

day Germany is so narrowly restricted by the hard facts of economic and social conditions. And there is a special danger of politics being turned into a game when the position of the various parties is so indeterminate as at present, when there is so much opportunity for management by careerists. But another reason, besides the desire to concentrate upon the fundamentals of religious and social life, is that Germany nowadays presents problems which can only be solved within a European framework. It is impossible to discuss German internal politics, for instance, without raising such questions as démontage, French control of the Saar, the possibility of European Federation, and so forth. The events in Bonn and the events in Strasburg are intimately linked. To have attempted any commentary upon the German elections, that is to say, would have proved too complicated and would have involved too many hypotheses about the future of Europe.

This short editorial, then, is simply intended to explain why so many aspects of German life have been ignored, and to introduce articles written by Germans themselves. It may not be inappropriate, however, for an Englishman to call to mind that it was one of our greatest saints, St Boniface, who first brought the Faith to large areas of Germany, and that perhaps more is to be hoped from his intercession, and from that of the patron of Germany, St Michael, than from the many fine speeches about democracy which have been delivered since the fall of Hitler.

D.N.

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## GERMAN CATHOLICISM AMIDST THE RUINS <sup>1</sup>

**T**HE Church in the early days of 1945 was no longer the same as the Church of 1932, and we shall pay heavily for any failure on our part to recognise the importance of this fact. On the one hand the Church has suffered the loss of almost everything that is normally associated with the Faith as it is practised in the family and in the parish; its scaffolding and its organisations have almost all been destroyed. Nor can the Church in Germany be entirely exonerated from the accusation of having failed over long periods of recent history to provide the nation with spiritual leadership and from its guilt on this account. But there is another side to the picture. New life has been poured into the Church by the blood of its martyrs, it has been purified by a flow of superhuman suffering, and it has undergone an interior rejuvenation. A generous

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by permission of the editor of *Orbis Catholicus*, in which this article originally appeared in April 1949.

missionary spirit is animating many of its members who have rediscovered the meaning and the richness of the Christian community; it can claim a trained, if small, *élite*, joyously prepared for sacrifices, who have it in them to serve as leaven for the masses.

At the same time as the Third Reich was brought low, the philosophy which had inspired that Reich, its *ersatz* religion, also came to an end. Millions of people were ready to entrust whatever hope and faith they had left to the Church because it had proved itself wiser, mightier and more enduring than their idol, the State. Yet there should be no illusions about the nature of this return to Christianity. Alongside numerous quite genuine and really profound conversions one finds many cases of sheer opportunism, of people with a keen eye for the main chance who are not really repentant. who have experienced little interior change and acquired no fresh vision.

Leaving aside the reasons which prompted the masses to look so hopefully towards the Church for some message, it is clear that there was no corresponding response on the Church's part in bringing that message home to the masses. But this is no place in which to lay the blame for this inability, which is partly due to being behind the times, partly to a complete ignorance of how ordinary people have to face their everyday lives, and partly because no one produced any plans to anticipate the need.

#### TERRITORIAL CHANGES

A single glance at the changes in the ecclesiastical geography of Germany is enough to show the revolution which has been brought about. Altogether, in 1912, there were twenty-five dioceses in Germany. Two of these have completely vanished, Ermland in East Prussia and its episcopal seat in Frauenberg, and the 'free prelate' in Schneidmühl. All that remains of the archbishopric of Breslau is a small area to the west of the Neisse which is responsible for some 180,000 Catholics and is nowadays being administered from Görlitz.

The greatest obstacle in the way of a speedy and fundamental reconstruction of diocesan organisation has been, and still is, the division of the country into various zones. No fewer than ten bishoprics have zone boundaries running through them: Freiburg, Rottenburg, Mainz, Limburg, Fulda, Würzburg, Paderborn, Cologne, Osnabrück and Berlin. The difficulties have been increased by the recent division of the country into provinces (*Länder*), a division which has frequently been carried out on a quite haphazard basis. Consequently the Bishop of Osnabrück, for instance, has to keep in contact with five different provincial authorities and with the

governments in those zones: in North-Rhine Westphalia, Lower Saxony, Hamburg (British zone), in Bremen (American zone) and in Mecklenburg (Russian zone). Such fundamental changes have driven deep inroads into a Church which had surrounded itself with bureaucratic institutions.

