

POST-WAR EDUCATION IN GERMANY

THE end of the war left the whole educational system in Germany in chaos and its rebuilding has had to start from scratch. This is obvious as far as external conditions were concerned; buildings were ruined, teaching material destroyed, teachers dispersed and in part forbidden to follow their profession. The children themselves were involved in the maelström of evacuation and in the disorderly flight from the bombed west to the east, and from the Russian invader in the east the return again to the west. All this is clearly appreciated by now. Equally one understands the loss of a sane religious background that followed the breakdown of Germany's former educational system and the scepticism shown by both teachers and pupils against any alternative system (and even against the re-introduction of pre-war arrangements), whether it was inspired by German teachers themselves, by the Church, the German authorities or the inter-allied military government. These problems are appreciated, in part at least, everywhere. Their solution is seen to lie only in a very gradual and by no means as yet wholly satisfactory rehabilitation. This is the natural result of the various factors involved in the present situation in Germany, but more recently two new and somewhat unexpected elements have emerged to influence post-war development in a disturbing manner.

The division of Germany into four zones has had an immense bearing on the political and social life of the country, but no less has it had its repercussions in the educational field. This is most marked of course in the division between east and west; but it is true also of the division of government within the west itself. When military government started it became obvious that the Allies regarded education as one of the questions on which they intended to exercise their control from the highest level. They had made up their minds to issue their instructions and decisions from the very centres of their government and to see that they reached the last German teacher and kindergarten nurse. In the event there was very little co-operation between the educational branches of the Allied Control Commissions even though there was of course an exchange of views between them. The choice of allied personnel to fill all, and even the lowest, posts in the educational branch of the government was superseded only slowly and step by step by a system in which the Allied officers retired into a merely advisory and supervisory position. The statutory regulations of the occupying powers now regard education as such as the proper responsibility of the Germans themselves so that the competence of the Allies in

this field has ended. Nevertheless a staff, much decreased in numbers, of Allied officers will continue to function in an advisory capacity. This transference of responsibility from the officers of the occupying power to German officials is today supported by legal and statutory sanctions. Their authority was not however in any sense founded in Germany or in the Germans. The general policy applied towards re-establishing the broken down German administrative machinery and inculcating into it democratic principles once again, was to bring influence to bear from the lowest levels at the outset and then step by step to higher levels of the local and municipal hierarchy.

It was in keeping with this policy that the specifically German educational authority should never extend further than the level of the *Länder*. The *Länder* now all have their own governments which in the three western zones at least are supported by Diets elected on a purely local basis in accordance with local constitutional and electoral tradition. This means that the various *Länder* are controlled by a parliamentary system in which each individual *Land* has either a majority representing one party or a coalition. Thus the administration as a whole and the administration of education in particular, including its legal authority, is vested throughout the *Länder* in the hands of groups with divergent political and educational aims. In *Länder* with coalition governments the various portfolios have to be shared among the different political parties. The principle of coalition is in some cases carried so far that where a minister belongs to one party, the permanent secretary of his ministry is supposed to belong to the other party of the coalition.

There are thus two new and somewhat unexpected elements in German educational administration; on the one hand the four zones with their governing bodies, and on the other the *Länder* of which there are between four and six to each zone. This development as a phase in the restoration of Germany is now coming to an end. We have already referred to the Occupation Statute. The new Bonn Constitution has made the *Länder*, in accordance with German tradition, the competent authority in educational matters and has at the same time laid down general principles on religious education and the regulations to be enforced with regard to private schools. Here therefore another aspect of authority comes into being. But it begins its life with an inheritance of the administrative machinery and in some respects the legal background of earlier post-war years. It is amazing to see how varied the directions have been that this development has taken in different districts and how this has resulted in a divided policy. Naturally these divergences of policy

have reflected a variety of personal interests, preponderant ideas and the special difficulties of particular districts. This disunity in policy of which the seeds were sown long ago is still growing and will continue to do so in the future.

In considering the outcome of the Allied occupation one has to bear in mind the situation in which the education officers started their work. They were convinced, and to a greater extent rightly so, that the roots of Nazism would be found in part in the educational system of Germany. They were moreover convinced of the value of the system evolved in their own country where it reflects, and is perhaps the source of, their own particular theory of democracy. If individually they were not always strongly in favour of the system existing in their own country, they at least drew from it preconceived ideas on educational policy. They lacked not only respect for the German system but also a knowledge of its history, traditions and ideological background. This is not to be understood as placing blame on the shoulders of the average officer, many of whom showed much good will, but rather as stating an inevitable fact. Victors entering a country which had lost a war that they had regarded not merely as a military campaign but as a crusade against wrongdoers would be bound to display such an outlook especially at a time when no adequate method for differentiating between the good and bad aspects of German life had been evolved.

