, commanded, or advised by the Council."

The ambassadors presented the Council’s instructions which emphasized the city government’s innocence. Scheurl, the embassy’s spokesman, stated that should the bishop desire more information, the Council would not object to a special trial of the provosts and preachers. Bishop Weigand replied saying he did not know whether or
not the city government approved of the innovations, but he would accept their suggestion for a trial.

When the trial took place in September, it resulted in the pronouncement of a major excommunication against the two provosts and the Augustinian prior and the demand that they be dismissed from their offices. Appeals were made and the case dragged on. Finally, it ended with Nürnberg refusing to recognize the bishop's competence to judge the case because he was one of the contending parties. By so doing the Council had, for all practical purposes, suspended the bishop's jurisdiction over the city.

Nürnberg defended the Reformation against imperial authority by referring to the decrees of the diet of 1524 which stressed that until a general church council decided the religious question, the Gospel was to be preached in accordance with the views of the church fathers. When facing church authorities, the Council maintained the alterations in the service were the work of the clergy, not the civil authorities. The Council pleaded to both church and state that a reversal of the religious innovations would lead to violent disturbances in the city. Certainly the Council was guilty of some dissimulation, but, given Nürnberg's vulnerable position, it is difficult to imagine a straightforward policy's succeeding. The city had been able to protect the
Reformation while avoiding an open break with the emperor.

Christoph Kress, as a member of the Nürnberg City Council, had helped to formulate this delicate Reformation policy. Surely he was well qualified to help carry it out as he did at Regensburg and repeatedly at Bamberg. He served the reform movement not only as a councillor and a diplomat but also by bringing the evangelical minded monk, Martin Glaser, to Kraftshof to serve his family church in 1524. We do not have any major statement of his religious beliefs. The tenor of his letters and the letters addressed to him indicate a quietly pious man. This would be in accordance with his family's tradition and interests. In his will written in 1531, he wrote "there were good reasons for a Reformation in the city of Nürnberg." He did not regret his role in the movement.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is not difficult to see that the Reformation would succeed in Nürnberg. Since the late fourteenth century, the Town Council had slowly but surely been gaining control over the city's religious establishment. The public announcement of the Reformation in March, 1525, after a religious colloquy, appears to have been the natural result of a lengthy process of reform and control by the City Council. Obviously the reasons why the reform movement succeeded
in Nürnberg are many and any adequate explanation involves difficult problems reflecting the complex nature of sixteenth-century urban society.67 This much is certain, by openly avowing Lutheranism in 1525, Nürnberg moved to the forefront of the new evangelical movement. The Reformation created as many political problems for Nürnberg as it apparently had solved.

At the same time the city adopted Lutheranism, it was plunged into the crisis of the German Peasants' War of 1525.68 Although the Reformation was more a catalyst than a cause of the Peasants' Revolt, the movement must be viewed as a part of the general upheavals of the Reformation era. The Peasants' Revolt posed a grave threat to the security of Nürnberg. Nürnberg faced not only the danger of outside peasant armies encamped to the north of the city, but also the danger of insurrection from revolutionary subjects both within the city and in its territory.69

The situation was further complicated by the city's recent adoption of Lutheranism. Catholics argued that Lutheran preaching had caused the peasants to revolt.70 The Council had to demonstrate that it was possible to propagate the Reformation without instigating civil insurrection.

Once again the Nürnberg City Council followed a delicate policy. The Council attempted to avoid revolt
in its territory, retain good relations with the warring peasant armies, and live up to its obligations to the Swabian League. Christoph Kress and Clement Volckamer served as ambassadors to the League during the period of the Peasants' War, relaying Nürnberg's instructions to the League while keeping the city informed of the League's activities. They also aided the League by collecting payments from its members necessary to purchase war supplies. In addition, Kress once again served as military adviser to the Confederation's military commander, George Truchsess von Waldburg. He spent twenty-one weeks in the field with the League's army in the extensive campaign against the peasantry.

On Easter Sunday, 1524, Kress had been named head of Nürnberg's war department. As the city's military leader and chief ambassador to the Swabian League, he became one of the key figures in the city's government dealing with the Peasants' Revolt. As Lawrence P. Buck has shown, the peasant threat to Nürnberg reached its greatest peak of peril after mid-May, 1525. A peasant delegation from the encampment near Würzburg had departed Nürnberg on May 13 threatening to leave no house standing which was better than a peasant's house. On May 15 the Council wrote Kress demanding that the forces of the Swabian League come to Franconia, or at least that a token force of 400 or 500 cavalry and 3,000 infantry be sent.
The peasant army at Würzburg had decided to attack the Nürnberg territory rather than that of Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg-Ansbach. When the Council learned this, it quickly rushed off another urgent request for troops. It threatened in another request for help not to send any money if troops were not sent. An effort to hire mercenary troops to defend the city proved unsuccessful. The situation had become desperate.

Word reached the city on May 25 from Clement Volckamer that the League had approved the sending of 200 cavalry and 2,000 infantry to Nürnberg if needed. The City Council aided its own defense by adopting a more conciliatory stance towards its dissidents. The danger to the city was suddenly removed when the Swabian League's army defeated the peasants at the battles of Königshofen, June 2, and Ingolstadt, June 4. The peasants were no match militarily for the more professional forces arrayed against them and their army was completely destroyed. Truchsess followed these victories by moving his troops up the Main to Bamberg, entering the city on June 17, 1525. Kress accompanying the army wrote that they had taken the monastery from the rebels and levied a contribution of 120,000 gulden.

When the League's army left Bamberg to return to Swabia on June 25, the Council worried that the army's movement might cause great damage to Nürnberg's territory
and possibly incite further peasant rebellion. The concern was realistic as sixteenth-century troops were notoriously undisciplined. Kress was asked to attempt to divert the army away from Nürnberg.\(^\text{80}\) The army did manage to avoid most of the town's domain and no major problems ensued as a result of troop movement.

The campaign for Kress also included the expedition against the peasants of the Allgäu and service at Württemberg. Perhaps his greatest service during the Peasants' Revolt was his repeated plea for clemency towards the rebels.\(^\text{81}\) This plea was for the most part ignored and the peasants were treated with great brutality by the Swabian League and the princes. In the spring of 1526 Kress again served with the forces of the Swabian League. This time the League fought on behalf of the Archbishop of Salzburg whose subjects had rebelled against him.\(^\text{82}\) This campaign also ended with a resounding victory for the forces of the Swabian Confederation.

Kress was rewarded for his services in the Peasants' Revolt by gifts of 180 gulden from the assessment at Württemberg and 100 gulden from that at Bamberg. He also received a large quantity of wine from the grateful rulers of Württemberg as well as a barrel of wine from Lake Constance from the provost of Weingarten. The Archbishop of Salzburg presented him with a gift of 200 gulden. The Swabian League acknowledged his merit by a
gift of another 100 gulden "because he had been their appointed councillor of war during the past warfare and had been useful in every respect." The crisis of the Reformation in Nürnberg and the Peasants' Revolt had ended and Kress had served with skill and distinction. He would soon be challenged again by the new problems of the emerging evangelical politics.
NOTES

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10 Baro'n, "Imperial Cities," p. 408.


12 BB 82, 120v, 133r.

13 Schubert, Lazarus Spengler, p. 295.


17 Schubert, Lazarus Spengler, pp. 254-311.


19 Grimm, Reformation Era, pp. 140-141 and Brandi, Charles V, p. 132.


21 Strauss, Nuremberg, p. 163.


23 Quoted in Schubert, Lazarus Spengler, p. 205.

On the imperial Council of Regency see Schubert, Lazarus Spengler, pp. 312-441 and Adolf Grabner, Zur Geschichte des Zweiten Nürnberger Reichsregiments, 1521-1523 (Berlin, 1903). One of the best primary sources for the Council is Hans von der Planitz Berichte aus dem Reichsregiment in Nürnberg, 1521-1523, ed. Hans Virck (Leipzig, 1870). The Nürnberg diets are discussed in Otto Redlich, Der Reichstag von Nürnberg, 1522-23 (Leipzig, 1887) and Ernst A. Richter, Der Reichstag zu Nürnberg (Leipzig, 1898). The sources for the diets are in RTA, III-Iv.

30 Redlich, Der Reichstag von Nürnberg, p. 18.

31 Baron, "Imperial Cities," p. 408.

32 Quoted in Ranke, Reformation, p. 307.


34 RV 687, 4r; Bebb, "Scheurl," pp. 115-118.

35 Klupfel, Urkundenbuch, II, 244-263.

36 RV 689, 19v.

37 RV 689, 13r, 14v, 19v; BB 85, 40r-41v.

38 Ranke, Reformation, pp. 307-308.

39 Baron, "Imperial Cities," pp. 408-409.

40 RTA, IV, 290-296.


42 Quoted in Thiry, "Archduke Ferdinand," p. 43; RTA, IV, 211-212.


45 Robertson, Charles the Fifth, I, 72.

46 RTA, IV, 603, 615-620.

48 Ludewig, Die Politik Nurnbergs, pp. 31-32.


50 BB 85, 78r-78v, 140r.

51 Thiry, "Archduke Ferdinand," p. 46; Ranke, Reformation, pp. 312-313.

52 Schubert, Lazarus Spengler, p. 441 and Franz, Nurnberg, pp. 82-84.

53 RV 704, 19r; BB 87, 82r; Pfeiffer, Quellen, p. 7.


55 Ibid. and Pfeiffer, Quellen, p. 262.

56 Pfeiffer, Quellen, pp. 262-264.

57 Ibid., pp. 266-267.

58 Ibid.

59 RV 705, 21r; Pfeiffer, Quellen, pp. 13-14; and Bebb, "Scheurl," pp. 138-141.

60 Pfeiffer, Quellen, pp. 273-275.

61 Ibid., pp. 275-276.

62 Ibid., pp. 286-288.


64 See BB 87, 139r-140v; BB 88, 92v-93r, 109v, and 199v.

65 FA Kress, VI, 1r.
For a more sophisticated analysis of the Reformation in Nürnberg see the literature cited in footnote 25 and especially Seebass, "Die Reformation," pp. 252-263.

The standard account of the German Peasants' War remains Gunther Franz, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg (Darmstadt, 1965). On the Peasants' War and Nürnberg see Buck, "Nürnberg and the Peasants' Revolt," an incisive analysis which largely supersedes the older studies of Johann Kemann, Nürnberg im Bauernkrieg (Nürnberg, 1878) and Adolf Engelsrath, "Nürnberg im Bauernkrieg," MVGN, XXXIII (1936). Buck has uncovered fresh documentary evidence in his "Die Haltung der Nürnberger Bauernschaft im Bauernkrieg," Altnürnberger Landschaft Mitteilungen, XIX (December, 1970), 59-77.


The correspondence of the City Council with Kress and Volckamer and be found in BB 89 and 90, passim.

StAN, Nürnberger Stadtrechnungsbelege, 54A, III, Nos. 253, 254, 256, 257, 269, and 270.


BB 89, 205r-206v.

BB 89, 220v.

BB 89, 224r-224v.

For details of the concessions see Buck, "Nürnberg and the Peasants' Revolt," pp. 154-163.