#### MATERIAL DAMAGE

An over-all estimate even of the material damage is hard enough to make. In the Aachen diocese 85 per cent of the buildings owned by the Church have been destroyed. The Münster diocese has stated that in the city itself almost every building used by the Church has been destroyed; in the diocese 71 out of 573 churches have been totally destroyed, 110 in large measure and 192 partly so. The bishopric of Trier has announced that only 124 out of 834 parishes have survived without any damage to either buildings or property, while 55 churches, 30 presbyteries, 36 parish halls and 51 religious houses have been completely destroyed. The archdiocese of Cologne numbers 954 churches and chapels, only 211 of which have escaped damage. 78 churches, 57 parish halls, more than 200 homes, 75 charitable institutes and 16 religious houses were completely destroyed. The city of Cologne used to have 104 churches, only one of which remains undamaged, 26 of them having been wiped off the face of the earth and 44 having lost roofs, walls and timbering. Furthermore one should not overlook the effect which the air raids had upon the population: the Sacred Heart parish in Cologne numbered 24,000 souls in 1939, 18,000 in 1943, 10,000 in 1944, whilst at the end of 1944 there were only 2,000, the numbers going up by a mere 200 in 1945. In the archdiocese of Paderborn 664 out of 1,284 churches and chapels were either destroyed or seriously damaged.

#### THE LACK OF PRIESTS

The inadequate number of priests in Germany is quite unprecedented. The contributory factors are as follows: an insufficient number of vocations between 1914 and 1925; severe losses amongst priests and theological students at the front, in prisoner of war camps and at home through air raids; also fewer people have been going to high-school (due to service in the labour corps, A.R.P. duties and war service before taking matriculation), losses in the concentration camps, and the inability of normal seminary education to attract even those wishing to try their vocation.

During normal times the bishopric of Trier experiences no difficulty in securing an adequate number of priests. But between 1939 and 1947 whereas on an average 32 priests died each year, replacements were only made on the following scale: 1940, 17; 1941, 9;

1942, 1; 1943, 0; 1944, 6; 1945, 3; 1946, 22; 1947, 12. The Archbishop of Cologne only ordained 55 priests each year from 1939 till 1946 although the average for previous years came to 80. The diocese of Münster, which was once quite well supplied, finds itself unable to fulfil its requirements at the present day. In the archdiocese of Paderborn the number of priests available for apostolic work has decreased by 200 since 1939 while in the same period the number of Catholics has gone up by about a million. The east German dioceses are in an even worse plight: in 1945 the bishopric of Ermland still had 393 priests available. 121 of these have died through persecution, hunger or typhus. Another third of the clergy in Ermland have been suspended or are in prison. This leaves only 136 priests from Ermland who are still able to help with pastoral work throughout Germany; moreover this takes no account of the enormous losses previous to 1945.

These conditions have been responsible for the lack of priests, but they also explain why southern and western Germany are to some extent fairly well supplied because large numbers of refugee priests have poured into these regions quite independently of their congregations which have almost all been broken up. According to figures given by the *Bonifatius-Verein* every refugee priest in the Russian zone should be in charge of 4,000 refugee Catholics, every refugee priest in the British zone of 2,500, every one in the American zone of 1,800 and in the French zone of 200 to 500.

Plenty of harsh criticism has been levelled against the way in which these priests have left eastern Germany and come to the security of the traditionally Catholic areas. Pope Pius XII, Bishop Kaller and the other German bishops have more than once urged the younger priests especially to return to the Russian zone or to the other areas of the diaspora—and have even suggested that other priests should go out there to help in those vineyards where the need for labourers is greatest.

Perhaps human weakness is responsible in one way or another for this state of affairs. But a less severe judgment will be made by those who know the enormous dangers and difficulties which confront anyone who tries to get into another zone and settle down there. Also one must admit that the hierarchy in general have firmly refused to give up priests to work in other dioceses because they have none to spare. The Church authorities do not appear to have grasped the grotesque lack of proportion in the fact that many congregations of no more than 300 souls in steadfastly Catholic Hohenzollern each have an able-bodied priest of their own (who might very well be given one or two similar places to look after at the same time) while the priests in the large towns of the same diocese

—and even more those in the diaspora—have to drive themselves to death in order to satisfy the barest spiritual needs of their flocks.

