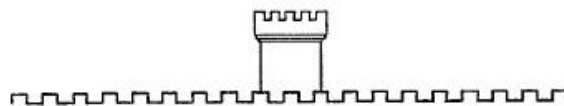

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
IN THE DIVINE PURPOSE

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
IN THE DIVINE PURPOSE



“‘You are my witnesses,’ is the utterance of Jehovah.”

—Isaiah 43:10

COPYRIGHT, 1959
by
WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY
OF PENNSYLVANIA

First Edition
500,000 COPIES

In this book all Scripture quotations or citations not identified as to translation are from the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NW) except those found in material quoted from some other publication, in which case they are from the *King James* or *Authorized Version* (AV). Reference to the *American Standard Version* is indicated by the abbreviation *AS*.

Other abbreviations used:

Ibid., abbreviation of *Ibidem*, Latin, meaning "In the same place."

Supra, Latin, meaning "Above or beyond."

PUBLISHERS
WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY
OF NEW YORK, INC.
INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A.

Made in the United States of America

The Fight for Liberty to Preach

CHAPTER 19

TOM: John, you said the radio work of the Watch Tower Society played an important part in the struggle that developed during the 1930's between Jehovah's witnesses and the prominent religious organizations. But what about the work in Fascist and Nazi countries?

JOHN: As might be expected, the preaching of the good news in Catholic-dominated Italy and Germany was bitterly opposed. Little headway had been made in Italy since 1891, when Pastor Russell made his first European tour. In 1903 the Society arranged to have the *Watch Tower* translated and published there in Pinerolo, Turin, but it was distributed through a news agency. In 1905 the book *The Divine Plan of the Ages* was translated into Italian with the result that, in 1912, when Pastor Russell made another visit to Italy, he found a congregation of about forty meeting in a village near Pinerolo.

The work developed slowly, though. Five pioneers came in from Switzerland during the early years of Fascism, 1922 to 1927, but a national convention in Pinerolo in 1925 brought out only seventy delegates from Italy and Italian Switzerland. A. H. Macmillan from the Society's headquarters

attended that convention. Then, in 1932, the Society opened a depot and began one of its most active campaigns. The booklet *The Kingdom the Hope of the World* was printed locally and twenty capable workers from Switzerland distributed 200,000 copies in twenty cities of northern Italy. Then the trouble started. Cardinal Schuster's newspaper, *L'Italia*, came out with a strong denunciation of this activity, with the result that the Fascist police made a sudden move against the Society's office and closed it in July, 1932. The police admitted that the clergy were responsible for the harsh measures against this Bible-booklet distribution, compelling the Fascist government to act on the Concordat signed with the Catholic Church in 1929.

The work in Germany, however, was showing considerably more progress. In fact, during a special campaign in 1933, there were almost as many Witnesses in the field in that country as there were in the United States. This campaign was one of a number the Society conducted during the 1930's that were called "International Testimony Periods" and that were of eight days' duration. It was a concerted effort of the Witnesses all over the world to demonstrate their unity by spending every day that week giving the same testimony and distributing the same publication.

According to the reports for this particular campaign called "The Remnant's Thanksgiving Period," April 8-16, there

were 58,804 workers in seventy-seven countries.^a A booklet called "Crisis" was being distributed. There were 20,719 workers that reported in the United States, and in Germany there were 19,268 Witnesses in the field. The German Witnesses distributed 2,271,630 pieces of literature, whereas in the United States 877,194 pieces were placed.

Catholic opposition, though, was strong and by the time of this campaign Hitler had come into power. But it had not prevented an intensive witness from being given. During the years 1931 and 1932 there was reported a total of 2,335 legal actions pending against the German Witnesses;^b yet, in the period from 1919 to 1933, they had distributed into the hands of the German people 48,000,000 books and booklets and 77,000,000 copies of the German edition of *The Golden Age*.^c