80 RV 718, 5r.


82 BB 92, 122v-123r, 152r-153v, 172r-174v, and 183r.

CHAPTER IV

THE EMERGENCE OF EVANGELICAL POLITICS

Nürnberg was one of the first major imperial cities openly to adopt Lutheranism. As such, the city had to play a prominent role in the newly emerging evangelical political movement. While Nürnberg had become a leader among the evangelical cities, Philip of Hesse and John of Saxony became the leaders of the evangelical princes. The Peasants' Revolt increased the tension caused by the religious controversy and contributed to attempts to form alliances along religious lines. In February, 1526, the rulers of Hesse and Saxony agreed to stand by each other in case they were attacked because of their religious beliefs. They were responding to a tentative alliance of Catholic princes formed at Dessau in July, 1525.¹

Much of the second half of 1525 and early 1526 was given over to feverish diplomatic activity. Nürnberg was in frequent contact with other German estates about the possibility of future political union. Philip of Hesse was especially eager to obtain political support from the townsmen. But Nürnberg and many other municipalities held back, waiting for word from the emperor,
future events, and the next imperial diet. Nürnberg became a leader in the effort to persuade the emperor to accept the permanence of her separation from the church of Rome.² Both Lazarus Spengler and Peter Butz, the city secretary of Strassburg, were among those who felt that the emperor might change his mind on religion as soon as he had observed the situation personally. They expressed the hope that the cause of the cities would be greatly strengthened by his imperial majesty’s good will in a series of letters exchanged in May, 1526, shortly before the opening of the Diet of Speyer.³ Even when it was known that Charles V would not be at the diet, Nürnberg still clung to her hope that an enlightened emperor would not oppose the city. The City Council strongly favored sending a delegation directly to the emperor explaining the cities’ point of view.⁴ It was hoped that the success of the extraordinary mission of 1523 could be repeated.

The Diet of Speyer which opened June 25, 1526, was a crucial test for the Lutheran cause and its adherents. The government of Nürnberg realized this and dispatched its leading diplomat, Christoph Kress, to head the city’s embassy. Although he was accompanied by Bernard Baumgartner, a seasoned diplomat in his own right, the Council’s correspondence with the ambassadors makes it clear that the main responsibility for the success of the
mission rested with Kress.\textsuperscript{5} He was then forty-two years old, thirteen of those years having been spent in the diplomatic service of Nürnberg. He had devoted much of his time the past several years as a key member of the Swabian League's executive council. He had participated in the Nürnberg City Council's maneuverings prior to the Diet of Speyer by attending meetings with envoys from other cities and by helping with the Council's diplomatic correspondence. He appeared to be ready for the next five years in which he would emerge as one of the key diplomatic figures in the Holy Roman Empire.

It appeared that some of the Lutheran princes were determined to force the religious issue at the Diet of Speyer. The Elector of Saxony entered Speyer with a retinue of 400 men, while Landgrave Philip of Hesse arrived with 200 armed followers. Banners were displayed which contained the Latin initials for the phrase, "The Word of the Lord endures forever." Lutheran services were held in the living quarters of the evangelical representatives and Lutheran literature was distributed in the city.\textsuperscript{6} The evangelical cause was further strengthened, it was thought by some, by the news that the emperor was again at odds with the pope. Shortly after the opening of the diet, Albert of Prussia, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, following Luther's advice, abandoned his monastic vows, married, secularized his order's
lands, and made himself Duke of Prussia.7 The diet had opened well for the evangelical faction.

The cities were not as vigorous as the princes in pressing the cause of the new faith. Even though the Nürnberg City Council instructed Kress and Baumgartner "to do what is necessary to maintain the cause of Almighty God," Nürnberg joined Strassburg and Ulm in her concern for the constitutional question.8 The towns were anxious to avoid disrupting their coalition with the Catholic, imperial cities.

In his opening address Archduke Ferdinand, who again presided over the assembly, brought up the issue of constitutional reform which was so important to the townsmen. On the religious question, he again insisted that the estates "resolve upon measures, ways, and means whereby the Christian faith and the well-established good Christian practice and order of the church in general may be maintained until the meeting of a free Council."9 He stressed that transgressors must be punished for their offenses and that the edict of Worms must remain in effect. The Hapsburg position proved to be unrealistic and the Diet of Speyer eventually moved to a compromise position.

A great deal of the credit for this move must be given to the town delegates at the diet. They attempted at the diet to maintain a unified front on the issues
most pertinent to their welfare. They chose as their spokesmen Christoph Kress and the able Strassburg orator, Jacob Sturm. Kress and Sturm began by informing the electors and the princes on June 26, that the cities would take up the issues raised by Archduke Ferdinand on their own. However, they could never agree to the strict enforcement of the Edict of Worms. They suggested instead that the estates work out their own solutions to the religious question rather than following the imperial proposals.

The townsmen then followed up this bold stance by drawing up their opinions and submitting them to the higher estates rather than following the customary reverse procedure. Kress and Sturm submitted the cities' reply to the electors and princes on July 4. The higher estates refused to respond to this audacious overture. The townsmen were not taken aback by the princely snub, instead they resolved upon further action.

Ten days later a new proposal was prepared which demanded that the cities be admitted to the rights of debate and voting in the diet without reservation. If the princes would not agree, the townsmen threatened to take their cause directly to the emperor. This memorial, like the earlier one, was largely the work of the Nürnberg envoys. In adopting this bold attitude, Kress and Baumgartner were acting in full accordance with the
wishes of the Nürnberg City Council. The Nürnbergers were firmly supported by many of the other city delegates, most notably Sturm of Strassburg and Bernhard Besserer of Ulm. Only Augsburg lagged behind the other major imperial cities.

The firmness of the cities paid off as their propositions touched off debates among the princes which lasted for another two weeks. Most of the electors opposed making any concessions to the towns. The Archbishop of Trier declared that the cities were subjects, not members of the Empire. He also attacked the towns as the main centers of the evangelical movement at the diet. His salvo rather neatly ignored the bold displays made by Philip of Hesse and John of Saxony. However, even those Lutheran stalwarts were unwilling at that time to strengthen the position of the cities at the imperial diets.

Nevertheless, the council of princes, despite the objections of many of the bishops, decided that the towns must be permitted some participation in the deliberations of the diet. The electors grudgingly gave in, emphasizing that their concession was a voluntary one and did not acknowledge any pretended right of the cities to full participation. The higher estates agreed to allow the cities two delegates who would sit with the six electors and thirteen princes on the general commission which was
to compose the diet's decisions. Christoph Kress and Jacob Sturm, the two top urban diplomats, became the municipal representatives on the general commission of the Diet of Speyer.\textsuperscript{16}

The majority of the estates at the diet were willing to take up the question of ecclesiastical reform. Nürnberg's diplomats were repeatedly instructed to do whatever necessary to maintain the evangelical cause.\textsuperscript{17} In fact Kress and Baumgartner regarded as possibly too timid the statement of the towns of July 4, in which they insisted that the cities would not tolerate traditions and usages which could not be defended on the basis of faith and Scripture, and that the enforcement of the Edict of Worms was impossible.\textsuperscript{18} Furthermore, Nürnberg, Strassburg, Ulm, and Frankfort joined with Philip of Hesse in a secret understanding to support any measure put forward by the Lutheran estates at the diet "in defense of the Gospel."\textsuperscript{19}

Again the combination of unity and audacity obtained surprising results. The electors and the princes, over the objections of several of the bishops and Archduke Ferdinand, appointed commissions to draw up their own reform proposals based on various older lists of abuses. By July 24, the memorial of the cities on reform was completed and Kress and Sturm delivered copies of Landgrave Philip and Elector John. The memorial contained
grievances similar to those drawn up at the diets in Nürnberg, 1522-1524, although the language used was more daring. In addition, the unity and energy displayed by the cities was something most previous imperial gatherings had not encountered. 20

Archduke Ferdinand on August 1 cut short all discussions of reform by producing Charles's instructions from Seville dated March 23. The emperor forbade religious innovations, promised to arrange a council with the pope, and demanded the execution of all imperial laws concerning religion until the meeting of a general council. 21 As might be expected, the imperial directives were favorably received by the Catholics and unfavorably received by the Lutheran minority.

On August 4, the evangelical towns sent Kress and Sturm directly to Archduke Ferdinand to inform him that the emperor's instructions could not be followed and that the only solution was to send an embassy directly to him in Spain. The city delegates were also instructed to say that with regard to the religious question, each estate should be responsible to God, the emperor, and the world for its own conduct. 22 This formula, although subject to great discussion when it first appeared, was eventually adopted by the diet in its final recess.

The strident tone of the evangelical memorial coupled with the conservative response of the more
orthodox estates brought the Diet of Speyer to a standstill. In order to break this impasse and to attend to other pressing matters, the diet as a whole decided finally to put aside the question of ecclesiastical reform. Ferdinand went along with this compromise because he especially realized the absolute necessity of getting to the question of military aid against the Turkish threat to his family's dominions. The diet, on August 23, accepted the general commission's recommendations for a generous military subsidy; 24,000 men were to be sent at once to aid the Hungarians. Once again the German help could not be utilized, for on August 29, the great battle of Mohacs began in which the Hungarian king was killed and his armies routed. Had the Turks been able to follow up their victory immediately, they would doubtlessly have made an impressive penetration into the Empire.

When it came to the crucial issue of military assistance to the Empire, the cities did not waver in their loyalties. The Nürnberg City Council wholeheartedly approved of the military subsidy, writing Kress and Baumgartner that "it is necessary that we and others help." The cities as yet did not consciously use the military vulnerability of the Hapsburgs as a bargaining lever to secure concessions on other issues.
The same day that the diet approved the military subsidy, John of Saxony and Philip of Hesse withdrew from the assembly without explanation and without taking leave of the diet's president, Archduke Ferdinand. The Elector of the Palatinate did the same thing the next day and presumably got together with the other two princes for a weekend hunting party at Heidelberg. Although they returned to Speyer on August 27, it can be argued, although not proved, that their actions may have precipitated a hasty conclusion to the diet.25

Also worthy of notice is the fact that Ferdinand's compromise on religion was in accordance with a policy shift made by his brother, Charles V. In a communication from Granada dated July 27, which must have reached the Archduke by the third week of August, the emperor suggested granting temporary concessions to the pro-Lutheran faction in return for German military support.26 Thus when the final recess of the diet appeared on August 27, 1526, it was a reflection of the combined policy of both the Hapsburg rulers. This recess, which in fact legalized the Reformation in Nürnberg, reads in part as follows:

Thereupon have we [the Commissioners], the Electors, Princes, Estates of the Empire, and ambassadors of the same, now here at this present Diet, unanimously agreed and resolved, while awaiting the sitting of the Council or a national Assembly with our subjects, on the matters which the Edict
Another step had been taken towards the territorial control of religion, expressed in the phrase, *cuius regio, eius religio*, which was eventually accepted in the Peace of Augsburg in 1555.