Scarcely any of the Orders have been able to see their way to sending priests into the Russian zone. The opposite is even true, that many of the communities which they had previously established in the Russian zone are being gradually reduced and restricted instead of being increased and built up. A praiseworthy exception to this seems to be the *Societas Verbi Divini*.

Only too true, moreover, is the statement which was issued as a result of the Conference held at Königstein (24-25 February 1948) by priests from various dioceses who have charge of refugees: 'This is a problem (i.e. the allocation of priests) which the refugees themselves cannot solve. The entire burden of it rests upon the Church in Germany as a whole.'

#### THE REFUGEE PROBLEM

The lack of priests reached tragic proportions on account of the enormous increase in the Catholic population in several dioceses and the radical structural changes which this caused. In accordance with the Potsdam decrees, and on the basis of a computation carried out on 1st April 1947, 10,096,000 Germans were ordered to leave the area east of the Oder-Neisse line by a fixed date. Cautious estimates put the number of those who perished on this journey at from two to four million. Since then the number of refugees has greatly increased.

Almost exactly half of the eleven million refugees from the east are Catholics. These may be classified further according to their origins into 500,000 from north east Germany, 1,800,000 from Silesia, 2,400,000 from Sudetenland, 600,000 from south-east Germany and 100,000 to 200,000 from the Baltic lands and Poland, etc. As a result of the Potsdam decrees the refugees were sent into the four zones with no regard for denominational differences, which has led to denominations becoming inextricably mixed and has naturally led to tremendous complications in pastoral matters. According to rough estimates, for example, three-quarters of the Catholic refugees were taken into areas where 90 per cent of the population were Protestant. Examination of their origins reveals the following distribution: in the Russian zone, one million from east of the Oder-Neisse border, 900,000 Sudeten Germans and 250,000 from south-east Germany; in the British zone, one million from north-east Germany and Silesia, some 100,000 Sudeten Germans and a similar number from south-east Germany; in the American zone, one and a half million Sudeten Germans, some 300,000 from south-east Germany and the same number from east of the Oder-Neisse line; on

the whole those in the French zone are just internees from Danish camps.

A totally changed situation has arisen in the receiving areas because of this influx of refugees. In the American zone the figures for the non-native population rise to 4.7 millions (of whom 2.9 million are refugees), and is just as high in the British and Russian zones (four millions of these being refugees), whilst in the French zone there are half a million (50,000 of whom are refugees). The hardest hit district is Schleswig-Holstein where there has been a population increase of no less than 87.8 per cent; 286 administrative areas have recorded between 120 per cent and 150 per cent increase, and 204 of them over 150 per cent. 76.83 per cent of the refugees in Schleswig-Holstein are women, while only 25 per cent are capable of working, as is the case also in Bavaria. A few comparisons may help one to imagine what this means. Almost six million refugees are Catholics: as many, that is to say, as in the whole of Austria and three times as many as there are in Switzerland. One out of every five Catholics in Germany is a refugee. What is more, three quarters of these Catholics who have been driven from their homes have been flung into areas which must be counted as diaspora.

The Catholics of the diaspora were often far superior to their fellow-Catholics in the traditionally Catholic areas both as regards their lively faith and their readiness to bear witness to it. The steep decline after 1933 and, even more, the rapid ebb of the sudden upsurge of religious impulses of 1945 have shown beyond a shadow of doubt that only a small minority can be regarded as really true to their faith, especially in the traditionally Catholic areas. In other words, besides the territorial diaspora, which has long been recognised and can be described statistically, there exists a spiritual diaspora which is all the more dangerous for being a concealed one.

