

# Church Relations with the Jews during the German Occupation of Norway, 1940–45

*Torleiv Austad*

## Questions

In the last three years there has been a heated discussion in Norway about the resistance movement's relationship with the Jews during the German occupation of 1940–45.<sup>1</sup> This discussion is also part of the history of the Church in Norway, including the Christian organizations and the small free churches. In this perspective, two questions are particularly important: What did the Church leaders know about the Nazi's plan for the deportation and annihilation of Norwegian Jews, and what did the Church do to protect them?

The Church of Norway is an Evangelical–Lutheran church. From the Reformation until 2012, the Church was organized by the state. The King (i.e., with the government, of which 50% or more of its ministers had to be members of the Church) appointed pastors, deans, and bishops. During the occupation, 96% of the population were members of the Church.

## The Church Struggle

When the Germans invaded Norway on April 9, 1940, a small National Union Party—*Nasjonal Samling* (NS)—under the Nazi leadership of Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945) took control of the Church functions of the King and the state Church Department. At first, the Church was troubled. But in October of 1940, its leading bishop, Eivind Berggrav (1884–1959), succeeded in establishing a consultative council called the *Kristent Samråd* (The Christian Consultative Council), which was independent of the official state church. Until the middle of 1942, this consultative council functioned as a platform for the Church's resistance against the ideology of German National Socialism and the church politics of the occupiers and their Norwegian supporters in NS.

The resistance of the Church against Nazism, called the Church Struggle, began in earnest in January and February of 1941 when the seven bishops sent out a rather extensive pastoral letter to the congregations. This letter, *Hyrdebrevet* (the Pastoral Letter), was a sharp protest against a number of violations of justice in their society. The Gestapo confiscated the letter, of which 50,000 copies were printed to be spread among the people. Despite the ban, the letter was read out in most worship services on Sunday, February 9.

The central basis of the resistance was Bishop Berggrav's concept of "the just state" (*rettsstaten*).<sup>2</sup> By emphasizing this message, the Church became an important guardian of justice in the vacuum after the resignation of the Supreme Court in December of 1940. Consequently,

---

<sup>1</sup> This discussion started with Marte Michelet's book, *Hva visste Hjemmefronten? Holocaust i Norge: Varslene, unnvikelsen, hemmeligholdet* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> See Arne Hassing, *Church Resistance to Nazism in Norway 1940–1945* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2014), 78. The English word *just* does not convey the full complexity of the Norwegian word *right*, which connotes "the right," "right," "rights," "just," "justice," "the law," "law," "court," and "correct," each according to its context, while always retaining the full range of meanings. For Berggrav, a just state was one that upheld order, law, and justice.

the Church's view of the difference between right and wrong, the truth and lies, received great attention and became normative for many Norwegians.

It is important to note that the Church Struggle did not start with a protest against the interference of Nazi rulers in the inner life of the Church, although it gradually became necessary to also fight for the independence of the Church. The main concern of the Church was its commitment to elementary human rights. Because of this choice, the Church received the broad support of the population. Many people felt that the Church spoke and acted as their advocate. Bishop Berggrav described justice as holy and argued for civil disobedience and active opposition to an unjust state.

In the fight for justice, human rights, and church independence, the Church of Norway used its pulpits.<sup>3</sup> The majority of pastors read out a wide range of protests, declarations, slogans, and pastoral letters in more than a thousand churches throughout the country. Several of the documents from Church leadership were also announced in free churches and prayer houses belonging to Christian organizations. In this way, the Church reached out to the people.

### The Persecution of the Jews<sup>4</sup>

In 1940 there were about 2,000 Jews in Norway. Between 300 and 400 of them were refugees from various European countries. Some of them wanted to move to the USA.

A few weeks after the Nazi invasion, Norwegian Jews were harassed. They were soon deprived of their radio devices, and a number of their stores were ravaged. It was obvious that the new authorities had a fundamental contempt for and hatred of Jews and other groups of people who were not of Aryan descent. This new and frightening situation did not come as a surprise to Norwegians. The anti-Semitic politics in Germany after Hitler's takeover of power in 1933 were widely known in Norway. The *Kristallnacht* (the Crystal Night) between November 9 and 10 of 1938 gained worldwide attention and was clearly criticized in church journals. But the bishops did not put Hitler's threat to the Jews on their common agenda in the thirties.

