

RE-EDUCATING EUROPE'S CHILDREN

Many Are Suffering Now For The Sins of Their Fathers

"WHEN food is got to them the children of Europe recover their physical stamina with quite surprising speed—but their psychological recovery will take much longer. Organisationally speaking, the Occupation has left a whole host of queer and difficult educational problems."

SO the Director of the Commission which the Allied Ministers of Education set up at the end of the war to enquire into the situation of the children in Occupied Europe told *The Listener* the other day. He is Dr. J. A. Lauwerys, a naturalised Briton and a Lecturer at London University (although born and partly educated in Belgium), and is returning from the Perth Conference of the International New Education Fellowship, of which he is Deputy Chairman.

Beyond this statement, however, Dr. Lauwerys would not generalise. "You

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place—well, obviously you don't get anything to eat. The flesh, considerably weakened, prevails, and we pick our way delicately and stiffly through the sprawled bodies on the floor to the exit. The lemonade is not very good; the fruit cake is dry as a bone; but you can sit down for a minute or two, and for that privilege we would at the moment be prepared to pay twice the exorbitant amount which we are charged for the refreshments. We sit down, and for a wonderful moment the pain is anaesthetised, and is transmuted into mere numbness.

The same traitorous thought creeps into our minds, almost simultaneously. Should we stay for the *Vaughan Williams Pastoral Symphony*? We don't dare as yet to express our treason openly, but we munch our arid cake and sip our lemonade on the cold stone stair, and think about it solemnly. If we go, it will mean that we have failed the test; we will be the subject of the just ridicule and anger of the more hardy Promenaders; we will have to face up to the awful realisation that we love our bodily comfort more than music. On the other hand, of course, the *Vaughan Williams* is the last work on the programme (the broadcast ceases at the interval), and it does seem rather odd that such a modern work should have been incorporated in a *Beethoven* programme. And, anyhow, we are stout classicists in music.

The rationalisations pile up in our minds; we mould them into a halo, and our projected conduct begins to seem almost virtuous. Quite a number of other Promenaders seem to have the same idea—or are they merely taking a little exercise in order to get the stiffness out of their legs? And so, trying to look as if we are merely going for a little walk along the passage, we slink up the stairs and skulk out into the street.

Just over the road, the moonlight illuminating its every knob and knick-knack, the Albert Memorial glares grimly at us, like the Picture of Dorian Gray, and we know that we are doomed.

can't speak of 'Europe' to-day," he explained. "It is a series of zones, not a continent. There's first the East, which the Nazis regarded as inhabited by inferior barbarians and treated accordingly. Then there's the Latin countries, including France, where they thought the people were racially inferior but certainly with culture, and so treated them indulgently. There's the Germanic countries—Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium—where the people were treated as equals—though, of course, anti-German activities got short shift. And finally there's conquered Italy and Germany, the latter itself subdivided.

"In the East the Nazis supplied only enough rations to sustain labour and shut up all the Universities and secondary schools. Their attitude was imperialist colonialism or slaveholding carried to its complete conclusions. Their 'New Order' was Huxley's 'Brave New World'—which, of course, is just Plato's utopia made feasible by science—put into practice: And the Slavs were regarded as 'gammas': naturally low-grade people fit only to grow food, or work on assembly lines. But in the West the Nazis interfered hardly at all with the schools."

Slipping Past the Barriers

We were surprised, and said so.

"Of course they gave orders that there was to be no teaching of any local nationalism or of any interpretation of life—like the Christian or the Marxist interpretations—which clashed with Nazism. But you can't enforce even a negative instruction like that without having an inspector stationed all day long in every classroom. And clever teachers can get past anything. For example, a French teacher friend of mine was told that he ought to feature the Hundred Years War—which of course was sheer English aggression against the French. He did. But he never once referred to the 'invaders' by their national name. He called them the 'occupation forces.' The Burgundians, who helped the English, he called 'collaborators.' Joan of Arc he spoke of as 'rallying the Resistance' and so on."

Then the Western education systems could carry right on to-day as before the war, we suggested.

