

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Evangelische Kirchenkonferenz

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Treysa b. Marburg, 1945-09-01

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Evening Standard London
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Treysa near Marburg September 1rst.

The national convention held here by seventy prominent protestant churchmen with Bishop Dr. Theophil Wurm of Stuttgart and Pastor Dr. Martin Niemöller ~~presiding~~ presiding, ended yesterday. After five days of deliberation the "Church Leaders' Conference" agreed on the establishment of a "Protestant Council in Germany". Of the Council's 12 ~~members~~ members 6 are Lutherans, 4 Unitarians and 2 Reformed Protestants. The assembly stated that 1.) it was impossible to restore the "Constitution of the Protestant Church" of July 11th 1933, because, on the whole, its institutions were irreparably compromised. 2.) It was impossible to recognize Pastor Niemöller's ~~anti-Nazi~~ anti-Nazi "Bekennniskirche" (Confessing Church) as the only legitimate body, because of the growing unity between the ~~pastor's~~ "emergency organs" and the non-Nazi elements of the old Church. The newly founded "Council" embraces members of both organisations and constitutes something like a provisional church government.

While the delegates devoted much time to ^{legal,} constitutional and administrative questions, it was evident that with the Treysa Conference the protestant church in Germany has started its fight for power. In this struggle German youth is the most crucial, if not the only objective.

The churchmen convened in a large hospital for Wehrmacht casualties and the conference room smelled disturbingly of anaesthetics. Except for this reporter the Allied press was not represented.

When Pastor ^M Martin Richter - the only delegate from Russian occupied Germany - made his report, the audience was breathlessly quiet. Conditions in Saxony, said Pastor Richter, were heartrending.

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This part of the country had never been self sufficient, but had imported much of its food supplies from BH Silesia and East Prussia. Now nothing but refugees arrived from there. Unfortunately, however, the food situation was such that the fugitives could not be permitted to stay. Two Million had been sent on in recent weeks. While it must be admitted that the Soviet occupation forces refrained from interfering with general church activities, they did not allow the church to exercise any organized influence on youth. As under the Nazis, the minds of youth were being molded by local political councils. But the educational rights of the church had been recognized at Potsdam and the church was determined to fight for its rights.

A sharply political note was sounded, when the pastor referred to "our Sudeten German brothers". Their plight, he said, was all the more deplorable, since the land from which they had been driven, was ancient German soil. The Evacuees arrived penniless. Whatever little the Czechs had let them keep, had been confiscated by "so-called boundary guards".

Dr. Mueller, youth pastor of Stuttgart, said nobody could have dreamed that German youth would ever be so completely lost to all things spiritual; that it could become so dull, so empty, so godless. Nazism, he said, created no values; hence no values were destroyed by its destruction. While not believing in anything - not even in Nazism - the young insisted that "formerly" (under Hitler) all had been better. Thus dead Nazism proved more dangerously attractive than live Nazism had ever been. The Allies had better recognize this danger and back up the church in its efforts to salvage the souls of youth. To characterize the present state of mind of the young, the pastor quoted Nietzsche: "He who has lost what you have lost, will halt nowhere."

The German nation as a whole, he stated, had taken to desperate pleasure seeking. Even clergymen had been drawn into ^{the general} ~~the~~ paroxysm. A year of mourning ought to be proclaimed by the Council. Church members ~~hbbb~~

should be asked to stay away from all places of entertainment.

The gathering's outstanding personality and guiding spirit, though only its co-chairman, was Pastor Martin Niemöller. After eight years spent in Nazi prisons and concentration camps, Niemöller was released from the American interrogation center near Wiesbaden on June 21st. He has not returned to his community at Berlin-Dahlem, but lives at present in Leoni at the Bavarian Lake Starnberg.

While most of his colleagues looked distinctly like clergymen, Niemöller wearing his shabby gray suit with a certain militant elegance, looks like a German naval officer on furlough. Born 53 years ago as son of a pastor in Lippstadt, Westphalia, he joined the Navy at the age of 18, four years before the outbreak of world war number one. During the war the young U boat Captain discovered his talent for leadership, a talent, which, after the war, had to be led ^{into} ~~the~~ other channels.

"I thought of becoming a teacher," he told this reporter; "but as such I would have ~~had~~ had to be a servant of the state."

According to Niemöller the Weimar Republic was devoid of Christianity and would not permit its servants properly to teach God's word.

"Nor", said gothic looking Mrs. Niemöller, white-haired and handsome in a becoming black Dirndl, "would my husband have ~~liked to~~ ^{DEFEATIST} teach history the way it was taught in the early years of Weimar. As a clergyman he was free, ~~Khkhkhkh~~ "

While studying theology in the Ruhr (he acquired a comprehensive knowledge of Hebrew within ten weeks), Niemöller took up arms once more. Along with other students he volunteered to quell the revolutionary upheavals of March 1920.

Though doubtlessly an ardent churchman, the young minister was and remained at least as ardent a German. His opposition to the Nazi regime was inspired no less by ^{PATRIOTIC} ~~nationalistic~~ than by christian ~~sentiments~~ sentiments. Thus when Hitler had plunged the world into war, Niemöller, then at Oranienburg concentration camp, offered his services to the

"Für den Krieg"

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Germany's nazification, he maintains, was caused by unemployment. So was the high percentage of psychopaths among Nazi leaders. Psychopaths were the first to be unemployed and consequently the first to turn Nazi. Other old party members, such as Goering, were "political idealists". Even so the German people ^{MUST} ~~must~~ now atone for what they have done or condoned.

Pastor Niemöller is enormously ^{GERMAN} ~~German~~ - a Lutheran to boot. Like his great master he joins the liberating spirit of the true revolutionary, with the anti-humanists's reactionary nationalism. He is intelligent, ^{courageous} ~~brilliant~~ and determined. His health has suffered; he has recently had a heart attack and ^{he} looks very thin. But faith and will power will help him carry on. His influence on his countrymen may come to be considerable.