In the first few months following the invasion, Jew-hostile politics were most evident in Trondheim and the surrounding area. NS campaigned against Jewish medical doctors, lawyers, artists, and merchants. In spring of 1941, the Jews in Trondheim were deprived of their synagogue. Real estate belonging to Jews was recorded. Dean Arne Fjellbu (1890–1962) of the Nidaros Cathedral supported the Jews and helped them as much as possible. He kept Bishop Berggrav informed about what was happening in the Trondheim area.

In early September 1941, Bishop Berggrav protested on behalf of his episcopal colleagues against the proposal from the Church Department to ban marriage between Norwegians and Jews and Norwegians and Sami people (Lapps). He clarified that racial biological injunctions that deprive certain peoples of their human dignity are in obvious conflict with the Christian church's fundamental view. After this protest, the proposal was put on hold until further notice.

---

<sup>3</sup> Torleiv Austad, "Church Resistance against Nazism in Norway, 1940–1945," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte / Contemporary Church History* 28 (2015), 278–293, especially 283.

<sup>4</sup> See Hassing, 205–215; Torleiv Austad, "Sviktet kirken jødene under okkupasjonen?," in *Dømmekraft i krise?* ed. Torleiv Austad, Ottar Berge, and Jan Ove Ulstein (Trondheim: Akademika Forlag, 2011), 17–109.

## Registration

When the Ministry of Police announced on January 20, 1942 that all Jews must be registered and have a red *J* stamped in their identification papers, none of the Church leaders reacted publicly. They did not open up the question of what this registration might entail. About six weeks later, on March 7, 1942, four Jews in Trondheim were executed without a word from the central ecclesiastical position.

After some pressure from Germany, the Quisling Government<sup>5</sup> adopted an amendment to Article 2 of the Constitution on March 12, 1942. It was a reintroduction of the Jewish clause from 1814, which was repealed in 1851: “Jews are excluded from the Kingdom (of Norway).”

## The *Kirkens Grunn*: A Confessional Declaration

By this time, the *Kristent Samråd* had begun working on the theological and ecclesiastical basis for the forthcoming resignation of the clergy and the separation of the Church and the state in Norway. It was a confessional declaration named the *Kirkens Grunn* (the Foundation of the Church).<sup>6</sup> Parish pastors in Bergen and Stavanger wrote to the *Kristent Samråd*, urging the Church leaders to protest against the reintroduction of the constitutional ban on Jews. But the protest was dropped for tactical reasons. As a justification for this, Bishop Berggrav said in 1948 that dragging “the most explosive Jew moment” into the declaration would have only made their “own lines” less simple and less clear. The bishop and his coworkers on the council thought that a protest regarding the state’s discrimination against the Jews would bring *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven (1898–1945) and Minister President Quisling closer together. Therefore, the Church leaders’ main concern was to avoid a common reaction from Quisling and Terboven against the Church after the resignation of the clergy.

On Easter Sunday, April 5, 1942, the *Kirkens Grunn* was read out in most of Norway’s churches, and more than 92% of the parish pastors closed down their state offices but wanted to continue being pastors in their parishes on the basis of their ordinations.<sup>7</sup> But the discrimination of the Norwegian Jews fell outside this important statement that marked the break of the Church of Norway with the Nazi state.

However, the *Kirkens Grunn* proclaims awareness of persons and groups who are under dangerous pressure:

If someone – without calling upon the court – is persecuted and tormented for the sake of his conviction, then the Church is the guardian of conscience and must stand with the persecuted. (Article III)

---

<sup>5</sup> Quisling became Minister President on February 1, 1942 and established a government with ministers from his own political party, NS.

<sup>6</sup> See the English translation of the *Kirkens Grunn*: “The Foundation of the Church: A Confession and Declaration,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte / Contemporary Church History* 28 (2015), 294–299; Torleiv Austad, *Kirkens Grunn: Analyse av en kirkelig bekjennelse fra okkupasjonstiden 1940–45* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1974).

<sup>7</sup> The small free churches in Norway, the Christian organizations, and the theological faculties supported the confession, with one exception: The Salvation Army. See Hallgeir Elstad and Per Arne Krumsvik, “The Salvation Army and the Norwegian Church Resistance,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte / Contemporary Church History* 32 (2019), 379–404.

The Jews were undoubtedly among the persecuted, but they were not mentioned by name. However, some other endangered groups were mentioned and directly included in the Church Struggle.