During the course of the Diet of Speyer, Landgrave Philip of Hesse made several alliance proposals to the most important city representatives. He first spoke to Christoph Kress on July 16 and on the following afternoon he spoke to the ambassadors from Nürnberg, Augsburg, Ulm, Frankfort, and Strassburg. At this meeting, the Landgrave repeated his invitation to join in alliance with Hesse and Saxony. The town delegates replied that they would report his offer to their governments. Failing to get a more definite commitment, Philip renewed his conversations with Kress. However, the Nürnberg envoy had been instructed to cultivate the Landgrave's friendship without making any binding promises. Kress resisted the pressure placed upon him by the Lutheran princes and Nürnberg remained uncommitted.

In the following weeks the diplomats from the major cities were entertained by both Philip of Hesse and Count Albrecht of Mansfield. They were asked if it would not be to their advantage to enter into an alliance with
the Lutheran princes. The townsmen were assured that
the emperor would not be among the alliance's prospective
foes. Once again the city delegates responded saying
that although the plans might be worthwhile, their
instructions did not allow them to enter into any alli-
ance negotiations. If their instructions changed, they
promised to notify the princes. These discussions were,
of course, to be kept strictly confidential.31

The period which followed the Diet of Speyer was a
time of consolidation and reconstruction. The Hapsburgs
found themselves preoccupied with politics outside
Germany. Charles was involved in his quarrel with the
papacy which eventually contributed to the sacking of
Rome in May, 1527, and his second war with France, 1528-
29. Ferdinand was busily engaged in winning the thrones
of Hungary and Bohemia. Even if the embassy to the
emperor proposed at Speyer had actually been sent, it is
doubtful whether it could have accomplished much in the
face of the Hapsburg preoccupations elsewhere. Instead
the embassy plan was dropped after delays in selecting
its membership.32

It was not the intent of the Diet of Speyer of
1526 to countenance the spread of the Reformation but
that was what in fact happened. The Lutherans inter-
preted the diet's recess as allowing them to make ecclesi-
astical regulations.33 The Catholic estates obviously
did not like the situation but without imperial direction there was little they could do. The diet convened at Regensburg in May, 1527, was so ill attended that it closed without undertaking any business. A second diet, to be held in March, 1528, was first postponed by Ferdinand and then forbidden by Charles. It is little wonder that for a time the Lutherans felt quietly optimistic.

As for Christoph Kress, the years following Speyer brought no significant lessening of his diplomatic activity despite his efforts to secure more leisure time. He had begun more and more to feel the burden of his responsibilities; the numerous trips on horseback often in bad weather and the continued absence from the comforts of his home were beginning to take their toll. His duties as Nürnberg’s ambassador to the Swabian League proved particularly onerous. For at the Confederation’s numerous meetings, he had to frequently defend Nürnberg in disputes with the League’s Catholic members. The Bishop of Bamberg and Duke Frederick of Bavaria proved especially troublesome.

Kress complained of his frequent absences from his family and asked the Council to relieve him of some of his duties. Finally in May, 1527, when the Swabian League’s councillors were up for election, the city government at last acquiesced to his wishes and discharged
him from his office. However, until the middle of June, he took part in the League's deliberations at Donauwörth with Clement Volckamer, who eventually took his position as a League councillor. His release from the League's council did not result in a great deal of free time for Kress for the City Council soon found a number of uses for his negotiating skills.

In 1528 Kress visited the court of Elector Ludwig of the Palatinate with the councillor Sebald Pfinzing and the jurist Dr. Hepstein, where they discussed the affairs of Ludwig's brother Count Palatine Ferderick who had become a Lutheran. He also attended important meetings at Schwabach, Ansbach, Heilbronn, and Schönberg in order to come to an agreement with Margrave George of Brandenburg-Ansbach, who now ruled in place of his brother Casimir who had died on September 21, 1527. Partially as a result of Kress's diplomacy, relations between Nurnberg and her traditional enemy became increasingly friendly and on one of his missions Kress invited Margrave George to visit Nürnberg. Kress became especially close to the Margrave's chancellor, George Vogler, a man who had supported the Lutheran movement and was a good friend of Lazarus Spengler. The three would continue to work together on behalf of the evangelical cause.
The Nürnberg diplomat also returned to Swabian League affairs for a time as one of Nürnberg's representatives to the assemblies at Augsburg and Ulm. At Augsburg Kress and Clement Colckamer along with George Vogler joined in protesting the Confederation's decrees against the sectaries. The League had decided to hunt down the Anabaptists as ruthlessly as they had crushed the peasants in 1525. Nürnberg felt the punishment was too severe and feared that the Catholic dominated League might eventually use similar tactics against the followers of Luther. Their protest failed but they did try and enforce the League's mandates as liberally as possible in Nürnberg and Brandenburg-Ansbach.

Kress also found himself engaged in an exchange of letters with the Landgrave of Hesse in March, 1528, as Philip continued to make alliance overtures to the leading Lutheran towns and their important leaders. Philip sounded Kress out on the subject of Nürnberg's possible military contributions to his proposed league. The Nürnberg diplomat and military leader responded in cordial but cautious terms. He assured Philip that Nürnberg had adequate military resources but that the "business of a league is full of difficulties."

Nürnberg's confidence in Philip had not been increased by his conduct in the notorious Pack affair. Early in 1528 the Saxon vice-chancellor, Otto von Pack,
confided to Philip the existence of a secret Catholic treaty concluded at Breslau in May, 1527, for the purpose of exterminating Luther's followers. The Landgrave promptly mobilized his army against Würzburg and Bamberg, compelling them to pay indemnities of 40,000 and 20,000 gulden respectively. It was eventually learned the treaty was a forgery and "existed only in the agile mind of Pack."[41] Philip's behavior provoked the natural resentment of the Catholic estates and helped create a climate of tension in Germany.

Meanwhile several of the towns had made efforts on their own to come to some sort of mutual understanding. Strassburg took the lead as Nürnberg became somewhat more cautious. One meeting was held at Esslingen in June and was attended by Nürnberg, Ulm, Strassburg, and Frankfort. This meeting paved the way for a general diet of the cities at Esslingen on July 27 at which Bernard Baumgartner represented Nürnberg.[42] Baumgartner informed the townsmen that if Nürnberg joined an alliance it would only be with Ulm, Frankfort, Augsburg, and Strassburg, while Ulm would only ally with Nürnberg and Strassburg. Constance was the only city which would commit itself to an aggressive alliance policy.[43]

The timidity of the townsmen was revealed when they backed down after being threatened by the imperial Council of Regency. They replied in an apologetic letter in which
they re-affirmed the loyalty of the cities to the Hapsburgs. A meeting of delegates from Nürnberg, Strassburg, Frankfort, and Ulm in the latter's territory on September 13, 1528, produced only a proposal for a six-year defensive alliance which exempted the Swabian League from its prospective opponents and sought to arrange a direct embassy to the emperor. Little came of this meeting either, for Nürnberg soon lured Ulm into a scheme for an independent envoy to the Council of Regency to assure it of the loyalty of the two towns to the emperor.

When the estates began to gather at Speyer in March, 1529, in response to an imperial summons, it was obvious that the evangelicals had lost a great deal of the unity and decisiveness they had displayed only three years earlier. Nürnberg's delegation to the diet was again headed by Christoph Kress and included his previous associate at Speyer, Bernhard Baumgartner, and the councillor Christoph Tetzel. Shortly after the diet opened, the Nürnberg Council dispatched the syndic, Michael von Kaden, to render additional assistance to the embassy. The embassy's instructions were to "supply all necessary aid against the Turks" and "work for the cause of God and peace." Furthermore, Kress, Tetzel, and Baumgartner were told that Nürnberg would "not be in league against the Empire," nor "will we abandon the cause of Christian truth."
Emperor Charles V had also decided not to abandon the cause of religion. He had patched up his quarrel with the papacy and had dispatched Balthasar Merklin, provost of Waldkirch, as his special envoy to the Diet of Speyer. The emperor had decided upon a policy of firmness towards the Lutherans which was shown in the proposition carried by Merklin. It was also reflected in his mandate of November 30, 1528, summoning the diet.

And if you do not appear within ten days after the day appointed our envoys and commissioners will, notwithstanding, discuss and determine affairs with the Estates then and there present, in all respects as if you and others who absented yourselves on slight and frivolous grounds, had been present.50

On his way to Speyer, Merklin had warned both the people of Augsburg and Strassburg about the religious innovations they had undertaken.51

How much the situation had changed from the earlier Diet of Speyer is illustrated dramatically by the different entrances of the Catholics and Lutherans. This time the Catholics entered Speyer first, led by Ferdinand, who was now king of Hungary and Bohemia and had not been in Germany for the past three years. He was accompanied by 300 Hungarian and Bohemian knights. After Ferdinand came the Bavarian rulers and their large retinue, followed by the three ecclesiastical electors, lesser church princes, and their brightly clad followers. The last to arrive among the German sovereigns were the Lutheran princes and
only Philip of Hesse made a display of bravura.52

Ferdinand opened the diet by reading his absent brother's proposition. The tone of the opening speech was exceedingly stern for Charles commanded that until the convocation of a general council "the ancient usages and customs" must be maintained under the pain of imperial ban. As for the compromise recess of Speyer, "your Imperial Majesty hereby repeals, revokes, and annuls the above-mentioned article contained in the aforesaid Recess."53 Although the imperial proposal placed great emphasis on the religious issue, Ferdinand was more concerned with the Turkish situation which more directly threatened his Danubian monarchy.

Christoph Tetzel rather than Kress was named to the diet's general commission along with Jacob Sturm. Kress may have wanted less formal responsibility at the diet in order to concentrate upon important behind the scenes negotiations with Philip of Hesse and other leaders. The commission considered the emperor's proposals and then reported to the diet their recommendations. The commission, over the protest of Tetzel, Sturm, and John of Saxony, suggested that the offensive article in the recess of 1526 should be revoked in accordance with the imperial request. They agreed that the recess had been "grossly misunderstood, twisted, and strained into justification of all sorts of outrageous new doctrines and sects."54
On other points the commission compromised somewhat but, in general, the Catholic majority had won a clear-cut victory. It recommended that no further religious innovations be made, no further secularization of church property take place, adherents of the old faith not be forbidden to attend Mass in the traditional form, former sacerdotal offices be re-established where local congregations might so desire, and Zwinglians and Anabaptists be summarily punished. These recommendations were eventually adopted by the majority of the diet in its final recess.

The evangelical estates immediately began to discuss protesting the commission's proposals on religion. Kress and envoys from Strassburg, Ulm, and Augsburg met in hurried sessions with the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse, while their respective governments exchanged communications about the new course of events. Philip of Hesse suggested that the Lutheran estates unite in formally protesting the commission's proposals on the grounds of conscience. The idea was favorably received by the urban delegations. Kress and his Nürnberg colleagues were instructed that "Nürnberg would stand by the other estates in protestation and appellation if the diet's recess is unfavorable," however, "we still favor a free Christian council as a solution to the religious problem."
Philip of Hesse and John of Saxony also suggested that the estates might withhold aid against the Turks if the diet adopted the unfavorable religious proposals. This idea was firmly rejected by most of the townsmen, although Memmingen for one had previously avoided paying its share of the Turkish aid. Nürnberg's government wrote Kress, "although help against the Turks is troublesome. .. it is our duty and our cross to bear." Nevertheless, the Lutheran estates agreed to go ahead with the religious protest.

