

The United Nations have been slow to send succour, and frequently such aid as has been sent has been inveigled from its intended destination by public officials whose positions on the Control Commission have been maintained solely on bribery. In fact, it is a fearful reflection on English politicians as a body that it has been a publisher (and he not a Gentile) who has so valiantly championed the cause of the oppressed. It is Victor Gollancz who has shown himself the embodiment of the cryptic saying 'Plan as if you were going to live for ever: act as if you were going to die tomorrow', for whilst bureaucracy to lessen certain controls devised further restrictions it was he who awakened citizens once more to their duties as good Samaritans. Hitherto they had lacked the initiative but he as a public man gave them the lead. He taught them by his persistent enthusiasm that they were not judges sitting on a jury examining hardened cases, but that if they looked far enough they might catch the cries of a sick people—cries not only for bread, but for that manna which in an earlier century the Israelites shared in common, and which was, is, and always will be, the body of Christ.

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THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

ALMOST anything that one may say about the situation in Germany today is trite and commonplace. It has all been said a thousand times already, and everyone would seem to be quite well aware of what is happening. Certainly many people have by now heard most of the facts; yet comparatively few seem to realise what they mean for Germany. Somewhere at the bottom of this gap in our minds there is the very understandable view that we have enough worries to deal with in our own country at present, and that we cannot spend ourselves wholeheartedly in trying to solve Germany's difficulties; 'Who won the war anyway?' Then of course the older generations have seen all this before; 'We became too sentimental after the 1914-18 war', we are told, 'with the result that on the first possible occasion the Germans armed again and got their own back; do you think we want to let them start again?' But one does not need to be very worldly-wise to know that an excess of sympathy is always as dangerous as an excess of severity. It is however no cure for emotional stupidity in the past (if this indeed was the case) to refuse to be troubled over present matters which are bound to touch our feelings, if we are human at all. I have no expert political or economic knowledge, I have no specialised 'inside

information'; I only want to mention one or two of the problems as they strike someone who has seen something of what they mean to the Germans, and who is afraid that the public conscience is insufficiently aroused.

Whether we like the Germans or not, they can be an annoying people. Politically they have shown themselves exceptionally foolish and undiscerning; personally, they strike one as does any other people: some good, some bad, some pleasant, some unpleasant. In business they show an outstanding thoroughness, and a love of detail which is often quite irritating. Anyone who has had close contact with them will have smiled when reading the report of the recent Commission of the Churches (*The Task of the Churches in Germany*), where, describing a meeting with German delegates, it said: '. . . and in addition to their oral statements the Germans handed in a number of memoranda'. Great wads of paper with closely typed reports come as the daily round. But if they know how to collect the facts, they have a genius for presenting their case badly. When not trying to convince one of their hardships—as if anyone with eyes needed convincing—with facts and figures, there is an unfortunate tendency to whining complaint. Few of us can have avoided being annoyed by this; but few of us also can have failed to be impressed by the stupendous way in which they have in fact kept their bearing amongst themselves in their extreme circumstances. And it is only fair for Christians to remember that neither tact nor diplomacy is the specific meaning of the virtue of prudence.

Not one of us can pretend that we have no prejudices one way or another about the Germans. It is not a bad thing to have prejudices, so long as they are reasoned prejudices. But we should do well to note the constancy of the reports from widely differing people on the state of their country; *all* have stressed the horror of the situation. A recent report in the *Tablet* by Major Guy Lloyd, D.S.O., M.P., says: 'All who have visited the British zone—and they represent many different political backgrounds—are unanimous in reporting that the German people have now been reduced to the lowest possible depth of misery and despair; that their economy is shattered and that the German people are without hope of the future. However much individuals may differ on details, there is no dispute on the essential facts'. And quite one of the most important of these facts is the utter disappointment of those who have struggled against Nazism from within for so many years, for they find their task as difficult as ever. One Catholic priest described life under Hitler's régime to me as 'living with foot in the concentration

camp'; he, and others like him, expected greater freedom from those whom they were assured were coming to liberate them.