The consequence of this was that in four different zones the education authorities of the various occupying powers attempted to transplant their own principles, aims and methods into German education. Even if one leaves the Russian zone which had a special fate out of the picture it is still true to say that there was no consistency between the principles, aims and methods of education in the three western zones. They had only one thing in common, that they were all different from the existing German system by which one refers not merely to the remnants of Nazism but to the age-old traditions and experience of the German people.

The French have developed for education their own Latin and highly centralised system, and while they fostered inside Germany as far as possible a trend towards federalism, they directed German education in close conformity with the French pattern. There is for example a system for training teachers, which is characteristically French, according to which selected children at the end of their primary school education are sent on to special schools to prepare for the teaching profession. A rather similar system, the *Praeparandie*, was favoured by the Prussians but was abolished at the time of the Weimar. This system of education with its vocational bias even at an early age has been introduced into the French zone. In

the Anglo-American zones however the training of teachers is carried out at special academies of university college status to which students are admitted after they have passed their Higher Schools certificate (*abitur*) in the normal way at ordinary grammar schools. It is obvious from this one example how a difference of policy could produce a rift in a common educational system. It is doubtful perhaps how far a pupil selected by the French system would have the necessary qualities required in a teacher in the other zones. Yet the zonal frontiers have been drawn so arbitrarily that such differences could never be justified on social, historical or traditional grounds. There are several similar instances of this inconsistency connected with the other zones. The Americans regard the widest possible application of the right to college education as a conclusion from the concept of democracy. Accordingly they insisted that the Bavarian government should abolish by regulation all grammar school fees even in cases in which the parents were willing and well able to pay them and had long been accustomed to do so. This occurred moreover at a time when a general shortage of suitable buildings, teachers and textbooks made it quite impossible to cater for an increasing influx of pupils. Only when it became obvious that the government of Bavaria was absolutely dependent on the fees paid by parents whose financial position did not warrant free education for their children was this regulation shelved. In the British zone a tendency to strengthen the hand of both local and independent educational authorities is recognisable. However there are in the British zone, as will later be explained, strong differences of political outlook between the various *Länder* which have led to equally marked disputes on matters of educational policy. But the curriculum and the selection of pupils are not the only matters on which discrepancies arise out of different Allied policies—there are also the questions of the selection of staff and of textbooks.

The selection of staff was of a negative rather than a positive character involving as it did the exclusion of all former Nazis from teaching and administrative educational work. The methods adopted in achieving this end showed little uniformity both from zone to zone and from time to time. Almost all teachers who continued to exercise their profession while the Nazis were in power were members of the Party or at least members of the Nazi-controlled teachers' organisation or affiliated bodies. There remained a few who had not sought membership of such organisations. A high proportion of these were older people who had already retired when the Nazis came to power twelve years before and were therefore not interfered with. The younger generation was seriously depleted by migration, death in concentration camps and on active service, and the few who

survived were drafted into more important posts in administration, experimental schools or political life. It was soon appreciated that teachers would have to be found either by shorter training on an emergency scheme or by some new system of screening those who had had Nazi connections. As will have been gathered from what has already been said, the emergency training schemes differed in the various zones. Teachers with Nazi connections had to be divided into groups: those who were Nazis by conviction; those who had joined the Party for the sake of promotion; those who had joined because they were requested to do so without their having any political leanings themselves; and those actual anti-Nazis who had made the personal sacrifice of accepting membership of the Party merely in order to camouflage their anti-Nazi intentions. There were also those who were explicitly asked by the religious authorities to join in order to maintain a nucleus of teachers who would continue to uphold Christian principles. The number of those who belonged to these last groups should not be underestimated. It is obvious that though some line had to be drawn between these groups a number of different lines were possible. The attitude of the occupying powers varied greatly both between one zone and another and from time to time as the needs and experiences of post-war years suggested. It took the Americans a very long time to understand that the same assurance in pursuing one's conscience, the same downrightness, could not be expected of the subjects of a totalitarian régime as could be expected of Lincoln's children. They therefore resisted any tendency to re-admit into favour former nominal members of the Nazi party more strongly than the British did. In the Russian zone developments showed yet another trend.