The evangelical protest to the Diet of Speyer of 1529 was quite mild in language and appealed the general commission's decisions on both constitutional and conscientious grounds. It was argued by the Lutherans that part of the diet could not set aside a unanimous decision of a previous diet and that in affairs of conscience the majority has no right to set aside the opinions of the minority. The protest in its written form stated in part:

We hereby protest to you, Well-beloved, and you others, that we, for kindred reasons, know not how to, cannot, and may not, concur therein, but hold your resolution null and not binding; and we desire, in matters of religion. . . to live, govern, and carry ourselves in our governments. . . as we trust to answer it before God Almighty and His Roman Imperial Majesty, our most gracious Lord.60

It should be noted that the protest did not include the commission's recommendations with respect to the Anabaptists and Zwinglians. The protest of Speyer was signed
by six princes and fourteen towns including Nürnberg and her neighbors, Margrave George of Brandenburg-Ansbach, Prince Wolfgang of Anhalt, and Dukes Ernest and Franz of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. The term "Protestant" has remained in use since the Diet of Speyer of 1529.

However, the Lutheran arguments did not prevent the acceptance of the general commission's religious proposals. On April 18 the diet was addressed by Ferdinand who, speaking in German, proposed measures which if adopted would have sanctioned the raising of a massive army in the Empire to be used against the Ottoman Turks. Realizing that he still needed the good will of the Lutheran estates, Ferdinand attempted to minimize the significance of the diet's resolution on religion. He argued that the new recess would allow the Lutheran estates the right to maintain their church system if they left Catholics undisturbed in their religious practices. He informed the assembly of the seriousness of the Turkish situation. According to his intelligence reports, his Hungarian rival, John Zápolya, had concluded a nonaggression pact with the Porte and the Turks had already left Constantinople with a great army. The assembly responded by giving Ferdinand a standing ovation and granting him 16,000 men on an emergency basis despite the demurrer of Philip of Hesse, who was an ally of Zápolya.
During the course of the diet, Kress had been asked what he thought about the Turkish situation by his relative Christoph Führer. He replied on April 19, 1529, saying, "the Turk must come and fight for he is an accursed man. . . . Our Lord God sends him in order to penalize and punish us for not rendering Him proper obedience." In that same letter Kress comments on his conception of his role as a diplomat:

I can not do more than what I have been commanded to do and what is expected of me; I will do what I understand I must do so long as it is necessary for the world and not against God. . . . because of our beliefs many estates must endure what is necessary. . . . we must love God for the ungodly shall be judged and damned. . . . we must honor, praise, and thank his Imperial Majesty.

Kress's comments reveal to what extent he was in harmony with the sentiments of his government and why he was such a loyal servant to both the Reformation and the emperor.

Throughout the Diet of Speyer of 1529, several attempts had been made to recapture the spirit of solidarity which had characterized the efforts at the diet of 1526 under the leadership of Kress and Sturm. On one occasion Michael von Kaden had pleaded, "they who would divide the cities have put the devil before God." Yet Nürnberg had itself contributed to the disunity by disagreeing with the other towns on the necessity of maintaining the imperial Council of Regency and by refusing to
bargain on the issue of Turkish aid. As a result of division, the urban delegates had not been able to win any further concessions on their position in the Empire and their rights at the imperial diets. From a constitutional standpoint, the Diet of Speyer of 1529 represents a failure for the cause of the townsmen.

However, the Lutheran estates did unite to a degree in their protest of the diet's decisions on religion and what is more made significant progress towards achieving a confessional alliance between cities and princes. A secret agreement was reached on April 22, in which the Elector of Saxony, the Landgrave of Hesse, Nürnberg, Strassburg, and Ulm agreed to meet at Rodach on June 6 to form a defensive alliance to protect the Gospel. Nürnberg had reluctantly succumbed to the sustained pressure which had been placed upon her for several years by her co-religionists. The firm stand taken by the Catholic majority at Speyer had given new impetus to the efforts to form a Luthean alliance. The question which now remained was for how long would Nürnberg agree to remain in league with other more aggressive Protestant estates?

The Diet of Speyer of 1529 ended on April 24 with the refusal to include the evangelical protest in the official acts. It had been a difficult diet, especially for the Lutheran representatives. Yet they had accomplished a great deal in the face of concerted opposition.
They had lodged an important protest, formulated plans for a new alliance, and made plans for another direct embassy to the emperor. The Nürnberg Council wrote its envoys saying that they were to be congratulated "for their courage in representing our position. . . . The Council appreciates your efforts and realizes that your stay in Speyer has been anything but agreeable to you, therefore the Council is not only thankful but also sympathizes with you in your troubles." Christoph Kress was probably quite tired after the Diet of Speyer. He could now go home and prepare for the next round of evangelical politics and diplomacy.
NOTES


4 BB 93, 128v.

5 BB 93, 89v, 98v, 115v. On the Diet of Speyer of 1526 see Theodor Brieger, *Der Speierer Reichstag von 1526 und die Religiöse Frage der Zeit* (Leipzig, 1909); Walter Friedensburg, *Der Reichstag zu Speier 1526* (Berlin, 1887), still the most comprehensive work; and August Kluckhohn, "Der Reichstag zu Speier im Jahre 1526," *Historische Zeitschrift*, LVI (1886). Friedensburg has also written two important articles on the subject "Die Reformation und der Speyerer Reichstag von 1526," *Luther Jahrbuch* (1926), and "Der Speyerer Reichsabschied von 1525 und die religiöse Frage," ARG, VII (1909-1910). Tragically the manuscripts for *RTA*, V and VI, were destroyed in 1943.


7 Ibid., p. 111.

8 BB 93, 75r.


14. BB 93, 77v-79v.


16. Ibid. and Friedensburg, Der Reichstag zu Speier, pp. 315-319.

17. BB 93, 75r, 78v, 88v-89r, 99r.

18. Friedensburg, Der Reichstag zu Speier, pp. 254-256.


24. BB 93, 121 r.
25 Friedensburg, Der Reichstag zu Speier, pp. 460-461.

26 Thiry, "Archduke Ferdinand," p. 120.

27 Kidd, Documents, p. 185.

28 Grimm, Reformation Era, p. 201.


30 BB 93, 89v.

31 Brady, "Jacob Sturm," p. 124.


33 Kidd, Documents, p. 185.

34 Ranke, Reformation, p. 552.

35 BB 95, 188r, 204r.


37 RV 760, 10v, 13r.

38 RV 766, 5r; BB 98, 163r-164v; Evans, Sectaries of Nuremberg, p. 174; Ranke, Reformation, p. 507.

39 BB 97, 63v-64r, 96v-97v.

40 BB 97, 97v.

41 Hillerbrand, Philip of Hesse, pp. 21-22; Clyde Manschreck, Melanchthon, the Quiet Reformer (New York, 1968), p. 161. See also Kurt Dülfer, Der Packsche Handel (Marburg, 1958).
42^RTA, VII, 1063-64; Brady, "Jacob Sturm," pp. 138-141.


44^RTA, VII, 326, 311-312.

45^RTA, VII, 338; Brady, "Jacob Sturm," pp. 144-145.


47BB 99, 30r. On Kaden see Will, Gelehrten Lexicon, I, 267.

48BB 99, 31r-v.

49BB 99, 34v.

50Kidd, Documents, p. 240.

51Ranke, Reformation, p. 553.


57 BB 99, 34r.

58 BB 99, 31r-v.

59 BB 99, 40v.

60 Kidd, Documents, pp. 243-244; RTA, VII, 1205-1213; Ney, Die Appellation und Protestation, pp. 36-40.


63 Ibid.; Fischer-Galati, Ottoman Imperialism, p. 34.


65 Ibid., pp. 226-227.

66 Quoted in Klühn, Speyer Reichstag 1529, p. 77.

67 The terms of the agreement are in Michael Reu (ed.), The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources with an Historical Introduction (Chicago, 1930), pp. 34-35, and RTA VII, 1321-1324.

68 BB 99, 58v.
In fifteen hundred thirty Christoph Kress
Was sent to Augsburg, there to lay before
The Emperor and princes by the score
Their self-willed separation from the Pope
To gain eternal blessedness their hope,
Thus Christoph served to bring us Light,\(^1\)

Undoubtedly Christoph Kress reached the summit of
his diplomatic career at the Diet of Augsburg of 1530.
Not only did he play a major role in the development of
the Augsburg Confession, but he was honored by a patent
of nobility from Emperor Charles V at the same time. In
striving to reconcile seemingly conflicting interests,
Kress displayed the consummate diplomacy which made him
the leading representative of Nürnberg's delicate
Reformation policy.

In the period between the Diet of Speyer of 1529
and the Diet of Augsburg of 1530, Nürnberg pursued a
double course of action in defense of the Reformation.
On the one hand, the City Council participated in an
active alliance policy, while, on the other, it sponsored
a direct embassy to the emperor. The Council, following
the advice of Lazarus Spengler, hoped that once the
emperor was informed of the realities of the situation in Germany, he would adopt a more conciliatory attitude toward the Protestants. At the same time the hostility of the Catholic majority at Speyer had made the city somewhat concerned about her ability to defend her religious innovation and for a time Nürnberg sought security in the form of an alliance with her co-religionists.

At a special meeting held in Nürnberg in May, 1529, the evangelical princes and cities drafted plans for a direct mission to Charles V. Lazarus Spengler played a crucial part in drafting the embassy’s instructions. The Protestant ambassadors were to explain the reasons for the evangelical protest at the Diet of Speyer, promise continued support against the Turkish menace, and assure the emperor of their support for the maintenance of the imperial Council of Regency and the imperial Supreme Court. The mission, which left from Nürnberg on July 14, was made up of Michael von Kaden, Johann Ehinger of Memmingen, and Alexius Frauentraut of Brandenburg-Ansbach.²

Early in June, 1529, Kress, along with Christoph Tetzel, attended a meeting at Rodach with delegates from Saxony, Hesse, Brandenburg-Ansbach, Strassburg, and Ulm for the purpose of considering the alliance agreement drawn up during the recent Diet of Speyer. The instructions of the Saxon delegate, Hans von Minckwitz, reveal
the uncertainty with which Nürnberg was regarded by her fellow Protestants. Minckwitz was told that if he was approached by the Nürnberg delegates, he was to "discover what the ultimate purpose of Nürnberg is, and find out whether the representatives have been instructed not to ratify the agreement at all or whether they have been ordered to bargain for more convenient terms."³

The delegates deliberated over a number of plans for implementing their common defense if attacked because of their religious beliefs. Both John of Saxony and Christoph Kress put forward suggestions of which a record has survived. The Nürnberg plan suggested that the princes provide 1,500 cavalry and the cities 3,000 infantry in case of emergency, while the Saxon plan suggested that the alliance member most directly threatened should appoint the leader of the combined forces who must be a prince.⁴ When the alliance plan had first been proposed, there had been no stated doctrinal requirement for membership other than a simple declaration for the evangelical faith. However, it was becoming increasingly evident that the Protestants would have to codify their beliefs in some systematic fashion.