#### THE TERRITORIAL DIASPORA

In western Germany Schleswig-Holstein must be treated as one of the most difficult of the new diaspora areas. Out of a total population of one and a half million in 1939, 3.4 per cent were Catholic. On account of the influx from the East their numbers have risen to 250,000, i.e. 9.2 per cent. Whereas before the war it contained 29 parishes with 53 Mass-centres, it now has 82 parishes serving 341 Mass-centres. But the number of priests has risen only from 46 to 113, which means that instead of being responsible for 1,100 souls as in the past, each priest now has charge of 2,200. These figures alone represent an impossible strain. It is altogether unlikely that this state of affairs can continue very much longer. The number of priests is on the decline. Already the currency reform has imposed

restrictions upon the expensive pastoral work in the diaspora and has made it nearly impossible to employ a staff of lay helpers who have the necessary qualifications. The task of *Caritas* has become almost unmanageable and is exhausting energy, time and money. Nevertheless one should not forget the resources which are latent in Schleswig-Holstein, and above all the fact that the secular authorities are not unfriendly.

An entirely different state of affairs is found in the Russian zone. There the diaspora areas are in a far more desperate position. The diocese of Meissen, which includes the free state of Saxony, had 185 priests for its 225,000 Catholics previous to the war. Even then the lack of priests was noticeable. Up to the 31st March 1947, 848,251 refugees fled into Saxony, some 516,000 of whom were Catholics. But these half million only brought 105 priests with them, and of these no more than 63 are fit to carry out all their duties; for even the barest satisfaction of the spiritual needs of the people at least another 300 priests are required. Similar conditions are to be found in the district under the Magdeburg commissariat which belongs to the archdiocese of Paderborn. For the 700,000 Catholics there (550,000 of them refugees) there are only 285 priests. After his confirmation tour in this area the suffragan bishop of Paderborn announced that the word 'God' is not allowed to be pronounced in the schools and that religious instruction can only be given out of school hours either by a priest or by a female lay-helper—never by a school master—and that only for one hour each week in the evenings. Because of the great distances they have to travel (usually six miles or more) most of the children cannot attend regular religious instruction, apart from the fact that they frequently have neither clothes nor shoes in which to make the journey. It is true that the number of pastoral centres has risen from 122 to 197 but 7,333 people have arrived in each new centre. Altogether 125 new priests have come into the field but it still means that each of them has to deal with over 4,000 refugees. No fewer than 49 priests have no Catholic church at all in their areas.

The county of Mecklenburg (without W. Pomerania) belongs to the Osnabrück diocese. A few figures from this area will give some idea of the situation there: in 1929 there were 26,000 Catholics, in 1948, 200,000; in 1939, 50 priests; 1948, 100 priests; in 1939, 68 Mass-centres; in 1948, 420 Mass-centres. The vicariate of the Thuringian division of the Fulda diocese announced on the 7th May 1948 that there had been an influx of 260,000 Catholic refugees from the east; for his 430,000 Catholics the bishop has 97 priests who are fit for pastoral duties. The Berlin diocese states that each of its pastoral districts includes at least 30 villages. The sparse Catho-

lic community around Demmin (Pomerania) used to have one church and one chapel but now it includes four towns and 220 villages. In fact it has become a small diocese.

All in all the number of Catholics in the Russian zone went up from 1,083,457 to 3,300,000 between 1939 and 1948, the number of priests from 987 to 1,564. In the Erfurt and Magdeburg commissariats every priest is responsible for 3,500 Catholics. For pastoral purposes the Berlin diocese is divided into 15 districts; only eight of these cover less than 200 square miles, whilst one of them (Bergen on Rugen) covers 500 square miles. These illustrations and examples have only been chosen haphazardly and by no means represent extreme cases.

#### THE SPIRITUAL DIASPORA

Most of the refugees have been 'accommodated' in the countryside. It is this which has placed so many obstacles in the way of getting work for them again and has caused such harsh feelings in discussions about the redistribution of the land. But these very factors make it imperative that we should turn our attention towards examining the religious situation in the countryside. And we need not hesitate to say that the results of these investigations can only be described as sensational.