A constant source of friction between the German and Allied authorities has been the question of textbooks. The textbooks dating from the Nazi régime were impossible in every respect and therefore had to be destroyed. But hardly any new ones were available because of the paper shortage and lack of printing machinery. At the same time the education officers over the various *Länder* insisted on the most exacting censorship of all that the schools proposed to use, even of the classics and of textbooks dating from before the advent of the Nazis. The textbooks varied from *Land to Land*, not only to keep pace with local differences in the curriculum but also because of the excellent German custom of reflecting (at least in primary schools and lower forms) local and provincial characteristics in these textbooks, especially in those dealing with history, geography and the native tongue. The education officers in different *Länder* had and have very inconsistent criteria on which to decide what was admissible or not. The interference of some of them could

not have been more irritating with their unrealistic attempts to classify books as 'militarist, nationalist or undemocratic'. The condemnation of medieval German classics like the *Nibelungen* as fostering the militarist spirit; that of the famous *Märchen* by the brothers Grimm, translated for the benefit of children of practically every nation, as 'cruel and creating an insane desire for mysticism'; the high-handed censorship from which practically no German poet known outside his own country escaped. All these instances might be attributed to an exaggerated mistrust of post-war days. The matter does not however end there. It may be understandable that the French did not take too easily to the German 'poetry of the war of liberation' in which a nation was called upon to liberate its soil and the soil of Europe from a foreign oppressor even though had this lyric dealt with Hitler and the 1940's and not with Napoleon, it might have reflected equally well the fate of the German poet Claudius who wrote the well-known *Testament to My Son* in which he gave his son a most noble rule of life and, like the Gospels, recommended him to 'be obedient to the authorities'. The *Testament* was banned from German textbooks 'because it fostered undue and modernistic subservience'. This was not laid down in 1945 but in 1949 and then in the British zone. As an English textbook it was proposed to edit part of Priestley's older works but they were vetoed as too critical of occupation forces even though their writer is rightly or wrongly held in high esteem in his own country.

This all leads to a quite arbitrary lack of uniformity in the media through which German schoolchildren are expected to acquire a knowledge of the literature of their own country, of the classics and of history. The same inconsistency extends into practically every field of education from the kindergarten to the primary school and right on to the university.

Within each zone these differences are accentuated by variations in the policies of the Ministries of Education in the individual *Länder* which reflect local differences in religious and political outlook and in social conditions. In the British zone the *Länder* of Niedersachsen and Nordrhein-Westfalia adjoin one another. The former had as her Minister of Education Dr Grimme, a humanitarian, religious socialist who is very highly esteemed—very definitely over-esteemed—among the adherents of Socialism as a genius in the field of modern education. It is just as obvious which type of education grew up there as it is in the Catholic Rhineland even though there the second in command at the Ministry is a Protestant. Here the study of the classics is given a special value though generally speaking the question of whether Latin is to be the mainstay of all secondary education is much disputed. The

general lack of uniformity has now reached a point where it is practically impossible for children passing from one *Land* to another to pick up the threads of their previous education. This is a particularly tragic problem for the children of the many refugees from the east, not only because of the very different training they have already had but also because, even when they reach the west, they are forced to move backwards and forwards from one *Land* to another in an attempt to settle down.

A personal experience was very striking. When I attended an international conference on education questions in the American zone in the spring of this year it was clear from the statements of German delegates, who had hitherto had little contact with their compatriots from other zones, that the process of disunity in educational policy was already well advanced. The general conviction that this ought not to happen was counterbalanced by an almost fatalistic certainty that it was inevitable. There is a special danger in this from the Catholic point of view. The Bonn Constitution provides for a compromise in most educational problems especially in the question of religious influence in the schools. The German hierarchy while it accepted the provisions of the Bonn Constitution was the best that could be expected under the prevailing political circumstances, did so with some misgivings. The Constitution is merely a framework. All definitive practical laws and administrative measures are vested in the constitutional authority of the *Länder*. This is in itself entirely in keeping with our federalistic outlook. In certain *Länder* the Catholics are a very small minority, small not in relation to the practising Protestant community but to the amorphous body of those who profess no religion, to agnostics and atheists. These have at the present time a very strong political influence chiefly in the Social Democrat party and to a lesser extent in the Liberal party. A lack of uniformity in educational reconstruction may very well mean the constant exclusion of Catholic ideals in the application of a constitution which is not wholly satisfactory because its provisions are capable of such wide interpretation. On the other hand the recognition of parental rights which is the basis of our attitude to religious education enforces a degree of toleration in those countries in which Catholics are prominent. There is always a danger that where power is available it will be misused. The same problems were found throughout the Weimar era but now they are complicated by zonal divisions. They are further complicated by the fact that power once established as it has been during four years of allied government will tend to maintain itself. Right from the start up to the present day some members of the occupying powers have regarded the Christian Demo-

crats or at least the Catholics as reactionaries and have tended to foster other elements, and this had an influence on the framing of the enactments of the earliest months of the occupation, enactments which have tended to remain in force ever since.