Strassburg and Hesse were already in frequent contact with the Swiss and they envisioned a broader confessional alliance than did Nürnberg and Saxony.⁵ Phillip of Hesse had written to Ulrich Zwingli as early as April,
1529, expressing his hope of bringing the Zwinglians and Wittenbergers together "so that if a merciful and almighty God grants us His favor, they may come to some Scriptural agreement."6 One of the fruits of Philip's efforts to form a united front against the Catholics was the famous religious colloquy held at Marburg in October, 1529. Although finding much common ground, the Protestant theologians could not agree on the crucial issue of the Lord's Supper and the unity desired by Philip of Hesse was not achieved.7

Nevertheless, a theological basis for a political union was proposed later that month at a meeting at Schwabach attended by Christoph Kress. After months of preparation seventeen articles of religious belief were announced. However, because the articles reflected an anti-Zwinglian bias, Strassburg and Ulm refused to sign them. Kress then announced that Nürnberg would not join any alliance which excluded Strassburg and Ulm from membership.8

Why had Nürnberg made such an abrupt change in her alliance policy? Perhaps her refusal to make a firm alliance commitment in the fall of 1529 was influenced by the news of the Kaden mission which reached Nürnberg before Kress left for Schwabach. It was learned that the Protestant delegates had not been favorably received, in fact, they had been arrested and had to flee from the imperial
court at Piacenza. Kress could later joke about the situation saying that "when the envoys tried to break out of their captivity, one knows that noblest Kaden could find little ready cash for he has a wife, ten children, and little property." However, when the news reached Nürnberg in October, it made the Council apprehensive about their relations with the emperor and they began to have serious reservations about the wisdom of pursuing an active alliance policy.

Grave doubts about the Council's right of resistance to authority had also been raised by Lazarus Spengler. He advised the government that resistance to authority was contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures. He argued that Christians cannot resist the lawfully constituted authority of the emperor by force of arms even if that authority is in error. Spengler's ideas also had an impact on Margrave George of Brandenburg-Ansbach, who had shown an inclination to active resistance. In large measure because of the influence of Nürnberg, the Margrave gradually softened his position on armed resistance. Other Protestants were uncertain what steps to take. At Schwabach Philip of Hesse favored armed resistance if necessary, while John of Saxony opposed it. Martin Luther at this time used reasoning similar to Spengler's.

According to Scripture, it is in no wise proper for anyone who would be a Christian to set himself against his government, whether it act
justly or unjustly, but a Christian ought to
endure oppression and injustice, especially
at the hands of his government. For although
his Imperial Majesty may transgress his duty and
oath, that does not destroy his imperial
sovereignty or the obedience that is due from
his subjects.12

Despite Nürnberg's increasing concerns about military
alliances, the city continued to work actively for a com-
mon Lutheran confessional statement both at Schwabach and
later at the Diet of Augsburg. Wolfgang Steglich has
asserted that the evangelical formation of a confession
should not only be interpreted in connection with the
formation of political alliances. The Protestant confes-
sions written in 1529 and 1530 also served the purpose of
coming to terms with the emperor and with other Catholic
estates.13 The diplomacy of the Nürnberg City Council as
implemented by Christoph Kress provides proof of the
validity of Steglich's thesis.

In late November of 1529, the representatives of the
Protestant estates began assembling in the Thuringian town
of Schmalkalden for the purpose of making a decision about
the formal establishment of an alliance. In the Council's
instructions to its delegates, Kress and Clement
Volckamer, it was stated that Nürnberg would adhere to the
alliance only on condition that all the important evan-
gelical cities joined as well.14 At this meeting
Strassburg and Ulm continued to object to the Schwabach
Articles as a basis for political union. Kress stated
Nurnberg's refusal to join an alliance without her important sister cities. Nürnberg still hoped to have secret negotiations with the emperor and thought that somehow Charles would agree to allow Lutheran preaching in the Empire.  

George Vogler, the respected chancellor of Brandenburg-Ansbach, announced that his ruler would not join an alliance unless Nürnberg was included. Hesse and Saxony found themselves at odds over the issues of armed resistance to the emperor and the inclusion of the Zwinglians in the league. As the meeting drew to a close in early December, it was quite obvious that the Protestants were still a long way from the creation of a permanent union. What had begun so auspiciously at Speyer in 1529 had floundered on theological uncertainty and political distrust. Nürnberg's desire to maintain a free hand in politics had gone a long way towards obstructing the political dream of Philip of Hesse.

While the Protestants found themselves hopelessly enmeshed in alliance negotiations and theological debates, Pope Clement VII and Charles V had settled their major differences. For a time emperor and pope lived together in the same palace at Bologna, where Clement had promised to preside at Charles's coronation. For his part the emperor had promised to bring the Protestants back to the papal flock and "avenge the insult offered to Christ."
Nürnberg dispatched the councillors Sebald Haller and Leonhard Stockamér to attend the emperor's coronation. In the past, as keeper of the imperial regalia, the city had played an honored role in imperial ceremony. All this had changed because of the religious division and because of the world-wide dominion of Charles V. Even the German electors were snubbed by not being invited to attend. Their traditional duties were now assumed by Spanish nobles.

Nürnberg still hoped to regain imperial favor and perhaps Haller and Stockamér were to renew the pledge of the city's loyalty to Charles in the face of religious division. We do not know exactly what the mission accomplished because the complete documentation for the embassy is not yet available. However, not all the citizens of Nürnberg were discredited by the embarrassment of the Kaden mission for Christoph and George Kress were granted an imperial fief on February 26, two days after the coronation ceremony. The Kress brothers were not completely surprised by this sign of imperial favor since Balthasar Merklin had carried an imperial letter of commendation for them on his journey to the Diet of Speyer of 1529. The brothers had gone to Bologna to receive this distinction byt Christoph was able to remain for only a short time. He was forced to return to Nürnberg to complete the arrangements for the forthcoming
imperial diet at Augsburg where he would gain additional imperial honor and play a considerable role.

In his summons to the Diet of Augsburg, Charles not only announced his intention of presiding in person, but he also expressed his hope that the Turkish danger could finally be alleviated and the religious problem solved. He expressed the hope that "divisions may be allayed, antipathies set aside, all past errors left to the judgment of our Saviour, and every care taken to give a charitable hearing to every man's opinions." The response of the Protestants to these noble sentiments was mixed. John of Saxony was pleased by the conciliatory tone of the mandate and by the fact that the emperor had addressed him as "Dear Uncle." Philip of Hesse was still concerned about the arrest of the Kaden embassy and that he himself had been charged with treason for attempting to give an evangelical book to Charles V. Strassburg and Ulm felt that the diet would not solve the religious problem regardless of the emperor's intentions, whereas Nürnberg supported the idea of religious discussion but doubted that much would come of it.

The opening of the diet was delayed by the emperor. He spent almost a month in Innsbruck discussing with his advisors and meeting with various Catholic emissaries. Meanwhile, the Nürnberg delegation headed by Christoph Kress arrived in Augsburg in mid-May with a statement of
religious belief prepared by several of the city's theologians (probably Osiander and Wenzeslaus Linck). Because of the length of the diet, the Nürnberg Council was forced to shuttle teams of ambassadors in and out of Augsburg. Kress, Clement Volckamer, Christoph Coler, Bernard and Hieronymus Baumgartner, all served Nürnberg as delegates to the diet.

One of Christoph Kress's main contributions at the previous diet had been his efforts to keep communications open between the princes and the cities. He continued to serve that function both before and during the Diet of Augsburg. Prior to the diet he had corresponded with John of Saxony about the seriousness of the Turkish menace, writing the Elector that "despite what doubts we may have it is our duty to help defend the Empire as we are able." The Turkish threat was real enough for Suleiman's army had again menaced Vienna before being repulsed by the emperor's forces.

However, the religious question and more specifically the problem of creating a Protestant Confession weighed even more heavily on the minds of both Saxon and Nürnberg statesmen. Philip Melanchthon, who had attended the Diet of Speyer of 1529, was sent to Augsburg to draft a confessional statement for the Saxons. Numerous other theologians both Protestant and Catholic came to Augsburg, although Martin Luther, still under imperial ban, was
obliged to remain outside the city and on Saxon territory at Coburg Castle.

From the numerous reports written by Kress and his associates from Nürnberg, it is possible to obtain a fairly detailed account of the activities at Augsburg. During the month preceding the emperor's arrival, rumors flowed into the city with the arrival of each new delegation. Reports that the emperor was once again going to insist upon the enforcement of the Edict of Worms,\textsuperscript{25} that the Protestants at Augsburg would be placed in "chains and stocks"\textsuperscript{26} and that all key issues were being decided in advance at Innsbruck circulated freely in the city. Kress was frequently sought out by both Catholic and Protestant leaders and asked for his opinions. On one occasion the Archbishop of Mainz asked him about Nürnberg's religious activity since the last diet.\textsuperscript{27}

In the midst of all this activity and apprehension, Philip Melanchthon and his colleagues worked tirelessly on their confessional statement worrying over each bit of terminology. On May 28, Kress wrote of those efforts, "The councillors and theologians of the Elector are holding daily sessions on the Confession of faith, with the purpose of giving it such a form that it cannot be passed over, but must be heard."\textsuperscript{28} A few days later he reported that his embassy had received a copy of the Confession in Latin, without a preface and epilogue, and
that the German version was undergoing daily revision.\textsuperscript{29} The Nürnberg copy was sent directly to the City Council, who received it on June 4.\textsuperscript{30} However, changes were still being made as late as June 11, for as Kress wrote, "the Saxons are not done with it yet."\textsuperscript{31}

In his third major revision, Melanchthon affirmed his faith in the emperor's justice and mercy, praised the loyalty of John of Saxony, and detailed the well-regulated church affairs in Saxony.\textsuperscript{32} All this diplomatic tact and careful preparation reveals the hope of the Wittenbergers that Charles V might still be persuaded of the truth of their doctrine and the correctness of their changes in ecclesiastical practices. At this time it was still not Melanchthon's intention to produce a common confession but merely a Saxon confession. Both Christoph Kress and George Vogler objected to this exclusiveness; they argued that other princes and estates should be included.\textsuperscript{33} Kress argued with the full support of his government that the Protestants should "show his Imperial Majesty our beliefs... with the hope that he may allow us to continue in them."\textsuperscript{34}

The urgings of Christoph Kress and other Protestant representatives met with some success and by June 15 a change in the Saxons' attitude was evident. This is shown in Kress's letter of that date:

The Saxon Confession of faith is finished in German. We herewith send it to you. It does
not yet have the preface and conclusion, and as Philip Melanchthon has stated, he has not put any part of those into German, because he thinks that this same preface and conclusion may probably be presented not alone in the name of the Elector, but in common in the name of all the Lutheran princes and estates.\footnote{35}

On that same day Charles V arrived at Augsburg. The emperor had hopes of solving the religious problem, establishing a united front against the Ottoman Turks, and having Ferdinand crowned king of the Romans. Following an impressive entrance procession and a religious service, the emperor invited several of the Protestant princes to his private quarters for a meeting. The princes were told to impose silence on their preachers for the duration of their stay in Augsburg and to join in the Corpus Christi procession. Margrave George of Brandenburg-Ansbach responded courageously, "Before I let anyone take from me the Word of God and ask me to deny my God, I would rather kneel down here before Your Imperial Majesty and let you cut off my head." The emperor, somewhat taken aback, assured the Margrave that his head would most certainly not be parted from his shoulders.\footnote{36}

The princes were given until the following morning to make their final decision. Kress and the other Protestant delegates who had not attended the meeting were aroused from bed and informed of the new developments. The evangelicals decided to remain steadfast in their
convictions and the next morning Margrave George announced their refusal to join the emperor in the Corpus Christi observances. Two days later the princes informed the emperor that they could not forbid preaching. On June 18, the Protestants agreed to further talks and to an interdict of preaching if it applied to the Catholics as well. That evening imperial heralds proclaimed that no preaching was to be allowed without the approval of the emperor.

