

BREAD AND PEACE. — AND TEXTBOOKS

More Than Physical Hunger in Germany

FROM England early this year the Association of University Teachers, at the request of the Foreign Office, sent a delegation to visit the universities in the British zone of Germany. It had two tasks—to give advice on university reconstruction and to explore the possibility of establishing relations between British and German universities.

One of the delegates was David Martineau Tombs, a New Zealander, who is now lecturer in telecommunications at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, University of London. At present he is in Wellington on leave, taking a holiday and visiting his parents. He told *The Listener* in an interview that the present generation of German students are exceedingly ill-informed on contemporary social, political, economic and every other sort of development outside Germany. But the more intelligent among them are acutely aware of these deficiencies and anxious to overcome them.

The delegation included Professor E. R. Dodds, Oxford (chairman); Professor Lord Chorley, Professor T. H. Marshall

and David Tombs, London; Professor J. A. Hawgood and Professor R. Pascal, Birmingham; Professor R. C. McLean, Cardiff; and Professor C. H. Browning, Glasgow. The party divided into two groups, one of which concentrated on the Universities of Göttingen, Hamburg and Kiel, the Technical High School of Braunschweig, and the Veterinary School of Hanover, while the other investigated conditions at the Universities of Bonn, Cologne and Münster, and the Medical School at Düsseldorf. Both parties finally met in Berlin.

"I visited Germany as a Robert Blair Research Fellow from 1934 to 1936, to do research in telecommunications," said Mr. Tombs. "It was a profound experience to see the country in the hey-day of the Olympic Games, and later to visit Germany—completely shattered, with nearly every university building in rubble."

No Common Policy

"To-day there is intense disappointment in the work of our occupying forces which have had no concerted policy in Germany. The goodwill of the German people towards Britain was very high when the collapse came, but now it is as low as it has ever been. We slung out tens of thousands of Nazis and left them wandering about the streets. Germany is now a dangerous vacuum, ready to be filled by any fantastic little Hitler that may emerge. Some alternative occupation must be given to all these people lest the upstarts rise again. And for this state of affairs the British Government must take the responsibility. Nevertheless, some attempt has recently been made to rectify this."

We asked Mr. Tombs what hope there was of democratising Germany through education.

"There's not much hope of doing anything radical inside some generations," he said, "but democracy, as a safeguard against future wars has a

great significance. The difficulty confronting our delegation was the lack of a sense of individual responsibility among the Germans. No radical and lasting reform of the universities is likely to come about on the sole initiative of the universities themselves."

"Is democracy in the Allied Zone making the same progress as Communism is in the Russian Zone?"

"No; certainly not. Communism has organised its region much more than we have. The Russians are dropping the standards of university entrance qualification to let in people who have not even matriculated. But perhaps it is better to have a large number of competently-trained men than a small number of experts."

"Isn't it a good thing to teach the democratic doctrine by giving equal opportunity to everybody?"

"Oh yes, up to a point, and it is interesting to note that a real attempt is being made in Britain to open up the schools and universities to people of different social standing. In time we hope to establish in Germany some degree of individual responsibility, but it can't be done by Act of Parliament or by an occupying force. What is wanted is an opening of frontiers to the exchange of ideas and the feeding of the acute intellectual hunger."

Divided Beliefs

"Is there any concerted plan for dealing with the German problem?"

"Unfortunately, the four occupying countries each have different beliefs, and so the Germans themselves are completely divided."

"Do you think the principle of dismantling capital equipment by way of reparations is a good one?"

"Things are so chaotic that that is hard to answer. The Russian idea is to take away every nut and bolt they can find; the Americans say, 'What the hell; that thing's no use; blow it up.' And the French think all Germans are rotten anyway. I must say that the British are more constructive."

"And how is Britain applying its more constructive policy?"

"Well, for example, when the British come across one of the huge wind-tunnels used for testing aircraft in wartime, they cut out the steel parts, but leave the building, which may be made to serve some useful purpose."

Democracy's Problem

"Have you any idea of what percentage of German youth, or Germans of university age it is possible to reclaim for democracy?"



DAVID MARTINEAU TOMBS
"No Germans—only Central Europeans"

"A small percentage only can be saved in the next ten years. They must be found a proper place within the community of nations; which is better than forcing them to fight for it."

"How do the Germans themselves view the future?"

"They hoped for some clarity as to their position at the Peace Conference and there was none. There can be no Germans in the future. They will be either Central Europeans with an eye towards the East, or Central Europeans with an eye towards the West. Germany to-day as a country is quite incoherent, and likely to remain so for many years."

Anti-Social Reform

Like many other people before 1939, Mr. Tombs had hoped that the outcome of the Nazi movement would not be war. To-day, when the actual fighting was over, and the chaotic aftermath was being faced, the proper approach for the democratically-minded was to provide adequate safeguards, but also to recognise the qualities of the German people and help them to get back on their feet, in much the same way as modern ideas of prison reform aided the rehabilitation of anti-social types.

"Can Germany," he was asked, "be reclaimed by bread and peace alone, or will text-books be necessary as well?"

"The text-books must be re-written, but to suppress the works on Nazism would be ludicrous. It is the British policy to destroy them, but that is dangerous. Such action simply immortalises a work by making it scarce."

"Would you say that German parents could be trusted to bring up their children in a democratic rather than a totalitarian form?"

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Top: Dr. Kurt Schumacher—"not as powerful as Britain would like." Above: "Nearly every university building is in rubble"—typical destruction in Berlin