## German Informants

When Hitler's Germany decided at the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942 to exterminate the Jews, both in their own country and in the occupied territories, the persecution of Jews developed into genocide. What did the Norwegian Church leaders know about this?

A key figure in the dissemination of information on German politics to opposition groups in areas occupied by the Germans was the lawyer Count Helmuth James von Moltke (1907–1945). He was an intelligence officer on the staff of E-commander Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and was in Norway four times between 1942 and 1943. Von Moltke was also secretly the leader of the Kreisau Circle, a group of prominent anti-Nazis who fought for the humanistic and Christian tradition of European history. His contact in Norway was Lieutenant Colonel Theodor Steltzer (1885–1967), who was a transport officer at the *Wehrmacht's* headquarters in Oslo from 1940 to 1944. He also belonged to the Kreisau Circle. He had a close relationship with Norwegian resistance fighters, among them Bishop Berggrav, the painter Henrik Sørensen (1882–1962), and the sociologist Arvid Brodersen (1904–1996). When Berggrav was imprisoned during Easter in 1942 and risked being sentenced to death by the People's Court, Steltzer sent a coded message to von Moltke. He came to Oslo in mid-April with another from the Kreisau Circle, the well-known theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1944), under the pretext of investigating whether Terboven's and Quisling's actions against Berggrav would create unnecessary difficulties for the German forces in the country. Von Moltke and Bonhoeffer also used their days in Oslo for secret talks with the Norwegian Church leaders.<sup>8</sup>

The Oslo visit in April took place just two and a half months after the Wannsee Conference's decision to exterminate the Jews. The son of the painter Henrik Sørensen, the physicist Sven Oluf Sørensen (1920–2017), who met von Moltke and Bonhoeffer, has written that by virtue of his position, von Moltke was “fully informed” of the plans to exterminate the Jews. In his conversations with Steltzer and Norwegian resistance fighters, von Moltke informed them and emphasized “that the Norwegian Jews had to be prepared.”<sup>9</sup>

In September of the same year von Moltke was back in Oslo. He had four nightly meetings with Steltzer, Church leaders, and other resistance fighters, confirming that a major action against the Norwegian Jews was imminent. However, he could not provide exact details on when the arrests and deportations would take place. For him, it was important to appeal to Norwegians to stand up for the Jews in this situation. At this time, it was probably not yet decided when and how the Norwegian Jews would be taken.

Among Steltzer's close associates at the German transport office in Oslo was a German pastor, Friedrich Schauer (1891–1958). He had contact with several ecclesiastical circles in Oslo. A book about his life revealed that he was engaged in saving Norwegian Jews. The author of the book, Friedrich Winter, emphasized that it was von Moltke who brought the message to Norway that the Jews would be imprisoned and deported. According to Winter, Schauer indicated that the

---

<sup>8</sup> Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Eine Biographie* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1966), 844–848.

<sup>9</sup> Sven Oluf Sørensen, *Søren: Henrik Sørensens liv og kunst* (Oslo: Andresen & Butenschøn Forlag, 2003), 178.

Norwegians did not trust the warning. Schauer's wife, Helga, recalled that her husband said: "*Das wollte man nicht sogleich glauben.*" ("They did not want to believe that immediately").<sup>10</sup>

## Anti-Judaism in Norway?

It seems relevant to take a look at the Church leadership and their relationship to the Jews and ask: Were the leaders of the Church during the occupation influenced by the anti-Jewish movements of the interwar period, and are there any reasons for claiming that they were influenced by anti-Jewish attitudes?

In the interwar period many people in Europe were afraid of the Russian Bolsheviks and communism. A widespread conspiracy claimed that the Jews stood behind the Russian Revolution and that they wanted to assume dominion over the world. Among many, this fear of Jewish activity and communist infiltration was seen as a threat to Christian Europe. This way of thinking also came to the surface in Norwegian theological and ecclesiastical circles.

In the interwar period there were prominent theologians in Norway with very critical characterizations of the Jews in exile in Europe. The famous Old Testament scholar Professor Sigmund Mowinckel (1884–1965) wrote in 1924 that communism is "a real and unblemished effect of Jewish blood."<sup>11</sup> In his view, an unbroken line from Lenin to Marx goes back to the prophet Ezekiel, whom Mowinckel described as an ecstatic and cataleptic person.

