

German Minister Sees Christain Total Diminishing

(Editor's note: After World War I, former U-boat commander Marlin Niemoeller joined the Protestant clergy and in a little more than a decade became one of Germany's best-known theologians. During the Nazi era, he spent seven years in a concentration camp for actively opposing Hitler. He resumed his ministry after World War II and now is one of six presidents of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Niemoeller recently discussed his views on the role of the Christian church in the contemporary world with a UPI reporter. A report on that conversation follows.)

petuating the church as a physical institution. It is to trust in his faith as a personal relationship between him and God and between himself and his fellow beings.

Dr. Niemoeller discussed with United Press International his views on the role of the Christian church in a world of exploding population and nationalism during a visit to this Long Island community to keynote a

world mission weekend at the Garden City Community church. The German theologian is spending the entire Lenten season in the United States, making appearances throughout the country.

To honor God's commandments, a Christian must love his fellow man as a brother and God's love does not respect national boundaries nor racial origins, Dr. Niemoeller said.

Combat Hunger

"You cannot love your neighbor and see him hungry. If you love your neighbor you have a responsibility for his body as well as his soul," said the 71-year-old clergyman, a man of diminutive stature but great personal magnetism.

The cold war is a mockery of God's wishes and all the blame cannot be laid at the door of communism, said Dr. Niemoeller. Nor, despite the anti-God nature of religion, can it be said that religion is being stamped out behind the iron curtain, he said.

"We have more atheists in West Germany and in the western world than there are in East Germany or Russia," said Dr. Niemoeller.

He said that on a visit to the Soviet Union several years ago he asked an old communist official what percentage of the Russian people still believed in the orthodox church.

"He evaded by question twice. The third time I asked, he shook his head and said, 'There is no statistic... maybe 65 per cent...'

Russians Religious

He evaded by question twice. The third time I asked, he shook his head and said, 'There is no statistic... maybe 65 per cent...'

the balding, bespectacled clergyman said. The patriarch of the Russia church estimated 75 per cent.

Then Dr. Niemoeller recalled a conversation with his Soviet interpreter, a young man in his thirties.

"He beamed when I asked him about his family; he was married and had two daughters. I said to him, 'I assume your daughters are not baptized.'

"He became furious! I thought that was some insight into the Russian people's feeling about religion."

Next, Dr. Niemoeller talked about East Germany.

"The East Germans' hopes for reunification have been gone for four or five years now. Nobody believes now that the West will save him. For 12 years, they waited patiently but now they feel they

must do something about their lives without waiting for the political situation to change.

Closer to God

"They now feel themselves closer to God. They feel a personal bond to God. They have come to ask a deeper question: What is our duty in this relationship?"

Before and during the first World War, Martin Niemoeller was an officer in the German Navy, commanding a U-boat. After the war, he entered the Protestant clergy and, in the 1930's, his book

"From U-Boat to Pulpit," was a worldwide best seller.

He rebelled against the Nazi demands against the Christian conscience and, in 1937, was cast into prison.

Dr. Niemoeller, pastor of one of Berlin's major churches, spent the next seven years in concentration camps—Sachsenhausen and Dachau.

In 1939, he authored a book with the Nazi-baiting title of "God Is My Fuehrer."

No Hero

But, at war's end, Pastor Niemoeller did not emerge from the prison camps a hero

—at least not to himself. Had the German Christians done enough to thwart power-hungry, super-racist aims of Nazi nationalism which led to global war? Had he personally done enough?

For months after his liberation, Dr. Niemoeller said, he was haunted by this dream: He looked into a bright light and heard a voice ask someone apparently near him, "What can you say for yourself for doing these terrible things?"

Another voice—he recognized it as that of Adolf Hit-

ler—replied, "I didn't know about the gospel... nobody told me."

Then, Dr. Niemoeller recalls, he awoke, trembling and expecting the strange voice to ask him, "Why didn't you tell me?"

Thus, the clergyman who opposed Hitler, whose faith was unshaken by seven years in a Nazi concentration camp, remembered the 30 minutes he had once spent with the Fuehrer. He asked himself: had he done enough?

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By FREDERICK H. TREESH

Popularity of President Down, Palmer Hoyt Says

United Press International
Garden City, N.Y.—UPI—One of the world's most eminent Protestant churchmen offers his thought to American Christians for Lenten meditation: It is foolhardy to feel secure that your religion and your western culture will prevail in a changing world.

"Every day the percentage of Christians in the world decreases and this will continue," said the Rev. Dr. Martin Niemoeller, a president of The World Council of Churches.

Nationalism in non-Christian, non-white countries of the world is ending an era of Christian predominance, said Dr. Niemoeller, who heads the German Evangelical church and is one of six members of the presidium of the World Council.

Decline Seen

"The so-called Christian nations the white nations, will decline in relative numbers, influence, power and resources," the German clergyman said. "By the end of this century there will be more than 5 billion non-whites and less than 2 billion whites among the world's population."

The non-white nations mainly are non-Christian. The present ratio of whites to non-whites is 3 to 2.

Is this a matter of grave concern, perhaps despair, for the contemporary Christian? No, declares Dr. Niemoeller.

"We need not be afraid. If we are afraid, it is because we trusted in our superiority in numbers, not in Christ."

Christian Duty

The Christian's duty, said Dr. Niemoeller, is not to feel falsely secure in the belief that his religion will convert the world, nor is it to make plans and strategems for per-

Portland — (UPI) — President Kennedy's popularity has suffered a "pronounced decline" and America is in a "crisis of confidence," according to Palmer Hoyt, editor and publisher of the Denver Post.

Addressing the Portland Knife and Fork club, Hoyt attributed the drop in the President's popularity to the Cuban situation, controversial proposals for tax cuts and reforms, and charges of improper "news management."

He said America must recapture a sense of motion and of confidence in its presidential leadership "in this time of international hazard." He said the crisis of confidence was complicating the exercise of presidential leadership.

Hazy Program

Since the popular Cuban quarantine that forced Russia to withdraw offensive missiles from Cuba, Hoyt said, the administration's Cuba policy had slipped into "a somewhat hazy program."

"Managed news," which Hoyt said governments had tried since George Washington, caused an uproar based on the administration's attempt to rationalize the practice and to play favorites in news dissemination.

"No administration before has announced that it tries to mislead the public as a matter of high policy," he said.

He urged the administration to adopt a "straightforward news policy," announcing that it will withhold information of help to an enemy but will release all other news promptly to all media.

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