Catholics in the country have not shown up well under the strain which the refugees have placed upon them. A most realistic essay on this subject has been written by a catechist, a lady who has become esteemed for her services to the Church. Unfortunately this essay did not reach the general public because one of the German bishops took exception to it; it was even more distressing that it should have been withheld from those people whose vocation and duty it is to be interested in such matters, since it ruthlessly destroyed the widespread illusion about a 'Christian peasantry': 'Once upon a time nearly everyone was a property-owner . . . nowadays living alongside and sharply divided from them there are many without property, a genuine village proletariat. The refugees' wives go to work in factories and the peasant women envy them on account of their easier work. The social gulf is even wider in the case of those unable to work. The Bavarian peasant has a household of people, but when he needs someone to help him with his work, none of them does so. Types like the peasant-lad of earlier days are a thing of the past. All the youngsters have seen the world, its women and its humbug, as they say.' Professor Arnold, in his discussion of this question, wrote: 'For Christianity to have become simply a customary obligation, a pure convention (as it has in many villages) means that it has fallen into decay. Conven-

tional performance of one's "duties" may conceal the rottenness inside the community for a time but it cannot prevent it from eating it away . . . the influx of refugees from the east has revealed the crisis which threatens the Christian village, and has produced a tension which may spell either death or re-birth. Can it be said that the seriousness of the situation is recognised on all sides?

For over a century the people in the towns have been consciously taking their stand for or against Christianity, and the urgency of the decision has led to more whole-hearted Christianity, but the villages are only just beginning to face up to it. The trimmings to the pretty picture of village religion have been shown for what they are worth and all essentially Christian inspiration is seen to be missing. Even in the cities the sense of urgency is weak enough, but in the villages it simply does not exist. The strict external order based upon traditional customs and conventions has been shattered. Now we can see what genuine feeling there was behind it all, which was little enough in all conscience.

The villages had a duty towards the refugees of doing everything they could to build new homes for them; they have almost entirely failed to do so. Although it goes against the grain, we must also admit that an alarming number of presbytery doors have remained shut whenever the needy have knocked at them. If the village clergy had taken in refugees and offered shelter to priests from the east they would have proved themselves witnesses of our Lord's message to the world; they might have softened the bitterness of many hearts both by word and example and have repeated with Christ, 'Let the little ones come to me' . . . Throughout almost all German dioceses the reports make it obvious how infrequently this has been the case.

Naturally there have been shining examples of self-sacrifice and brotherly love to set against this dereliction of duty. Nor should we forget that 'a single unhappy marriage makes more noise than ten happy ones', and that a single uncharitable priest stirs up more dust than ten who prove themselves faithful shepherds of their flocks. But a terrible lot of dust has in fact been stirred up. And the ecclesiastical authorities have not been anything like energetic enough in bringing home to the clergy their duties as good shepherds. There would have been a great deal more noise if Christians occupying important public positions had not stifled it, and if they had not been ready to humiliate themselves to do so. Villagers have their own deeply-rooted vices; they are often avaricious, hard-hearted and narrow-minded, suspicious of anything new and slow to enter into the sorrows of strangers; it is these vices which have damped the ardour of Christian love wherever this ardour has flared

up. Many parish priests have not done their duty either because their vision has been dim, or because they feared local opinion, or because their hearts are cold. Perhaps this is even a punishment for the way in which those who come to the priesthood from the ranks of the peasantry have for so long been treated in a strikingly privileged fashion. Special difficulties have arisen out of the position of the refugee priests and one cannot overstress the injustice which would be inflicted upon them if they were to be treated strictly according to their official status in terms of canon law. Most of these priests are old and have been driven hither and thither for years; frequently they are at the beck and call of dependants, and whatever positions they have won for themselves have only come as a result of hard toil. It is sheer nonsense to suggest that they should give up these positions and begin all over again in subordinate positions in the diaspora, where the material resources available are so inadequate, and whilst all the time no arrangements are being made for the younger German clergy from the Western zones to do some years 'front-line' service in the diaspora. A just solution to this problem is not easy to find because there are many of the younger clergy whose attitude on this matter is entirely praiseworthy and who would regard such 'front-line' service as a grace rather than as a burden.

In this context also it needs to be made clear that the refugee problem cannot be solved merely through charity and love of our neighbours. Much more will have to be done both by the German nation and its Christian communities and this is a question which involves all of us. It is simply not true, for instance, as we had every right to hope, that those regions where nominally Christian parties are predominant have given better and speedier aid to the refugees. Often the opposite is true. Christians seem to have forgotten (and not only on this issue) that the will of the Father is not fulfilled simply by almsgiving, but by seeing that justice is realised in political decisions and political action.

