

PATHFINDER

February 13, 1937 p. 8

Nazis, Church

Germany's four years of National Socialist rule has been marked by growing attempts to orient the church to Nazi purposes. Subversion of Christianity to a new religious philosophy, which seeks to surround Adolf Hitler with the aura of divinity as God's revelation to the German people, has brought resistance from Protestants and Catholics alike.

Last week, amid rising resentment over efforts to subject spiritual life to political domination, the Nazi-Church fight flared more into the open. Protestants contemplated the general synod election with misgivings and indignation because they had just learned that there would be no freedom of the press in the "campaign." (The election, permitted by the Hitler government, is to be held April 4).

In addition, they had this fresh action to bring churches of all faiths under the Nazi yoke to think about. Hans Kerrl, Minister of Church Affairs, had appealed to the churches to cooperate wholeheartedly in the government's task of finding land for small settlers by forthwith sharing their real estate with the landless elements of the population.

Arguing that a citizen's "spiritual welfare" would be promoted if he were helped to establish a home, the Minister declared the churches were expected to make the necessary sacrifices, or yield to "compulsory measures." Then he pointed to Nazi party statistics issued a few months ago showing that 27 per cent of all German land or 2,500,000 acres was in the hands of the churches, while the remaining 73 per cent was divided among 4,000,000 farmers and settlers.

But the government's drive to make the churches share part of their lands became deadlocked late last week when church leaders demanded, as their price of cooperation, fulfillment of these two conditions: (1) land must be granted to the church inside each new settlement for a church and cemetery under administration of the church, and (2) small-farm settlers of the future must not be members of the neo-heathen movement.