

## EDITORIAL

ANY attempt, such as the present number of BLACKFRIARS is making, to direct the attention of English readers towards Germany and towards the great need in that country for help from outside is bound to be very limited in its scope, and can scarcely do more than touch the surface. The complexity of the German situation defies slick and short analysis; for it is true that there are many Germanies. Not only must we take into account that 'other Germany' upon which something has been written since the war, the Germany which resisted Hitler and numbered such men as Cardinal von Galen, Niemöller, the Schons, and many whose names will never even be known. Our understanding must also reach out towards those who are less obviously to be admired, or even liked, those who did not grasp the issues so clearly but found themselves ranged alongside that diabolical power, Nazism. Such understanding is perhaps made easier when we begin to wonder how quickly most of us in this country would have come to detect the Devil at work in similar circumstances. It is no accident that one of the most popular plays in post-war Germany bears the title 'The Devil's General'; a closer knowledge of that country's experience may save us from having to wait until after we have been possessed before an English playwright tells us what has been happening to us, as Zuckmayer has done for Germans.

And even if the kind foreword by Cardinal von Galen's successor at Münster, Bishop Keller, and the other articles by Germans do not produce the effect which one hopes for in this country, the fact that they have been published here will be a sign to the Germans themselves that the British daily press is not entirely representative of British public opinion. Unfortunately the daily press does to an alarming extent form public opinion, and Germany has not been given a good press. When one of our most popular dailies, for instance, introduces its front-page account of the recent elections in headlines wherein the name of Hitler is placed next to the equally explosive word 'Catholics', it would be surprising if some of the paper's readers did not fall for the assumption that Adenauer or Schumacher are potential Hitlers. When the same paper also goes on to publish vivid pictures of the wining and dining that is possible in a country which was defeated in the war it is only natural that the average Britisher should begin to think of himself as worse off than the Germans. The inference that the present Labour Government is responsible for his unfavourable position is not explicitly proposed to the reader; it is even possible that he is not expected to make the inference, but conversations in buses and railway trains

prove that he does make it. And one finds oneself back again in the dangerous situation where the cause of international friendship is subordinated to political jugglery, and national hatred becomes a weapon for the power politicians.

It is not easy to see how this ignorance on the part of the general public is to be overcome until there is far more intertraffic than at present between the two countries. Amongst Catholics very praiseworthy efforts to facilitate visits have been made by the Newman Association, in particular, and the results have justified the Newman Association's policy of concentrating on Germany. Catholics have returned from their visits with a much firmer grasp of what action will be necessary in this country if we are to maintain the Church against threats from the totalitarian state. Here it is we who are the learners and the German Catholics who are the teachers. Already the decisive stand of the German bishops in refusing to compromise on the question of the Catholic schools shows that they themselves are no longer in any doubt as to the unwisdom of hoping for anything from the half-promises of politicians. English Catholics are now going to be faced with a very similar situation; fortunately the lessons of the Nazi régime mean that they are not without a lead.

Still the percentage even of the Catholic population which is reached by such methods must remain small. The steep falling-off in the number of parcels sent to various organisations for the relief of Germany suggests that it is very small; the articles in the daily press seem to have been more effective. What the answer is would be difficult to say. There seems to be no other way to gather a true impression of the situation than to go to the country—and to live with the people, not to live in hotels frequented by those very people who preserved their comfort under the Reich and have managed to insinuate themselves into favour with occupation régimes. Amongst many sections of the population one will find that the need for food and clothing is almost as great as ever. Workers in the industrial districts not only cannot afford to visit the hotels and patronise the glittering shops, frequently they can scarcely pay for their basic rations. Amongst the homeless people who have to live in bunkers in Stuttgart, sweating underground in windowless concrete cells, one notices no enthusiasm for an independent Germany; there is even a feeling that they have rather more to hope for from the occupation régime than from the potential leaders of Germany, who will continue to encourage 'free enterprise', building more and more shops and offices when justice requires that they should build houses.

This is one of the reasons why there is so little political comment in this present number, that the range of political play in present-

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.

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

THE 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

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