In many places the coming of the refugees has resulted in outbursts of hatred and violence between the refugees on one hand and the securely established country folk on the other. Perhaps there is no general solution but this does not alter the fact that many individuals have failed to make the sacrifices which have been demanded of them personally. In more than one place the police have had to be called in to commandeer shelter and the barest essentials of life for the refugees. And it is no answer to say that other nations would have behaved just the same in similar circumstances. We have reason to doubt the basis of this argument. In any case it is certain that large sections of the German people

have not behaved honourably. All of which is most relevant when we hear so much about that inner 'conversion' and that 'penitence' which gave rise to such high hopes.

#### EFFECTS OF MASS EVACUATIONS

The forms of devotion to which Sudeten and south-east Germany are accustomed differ considerably from those commonly practised in western Germany. Their devotions, hymns and religious imagery correspond in many respects to those current in an earlier age, the age of Franz Joseph. Obviously such generalisations are always only partly true. Closer analysis would reveal quite different trends. Above all, one would discover remarkable qualities, a pious, unself-conscious and solid belief rooted in the religious traditions of their people, along with a passionate reverence for our Lady. One of the tragic features is the way in which these qualities in the present situation turn out to be stumbling blocks instead of smoothing the path towards a friendlier relationship.

This is no place for making particular accusations. Yet one must admit that the German clergy in many of the eastern areas seem to have prepared their people for such a situation as the diaspora far less energetically than their western and south-western brethren; the Catholicism of eastern Germany does not seem so lively and active or so deeply aware of its mission both to defend its Christian heritage and to spread it abroad.

Surely it is significant that the refugees can scarcely ever be persuaded to go regularly to Mass on Sundays unless a High Mass is being celebrated in a large and beautiful church? Is it not also a sign of how much love for their homes determines their religious outlook that they find it almost impossible to pray in an unadorned room or to sing other than familiar hymns, whilst enormous throngs of them flock to 'Refugee Pilgrimages' with their mass demonstrations, their brilliant processions, their fervent evening devotions, their scenes of reunion and their commemorative speeches, their shattering pathos, tragic gestures and their nostalgic, heart-breaking hymns?

A word or two should now be said about how this evacuation has affected relations with Protestants. In the common struggle against the terror of the Third Reich both denominations experienced a genuine sense of brotherhood and comradeship. An equally strong set-back to this feeling has since taken place, especially whenever the question has arisen of sharing buildings for divine service. Exceptions there have certainly been on both sides.

Just as there are no longer any purely Protestant regions likewise there are no longer any purely Catholic ones. The extent of this

revolution may be gauged from the announcement that during 1947 in Munich, the capital of Catholic Bavaria, for every marriage in which both parties were Catholic there were no fewer than 51.14 mixed marriages. The proportion is well worth remembering. A questionnaire carried out in one of Munich's secondary schools for boys disclosed that only 10 per cent of the pupils received the Blessed Sacrament and only 20 per cent attended Mass. Of the patients at a Munich women's clinic 50 per cent had not made their confession for over six years, which means that they had not experienced any desire for spiritual consolation even in the crises of war. . . .

This lack of priests and of religious education presses twice as heavily upon Catholics in the Russian zone, where they are without hymn books, 'bible histories', catechisms and religious pamphlets. Sunday is not observed, and usually there are neither shrines nor religious houses nor centres of pilgrimage nor Church feasts. The resources necessary for pastoral work simply do not exist. The State schools are run quite separately from the Church. Religious topics must never be mentioned in the classes and religious instruction inside the schools is impossible. Since the 1st December 1945 it has been compulsory for every child over five years old to attend a State kindergarten where they learn Marx's materialism. In the whole of the Russian zone there is not one Catholic theological faculty, no seminary for priests and no Catholic secondary school. The country is honeycombed with spy rings. The Church's youth organisations are paralysed, all youth activity on Christian lines and in public having been prohibited. The whole atmosphere of public life is definitely anti-religious. Religious books, journals and newspapers are not allowed to be published. Even in these matters the refugees are harder hit than the natives in these areas because they never lived through the terror of the Third Reich. Until 1945, for instance, religious instruction was permitted at schools in Erm-land and Sudetenland.