Now, in the United States, the real fight over the use of the air waves began. Pope Pius XI had declared 1933 a "holy year" that was to usher in an era of Catholic action designed to bring peace to the nations. Simultaneously, in the spring of 1933, American Catholics organized a nationwide campaign under the leadership of their cardinals, bishops and priests to "drive Rutherford off the air." Their plan was to intimidate owners of radio stations under threat of boycott into refusing to sign contracts with the Witnesses for the use of their broadcast facilities for their recorded lectures. You will recall that by this time the international broadcast voice of the Society was being heard through 408 radio stations.^d In spite of the threats of boycott, however, the radio work continued to expand and the Society poured millions of dollars into this feature of the service, although these years, 1929-1935,

found America in the grip of its great depression.^e

At this same time another feature of service was being developed aside from the radio broadcasts. Public and private gatherings were held where 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ -rpm transcription recordings were played. These were the same as those used for the radio broadcasts. During 1933, 4,646 such meetings were held, with a total attendance of 240,434 persons.^f Furthermore, sound cars were used to cruise along the streets and play the recorded public lectures wherever people might hear.^g In the years that followed, this sound service proved an effective means of reaching the public.

Then, following as a climax upon "The Remnant's Thanksgiving Period" in April, on the 23d of the month, the Society's president broadcast his historic radio lecture entitled "Effect of Holy Year on Peace and Prosperity." This talk laid bare the vain hopes set out by the Roman Catholic Hierarchy for the people, branding them as a counterfeit of the peace and prosperity promised through the Kingdom of God. The talk was broadcast over fifty-five radio stations.

Two months later, on June 25, arrangements were made to broadcast the full-hour lecture by transcription over 158 stations. In preparation for it and to stir up the radio audience, five million invitations in leaflet form were distributed in the house-to-house work.^h The reaction was immediate, bitter and intense on the part of the Hierarchy. Catholic intimidation increased and certain radio managers fell victim, refusing to carry any further Watch Tower programs.

THE WORK CLOSES DOWN IN GERMANY

Meanwhile, in Germany an overt act of the government induced Judge Rutherford

^a *Bulletin*, July 1, 1933. ^b 1933 *Yearbook*, pp. 122, 123. ^c 1934 *Yearbook*, p. 145. ^d *Ibid.*, pp. 60-64. ^e *Ibid.*, p. 63. ^f *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66. ^g *Bulletin*, Aug., 1935. ^h 1934 *Yearbook*, pp. 60-64; *The Golden Age*, Vol. XIV, 1933, pp. 530-536; *Special Bulletin*, June, 1933.

to make a hurried trip to that country. With Hitler now dictator there since January, 1933, opposition had become severe. Early in April the police occupied the Society's large factory and Bethel home in Magdeburg, Germany, closed it up and put a seal on the Society's printing machines. Originally the Society's Branch was established in Barmen-Elberfeld in the Rhine-land area. But in 1926 it was decided to move the headquarters nearer to Berlin. Magdeburg, a large city about fifty miles northwest of Berlin, was chosen as the site and the Society had built new, spacious, well-designed buildings for an excellent printing plant and for the Bethel family. Hitler's government closed the Branch because of a charge that had been made that the Society was subversive and, pending an investigation, no work could be done by the brothers. Since no real evidence could be found, the Society was allowed to resume control of its property on April 28. This allowed the brothers at the headquarters office to compile the special report for the April testimony that they had carried forward with such great zeal.

Judge Rutherford had been watching the German situation closely and was well acquainted with its development as it affected the witness work. With this serious turn of events he lost no time in going to Germany, accompanied by N. H. Knorr, to see what could be done. On June 25, the same date scheduled for the rebroadcast over 158 radio stations of the lecture "Effect of the Holy Year on Peace and Prosperity" in the United States, a convention was called in Berlin. There a prepared Declaration of Facts was presented to the 7,000 in attendance in protest against the Hitler government for their highhanded interference with the witness work of the Society, and was unanimously adopted. The

declaration was mailed to every high officer of the government from the president down to the members of the council, and 2,500,000 copies were given public distribution. Retaliation came quickly. Three days later, on June 28, for the second time the Society's property was seized and occupied, and by government decree its printing plant was closed. There were 180 members of the Bethel family that were compelled to leave the premises.

