

FIFTY-THOUSAND tons of Allied shipping were sunk in World War I. by Martin Niemoller. For this he received the Iron Cross. It had been Niemoller then, against the Allied navies, and Niemoller had won.

In 1933, the submarine commander is discovered looking after a well-to-do congregation in one of Berlin's better class suburbs (Dahlem). From this pulpit Niemoller began to launch a different sort of torpedo against an enemy better able to hit back.

By 1937, Hitler was raging: "It is Niemoller or I."

This time, it seemed, Niemoller had lost his fight.

In July, 1937, he was jailed for "misuse of the pulpit."

In February, 1938, he was tried and freed; but he was no sooner freed than the Gestapo packed him off to the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

Here, as far as we know, he remains. It was known last year that he had refused a release offered him on the condition that he stopped preaching.

The Final Defiance

He was known to be on half-rations, double hard labour, and solitary confinement. The last authentic news of him was that he had not been beaten himself, but had seen others thrashed unconscious.

"Not you, Herr Hitler, but God is my Fuhrer."

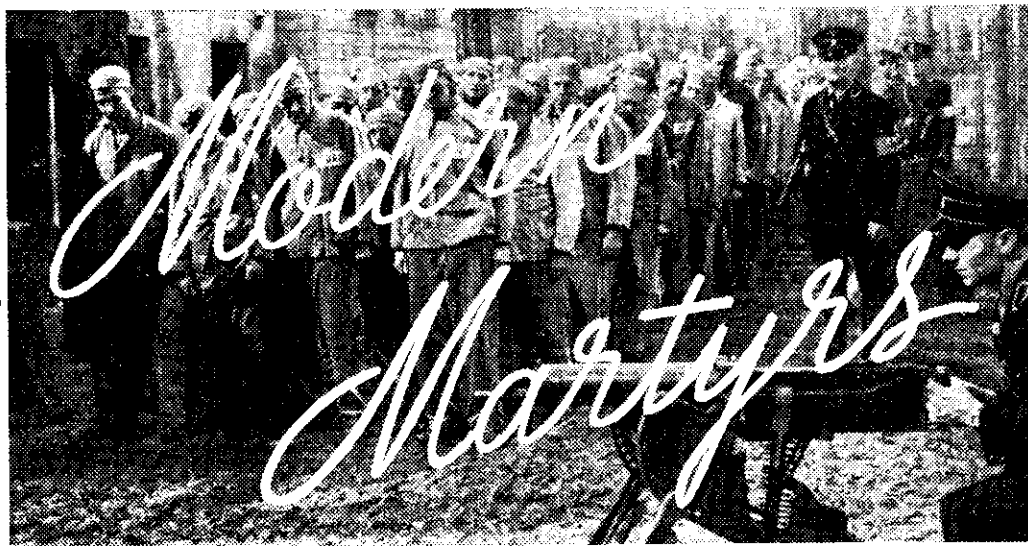
This was the final defiance Niemoller threw against Nazism. The words were typical of a determined Christian sentiment which survived in Germany despite all Hitler's attempts to replace the Church's interpretation of religion with that of Dr. Rosenberg.

With Niemoller in camp is the Jesuit Priest Rupert Mayer. In 1937 he said: "It is better for a priest to be shot down in Spain than see his faith being dragged in the dirt in Germany."

In more or less similar circumstances, last year Hitler held more than 10,000 pastors, priests, monks, and other churchmen. "More than 80 per cent. of the prisoners in concentration camps," said Albert Einstein in the U.S.A., "are not Jews but Christians. The universities were silenced. The newspapers were silenced. Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly."