#### OPINIONS AND PROPOSALS

Therefore Germany also has become a mission country, and that in a double sense, territorially and spiritually. The apostacies of 1933 and 1945 have shown Christians to be in a minority. Instead of the propertied class of previous times there remains an army of millions of diaspora Catholics who were unprepared for diaspora conditions and whose unhappy material, personal and spiritual state makes normal forms of orderly apostolic work quite impossible.

Catholicism in Germany has lost its traditional social fibre, its heritage of interior and exterior habits. Either directly or indirectly

its interconnection with the distress of the nations as a whole is clearly marked. German Catholicism lives under a threat because the lack of priests is steadily increasing and the priests are rapidly becoming old; because the Orders are receiving fewer novices (although this is by no means true of the contemplative orders), and because too few of the laity are both willing and able to help. The Church is suffering from the general crisis of the times, from the perpetual shifting of German affairs, and from the arbitrary changes in zonal and provincial boundaries. In the Russian zone it faces even severer hardships because there the authorities hate religion. It suffers from uncertainty and anxiety for the future, but it suffers most of all because its members are so weak, so many of its leaders are devoid of imagination and because it throws off a continuous smoke-screen of illusion so as not to have to face up to realities. The bourgeoisie, from whose ranks most of the faithful come, has changed into a proletariat; it is exhausted, disorientated and unable to cope with its responsibilities; it is devoid of both political vitality, fertile ideas and trustworthy leaders. The working classes to a depressingly large extent hold aloof from the Church. Throughout Germany a type of conventional Marxism influences quite a large proportion of the people. A few intellectuals have undergone genuine conversions and found their way back into the Church which they have frequently infused with some of their own energies; but most intellectuals still adhere to liberalist doctrines (such as the leading scholars have abandoned) and are in practice banal materialists. The country folk display a terrifying lack of solid religion and practical Christianity. Taken in conjunction with their refugee neighbours, these country folk present the most trying spiritual problem of the day. According to Spengler, when the peasant's cottage stands outside world history, then it gets flattened out by world history. Nor has anyone given an answer to the question of the returning soldier who has been unsettled and disillusioned by the war. The epidemic of divorces, the marriages of returning soldiers, mixed marriages, birth control among the newly married, all represent tasks which have yet to be mastered.

It must be confessed with shame that official German Catholicism's reaction to these trials has been to a large extent pathological. Instead of trying to answer the extraordinary demands of the territorial diaspora by an exchange of priests and by other means which would have equalised the strain in different parts of the Church the dioceses have hermetically sealed themselves up. Nothing more promising than a sort of restricted guerilla tactic has been evolved in order to meet the unbelievers, when what was needed was generous and ambitious strategy. Here again there are

exceptions but very few seem to have paid any heed to the cry of Magdeburg's Dean: 'I need priests *now*—in five years I shall have no Catholics left'.

Instead of seeing the widespread destruction of seminaries and theological colleges as a glorious opportunity for educating priests in a new way which would open them up to the world's needs, all efforts have been directed towards rebuilding a ghetto, and the wonderful opportunity scarcely seems to have been noticed.

Those priests and theological students who might have reasonably expected to find themselves particularly trusted on account of having tested their convictions in the stress of war service have been treated almost as objects of suspicion. This is proved, for example, by the list of questions which have to be answered by candidates for the priesthood, and which decide whether they will be accepted or not and upon which even the validity of their subsequent ordination is made to depend.

Whereas the refugee priests should have been gladly welcomed into the circle of diocesan religious life (not *de jure* but *de facto*) they have generally been treated (and not only juridically) as strangers and interlopers who were not wanted.

Instead of taking to heart their experiences under a totalitarian state and erecting institutions and organisations as remote as possible from direct state interferences, most people have clamoured even louder for those very privileges which depend upon the benevolence of the secular state. Frequently it seems almost as if people were hoping to use the Christian parties' majority in order to put forward claims dating from as distant a time as 150 years and to squeeze from a bankrupt state the interest which has collected in the meantime.

