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AMSTERDAM uber BERLIN?

WHATEVER happens during the next few weeks in Berlin there are many people who think that what will happen next week at Amsterdam is more important in the long run. In this article, our contributor, A.M.R., gives his reasons for agreeing with them.

FROM August 22 to September 4 the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches will meet in Amsterdam. Delegations will be present from every country in the world except the U.S.S.R. All major churches (148 in all) will be represented, except for the Orthodox Churches of Russia and Bulgaria, and except that the Roman Catholics present will attend purely as observers and are committed against membership.

Fourteen hundred persons will be present, packing out the Nieuw Kerk (first built 1414) and the municipal Concertgebouw. Delegates, by using earphones, will hear all speakers in their own tongue by means of simultaneous translations. Their first task will be to constitute the World Council of Churches and draft a constitution. Their second will be to consider, in sectional groups, various "concerns" submitted by member churches. Thirdly, the same "sections" will discuss four book-length

reports, the work of over two hundred theologians and other experts, upon "The Universal Church in God's Design" (i.e., the nature of organised Christianity in concrete practice), "God's Design and Man's Witness" (i.e., evangelism, or the current outreach of Christianity), "The Church and the Disorder of Society," and "The Church and International Disorder."

That is the bare bones of the event. Now let me try to justify calling it the event of this year.

First, although the World Council does not yet technically exist it has already done the most outstanding job in post-war reconstruction. UNRRA, having the wealth of governments behind it, of course distributed far more actual relief goods. But the World Council's hastily improvised Reconstruction Department not only quickly left standing all existing voluntary relief bodies in sheer quantity of help given, but gathered and distributed it without public appeals or hullabaloo, worked on the tiniest fraction of organising expenses, and gained the greatest response of self-help from the recipients.

However the Reconstruction Department is only one out of 13 departments of the "World Council of Churches in Process of Formation"—as its letter-paper has so far had to be headed. Other departments have helped to repatriate prisoners-of-war, settle-in immigrants, advise UNESCO and the UN's social

and welfare committees, or spread information and evolve more united Christian opinions on current problems. There is social conscience here, individual and massed goodwill, and the beginning of organisation to make it effective—organisation which no government or party can capture and divert to its own ends.

Vital Force

Secondly, for all their impotence in the face of many pressing problems, for all their muddleheadedness towards many others, and for all their incomplete acclimatisation in a science-dominated age, the practising Christians of the world remain its largest single vital force. In Germany the Unions and the Universities, guardians of welfare and freedom, capitulated to Hitler; only the churches never did. And, long on the defensive against "the modern mood," they begin to-day to resume the intellectual initiative against current society: poets and thinkers who were Marxist or nihilist in the nineteen-twenties and 'thirties become Christian or Christian-facing in the 'forties.

Drastically pruned in its ancient centres (the churches of Hungary and Russian-zone Germany are reported the liveliest in Europe) Christianity has taken root in the last hundred years throughout the whole world in what often are small but nearly always truly indigenous churches. In the last 50 years "the younger churches," as they are now called, have increased their membership 600 per cent. and the number under their pastors' instruction thirteenfold. When an already world-wide and very

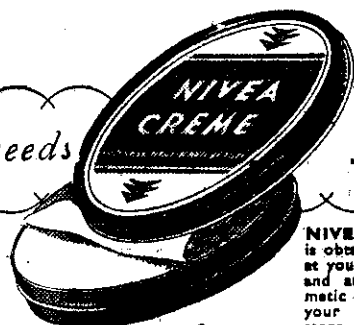
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D	I	S	D	A	I	N	S	I
S	O	A	B	D	S			
M	I	T	R	E	D	E	S	E
A	E	O	N	S	L	R	E	
N	M	J	I	H	A	D	A	L
A	N	T	L	E	R	T	H	E
G	O	A	B	E	C	A	U	S
E	R	M	I	N	E	D	T	S

Clues Across

- What the new reporter might say in order to do this.
- A notorious gangster deprived of his head-gear finds himself in solitary confinement, perhaps?
- Phyllis Bottome wrote of a mortal one.
- That war (anag.)
- "Tell me where is Fancy —" (Song from "Merchant of Venice")
- Or strife (anag.)
- And 24 across. Title of a novel by the author of "Good-bye, Mr. Chips."
- A dangerous family to dine with.
- No, listen! that's very rude.
- Maria Marten was murdered in a red one.
- "Thou art noble and nude and —" (Swinburne).
- "That every boy and every gal, That's born into the world —" (Private Willis, in "Iolanthe")
- Mixed relay.
- See 13 across.

Clues Down

- Toad be in ruins (anag.)
- One part may be versatile.
- In which Tennyson's moaning doves were to be found.
- "Under the wide and — sky, Dig the grave and let me lie." (R. L. Stevenson)
- He's no aid, even in sticking to it.
- African ruminant.
- Neat interment (anag.)
- Talk.
- Tearing into rock.
- What the first lesson doth here.
- "Hyperion to a —" ("Hamlet," Act 1, Sc. 2)
- "If she be not so to me, What care I how — she be." (George Wither)

No. 406 (Constructed by R.W.C.)