In 1938 the young theologian Leiv Aalen (1906–1983), who later became a professor of systematic theology, wrote in the Christian newspaper *Dagen* that Jews, socially and culturally, have "a remarkably restless people's journey that seems spiritually and materially dissolving when they gain a decisive influence on the social and cultural development of another people." Aalen pointed out that the Jews had acquired tremendous political and economic power in Germany after the First World War and that they had extensively used their power to keep the country down both spiritually and materially. But he admitted that the nationalist revolution, based on "a more or less dubious racial theory," had gone too far and affected innocent people.<sup>12</sup> Such rhetoric of the restless and powerful Jews in exile stimulated anti-Jewish attitudes, which often led to anti-Semitism.

Those theologians and Church leaders who expressed anti-Jewish and even anti-Semitic reflections in the twenties and thirties seemed to have toned down their opinions, and they probably changed their minds when they experienced Nazi politics and anti-Semitism during the occupation. Mowinckel and Aalen are examples of influential theologians who did not express anti-Jewish opinions and attitudes after 1940.

## The Mission to Israel

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, *Den norske Israelsmisjon* (the Mission to Israel) carried out missionary work among Jews in Romania and Hungary. The mission's aim was to convert the Jews in exile to Jesus Christ. It was a widespread perception that the "the Jewish question" could only be tackled by facilitating a transition to Christianity.

---

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Winter, *Friedrich Schauer 1891–1958: Seelsorger – Bekenner – Christ im Widerstand* (Berlin: Wichern-Verlag, 2011), 124.

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, "Kommunismen som jødisk religionsdannelse," *Tidens Tegn* (August 2, 1924).

<sup>12</sup> Leiv Aalen, "Tysk uten-og innenrikspolitikk," *Dagen* I–IV, October 15, 18, 25, and 25, 1938.

At that time, the understanding of carrying out a mission to the Jews was strongly influenced by so-called replacement theology. The main idea of this theological movement is that the Christian Church has replaced the Jews as God's chosen people with distinctive promises. The covenant God made with Israel has lost its validity because the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, their prerogatives have been transferred to the Christian church. But if the Jews convert to Christianity, God's covenant and promises will embrace them again. Until that happens, Christians have replaced the Jews' position in the history of salvation.<sup>13</sup>

In 1923 one of the Mission to Israel's key missionaries in Romania and Hungary, pastor Gisle Carl Torsten Johnson (1876–1946), wrote four articles in the periodical *Kirke og Kultur* (Church and Culture) under the heading "From the World of Jews."<sup>14</sup> According to him, there are no people on earth "who are so greedy for power like the Jews." "A Jew loves power and influence," he wrote; therefore, it is always a sign of illness in a people or in a period of time "when Jews become over-populated."<sup>15</sup>

Professor Christian Ihlen (1868–1958), a colleague of Mowinckel, was chairman of the board of the Mission to Israel from 1907 to 1948. In 1934 he wrote,

Along with Russia, Judaism is certainly the strongest and most dangerous anti-Christian power in our Christian Europe at the moment . . . There is a coldness coming from the unbelieving Israel which is an essential obstacle to the spread of the Kingdom of God and a major anti-Christian power.<sup>16</sup>

The Mission to Israel often repeated that Jews are a rootless people and create problems where they settle. This popular rhetoric was quite common in Norway during the interwar period and in ecclesiastical circles beyond the Mission to Israel. Such slogans unleashed anti-Jewish—and even anti-Semitic—attitudes.

Nonetheless, it should not be underestimated that this organization, to some extent, supported both Zionism and a somewhat more liberal attitude toward the immigration of Jewish refugees to Norway. But there was still a shadow over the Jewish people, mainly because they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. God's promise to Abraham that the people of Israel would become a great people in their own land was dependent on repentance and faith in Jesus as the Messiah. That is why it was so important to bring a mission to the Jews.

Among those in Norway who supported the Jewish mission, there was unease over the growing anti-Semitism in Germany. They noticed how the persecution of the Jews had increased. The national assembly of the Mission to Israel in Stavanger in early autumn of 1933 adopted a statement, protesting against "the fundamental racial hatred and the lack of consideration and respect for human happiness and purely human qualities and work." The statement asserted that it was a shock to see the careless way in which the German authorities were advancing and expressed the deepest sympathy to those affected by the persecution of Jews. At the same time, the assembly would not interfere in the political affairs of the German people, nor would it dispute the justification of "certain political precautions against the Jews."<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> See Oskar Skarsaune, *Israels Venner: Norsk arbeid for Israelsmisjonen 1844–1930* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1994), 218.