The uncertainty and tension for the Protestants at the Diet of Augsburg continued during the next few days. In his report of June 19, Kress expressed some doubt as to whether the Confession would be presented. However, he assured the Council that the evangelicals were planning to act concertedly. That same day Charles V met with delegates from both sides and asked them all as a token of good intentions to attend the opening mass of the diet. The Protestant delegates agreed to this, although they refrained from direct participation in the mass.

The diet formally opened on June 20 with the reading of the imperial mandate in both German and Latin. The emperor recommended that the Turkish situation be the first topic of deliberation, then the question of confessional disunity, and finally the old business of the re-organization of the Empire. This set off a good deal of debate until finally a resolution was passed that
placed the religious problem on the top of the agenda. The Protestants then asked the Catholics to prepare a confessional statement of their own for presentation. This they refused to do, replying that they represented the "true" church and needed to make no such statement. The evangelicals next proposal for a general council on religion was also rejected by the Catholic majority. 41

The diet's opening had not been encouraging and there arose a real fear that war might eventually ensue. Elector John of Saxony called together his co-religionists and urged them to continue to persevere in their cause. The next day the Protestants resolved to make a public, common confession of faith. Kress reported to the Nürnberg Council some of this activity:

I, Kress, was called to the Elector's residence. His Electoral Grace, Margrave George, and the councillors of Hesse and Lüneburg were there. In the presence of the Elector and of Margrave George, they declared simply, that, inasmuch as the Elector had already prepared a confession of faith, a copy of which Your Excellencies have received, they, through us, have offered to join the Elector. At this time they are holding a session over the articles, and are further revising, stating, and finishing them. It is the desire also of the Princes that Your Excellencies should immediately send your preachers, or whom you will, but especially Osiander, and would instruct them to help us to consider and deliberate over these articles, and whatever is needed in the transaction. 42

The emperor notified the Protestants on June 22 that they must have their Confession ready to present no later
than June 24. Philip Melanchthon continued to work feverishly with other theologians and representatives to perfect the Confession as a mutual Protestant statement. Kress received the Nürnberg government's approval of the draft of the Confession on June 23. The Council indicated that they would like to see the final draft before its presentation to the emperor and their hope that it would be well received. Kress did not have sufficient time to receive the Council's final approval and when the Confession was presented he signed it on his own authority.

On June 25 Kress reported to the Council:

Last Thursday morning we and the delegates of Reutlingen were summoned to a conference with Saxony, Hesse, Margrave George, and Lüneburg. There in the presence of all their princiely graces, their councillors, and the theologians, of whom there were twelve, besides other scholars and doctors, the aforesaid Confession was read over, examined, and considered in order to present the same... to his Imperial Majesty... After some discussion with the Elector and the Princes, the Emperor first flatly refused to allow the Confession to be read and simply commanded them to deliver it to His Majesty. Even when the Princes declared that it was positively necessary to read the Confession because it was a matter of gravest concern to them and because it pertained to their lives, their honor and reputation, and when they insisted that their defense should be made publicly because many evil reports had been spread concerning them as though they had tolerated improper teaching and preaching in their territories, nevertheless His Majesty persisted in refusing their request... His Majesty finally decided to hear the Confession at the palace and to leave it in the possession of the Elector and the Princes.
Kress went on to assure the Council that "the above mentioned Confession is substantially identical with the draft which we sent Your Honors" except for a few minor changes "which we have agreed to in Your Honors' name."\(^{45}\)

The Augsburg Confession was presented to Charles V. on Saturday, June 25, at three o'clock in Latin and German according to Christoph Kress's account of the proceedings. "The Emperor then had a conference with the other Electors and Princes and informed the Elector of Saxony and his adherents through Duke Frederick that His Imperial Majesty had heard the Confession, but since the matter was of vital importance and vast magnitude, His Imperial Majesty would require some time to consider and study it.\(^{46}\)

The Protestants expressed their gratitude to the emperor and promised to appear in all obedience whenever the emperor might summon them. Kress also reported:

Afterward, as they reported to us, the Elector and the Princes were privately asked by His Imperial Majesty to keep the Confession secret and not to have it printed. The Princes promised to fulfill His Majesty's wish. His Majesty has not shown any ill will in this matter. We have heard more than one person remark that our Confession does not deserve to be condemned and even some of the Electors and Princes are said to regard it as perfectly proper.\(^{47}\)

When the Augsburg Confession was first presented only Christoph Kress and the ambassador from Reutlingen from among the townsman had signed. Other cities obviously impressed by the document soon added their
signatures. All the princes, who had signed the Protestation of Speyer with the addition of Count Albrecht of Mansfeld and the Saxon elector's eldest son, John Frederick, signed the Augsburg Confession. For Christoph Kress it was a moment of great triumph, a moment he had worked for diligently for quite some time.

Unfortunately, pleasant moments are all too brief, and soon complaints began to be heard that Melanchthon had gone too far towards Catholic doctrine in the interests of peace. Luther, who was seldom happy when forced from the center of the stage, complained that he had not been properly informed of what had happened at Augsburg. He also expressed his dissatisfaction with what he considered to be excessive compromises with the Catholics.48

As for Charles V, he may have seen some cause for hope in the mildness of the Protestants' statements. Following the suggestion of Cardinal Campeggio, he appointed a committee of "qualified" theologians to examine the Confession. The committee included such anti-Lutheran stalwarts as Faber and Eck and in less than two weeks they had completed a 351 page refutation of Melanchthon's work. The emperor was quite disappointed with the polemical nature of the report and quickly sent it back for further revision. He still needed Protestant support against the Turks and saw no need for such violent
language.

Kress also did his utmost to maintain a calm demeanor in the midst of uncertainty. On July 2 Count Albrecht of Mansfeld asked him if he thought Nürnberg would be punished by the emperor for its religious beliefs. He replied saying that “such rumors should not be listened to.” However, even Kress could be pushed too far. It is reported that when a Catholic count treated him rudely because of his religion, he retorted, “Why, this miserable toady wants to oppose God! Christ will maintain the field anyhow.”

The religious debate continued as Ulrich Zwingli’s Ratio Fidei was presented to the emperor on July 8 and the Tetrapolitan Confession of Strassburg, Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau on July 11. All this was to no avail for when the revised report of the Catholic commissioners, known as the Confutation, was read on August 3, the existing papal system was completely maintained. The new report was only 31 pages long and mild in language but the fundamental Protestant doctrines were all denied. Melanchthon immediately set to work drafting a response to the Confutation called the Apology to the Augsburg Confession. Negotiations continued as a new committee of Protestants and Catholics was appointed to give further consideration to the religious doctrines.
A brief interlude in the difficult negotiations of the diet was provided for Kress when on July 15, Charles V presented him with a patent of imperial nobility. The patent reads in part:

We have propitiously looked upon and remarked and considered the honorableness, the good noble habits, the virtues and intelligence, for which Our and the Empire's dear, faithful Christoph Kress is famous and known to Our Imperial Majesty; and have further considered his and his forefathers and family's honorable positions, their noble, kind, and ancient descent, and besides the faithful and useful services, which his forefathers have at all times rendered to Our ancestors, Roman Emperors and Kings, as well as to Us and the Holy Empire and Our hereditary kingdoms, princecedoms, and countries, as warriors, councillors, and officials . . . and in many other ways, and particularly the services, which he, Christoph Kress, has so often profitably and willingly rendered and may and shall further render, as civic and war councillor of Our Imperial Confederation in Swabia, in campaigns, battles, and other good and great things for Us and the Holy Empire as well as for His Serene Highness Prince and Lord Ferdinand.52

The emperor also improved Kress's coat-of-arms and his possession, Kraftshof, officially received the name of Kressenstein. At the same ceremony Ferdinand presented Kress with a valuable silk garment and asked the emperor to grant him whatever he wished. The modest diplomat is reported not to have made any additional requests of Charles V.53

Kress had little time to contemplate his new honors for he was named with Jacob Sturm of Strassburg to the
committee which deliberated on the subsidies for the war in Hungary. However, there was no united urban policy on this issue either. Strassburg was unwilling to promise a permanent subsidy without some guarantee of religious peace. The Nürnberg Council expressed concern over the old problem of monopolies and wanted to see what was going to happen on this issue before taking action on the Turkish situation. Several of the princes had approached the emperor with a request that the existing imperial laws against economic monopolies be enforced by the entire machinery of imperial government. However, nothing came of this request except, perhaps, a certain degree of embarrassment for the townsmen. Further humiliation for the city delegates also resulted when it was proposed that the imperial cities be forbidden to hold their own diets.

The preoccupation of the diet with religious affairs left most other matters of business completely undecided until autumn. The religious discussions dragged on and on throughout the month of August. Even Kress began to weary and on one occasion joined the critics of Melanchthon. In his report of August 19, he expressed the opinion that Melanchthon's prepared reply to the Catholic Confutation was not nearly strong enough. He also requested that he be relieved of his duties at Augsburg and be allowed to return home. The Council replied,
asking him to stay on a little longer as "you know our disposition." However, by the end of August his request was granted and he left the Diet of Augsburg.

Following Kress's departure, the policy of the Nürnberg City Council remained unaltered but its implementation changed in tone. The reason for the change can be seen partly in the personality of Kress's replacement at Augsburg, Hieronymus Baumgartner. The younger brother of Bernard Baumgartner, Hieronymus was a much more temperamental and sarcastic man than Kress. Whereas Christoph had kept relations with all factions as friendly as possible, Baumgartner favored a blunter approach. With Kress present Nürnberg had access not only to the emperor and his brother but to other prominent Catholic leaders as well, without him these leaders were harder to approach. However, as the diet dragged on, Catholic threats of violence grew more frequent and perhaps the youthful vigor of Baumgartner was a necessary antidote.

