

NAZI APOLOGETICS

WITH the admirable intention of giving the English public reliable and authentic information about present-day Germany and in the hope of thereby promoting friendlier relations between the two countries twenty-one prominent Germans have collaborated to produce a book called *Germany Speaks*.¹ In many respects the work is well done. It is an attractive-looking book, lengthy without being too discursive, and generous in the amount of information about many aspects of German life and policy. Unfortunately it fails to give anything like an adequate account precisely of those questions which have caused the average Englishman to take up an attitude which is at best distrustful, at worst positively hostile, towards Germany.

The fundamental principles behind the Nazi system, labour, social and economic conditions and Germany's external relations are of interest chiefly to politicians and intellectuals and the average man is prepared to admit the truth and justice of much that appears under these headings. The problems which do need an explanation if the ordinary Englishman is to be won over to sympathetic understanding of Germany and which are omitted or scarcely touched on in this book may be reduced to four.

Fearing war above everything, he wishes to know what precisely are Germany's intentions towards the German-speaking members of other States whom she appears to regard as under her special "protection." Because he is kind-hearted and a lover of freedom he is shocked at the reports of cruelties in concentration camps and of the interference of the Gestapo in all aspects of private life. The Nazi attitude towards the Jews is to him incomprehensible and the treatment meted out to this race appears to be altogether inhuman. Finally, whatever be his own religious convictions, he is shocked above everything else by the persecution

¹ *Germany Speaks*. By 21 Leading Members of Party and State. Preface by Joachim von Ribbentrop, Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs, pp. 408. (Thornton Butterworth, 10s. 6d.)

of Christianity. It becomes therefore highly important to consider what little is said, even indirectly or *obiter*, on these topics.

Only at the end of the book are the three-and-a-half million Germans in Czecho-Slovakia mentioned; it is assumed that German wishes in that region are fully appreciated and the government's desire for peace is reiterated. But in view of the insistence in this book that "Nazi" and "German" are identical terms, bearing in mind the claim made in *Mein Kampf* that all those who are Germans by race should belong to the one Reich and recalling the fact that maps exist showing all the German language areas in Europe as if they formed a unity, must we not expect that such autonomy will be demanded for these Germans as is incompatible with allegiance to the Prague Government? In view also of the close relation between culture and politics in the Nazi outlook, will not this autonomy in reality only mean absorption in the greater Germany? The same questions may be asked concerning other States with German-speaking subjects. Only in one instance so far has the German government inconsistently waived her claim to interest herself in such *Auslandsdeutsche*. Either she must be inconsistent again and again, in which case the identification "Nazi" and "German" becomes impossible, or she must insist on her claims. In the latter event, world opinion must become rapidly more hostile and in a very short time it must mean war. It would be said of course that Germany was guiltless and peace-loving, that the other nations did not appreciate the true needs of National Socialism but were still trying to impose on others the narrow outlook of Liberal Democracy. Unfortunately, what are here involved are not only the prejudices of Liberalism, not merely the positive conventions of International Law, but those principles which all reasonable men see to be necessary for the maintenance of order between the nations of the world.

All this anxiety has been increased since the annexation of Austria and even these authors could not omit all reference to the events of March 12. The intervention, it appears,

was "to prevent civil war, to stop a breach of contract" (p. 384). On the other hand Germany had solemnly recognized Austrian independence in July, 1936, and there are many who still prefer to give credence to the last words of the Austrian chancellor to the effect that rumours of civil war were false "from A to Z." It is also claimed, "No force was used, not a single shot was fired" (p. 381). This seems to imply that hundreds took the train or drove their own cars to the concentration camps and is contradicted by the accounts of unimpeachable witnesses. Statements like these make the reader critical of the rest of the book and the actual treatment meted out to Austrians—who shared the German blood by which the Nazis set such store—is a reason for fearing the worst atrocities against the enemies of Germany in a new war.

Which brings us to another serious omission. There is not a word (even of denial) about the cruelties which, it is claimed, are being practised on German territory and against German nationals. It is not sufficient to say this is an internal question. These reports have shocked Englishmen and in order to regain their friendship, in Germany's own interest, it is necessary to explain them. Moreover if they are true, offences are being committed which are an insult to our common humanity and demand reparation before the world. If, as this book suggests, all save an insignificant minority of Germans are enthusiastic supporters of the government, why should the whole population be subject to the inquisitions and restrictions of a widely organized and intensely active secret police? Are the ordinary police incapable of dealing with the small numbers of dissidents?