Instead of encouraging lay movements (both outside and within Catholic Action) in order to compensate for the lack of priests, most of the attempts at independent lay action have been treated with the utmost caution. The clergy have never missed an opportunity to demonstrate their authority—even upon issues where this authority just does not apply. Here again there are exceptions.

Instead of learning from experience under a totalitarian state and recognising the family as the ultimate and most secure stronghold of belief, morality and Christian education; instead of invoking all its massive collective energy to elaborate every possible means fulfilling the task that God has laid upon it; instead of taking every advantage of the truly epoch-making opportunity given to the German Catholics now that they are members of a missionary church, every effort has been made to restore the status quo without considering that what once upon a time produced good

results can be just as harmful in a society which in the meantime has been turned inside out.

German Catholicism remains, and must remain, involved in the social chaos of the German people, living with them, praying with them, sacrificing with them, doing penance with them and lastly hoping with them. The profoundest hopes of German Catholics centre upon him who has brought them to this time of trial. Their hopes are also founded upon help from their fellow-Catholics in foreign countries, who have already answered their appeals in a very practical manner either directly or through the Holy Father. They are also hopeful that efforts will be made to enable them to share with their fellow-Catholics the lessons they have learnt from their experiences under totalitarian régimes. Their hopes rest upon all those loyal Christians who are ready to share in their sacrifices and to seek for mutual understanding, Christians who have grasped what is happening on both sides of the fence. Above all they place their hopes in those of the laity who are awake to the fact that it is God who has brought them to the age of discernment.

The limitless tasks of the German diaspora cannot be carried out in any other way than through the lay apostolate. This refers both to the territorial and to the spiritual diaspora; it expresses a notion which is not easily arrived at, but which is much less rare in Germany than it used to be and is penetrating even into official Church circles.

The lay movement in Germany has not found the struggle for recognition against traditional forms and regulations easy. But it has its allies, including some who are influential besides being well-disposed; it is full of admiration for lay movements abroad and finds them a great encouragement, particularly that in France because the French movement has recently received some degree of approval from the bishops. Its greatest weakness is due to the fact that no one knows precisely what the movement is, and what it is supposed to be doing. So far its aims have been too narrowly conceived and it has been far too much restricted to the bourgeois-academic class. Nevertheless the eastern zone is the great testing-ground of Christianity and it is there also that the Christian laity have a chance to prove their zeal.

To be worthy of the occasion German Catholicism must first of all develop a thoroughly missionary spirit. It must get rid of its defensive and apologetic attitude, it must burst the bonds of that ghetto into which it was once forced and where it has since remained of its own free will. This ghetto is that of the 'purely religious sphere' (which is nothing but an idea of the devil's). German Catholicism must be ready to take heaven by storm. When Chris-

tianity starts marking time it is committing suicide. Previously it has been supposed that apostolic activity depends upon certain material conditions, but it is a prejudice which ought to be destroyed, because apostolic work from now on must be functional, which means that it must take risks and improvise methods, get on with its job and forget the a priori necessity of material conditions.

German Catholicism must carry on with its work in spite of its own disappointments or of the current widespread disillusionment. It must be convinced that even a great political landslide would not alter the essential tasks of either the territorial or the spiritual diaspora and it must spread this conviction. Furthermore it must try to assimilate the refugees as smoothly as possible, protecting them from the fate which threatens them at present, which would turn them into a featureless proletariat. If this means that we have to overthrow certain thoroughly respectable traditions and if it offends the sensibilities of both priests and laymen belonging to settled communities, then that is unfortunate, but it must still be done. The outstanding need is for able-bodied priests to be sent where they can be most useful without worrying about diocesan boundaries.

We must not be frightened of acknowledging the truth, and we must stop trying to water it down, which does not mean to say that we need be gloomy and only see the difficulties. Primarily the diaspora is a great opportunity and it will only become a menace if the opportunity is not taken with both hands. That is the decisive issue: whether Germany can give birth to a genuine lay movement and a form of Catholic Action which will be wide enough in scope and spiritual enough in inspiration to meet this situation. We believe that the fate of Germany depends upon it, and that in it the destiny of Europe is equally at stake.

OTTO B. ROEGELE.