As negotiations moved into September, the short tempered Baumgartner lashed out at those he felt were guilty of betraying the Protestant cause. In a famous letter of September 13 to Lazarus Spengler he wrote:

It is special merciful divine providence that the Confession is at hand and has been presented, for otherwise our theologians would have long ago confessed another different one as they would gladly do if they were obeyed. Still there is a difference in them. Philippus [Melanchthon] has become more
childish than a child. Brentius \textit{Johannes Brenz} is not only clumsy but also uncivil and rude. . . . If we do not soon receive a gruff and ungracious recess from His Imperial Majesty, they will not rest until they have us all in a net like a fish; that we not only lose God's grace but never gain the Emperor's!60

Baumgartner's prediction was soon realized for on September 22 the emperor tentatively ordered an imperial recess. Charles said that the purpose of the diet had been fulfilled, that both sides had been heard, and that he had found the Protestants thoroughly refuted. He gave them until April 15, 1531, to confess the same beliefs as the Roman Catholics until a general council could be convoked.61 The Protestants reacted by presenting the emperor with a document known as the Apology which denied that the Confession had been refuted and again defended evangelical practices. Charles on the advice of Ferdinand refused to accept it.62

The emperor's stand only strengthened the resolve of the Nürnberg delegation to stand behind the Augsburg Confession. In their report of September 25, Volckammer and Baumgartner wrote, "It is our opinion that we ought not to yield unless the favor of the Emperor is valued more highly than that of God."63 The City Council fully supported their diplomats as the Diet of Augsburg continued into October.

Since now the condition of affairs is the most dangerous, God gives us the choice of either
being true to His Word and of being Christians or else of forsaking it and proving faithless to Him. And, indeed, he who would let even greater dangers move him to abandon the Gospel must be a very weak member of Christ. . . . Therefore, take courage and act accordingly. Since we do not seek our own temporal interests in this matter, but only God's glory and our salvation, and for this sake must risk all that God has given us, therefore God will devise means to protect us against our adversaries. 64

A number of the Protestant leaders had withdrawn from the diet, including John of Saxony, who left on September 24, the day after the Apology had been presented. Those left were able to deal with other matters such as the problem of aid against the Turks. Although the help eventually agreed to was not as much as the Hapsburgs desired, it was still a considerable amount, enough to raise 40,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry for six months. 65 The Nürnberg Council decided that it would harm the evangelical cause to withhold aid while Germany was in danger. Accordingly they wrote their delegates on October 12, "We think, and so does our dear councillor, Christoph Kress, that we must help against the Turks." 66

The diet's final decree was published on November 19, 1530. It retained the April deadline for the Protestants to return to the Catholic church, expressed the emperor's determination to enforce the Edict of Worms, reconstituted the imperial Supreme Court so that it would be less favorable to Protestants in cases involving the
secularization of ecclesiastical property, and promised to call for a general council of the church to settle the religious question. The emperor's vigorous action helped to solidify the Protestants as plans were drawn for another meeting at Schmalkalden to create a Protestant alliance. Nürnberg planned to attend this meeting, but the city also intended to continue to maintain her traditional free hand in diplomacy.
NOTES


3Reu, Augsburg Confession Sources, p. 38.

4Fabian, Schmalkaldischen Bundes, pp. 190-192; Ranke, Reformation, p. 563.

5Brady, "Jacob Sturm," pp. 198-199; Baron, "Imperial Cities," p. 415.

6Preserved Smith (ed.), Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters (2 vols.; Philadelphia, 1918), II, 473-474.

7On the Marburg Colloquy see Manschreck, Melanchthon, pp. 166-170.


10 Franz, Nürnberg, p. 106. See also Schubert, Bekenntnisbildung, p. 190.

11 Baron, "Imperial Cities," p. 416.

12 Smith, Luther's Correspondence, II, 519-520.


15 Fabian, Schmalkaldischen Bundes, pp. 72-76.

16 Ibid.

17 Manschreck, Melanchthon, p. 173.


19 Ibid., p. 198; FA Kress, VI, A, No. 323b.

20 FA Kress, VI, A, No. 323a.


22CR, II, 166-67; Manschreck, Melanchthon, p. 176.

23CR, II, 50-52; Ludewig, Nürnbergs Politik, p. 110.

24BB 100, 136r.


26Ibid., p. 66.

27Ibid., p. 67.

28Ibid., p. 70; Manschreck, Melanchthon, p. 183.
31 Manschreck, Melanchthon, pp. 183-84.
32 CR, II, 90; Manschreck, Melanchthon, p. 183.
33 CR, 88-9; Manschreck, Melanchthon, p. 184.
34 Vogt, "Korrespondenz," p. 11.
35 CR, II, 105.
37 CR, II, 116; Reu, Augsburg Confession Sources, 93-94.
38 CR, II, 116; Manschreck, Melanchthon, pp. 188-89; Engelhardt, Augsburg und Nürnberg, p. 10.
40 Reu, Augsburg Confession Sources, p. 100; Manschreck, Melanchthon, p. 190.
42 CR, II, 124; Manschreck, Melanchthon, p. 192.
45 Ibid.
46 Reu, Augsburg Confession Sources, p. 313; CR, II, 142-44.
47Ibid.


49CR, II, 162.

50Frank, Kress Family, p. 189.

51Manschreck, Melanchthon, pp. 199-200.

52Frank, Kress Family, pp. 190-93.

53Ibid.

54Brady, "Jacob Sturm," p. 310.


56Tetleben, Protokoll, pp. 196-97; Brady, "Jacob Sturm," p. 312.

57CR, II, 289090.

58Vogt, "Korrespondenz," p. 34.

59Englehardt, Augsburg und Nürnberg, p. 154.

60CR, II, 363-65; Reu, Augsburg Confession Sources, pp. 388-89.

61Manschreck, Melanchthon, pp. 206-07.


63CR, II, 389-91; Stuckenber, Augsburg Confession, p. 144; Ranke, Reformation, p. 617.

64CR, II, 392-93; Stuckenber, Augsburg Confession, pp. 144-45.

65Fischer-Galati, Ottoman Imperialism, p. 45; Ranke, Reformation, p. 627.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

During the last years of his life, Christoph Kress continued to render valuable services to the government of Nürnberg. The city's policy of nonresistance to the emperor solidified in the period immediately following the conclusion of the Diet of Augsburg. Nürnberg's decision not to join the Schmalkaldic League cost her the leadership of the Protestant cities in Germany, but it proved to be an effective policy for maintaining the city's religious beliefs and political independence. Christoph Kress played an important role in carrying out the city's delicate Reformation policy.

When Kress and Leo Schürstab began their journey to the Protestant meeting at Schmalkalden in December, 1530, the Nürnberg City Council had already made its decision about the question of resistance to the emperor. Despite the fact that even John of Saxony now supported the concept of armed resistance and that in October, 1530, Luther had reluctantly dropped his opposition to it, Nürnberg continued to follow the opinion formulated by Lazarus Spengler and refused to enter into any alliance.
which might be directed against the authority of the emperor. The Council's decision had been made after careful deliberation and after consulting with the city's leading theologians and jurists. On the question of right of resistance, the Council received conflicting advice from its advisors. The theologians led by Osiander argued in favor of resistance; the lawyers led by Dr. Christoph Scheurl joined Spengler in opposing it.¹

What probably swayed the Council's decision in favor of the Spengler faction was the fact that continued loyalty to the emperor best served the city's traditions and interests. As we have stated earlier, Nürnberg's interests and history were closely associated with those of the Holy Roman Empire.² The city had received numerous favors and large land holdings from the emperor. Nürnberg's far-flung commerce was more dependent on the existence of the Empire and a strong emperor than that of any other city in Germany. Her very existence as an autonomous city was vitally linked to the fate of the Empire.³ Furthermore, it appeared evident to the Council that Nürnberg had little to gain from a Protestant military victory, which would be led by princes, over the emperor. Had not recent history shown that the city's religion could be adequately defended by the skillful use of diplomacy? The Nürnberg City Council in the winter of 1530-31 decided to gamble on a traditional policy and the
skill of her diplomats. That decision proved to be a sound one.

Nürnberg's envoys to the meeting at Schmalkalden arrived at Forchheim on December 17, 1530, where they met with the delegations from Brandenburg-Ansbach and Ulm. Christoph Kress soon became ill and had to be left at Heidelberg while Leo Schürstab and the others journied towards Schmalkalden. At first Kress feared that he might have to return to Nürnberg, but after a few days of rest he was able to continue his journey. Ekkahart Fabian has suggested that perhaps this illness was more diplomatic than real. He argues that Kress, who had championed the Protestant cause at so many earlier meetings, may now have found it difficult to abandon the evangelicals at a time when their very existence was at stake. In the light of Kress's devotion to duty, his harmonious relations with his government and its policies, and his consistent refusal to countenance any break with the emperor, Fabian's assertions appear dubious. It should not be forgotten that Kress, as a member of the Little Council and one of the Seven Elders, helped to formulate Nürnberg's foreign policy as well as working to carry it out.

Kress and the other diplomats and leaders at Schmalkalden discussed the following topics: Ferdinand's election as king of the Romans, the recess of the Diet
of Augsburg and how to oppose it, the actions of the imperial Supreme Court against Protestants, aid against the Turks, and the formation of a Protestant alliance in defense of religion. The meeting was extremely well attended and included representatives of both the Zwinglian and Lutheran cities as well as all the leading Protestant princes.

It was the fervent wish of Charles V to re-organize his Empire by having his brother officially designated as his successor to the imperial throne. In the six months following the Diet of Augsburg, the emperor's diplomats worked diligently on securing a majority vote from the Empire's seven electors. Many of the Protestant princes were adamantly opposed to Ferdinand's election, but imperial bribes, threats, and concessions succeeded in securing the votes of five of the electors. Despite the opposition of the Protestants led by Electoral Saxony, Ferdinand was elected king of the Romans at Cologne on January 5, 1531.6

Although Nürnberg went along with the Protestant protest of Ferdinand's election, the protest against the recess of the Diet of Augsburg, and the protest against the actions of the imperial Supreme Court, the city refused to support a military alliance which was definitely against the emperor. The instructions of the Nürnberg government for Kress and Schürstab repeatedly stated that
although the city would continue to maintain its Protestant beliefs, it "would not oppose the authority of the emperor. . . regardless of what the other estates might do." When Kress and Schürstab announced this decision publicly on December 26, 1530, they were supported only by the delegates from Brandenburg-Ansbach.

At first many of their co-religionists attempted to win over Nürnberg and Brandenburg-Ansbach. However, when at a second meeting in Schmalkalden in February, 1531, Kress again stated Nürnberg's refusal to join the League, he encountered open bitterness and hostility. Philip of Hesse was especially disappointed in Nürnberg's decision, even though Kress had personally explained to him the Council's reasons for it. Despite the abstention of Nürnberg and Brandenburg-Ansbach, the Schmalkaldic League soon won a large number of members, who pledged that

Whenever anyone of us is attacked on account of the Word of God and the doctrine of the Gospel, or anything connected therewith, all the others shall immediately come to his assistance as best they can, and help to deliver him.

By the time of the Diet of Regensburg in the spring of 1532, the Schmalkaldic League was recognized as an important political force in the Empire. Nürnberg had persisted in its policy of loyalty to the emperor. Its delegates at the diet, Christoph Kress, Clement Volckamer, and Hieronymus Baumgartner, had been instructed to attempt
to arrange for a direct mission to the emperor for the purpose of inviting him to the city. Charles V informed the Nürnbergers through Dr. Matthias Held that it would not be proper for a Roman Catholic emperor to visit a city "whose Council and entire populace had not accepted his imperial recess and edict." Kress expressed the Council's deep regrets and said that the Council "would not like to think that His Majesty was displeased with them." This rejection did not prevent the city from sending the emperor a substantial gift of 2,000 gulden on March 25, 1532.