And if for some unknown reason this dreaded organization be necessary, why does it take offenders straightway to a place of arrest which is often worse than a common prison—without trial or any public attempt at justification? A hint as to the answer is given in the chapter on justice in National Socialist Germany. Here it is admitted that the judge has power to order that criminals be kept in custody *after having served their sentence*, that he is no longer bound

by the letter of the law where it appears to conflict with the living spirit of National Socialism and the claims of the community. In other words the freedom of the individual is dependent on the judge's appreciation of the people's needs. The same apparently would apply to the actions of the secret police who exist for the protection of the community. The only difficulty is that the community has repeatedly shown that it disagrees with the actions of the Gestapo—for instance when they arrested Pastor Niemöller after what was tantamount to an acquittal in the courts.

It is the same line of thought, the claim that national (that is, racial) interests are supreme, which explains the Government's attitude towards the Jews. They are said to have had "imperialistic designs," but no evidence of this is forthcoming. The figures of professional posts held in Berlin by Jews is given and the naive question is asked, "Who then can reasonably object to the Germans removing the Jews from the prominent positions in their country?" (p. 77.) Nazi reasonableness argues that they are a different race and therefore must be removed; common human reason asks, with what justice can a man who has committed no real crime be deprived of his means of livelihood. That is the problem of arguing with a National Socialist, his first principles are different from those of the rest of the world.

The sudden deprivation of civic rights does not alter the fact that German-Jews are members of the community and as such have a right to support from the rest. If for any reason they are reduced to a state of want, then the other members are bound to assist them to provide for the necessities of life. The fact that this elementary duty is neglected is glossed over, and it is hoped apparently that English readers will believe that the Jews will be treated, like other foreigners, as honourable guests. Unfortunately, other Nazi leaders have lately insisted with amazing effrontery that the Jews must leave the German-speaking community and be provided for by other countries. Almost more amazing is the attitude of those other countries in accepting this situation, naively hoping that Germany will contribute

towards the expenses of refugees, without formally reminding the German government that it is their duty to provide for these people *within the country*. There was happily one solitary voice at the Evian conference, which asked, "Whether a State had the right to force on other States the citizens it wished to get rid of in consequence of its own disastrous internal policy."²

The silence of this book about Christianity is itself an indication of the official attitude. It has been considered possible to dispense with all explanation, because the only task which the Nazi State would assign to the Churches is the purely subordinate task of exhorting Germans to keep their blood pure on the lines laid down by the laws. There is no need to explain the public position of the Church because it has none; apart from acting as the handmaid of the State its work is exclusively private.

This policy is rather indicated than outlined in the reiterated claim that the nation is the highest value and in the frank admission that the Nazi State is totalitarian. Frank, too, is the statement that restrictions have been placed on the confessional schools, "the denominational aspect being looked upon a matter of secondary importance" (p. 107). It is interesting to note that the emphasis is placed on the differences between the Churches by the use of the word "denominational," thereby implying that they are subversive of the nation's unity. But more explanation than this is required to satisfy the Englishman who, even unbelieving himself, thinks that Christianity ought to be allowed to exist.

For that and no less is the problem in Germany. The very existence of Christianity is the ultimate object of the Nazi attack and no amount of apologetic could conceal it. The Government does not demand simple obedience but a profession of Faith, of Faith in its own totalitarianism, in its materialistic and neo-pagan heresy of the blood. Churchmen must not merely withdraw from political oppo-

² Señor Ypes, delegate for Columbia. *The Times*, July 11th, 1938.

sition into private life, they are expected to preach National Socialism from the pulpit. It was the Austrian Catholic Seyss-Inquart who, after delivering up his country to the aggressor, said publicly in Berlin, "National Socialism is to be conceived as a great Faith-movement to which the Christian Churches, if they have honourable intentions, must subordinate themselves." Would that it were, as the Austrian Bishops hoped, merely a matter of giving to Cæsar what is his own; but the new Cæsar claims also what is God's and to decide himself the limits of the two jurisdictions. Thus it came about, for instance, that they were not able to prevent the suppression of a purely spiritual work, unquestionably belonging to the Church's proper mission and having no reference to politics. This was the *Pauluswerk*, an institution for the instruction of Jewish converts, which, without violence, at the request of the Nazi authorities has been compelled to cease its existence and whose director is in exile.

Germany has spoken, but its leaders have said nothing of this important problem. There can be no doubt as to their attitude if compelled to speak. They would admit, as they have at other times admitted, that there can be no peace between National Socialism and Christianity unless one or the other gives up its entire character.

This book then will not satisfy. It will not satisfy because it touches all too lightly on or omits altogether the reasons for foreign hostility towards present-day Germany. There is one comforting thought, namely, that in spite of the eminent authority of the gentlemen who wrote this book we who love Germany but hate Nazism are convinced that we are right in making this distinction. We do not believe that "a Nazi is *ipso facto* a German and a German a Nazi" (p. 329), and we dare to hope that one day this strange and terrible disease will be cured and the true glory and nobility of the German character be revealed to the world. We have seen something of it in the person of Schuschnigg who was compelled to yield to force because, unlike his Nazi opponents, he was not prepared "to shed German blood."

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