

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

OBJECTS:

1. To provide for readers at home and abroad information concerning the life and thought of the British Churches in wartime.
2. To elucidate by news and quotations the spiritual issues at stake in the war.

Number 128

APRIL 16th, 1942

THE LAST SIX WEEKS IN NORWAY

CHURCH CONFLICT REACHES DRAMATIC CRISIS

Our bulletins have told in detail the story of the Norwegian Church conflict as far as the resignation of the seven bishops on February 24th. Events have moved with alarming rapidity since then, and all the world now knows how the whole body of the Norwegian clergy, with a few trifling exceptions, announced their resignations from State office on Easter Day. Between the resignation of the bishops and that of the clergy there lies a dramatic story, details of which we are now able to give.

Delayed decisions

The Quisling government took some time before it announced its decision on the resignation of the bishops. That of Bishop Berggrav was accepted with a despatch which was meant as an insult, but decisions on the other bishops were deferred till March 12th. By that time Quisling was ready to announce the resignation of all the remaining bishops, but he allowed Bishop Stoeren to retain his office and titular rank, believing that he was less violently opposed to the Quisling government than the rest. Quisling probably intended to use him, if possible, as a means of consecrating the new bishops if and when they should be appointed.

Soon after, on March 14th, new appointments were made by the Quisling government to the vacant offices. As the deans had been deposed the newly appointed clergy had to take on the office of bishop and dean in the various dioceses. The clergy appointed were mainly obscure sympathisers with Quisling.

Berggrav threatened with death

The treatment of the retired bishops soon became a source of indignation among the Norwegian clergy. Bishop Berggrav was called to a conference with Quisling at the Royal Palace, Oslo, soon after his dismissal. The conference developed into a long interrogation. In the end Quisling lost his temper and said, "You triple traitor, you deserve to be beheaded." Berggrav answered quietly, "Well, I am here." Soon after the Bishop's return to his home Nazi police arrived and searched his house. Berggrav and Maroni were made to report twice daily to the police. It is said that Berggrav was always accompanied by a large crowd of sympathisers and this may be the reason why the Quislings soon dropped this particular form of persecution.

Ultimatum from the Clergy

On March 23rd, the Norwegian struggle entered a new and, as it has proved, decisive phase. In all Norwegian churches, except a very few, a declaration was read by the clergy emphasising that the fundamental relationship between parents and children is a gift from God—holy and inviolable. "In the school law," so the declaration pointed out, "it is emphasised that the schools' aim is to give children a Christian and moral education. The Church must see that this is done. The Church, therefore, cannot hand over the responsibility for education to the State. A Christian State is obliged to listen to

the ecclesiastical officials who have misused their position for political and treasonable actions. New religious thoughts and new religious orientations will follow these historical times." The document claimed that these lay outside the programme of Nasjonal Samling. "There is no need to stir up a Church fight for the benefit of Herr Berggrav. The confusion which has been created is the result of provocative high-handedness and inexcusable political and treasonable activity from certain quarters inside the Church, instigated by Berggrav and his accomplices. Here is no question of religious warfare and Church antagonism. Herr Berggrav lies as brazenly as a criminal. These people must, without any frills, be treated for what they are—swindlers and traitors. It would be wrong to show to them any of the respect which one generally manifests towards a vocation which they have shamelessly misused. They want to play the martyr, but really it is a case of humbug and hypocrisy. *It would be a great mistake and also a neglect of duty not to act against these criminals with all the firmness and determination which their misdeeds deserve.* . . . Those who continue to fight against us and deliberately or unconsciously help the enemy must, without pity, be rendered harmless. They force us to destroy them and those who join them must be prepared to fall with them."

It is clear from the violence of the language that Quisling and his colleagues were seriously discomfited by the courageous action of the Norwegian Church.

Scandinavian solidarity

One of the most striking things about the whole story is the way in which the Scandinavian nations have stood together through it all. Many Swedish bishops have expressed their admiration for what is happening. Thus Bishop Aulen of Strängnäs, preaching in Stockholm on February 16th, said: "In that country (that is, Norway) an unparalleled struggle is being waged against aggression and commands our admiration. The great war has many fronts and among them the spiritual front in Norway is not the least important." From Denmark came a testimony from Bishop Fulsgang Damgaard (Bishop of Copenhagen), who said in an interview that the unity between the Scandinavian Church is unbroken and stronger than ever before. "Our thoughts," he said, "this Easter go especially to the Norwegian Church. The people of Norway and her Church inspire our profound love and heart-

felt intercession." It will be remembered that at an earlier stage in the conflict Archbishop Kaila of Finland said that he deeply regretted what had happened, and pointed out that there must be something seriously wrong in Norway. He did not disguise the fact that he knew Bishop Berggrav and obviously admired him.