"In the main, yes," replied Dr. Lauwerys, "as soon as destroyed school buildings have been rebuilt and undernourished children have recovered. The latter job can often be done the faster. I saw in England, for example, a football team drawn from Dutch children, who had been in a health camp there for only three months, beat the local school team.

"Even the Belsen children are mostly normal weight-for-age by this time—although, mind you, only the fittest survived, and other children have been lucky if they've been as well fed since. But psychological upsets persist. For example, these Belsen children have queer complexes originating in their constant anxiety about food, but didn't acquire any of the more usual sexual inhibitions in the camp's promiscuous conditions. Children of political interness

who were taken after peace to Swiss health camps subconsciously considered themselves still prisoners and had wild animosities and suspicions against their well-intentioned rescuers. The thought of escape to Palestine has become so absorbing to thousands of young Jews who have never known security, that it, too, amounts to an obsession with many. Or another illustration—when the World Student Christian Federation meeting in Switzerland last month elected a German vice-chairman, some delegates felt that they would never be able to explain it to their national movements. And my own organisation, meeting in Paris, refused seats to Germans on the Executive. Europe, in short, is still seething with war-created animosities and irrationalities."

The Children of Collaborators

Then the children of collaborators would be suffering for the sins of their parents, we suggested.

"Suffering very badly, sometimes. In Holland, for example, ten per cent. of the population belong to the Dutch Fascist party. Some, of course, had joined to make living and money—making easier. But many were Fascists quite sincerely for ideological reasons, as their fifth-column help to the Germans when they first attacked clearly shows. These people were armed when the Germans surrendered and took to roofs and strongpoints where for three whole days they kept all Holland in chaos while they defied capture. The less desperate ones were finally rounded up, and more than 100,000 are still in concentration camps—or were six months ago. Conditions for their children have often been crude. In one over-crowded sick-bay which I saw, a boy with whooping-cough shared the same bed as one with measles.

"In Norway the Germans left 10,000 illegitimate children. (The Nazi authorities flatly prohibited all intercourse with Slavs, behaved punctiliously to French women, but actually encouraged liaisons with Scandinavians.) Well, the Norwegians took the children from their mothers for a mixture of moral and patriotic reasons, but were absolutely stumped about what to do with them until the Swedes very decently offered to find homes for the lot. All children in Norway go to school up to 14. But after that headmasters must decide, on the merits of each case, whether or not to let collaborators' children go further."

That reminded us of other groups stranded among communities ideologically antagonistic to them—Roman Catholics in the new Orthodox and communist Yugoslavia, for example, or the 80,000 Cossacks who had fought for Hitler in Italy. We asked how their children were faring. In replying, Dr. Lauwerys concentrated on one such situation with which he was familiar.



DR. J. A. LAUWERYS
The problem must be tackled internationally

"Eugen-Malmedy," he said, "is a mainly German district that was somewhat unfortunately added to Belgium after the last war. After the Germans marched through on the tenth of May, 1940, the schools closed for the weekend and opened with totally new equipment, staff, and methods—all first-class educationally. And from then to the war's end they concentrated on making the Eupen-Malmedy children expert saboteurs—to guard the Siegfried Line—and enthusiastic Nazis. One history book I saw was called *Robberstate England* and was pure inverted Vansittartism—Vansittart turned inside out—showing, for example, starved-looking Indians being hanged or over-worked and the map getting steadily redder. Well, what can Belgium do to re-educate these young people who enjoyed life under Nazism so intensely?"

That led to a discussion on how to re-educate the Germans themselves. "Italy's new education system is the most democratic in the world," declared Dr. Lauwerys. "But I fear we are starting at the wrong end in Germany. The lower-class textbooks were never much altered by the Nazis. It was higher education that they prostituted to propaganda. Yet to-day we have the lower schools running only half-time, but we have reopened some universities—just the place for Nazi ex-officers to gather: in fact a democratic professor has already been shouted down at Freiburg. I believe we ought to be very easy on infected individuals: but utterly ruthless with infected institutions.

"Besides—re-education by one nation, or for one nation, has limits. That is why I am very glad to be a liaison officer with UNESCO, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation."