

# INSTRUCTIONS

Charles V (1500–1558), King of Castile (1516–1556), Holy Roman Emperor (1530–1556)  
to Matthias Held, Vice-Chancellor of the Empire

October 1536

In addition to the instructions which you, Mathias Held, Our dear and faithful councilor and Vice-Chancellor of the Empire, have already received, drawn up in German, and relating to the business for which We have sent you to Germany, We think it essential to confide in you the following secret instructions, which you are to impart confidentially to the King, Our good brother<sup>a</sup>, and to the most reverend Cardinal of Trent<sup>b</sup>, without, however,  
5 allowing the matter to reach the ears of anyone else.

First you shall inform my lord, Our brother, concerning what you saw and heard of public matters up to the time of your departure, and of the existing relations with the Pope<sup>c</sup>, the Venetians, and other powers of Italy, as well as with the kings of France<sup>d</sup> and of England<sup>e</sup>. Of these matters We shall say no more here since We do not wish  
10 to lengthen this instruction unduly, and are, moreover, expecting more exact information of the status of affairs. You will also speak of the conditions in Flanders, and of various other matters which can be more advantageously communicated by you than written.

The information which you might otherwise convey to Our brother as to the policy which We desire and are in a position to adopt cannot well be formulated without learning first what action the said King of France will take in regard to peace and the conditions which We have offered in the case of Milan. These you have seen, and of them you have a copy. We must, moreover, learn what further violence the said king will resort to. Inform Our  
15 brother of the measures We have taken to learn as soon as possible if matters can be arranged. He must, moreover, be made aware of the measures which the Pope, the Venetians, and the other powers will take should the King of France obstinately continue the war. It is further very essential to learn the aim and intentions of the electors, princes, and estates of the Empire in respect to the matters with which you are commissioned, not only as regards the question of the faith, but concerning the sympathy and assistance which We may expect and hope from them. You must exercise the greatest diligence and prudence in this matter, and inform Us of the disposition which you  
20 find.

In view of the ill-will which the King of France has always shown, and the frequent negotiations for peace which have come to naught, We are inclined to doubt whether any results will be reached in the present case, hence it is especially important that you should make every effort to learn what can be done to gain the favor and  
25 assistance of Germany in case of the continuance of the war.

It must always be kept in mind that the division in Germany is at bottom entirely due to the controversy in regard to Our holy religion. This prevents Germany from being united, as it should be, in obedience to Us and the Holy Empire. This encourages the King of France, moreover, to persist in the war, and furnishes him an obvious excuse for impeding, in a most unwarrantable fashion, the meeting of the council. The confusion may even become  
30 worse in view of the said king's favorable attitude towards the Turks, should no means be found to restore peace. This point must be emphasized in Germany, and some agreement ought to be reached as to the measures which should be adopted in case the Pope, through the influence of the said King of France or through fear on the part of the Holy Father of losing his authority in the kingdom of France, should refuse to consent to the calling of the council, on the ground of the war between Us and the King of France, or for other reasons. To say the truth, it

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<sup>a</sup> Ferdinand (1503–1564), King of Bohemia and Hungary (1526–1564), King of the Romans (1531–1558), Archduke of Austria (1521–1564)

<sup>b</sup> Bernhard von Cles (1485–1539), Bishop of Trent (1514–1539), Cardinal (1530–1539)

<sup>c</sup> Alessandro Farnese (1468–1549), Pope Paul III (1534–1549)

<sup>d</sup> Francis I (1494–1547), King of France (1515–1547)

<sup>e</sup> Henry VIII (1491–1547), King of England (1509–1547)

would seem, in spite of the evil deeds of the King of France, which are notorious and proven beyond the chance of doubt, that the Holy Father does not care to take any measure against the king, but that he will, in a word, remain neutral until he discovers which is in the wrong, as if the King of France had committed no offences up to the present and Our actions belonged in the same category as his. He would seem to excuse himself and escape responsibility on the ground that he ought to arbitrate between Us as a father and that, especially, he fears the loss of his authority in France. He may in this way be simply disguising the partiality which he constantly showed towards France before he became Pope.

It is, however, none of the less true that, in spite of the anxiety caused by the attitude of the Holy Father and the obstinacy of the King of France, We do not wish to use Our power in any way against the apostolic authority and dignity, or do anything prejudicial, directly or indirectly, to the essentials of Our religion or the holy Catholic institutions. But We see clearly that should the Pope continue to maintain his attitude of indifference or dissimulation, and not frankly consent to a council, it is all the more necessary that some means should be devised as soon as possible to prevent an increase of confusion in Germany, which will cause the destruction both of religion and the imperial authority. Owing to this disorder, We are prevented from doing anything for Christianity itself or towards the defense against the Turks, whom the King of France is constantly encouraging. Our power is thus paralyzed to an extent which manifestly jeopardizes Our realms and estates and those of Our brother.

For these reasons, while maintaining the great secrecy which the affair demands, you should confer very particularly with my lord Our brother as to whether there be any way of celebrating the council, should Germany consent, even if the said Pope and King of France should not agree to it, and as to how this may be done and with what certainty. This would seem to be a plan based upon perfect right and reason, and all the more, because the Holy Father has already promised a council and pledged himself expressly for the King of France. The principal need of a council is, moreover, for the German nation. The King of Portugal will consent to and support the plan, as will probably the King of Poland, and the most of the powers of Italy. As for England, since it is utterly schismatic, the Pope and the King of France cannot validly allege against the legitimacy of the council the fact that that country was not included.

Should the resort to a council in Germany, with the approbation of all or the greater part of that nation, prove impracticable, it should be determined whether there is not some other expedient, for example, to assure those who have fallen from the faith that no further coercion will be used if they will but sincerely conform with the other members of Germany in maintaining peace at home and in co-operating with Our said brother and Ourselves, or might not the Treaty of Nuremberg<sup>a</sup> be modified, or such a new one drawn up as the change of times and altered circumstances might dictate. Or may it not be advisable to call a national assembly in Germany and adjust, or neglect, such matters as may not be essential to Our holy religion. Or let some other expedient be devised so that the imperial, Roman authority be not sacrificed, as well as Our said brother and Ourselves, even should it not supply a remedy in the matter of religion. For We can but wait until God grants such remedy as He shall judge fitting to His holy service, since He knows the regret with which Our said brother and We behold the sad state of affairs, and that Our aim and desire is to serve Him and apply Ourselves to cure the existing evils so soon as any means shall offer themselves.

We are thus placed in a difficult and critical position, for We cannot have peace if Our enemy does not consent, for, as it is well known, he is as obstinate as he is powerful, and regards neither God nor good faith, placing his chief hope in the division of Germany and the difference in religious matters which exists there, as well as in the approach of the Turk, whom, as it is reported, he spares no efforts to encourage. In view of this, it behooves Our brother to turn his attention to this matter, since everything is at stake, and to find some way of settling his difficulties in Hungary, and any other complications in which he may be involved. For it would be quite impossible for Us to lend him any assistance, being, as We are, far in arrears for the outlays We have been forced

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<sup>a</sup> The Treaty of Nuremberg (23 July 1532) tolerated Lutheranism where it existed by that time, but forbade its spread.

to make in the past. Our kingdoms and countries are so surcharged with burdens that We do not know where We are to look for the absolutely necessary means of continuing this war. This is one of the chief motives which induces Us to return to Our Spanish kingdoms in order to take council there as to what may be done.

University of Pennsylvania, Department of History. *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History* (1895), II:31–34.