Letter from Bishop Nikolaus Bares of Berlin to Hitler, July 12, 1934

Most esteemed Herr Reich Chancellor!

With the greatest concern for the People and the Church, I take the liberty to turn to Your Excellency with open speech and a heartfelt request. As is known to Your Excellency, Ministry Director Dr. Erich Klausener, President of Catholic Action in the Diocese of Berlin, met his death in the course of the purge Your Excellency carried out.\* We do not doubt for a moment that Your Excellency did not include Ministry Director Dr. Klausener within the scope of the measures that Your Excellency took out of necessity against demonstrably revolutionary elements, and that his death could only be the result of an unfortunate chain of unforeseen circumstances. I am morally certain, as are all who know Minister Director Dr. Klausener . . . that he was totally incapable of suicide or a traitorous act or any kind of improper conduct against the existing order of the state.

As chief shepherd of the Diocese of Berlin, of which the deceased was a member and which he served in a high position, as a German bishop mindful of the portentous impact of this unfortunate fatality upon the People and upon the future of Germany, especially in the hotly contested Saar district, I hold myself duty-bound to ask Your Excellency urgently to speak a clarifying and liberating word . . . for State and Church . . .

Your Excellency’s most devoted . . .

/s/ Nicolaus Bares, Bishop of Berlin

\*Note by Stasiewski as editor: Klausener was shot on June 30, 1934 at the order of Gestapo Chief Heydrich, and the murder was falsely called a suicide. . . . At a meeting on the evening of June 30th at the Berlin diocesan offices among Nuncio Orsenigo, Archbishop Gröber, Bishop Berning, Bishop Bares, Vicar General Steinmann and Cathedral Vicar Adolph . . . under the impact of the events, the Nuncio exclaimed, “That’s Soviet-esque,” Bishop Berning: “Bolshevism” and Bishop Bares: “The shooting of Klausener was the ending point of our Concordat negotiations.”

Source: Bernard Stasiewski, ed., vol. 1, pp. 753-754