The city also showed its loyalty in dramatic fashion by being the first at the Diet of Regensburg to send aid for the new campaign against the Turks. Before negotiations had even been completed, Nürnberg offered to raise and equip a force of 8,000 men, among whom 200 were to be armed with matchlocks and 50 with arquebusses. Nürnberg also gave Charles fifteen pieces of heavy artillery, a large supply of powder, 1,000 lances, 200 coats of armor for the imperial heralds, and a large stock of flour. All this was "destined for the fortification and provision of the city of Vienna." The Council wrote Kress that "we must help these people." Nürnberg also wanted to demonstrate its loyalty to the emperor in a tangible manner.
It was the severity of the Turkish situation that forced Charles V once again to compromise on religion. The leaders of the Schmalkaldic League had demanded the cessation of all imperial Supreme Court proceedings against Protestants. On February 7, 1532, Charles first made his new terms known to the Protestants. In exchange for peace in Germany, aid against the Turks, and the recognition of Ferdinand's new status, he was willing to accept the Augsburg Confession as valid until the calling of a church council and to assure the Protestants of peace.

At the beginning of the Diet of Regensburg, the estates agreed to grant Charles the same aid they had given at Augsburg if he would make certain concessions. Only Nürnberg favored unconditional aid, although she saw the necessity of stopping the proceedings in the Supreme Court and the necessity of officially recognizing the Protestant religion. The negotiations continued into the summer with the Protestants deliberating at Schweinfurt and later at Nürnberg. The Catholic estates remained at Regensburg, while the Nürnberg diplomats attempted to facilitate a settlement. The deliberations were given new urgency by the news that the Turks had left Constantinople. Nürnberg's policy of aid without concessions began to be adopted by other Protestant estates. Ulm instructed her deputies that even if concessions were not granted,
it would look bad in the eyes of God and the world if they were to desert common Christianity in so great an emergency.19

Finally, on July 23, 1532, an agreement was reached known as the Religious Peace of Nürnberg. The emperor promised to urge the convening of a church council within a year and a half, to suspend all lawsuits against the evangelicals in the imperial Supreme Court, and to postpone the question of confiscated church property.20 The Catholic estates refused to recognize this treaty as anything more than a private understanding. Nevertheless, it served its purpose; the emperor received help against the Turks and the Protestants obtained a religious truce. Nürnberg had once again showed the way to her co-religionists.

During the year 1532, Christoph Kress continued to receive honors and recognition. On two occasions he was offered the position of Losunger, the highest official position in the Nürnberg government which became vacant following the deaths of Hieronymus Ebner and Martin Geuder. Both times he refused, although he fulfilled the duties of that position for a year and was finally persuaded to accept the job of Captain General, the third highest office in the city's hierarchy on September 3, 1532.21 Throughout his career on the City Council, Kress had been honored by a succession of offices. He had been
made keeper of the city's seals, head of the war department, and commander of the city's mercenaries in 1524. In 1526 he had joined the exclusive circle of the Seven Elders and three years later he had been named head of the toll office.

Proof of Christoph Kress's importance to Nürnberg is reflected in the fact that he was undoubtedly the highest paid official in the city's government. His official salary for the year 1533 was 850 new pounds or about 425 gulden. This was about sixteen or seventeen times the income of the average workman in Nürnberg during the sixteenth century. Between 1529 and 1533, Kress records a total official salary of 1,822 new pounds or about 900 gulden. This must be compared to the 200 gulden salary paid to the Council's secretaries and the 200-300 gulden paid to full time legal advisors. Kress was already wealthy before he became a councillor and government official, but his official earnings helped to contribute to a fortune of 2,435 gulden in cash and silver plate in addition to the value of his property and land.

Neither his wealth nor his many offices kept Kress from continuing in the diplomatic service of Nürnberg until the end of his life. He continued to attend the last meetings of the Swabian League, whose demise appeared to be inevitable. Several of the princely members had never been happy with the League's executive council in
which cities and prelates enjoyed equal rights and influence with themselves. There was also general dis-
content over Württemberg's failure to make a greater contribution to the League's well-being.²⁶ Nürnberg and
other Protestant members were unhappy about the Catholic dominated League's activities against their co-religionists.

In a letter of March 21, 1533, Christoph Kress expressed Nürnberg's discontent with the League and the
city's concern over the possible reaction of the emperor if the city should withdraw from the League. Kress also
told George Vogler about the city's "oral courtship" of Ferdinand.²⁷ For over two years, Nürnberg would continue
to worry about not extending its membership in the League and the effect this would have on its policy of friendship
towards the Hapsburgs. However, on April 23, 1533, at a League meeting in Augsburg, Nürnberg joined Augsburg and
Ulm in a formal protest against the Swabian League's religious proceedings.²⁸

The Württemberg problem became critical in the winter of 1533-34, while Kress and Bernard Baumgartner were at a
meeting of the Swabian League in Augsburg. Ulrich of Württemberg, who had been deposed from his throne by the
Hapsburgs in 1520, had succeeded through the diplomacy of his son, Christoph, in gaining the support of Hesse,
Saxony, Münster, Brunswick, Prussia, and even Francis I of France. The possibility of war seemed likely and the
Nürnberg Council was concerned over the role of the Swabian League in this crisis. "Must we help the Emperor in this difficult situation?" they wrote Kress and Baumgartner. The situation was made more difficult for Nürnberg by the fact that Ulrich was a Lutheran. Once again the Council was in an uncomfortable position involving religion and the secular authority of the emperor.

The Council decided to begin making military preparations in case of war, while hoping for a diplomatic solution. Their hopes were answered by the persuasive tongue of Frederick of Bavaria, who won over the Swabian League to a policy of neutrality. The conflict was decided in May, 1534, when Ulrich's forces won a clear-cut victory over the Hapsburgs. Ferdinand agreed to recognize Ulrich and his religion, while John Frederick of Saxony finally agreed to accept Ferdinand as king of the Romans.

In the sixteenth century the life of a diplomat was not free from certain occupational hazards. In the Swabian League's campaign against the robber barons in 1523, Kress had played a notable role and had succeeded in making a great enemy of the von Rosenberg family. According to a letter written by Lazarus Spengler to George Vogler on February 16, 1534:

After the closing of the last Federal Diet
Hans Thomas von Rosenberg waited for Christoph Kress and Bernhard Baumgartner in two different places, in order to attack them after they had left the meeting. But God warned them while they were sleeping, just as he warned the Three Wise Men from the East, so that they did not take either of the roads, but went home by another way and thus the foul plot of these and other rogues failed.34

Kress had escaped this danger but he could not escape the rigors of his many activities and responsibilities forever. Throughout the remainder of 1534 and most of 1535, he attended diplomatic meetings at Schwabach, Heilsbronn, and Donauwörth with little time for relaxation in between.35 On one occasion he did accept an invitation to hunt boars with Margrave George of Brandenburg-Ansbach, but for the most part he continued to work a heavy schedule until slowed by illness in the fall of 1535. On November 15, 1535, the Council wrote in a letter that "our dear and true councillor, Christoph Kress, has since become somewhat weaker. We continue to pray for his improvement."36 His condition did not improve and on the night of December 15, 1535, he died. The not quite fifty-two year old patrician was buried in his family church in Kraftshof.

The general grief at his death was best expressed by Hans Sachs, Nürnberg's famous cobbler-poet, who wrote:

In Germany, thro' that free old town
(Her honors great—full her just renown)
Are tears today—lament and sorrow,
Their noblest son will greet no morrow
In peace this morn his spirit took flight,
No braver man could be found for right.
Most faithful steward of the City
Has left this world, Oh me! What pity!
On red escutcheon he bore his sword,
A worthy sire, a mighty lord.
A man, ever just and eloquent,
And held in esteem wherever he went.
Grave decisions made with insight rare,
At councils, meetings, and in warfare.
Beloved and revered by man and prince,
The lowly grieve their heart's eloquence.
The muse for our loss weeps bitter tears,
With low-bowed head views comfortless years,
Thrice blessed his mem'ry to those who mourn,
His deeds will live like seeds that are sown.37

The poet's portrait is completed by that of Dr. Christoph Scheurl, who wrote:

He was a man of good Austrian, good imperial,
good religious sympathies and always used
his advice for peace and unity and wanted
everybody to get his due. He was sent to
imperial and federal diets, to emperors,
kings, and princes, in order to represent his
native town, Nürnberg, in important matters.
He enjoyed a great reputation among those
sovereigns, whom he had personally to deal
with as well as with other princes and was
granted many a favor. He was a straight-
forward, proud, capable, dexterous, sensi-
ble, and extremely eloquent man, a good
father to his family and a ruler, with
whom very few citizens of the Emperor could
compare.38

Christoph Kress was a man who earned the respect
and affection of all classes of people. Among his
personal papers are letters expressing friendship and
requesting advice from King Ferdinand, Landgrave Philip of
Hesse, Duke Ernest of Lüneburg, Chancellor George Vogler
of Brandenburg-Ansbach, and other dignitaries.39 There is
also a fascinating letter from a soldier asking Kress if he
thinks the Turks will invade that year (1532).  

His public career was that of almost unbroken success and honor. Perhaps, his greatest contribution was his work in guiding Nürnberg through the difficult years, 1521 to 1534. The policy of holding fast to the Lutheran faith, while avoiding a direct break with the emperor, was a difficult one to execute. Yet Nürnberg, with the help of Christoph Kress and other skilled diplomats, did exactly that and continued in that direction even through the dark days of the Schmalkaldic War. As a leading Nürnberg diplomat, Kress would probably have enjoyed reading the autobiography of Charles V who described Nürnberg as "a city which has not taken part in the League Schmalkalden, and which has never been hostile."

NOTES

1BB 102, 10v, 85v-86r; Baron, "Imperial Cities," pp. 420-22; Pfeiffer, Nürnberg, II, 162.

2See Chapter I.

3Baron, "Imperial Cities," pp. 617-18; Strauss, Nuremberg, pp. 182-83.


5Fabian, Schmalkaldischen Bundes, p. 152.


7BB 102, 86r. See also BB 102, 76r-77r.

8BB 102, 97v. On Philip's reaction see his letter to John of Saxony in Fabian, Schmalkaldischen Bundes, pp. 173-74.

9Kidd, Documents, p. 301.


11BB 104, 185r; Franz, Nürnberg, p. 21.

12Franz, Nürnberg, p. 121.

Ranke, *Reformation*, p. 690.

BB 105, 34r.


BB 105, 34r.

Baron, "Imperial Cities," p. 619.


"Über die Bezüge," pp. 241-44.

FA Kress, VI.


BB 108, 29r.

BB 108, 30r.

BB 108, 36r-v.
32 BB 108, 38r.

33 See Chapter II.

34 Quoted in Frank, Kress Family, p. 189.

35 See for examples, BB 109, 59r-v, 64r-65v; BB 110, 17r-20v, 66r-68v, 75r-76r.

36 BB iii, 89r.


38 Ibid., p. 185.


40 FA Kress, XXX, B, No. 30.

41 Charles V, Autobiography, p. 139.
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