On April 10th it was learned that Quisling had taken the drastic step of sending Bishop Berggrav to a concentration camp at Bretvedt, charging him and three other clergy with "rebellious action." The names of the other arrested clergy are Pastors Indreboe, Carlsen and Wisloeff.

A Quisling ultimatum

The Ministry of Church and Education called on the clergy to retract their resignations by April 11th at 2 p.m., in which case they were to be allowed to resume their work. Failing this, they were threatened with instant dismissal.

According to evidence so far received, the ultimatum completely failed. The clergy carried on with their Services on Sunday, April 12th, and made no reference to the conflict. Their presence in their churches showed that they propose to insist on their right to continue with their spiritual ministrations. There is reason to believe that the Germans are now taking a hand, and endeavouring to arrange some kind of compromise.

However things may develop, it is certain that Easter 1942 will become an historic landmark in the life and witness of the Norwegian Church.

MESSAGE FROM KARL BARTH TO NORWEGIAN CHRISTIANS

Professor Karl Barth has addressed the following message of encouragement to Christians in Norway. It has already been broadcast to the Norwegian people.

"Dear Brethren, We have heard of the fight which has been imposed upon you and you have taken up; you and Bishop Berggrav, your clergy and teachers and your parishes. Even during the present grievous ordeal through which your country is passing you desired to go forward unswervingly with the proclamation of the Gospel, which duty is committed to the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, erected on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. They sought to draw you aside from this path by means of every kind of blandishment, and finally by threats and open violence, but you have up to the

present received the grace to withstand this temptation. You are now called on to suffer for the cause.

"We believe that we are truly reflecting your own mind when we tell you that we do not grieve on account of what is befalling you but rather rejoice at the special call which you have answered. It is your privilege to put your faith to a test out of which, if it stands the test, it cannot but emerge stronger and purer than before. You will see and know, specially in the glorious power and light which is to be found in it at a time like this, when it ceases to be a matter of tradition and habit, and becomes as it was in the days of the fathers, a matter of obedience and daring. You are called on to make the greatest and most decisive contribution to the restoration of liberty and right in your own country. You will give us Christians in all countries a stirring, inspiring and consoling example. And, most important of all, you will be taking up your cross as humble and valiant men and entering into specially close fellowship with Him who, as Israel's Messiah, the Saviour of the whole world and head of His Church, is ruler of all principalities and powers in heaven and earth.

"You are not looking for our approval or applause. But be assured that we are thinking of Norway, of you and your whole people, and praying that you may ever receive anew gifts of steadfastness, wisdom and simplicity. We are persuaded with you that nothing, whether great or small, which you are called upon to suffer will be in vain and that it will all yield fruit for the Kingdom and Church of Jesus Christ, for your country and for the future of all. We believe with you that the victory of Jesus Christ, who 'is alive for evermore,' has already been won for men of our time and will be made manifest in our time. We unite with you in petition that God's Kingdom may come and in thanksgiving to Him for the fact that He will never forget or abandon His people."

THE ŒCUMENICAL CHURCH—

"A reality of supreme importance."

In the course of an Easter broadcast addressed to Sweden the Bishop of Chichester said:—

"I will tell you why I think the Œcumenical Church is so exceedingly important now.

"(1) First, the Church, which is not of one nation but for all nations, stands for truth and justice. To States or Parties which have no standard save that of their own interest, it opposes the Divine Law. . . .

"(2) Again, the Church stands for the worship of God, not man. When it sees individuals or nations putting idols in the place of God, whether that idol be power, or wealth, or race, or State, or any other idol, it recalls the First Commandment which God gave to Moses, 'I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have none other gods but me.'

"(3) Once more, the Church stands for love as the foundation of all social and international, as well as personal life. It declares that God made mankind one family and that each nation in that one family is called to contribute to the building up of the life and health of the whole. It declares that the nation which seeks to destroy other nations is sinning against God. It declares that the nation which deliberately plans its economic policy for its own enrichment, at the expense of other nations, is sinning against God.

"I know that the Church which declares these truths is not yet united. That is why its witness is much less clear than it could be. But God meant it to be one, and we must pray that through the Œcumenical Movement, now steadily growing, it may become one in fact. . . .

"That there are Christians who have the vision and the courage for action like this, in the very torment of war, I am sure. And I am made all the more sure by the witness which a brave Church is giving for Christ against tyranny. Christians all the world over are filled with admiration for Bishop Berggrav and the Bishops, the Deans and the Pastors of the Norwegian Church for their fearless stand against the violence and injustice of the present State authorities in Norway. . . . In the voice of the Church of Norway to-day we hear the voice of the Œcumenical Church, and it speaks to all the churches."