A clue to the real cause of the trouble is found in the following statement that was written by a Catholic priest in Berlin and published in *The German Way* under date of May 29, 1938:

There is now one country on earth where the so-called "Earnest Bible Students" [Jehovah's witnesses] are forbidden. That is Germany! The dissolution of the sect which, at that time, had found a strong foothold in Germany, did not come to pass under Brüning [chancellor of the German Reich before Hitler], although the Catholic Church in Brüning's time urged to have this done. However, the "most Catholic chancellor" Brüning answered that he had no law which authorized him to dissolve the sect of the "Earnest Bible Students".

When Adolph Hitler had come to power and the German Episcopate repeated their request, Hitler said: "These so-called 'Earnest Bible Students' are trouble-makers; they disturb the harmonious life among the Germans; I consider them quacks; I do not tolerate that the German Catholics be besmirched in such a manner by this American 'Judge' Rutherford; I dissolve the 'Earnest Bible Students' in Germany; their property I dedicate to the peoples' welfare; I will have all their literature confiscated." Bravo!

However, the American Episcopate, even Cardinal Mundelein, is not able to have Rutherford's books, in which the Catholic Church is slandered, to be taken away from the book-market in the United States!¹

Seizing the Society's property at Magdeburg was a flagrant violation of international property rights, because title was held by our American corporation. In an effort to regain control of the property, an

¹ *Face the Facts* (1938), pp. 60, 61.

appeal was made to the United States Department of State urging a protest against this highhanded action of the German government. As a result of the negotiations that ensued between the State Department of the United States and Germany, the German government entered an order for the release of all the Society's property and turned it back into the possession of the brothers there.

However, the order that had been entered in June at the time that the property was seized had also placed a ban on the preaching activities of the Society. This was not lifted, and in the period from June to October the government police had seized and carried away and burned over \$25,000 worth of literature, books, booklets, Bibles and other materials belonging to the Society. Meetings of the Witnesses were forbidden and distribution of the literature halted.^j This did not stop the energetic German Witnesses, however. Accepting their God-given commission above all orders of men, they continued to press the battle to the gate of the enemy throughout this entire period of Nazi control in Germany. They were mightily strengthened to faithfulness by the publication of the leading article, "Fear Them Not," in the *Watchtower* issue of November 1, 1933.

MAINTAINING THE OFFENSIVE

TOM: Were there any other developments as a result of Rutherford's talk exposing the Holy Year?

JOHN: The opposition was rapidly becoming more heated, especially in New Jersey. In July, 1933, while the results of Hitler's seizure of our German property were still in the balance, the Society's president decided to hold a public meeting in Plainfield, New Jersey, because of the persecution being experienced there. Ruth-

erford's subject "Intolerance" was well-chosen for the occasion because of the Catholic strong-armed tactics that were revealed at that assembly.^k

Plainfield was the very center of the Catholic battleground in New Jersey. For this special program, Sunday, July 30, the Society engaged the two largest theaters in Plainfield and arranged for wire communication between them. One theater, as the key hall, was to provide facilities for a chain broadcast in which WBBR would participate as well. Many of those used as attendants or ushers at this meeting were members of the headquarters staff at Brooklyn, and this incident has been related:

Each of these attendants had been given a package, well-wrapped and sealed, with instructions not to open it until told to do so later. Shortly before Judge Rutherford arrived, more than fifty police swept in to "guard" both theaters. They noticed that every attendant had one of these packages of uniform size. This made them extremely nervous. One officer asked an attendant what he had in his package. The brother responded that he didn't know. Not believing him, the officer ordered him to open it. But the attendant refused, explaining the instructions he had received with the package. The officer went back to report. He returned with his superior who took charge and, himself, commanded the brother to open the package, which he again refused to do. Thereupon, the senior officer told his subordinate to pick it up. He did so, obviously shaking as he carried the package away. They opened it and found that it contained not a bomb, as they had supposed, but only fifty harmless copies of the *Golden Age* magazine containing the lecture that Brother Rutherford was going to deliver that afternoon. The police re-wrapped the package and returned it sheepishly to the attendant.

^j 1934 *Yearbook*, pp. 127-146. ^k *Ibid.*, p. 66.