"Let Us Go Forward"

The Anti-Nazi Christian movement which Einstein thus praised consisted mainly of the Lutheran Council and the



"NOT YOU, HERR HITLER, BUT GOD IS MY FUHRER"

Confessional Synod, representing some 9,000 and 5,000 preachers respectively. The Lutherans were more moderate in their opposition. The Confessional pastors were militantly opposed to Nazi domination. With them, when Hitler made it clear that he did not pretend to respect the Concordat made with the Pope in 1933, the Catholic Church had begun to march before the outbreak of war. Cardinal von Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, was bold enough to say outright that "we were saved not by German blood but by the blood of Christ!" Last year, aged 71, and in ill-health, he was still determinedly leading Catholic resistance to Nazi principles.

Among the Confessional pastors, Niemoller stood out strongly as the most determined and belligerent in his opposition.

"I want to ask of you that we give no place to weariness," he said in a Christmas message smuggled out of Germany in 1939. "Let us go forward on

the way, unconcerned with the censure of men, but with the peace of Christ in our hearts and with praise of God on our lips."

Pastor Niemoller was stubborn.

PASTOR HALL (Gaumont-British)

OF the same stubborn quality as Niemoller, only more so, for film reasons, is Pastor Hall, the character played by Wilfrid Lawson in the recently released Gaumont-British film, *Pastor Hall*.

Niemoller, we understand, has not been beaten in his concentration camp. Pastor Hall is spreadeagled on a block and savagely lashed. Niemoller had a wife and family who were able to write to him. Pastor Hall is shown as having only one daughter (Christine) (Nova Pilbeam). Niemoller preached in a flourishing Berlin suburb. Pastor Hall is discovered by the Gaumont-British

camera in an alpine village, with artificial mountains painted on the set.

Apart from these and other similar small points, the film is generally accepted to be an analogy of the Niemoller case. Dr. H. S. Lieper, secretary of the World Council of Churches, says of the film, indeed, that it understates rather than overstates "one of the most subtle and terrible persecutions in all history."

THIS supposed understatement of reality will, by itself, be strong enough to move anyone prepared to risk the shock which it gives the emotions. It is easy enough to read in the newspapers written statements about persecution. The film with its visual and emotional

effect has far greater shocking power. This advantage over the written word *Pastor Hall* uses to the full.

The audience in which this reviewer sat through *Pastor Hall* contained a certain element of larrikinism. When *Pastor Hall* began, a few noisy rows of seats refused to take it seriously.

After ten or fifteen minutes of its showing the entire theatre had been quietened, and when it had ended the audience made a subdued departure. For that reason, the little man at the top of this review is not clapping, but is sitting up attentively.

THE sobering effect, however, is not achieved by the mere portrayal of crudity. It is in fact difficult to decide whether to view *Pastor Hall* as anti-Nazi propaganda or as pro-Christian propaganda. Probably the emphasis given by Wilfrid Lawson's portrait of Pastor Hall makes the film very much more powerful as a sermon than as a political lecture.

The brutalities depicted are not thrown into relief strongly enough to make us more sympathetic for tortured flesh than we are sympathetic for tortured minds and spirits.

We see Pastor Hall living simply among his villagers. We observe the coming of the Storm Troopers, the change in the atmosphere of the village, the Pastor's early inability to understand the doctrines of National Socialism, his gradual realisation of their meaning, and his decision to speak out against them when he finds they encourage brutality, prize power above gentleness, and deny to men what God gave them—the responsibility of individual decision, the valuable, dangerous gift of freedom with which He entrusted them.

The Pastor is at last arrested. Somewhat superfluously, the film fills in time before his arrest by making some play with the desires of the Storm Troop leader for Christine, Nova Pilbeam being made to act the ancient dilemma about choosing between love and honour with her father's safety as the pawn. However, perhaps we can forgive this lapse into the obvious. The picture atones for it with consistently sure handling on the part of the Pastor himself.

Except where he is lashed and whipped on a block, and in a handful of other shots giving the producers' idea of life

(Continued on next page)



PASTOR HALL

Wilfrid Lawson, starring in the film



PASTOR NIEMOLLER

A German hero in both wars