So far we have concentrated our attention on the western zones. It does not need great insight to imagine that the state of affairs is even more complex in the Russian zone. Certain aspects of it are not however according to one's expectations. The general structure of German education was in part at least not interfered with and its administration passed at a comparatively early date under German control. For a long time the coalitions in the various *Länder* contained some Christian Democrats though these came more and more under the influence of leaders who were not *personae gratæ* among the Christian Democrats of the west. (Today relations between the Christian Democrats of the east and of the west have completely broken down.) But there were always a number of parents who were faithful to Christian principles and the attitude of a surprisingly large part of the teaching profession was no less exemplary. This has been in part a remnant of the spirit developed under the Nazis when open resistance, or a more subtle form of opposition, was more in evidence among the followers of the religious bodies, and especially those of the Catholic Church, than among agnostics and liberals. These men and women are well trained in the struggle against a totalitarian state aiming at avoiding the stigma of being called anti-religious by subtle and deceitful methods as the Nazis did and as the forces in power in eastern Europe are doing today. The ranks of the Christian Resistance are strengthened by many displaced persons from Silesia who are stubborn and devoted Catholics and by those who are stranded in the east after being driven from the west during the war. Thus ever since 1945 resistance in the eastern zone has been maintained. One special example may be cited in Thuringia which though Protestant as a whole contains one *kreis* ('riding') which is entirely Catholic and very jealous of its religious integrity. There Communism has been entirely unsuccessful though the number of Catholic teachers, inspectors of schools and parents who have paid heavily for their loyalty is large and one can imagine that their endurance must by now be almost exhausted.

There is at the present time a constant flow of refugees from the eastern zone to the west and a remarkably high percentage of these are teachers or members of other professions who continued to exert their influence until they knew that their imprisonment was a matter of days or that failure to escape would merely ask for martyrdom. They are a special problem in the west where every

walk of life is already overloaded. It is difficult indeed to make use of the abilities of those who for many years worked under conditions and in an atmosphere not found in the west where they can only be given temporary employment until they are able to return to their homes in eastern Germany. The same problem exists in a different form for the parish priests who, having lost the parishes to which they were assigned, are now employed as a special kind of curate in western Germany. It is however essential that the problem be overcome since the majority of the refugee teachers are the elect of their profession and it is the best who are the last to abandon their responsibilities.

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THE CRISIS IN GERMAN PROTESTANTISM

ON 11th July, 1948, exactly fifteen years after the dark day on which Hitler founded the 'German Evangelical Church', Dr Martin Niemöller was present at the founding of the 'Evangelical Church in Germany' (EKD) on the Wartburg near Eisenach, which had once been Luther's stronghold; there he coined the shattering phrase, 'the solidarity of the helpless' on the same occasion as the aged Bishop Wurm described this new structure as a 'temporary shelter'. These words were sign enough, even for the uninitiated, that this emergency organization was a long way removed from that source of grace, the upper room at Jerusalem. Rendered indispensable by the sheer stress of chaotic political conditions, the new 'Church' was attempting to reassert its legal continuity with the past and to affirm the 'unity of Evangelical Christianity' in all the occupation zones, especially to bind together the East and the West. Was its motive, therefore, political?

Whilst these lines were being written Wilhelm Niemöller, the pastor of Bielefeld, issued an open letter to Germany which ends with the cry: 'The crisis is upon us!'; and the Reformed Church in north-west Germany has resolved not to attend the EKD conferences any more until they are again animated by an evangelical spirit. What does this signify?

The downfall of the Nazis and their 'Reichs-church' means that, for the first time in 400 years, German Protestantism has been given the opportunity to free itself from the state and to give itself a constitution 'in accordance with the New Testament' as an earlier conference expressed it. However, it could scarcely be anything more than a federal 'church union' in which the remnants of the various