<sup>14</sup> Gisle Carl Torsten Johnson, "Fra jødernes verden," *Kirke og Kultur* 30 (1923), 296–300, 513–518, 518–523, 619–625.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 513–518.

<sup>16</sup> Christian Ihlen, "Jødefolket i fremtidsprofetienes lys," in *Det evige folk* (Oslo: Israelsmisjonen, 1934), 7–17, esp. 14–15.

<sup>17</sup> *Luthersk Kirketidende* 70 (1934), 421; Austad 2012, 43.

From about the middle of the twentieth century onward, a new generation of leaders and missionaries for the Mission to Israel did not continue with the previous replacement theology understanding of mission work among the Jews. In 1949 the mission—called The Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel—began working in the new state of Israel, which was established in 1948. In this new context, Magne Solheim (1911–2000) and other Norwegian missionaries began developing a new theological approach to proclaiming the gospel to the Jews.<sup>18</sup>

## The Silence of the Church

In the spring, summer, and early autumn of 1942 the Church leaders were silent on the threatened situation of the Jews, but it does not seem that the main reason was a strong influence by the anti-Jewish tendencies of the interwar period. This long silence was most likely because the leadership of the Church had enough of their own concerns after the resignation of the bishops at the end February and the parish pastors at the beginning of April. Those who led the Church Struggle after the breakup with the state were engaged in establishing a leadership body for the self-governing national Church called the people's church (*folkekirken*), which still claimed to be the Church of Norway. The new leading body was established at the end of June 1942 under the name of *Den Midlertidige Kirkeledelse* (the Provisional Church Leadership). Furthermore, on Easter of 1942, Bishop Berggrav was arrested, and from mid-April he was detained in his cabin in Asker, outside of Oslo, until 1945.

Because the Church leaders at that time were particularly concerned about the new organization of the Church, less care was available to the threatened Jewish minority. The Jews were left on the fringes of the Church's resistance strategy. Although the Norwegian people knew that Jews were being discriminated against in different ways, the Church's leadership did not prioritize their care. They were treated as strangers and did not receive the same attention, support, and protection as other non-Nazi groups in society who had a hard time, such as the youth and teachers in the public schools. The Church did not seem to have grasped how fateful anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews could be.

How specific the information from von Moltke was, and what words he used, may be difficult to prove. Such information was too sensitive to be conveyed on paper. It is also difficult to know exactly how the message from the Kreisau Circle was perceived by the Norwegian Church leaders. Was von Moltke's warning too unreal to be accepted?

After their meetings with von Moltke and their contact with Steltzer and Schauer, the Norwegians did not take any precautions in preparation for the possibility of a major action against the Norwegian Jews. The idea of a unified deportation of the Norwegian Jews and their extermination as a group of people may have been a message that seemed too unrealistic to deal with, especially because it was not known when and how it would happen.

## The *Hebreerbrevet*

After the imprisonment of Jewish men over the age of fifteen in the night between October 25 and 26 of 1942, Secretary General Arnold T. Øhrn (1889–1963) of The Norwegian Baptist Society asked the Provisional Church Leadership to make a statement about the persecution of the Jews, including the Quisling government's decision to confiscate their wealth. This initiative resulted in a sharp protest letter from the Church leadership to Minister President

---

<sup>18</sup> Magne Solheim, *Nybrott. 27 år i Israel – eit attersyn* (Oslo: Den norske Israelsmisjon / Luther Forlag, 1986).

Quisling, dated November 10, 1942. Among the people, the letter was named the *Hebreerbrevet* (the Hebrew Letter).<sup>19</sup> Almost all churches in Norway endorsed the protest, including theological faculties, Christian organizations, and non-Lutheran denominations. The message was “Stop the persecution of Jews, and stop the racial hatred spreading through the press in our country!” The letter was read out in many Norwegian churches in December 1942 and attracted attention beyond the country’s borders.

When it was said that the Jews were not punished because they had done something wrong but “solely because they are Jews,” it was the imprisonment of Jewish men and the confiscation of their property that laid behind it. There was nothing in the protest letter that said that the Jews as a group of people were threatened by an upcoming deportation. If one had been fully aware of such a danger, one would hardly have failed to speak up. The fact that the letter was addressed to Quisling—not the German occupiers—underlined that the Church leaders at this time did not see that the Norwegian Jews were in danger of extinction. In other words, the warnings did not seem to convince the Church leaders that a major action of such dimensions would come.