Policy in government, if settled on the spot, would be much better; for the heads of divisions and branches of the Control Commission, and staff-officers of Military Government have an appreciation of the situation which would astonish anyone cynical of the 'khaki mind'. But the Germans are forced to judge their governors on a man-to-man basis, for they can see no policy to judge, and by the standards of which they could at least settle their expectations of us. The same Churches Commission report, referred to above, describes our government of the zone as 'an amateur bureaucracy struggling with colossal problems in a foreign country and largely through interpreters', and this is no facile criticism.

No one who has not seen it for himself can obtain any idea of the enormity of the damage in all the towns and cities; no description or statistical comparison with this country will ever convey the sheer destruction that is to be found everywhere. Mr Gollancz's *In Darkest Germany* is the nearest we shall get to some sort of appreciation of it. And the problems to which this gives rise can scarcely be imagined, they are so vast. But physical damage does not constitute by any means the whole problem.

The civil internment camps loom large in the fears of the Germans. The Churches Commission's Report expresses the matter a great deal more mildly than one might expect of people with a strong moral sense from a country with an enormous reputation for justice: 'The long retention of some 38,000 persons in civil internment camps, without trial or specific charge, is difficult to justify, even on the plea of Britain's poverty in competent "screening" staff'. And when it is realised that young boys of sixteen have been rubbing shoulders with 'hardened ruffians', the situation appears more serious still. Major Lloyd says quite openly that 'the policy of "de-Nazification"' is now being used largely for vindictive or class-conscious purposes'. What are we to think of this?

It is obviously arguable whether we should hand over the government of the zone to the Germans themselves or not, and here in particular I think we may be swept away either by a genuine desire to give them more freedom, or by the less creditable desire to escape from a difficult situation. In certain spheres anyway there would be grave dangers inherent in any transference of responsibility at this stage. It is not so much that the Germans would lose their heads and revive Nazism; for as far as possible the old school of German democrats have been given posts in the German administration. But we know well enough in Britain into what ill-favour a govern-

ment may fall, sometimes merely because of the difficulties of the time, and not at all because of their mismanagement (I am doing my best to make no reference to Britain in 1947). There is then considerable danger that the reliable older Germans will be worn out and in ill-repute when Germany is beginning to make her recovery; and in their weakness they might easily be displaced by stronger, yet probably less wise, statesmen. In many ways we are doing Germany a service by bearing much of the responsibility, and consequently a great deal of the odium. But such a view does not justify or condone abuse or injustice.

Are we to support one political party or not? Until recently the cry was that the British had no axe to grind, no positive policy to pursue. Now it appears we are being taken to task for backing Dr Schumacher and the Social Democrats. It does seem to be true, as Major Lloyd points out, that we no longer have any excuse for blaming the Russians for their 'blatant support of the Socialist Unity Party'. But how much better if we approached the question on a far broader basis, an ideological basis, and pursued a vital Christian course, as Mr Churchill led German Christians to expect! There should be better facilities for all the activities of the Churches to implement their own policies, and much greater contact encouraged with equivalent bodies and organisations in other countries. Germany is starved of news from the rest of the world; if she is to be nursed back to a sense of internationalism her representatives must travel more freely and literature must be made available. Aldate's appeals in *BLACKFRIARS* are an important starting-point for our support.

Germany is providing a problem of incomparable size; it is time we stopped thinking of it, or acting towards it, as a mere testing-ground for Allied unity, or as matter for Allied disputes. If our views are to be considered it is not right that we should wait to be called upon to act as Catholics on purely Catholic issues. We are too easily swept away by the popular feeling that Germany—some vague, impersonal entity—is 'getting what she deserves'; that it is only natural in a world of misery that she should be dealt with last. Are we as Christians only committed to doing what is natural? Surely it was the most unnatural thing in the world for a Samaritan to help a Jew. Catholics in this country may have succeeded in avoiding the error of mere sentimentality; but are we to be accused of having no heart at all?

OWEN HARDWICKE.