The *Hebreerbrevet* attracted great attention, even beyond the borders of the country. It was the only public collective protest from one of the main institutions in Norway against the detention of the Jews during the war. But it came too late to create a strong and comprehensive opposition against the persecution of the Jews that might have made difficulties for Norwegian police becoming servants of the German occupiers in the mass deportation of the Jews in Norway. The deportation of 532 Jews on November 26, 1942 on the ship *Donau* to Stettin and on a train to Auschwitz came as a surprise to most of the Norwegian people. Altogether, 773 Norwegian Jews were sent to Hitler’s death camps. Only 38 of them survived. About 42% of the Norwegian Jews were killed.

## The Church Network

We do not know what would have happened if the Church had tried to raise a public opinion and initiate a campaign to stop the Nazi’s actions against the Jews. But it is relevant to recall that the Church at that time had considerable moral authority among the people, especially because of its clear and direct stance on justice and human dignity. Together with the public school and the schoolchildren’s parents, the Church was active and crucial in the protest against Quisling’s attempts to Nazify the Norwegian people. The Church had a network that reached nearly every corner of the country. But this network was not used to protect the Jewish minority when it was still possible to impede the imprisonment and deportation of Norwegian Jews.

When the question is raised as to whether the Church failed in protecting the Jews, it is not sufficient to concentrate on the Church leaders’ knowledge regarding the Nazi plans about the notified great action. It is wise to establish a broader perspective. It is no doubt that the Church leaders in Norway knew a lot about the persecution of Jews in Germany and of anti-Semitic propaganda in NS.

Despite this common information, the Church was passive to the real threat that rested over the Jews. Church leaders, as well as most Norwegians, had the feeling that they could not prevent the propaganda of the German occupying forces and their Norwegian supporters, who looked down on the Jews and placed obstacles in their way to prevent their freedom to live and work as they chose.

---

<sup>19</sup> For the Norwegian text of “the Hebrew Letter,” see Austad 2005, 222–224.



But we must not forget that a number of committed and responsible Christians engaged in supporting the Jews in their local communities and, in several cases, hid them and helped them to flee to Sweden. However, despite confirmed warnings of the extermination of the Jews, until the beginning of November 1942, the Church leadership did not take any initiative to encourage a public opinion that the endangered Jewish minority should be protected.

Altogether, it seems that the Church's attitude toward the Norwegian Jews during the occupation was a mixture of support and indifference. The Church criticized the harassment and persecution of Jews, but it did not take the warnings from German informants seriously enough when Nazi policy led to the mass deportation of Jews. The question as to whether the Church failed the Jews cannot be answered with a straight yes or no. It was both. But the failure stings. Norway could have done more for the Jews.

## The Aftermath

Since the war, the question as to whether the leadership of the Church did their best to support and defend Norway's Jewish minority has been under discussion. Different opinions have surfaced. The historian H. O. Christophersen (1902–1980), who had been active on the home front, wrote in the *Aftenposten* (the Evening Post) on October 23, 1967, "It is certain that many of us, when the Norwegian police took action in the autumn of 1942, had a bitter feeling that we had failed."<sup>20</sup> Ten years later, he wrote,

The Jewish action by the Germans and Nazis in October 1942 is the saddest chapter in the history of the occupation. Rightly or unclearly, a large part of the Norwegian people was left with the impression that not enough had been done to save the very group of compatriots who had been under the most sinister pressure from the start. Many of us felt guilty.<sup>21</sup>

After the war, Alex Johnson (1910–1989), who had been a central and important person in the Church Struggle and some years later became a bishop, said to me in April of 1969, "We did not do enough for the Jews."<sup>22</sup>

*Torleiv Austad, ThD, is an emeritus professor at the Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society: [torleiv.austad@mf.no](mailto:torleiv.austad@mf.no).*

---

<sup>20</sup> H. O. Christophersen, *Aftenposten* (the Evening Post), October 23, 1967.

<sup>21</sup> H. O. Christophersen, *Av nød til seir: Bilder fra okkupasjonstiden i Norge* (Oslo: Grøndahl & Søn Forlag, 1977), 184.

<sup>22</sup> Alex Johnson's family and others heard him saying the same to them.