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Germans on Germans

THE strangest piece of propaganda that has so far appeared in English must be a book just off the presses of Allen and Unwin, London: *German versus Hun*, by Carl Brinitzer and Berthe Grossbard. This book, which is most attractively bound and printed, runs to 270 pages, and from the first page to the last consists of bitter things said about Germans by Germans. For example: a remark by Nietzsche in 1887 ("What a treat is a Jew among the Germans!"); one by Schopenhauer in 1851 about German writers ("Doltish, industrious charlatans, scribbling respectable nonsense, without wit or merit"); a now pathetic remark by Börne that "one is freer in prison in France than at liberty in Germany"; a statement by Werfel on the eve of the war that the present generation of Germans would "promptly slaughter their own children if they were required to do so by a philosophy armoured with power and with scientific trimmings." On a rough count there are about twelve hundred of these pronouncements ranging in time over three centuries and in authorship from Luther to the Fuhrer himself. And they have of course been collected by Germans.

But this is just attacking an enemy with a backfiring gun. For every bitter remark made about Germany by some German one could, by searching, find two made about England by some Englishman—first because the volume of our literature is greater, and second, because our liberty to speak is many times greater. From Swift alone, or Carlyle, or Dickens, or Shaw an industrious German could collect almost as much verbal explosive as there is in this whole volume; and when Mr. Duff Cooper in the foreword calls it "the truth about Germany," he invites every German, and for that matter every Englishman, to ask if Rudyard Kipling's notorious remark was the truth about Queen Victoria or one of Cromwell's speeches the truth about parliamentary democracy.

The boomerang in fact hits us harder than that. If these things about Germans are true, as perhaps half of them still are, the fact that they have been spoken by Germans makes nonsense of the argument that there are no free German minds. If they are not true, or not true to-day—mere survivals and anachronisms dug up from a part as remote and unreal as our own—the more prominence we give to them the more plainly we show that the people to whom they originally applied are now dead. It is not necessary to fake charges against Germany, and it is tempting Providence to trail our coat back three hundred years.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible, and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send in their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

"BLACK RECORD."

Sir,—One of the three correspondents in *The Listener* of August 8 who attacked "Audax" of Auckland for his criticism of Sir Robert Vansittart and his "Black Record," suggested that "Audax" left the book alone because he found its arguments too strong. This is pure bunkum. They are as easy to answer as Dr. Goebbels's arguments that the Germans are a super-race. In fact, they are in essence the same. I wonder if your three correspondents realise that by supporting Sir Robert and his pamphlet they were supporting that very theory of racialism which Hitler and Goebbels and their crew embrace and which is so repugnant to all free and intelligent people. Sir Robert himself may deny any intention of expounding a theory, but actually he has done just that. He seeks to prove that the Germans are by nature barbarous and inferior: the Nazis, on the other hand, seek to prove that the Germans are by nature superior to all other races. The conclusions are different, but the theory is the same, and the results equally absurd and obnoxious.

If he had been content to deal only with the baleful influence of Prussia on Germany, Sir Robert could have made out a case of a sort—though even here it is well to remember that, while Bismarck waged three wars, Louis Napoleon waged four, and that France, not Germany, was regarded as the militaristic menace to Europe in the 17th century, and from the French Revolution up to 1870. But Sir Robert goes back to Tacitus in an attempt to show that Germans are predatory and bellicose because they are born that way, quite forgetting that we British came from exactly the same racial stock, and that the ancestral vices of the Germans must also be our ancestral vices, except that perhaps we added to our share of original bellicosity by importing a ruling class of Normans!

Sir Robert's type of propaganda is, however, to be deplored most of all, because it plays right into Hitler's hands by uniting the German people even more strongly behind him. We may be sure that Sir Robert's views have been widely circulated in the Reich, in order to make the Germans willing to die in the last ditch rather than surrender. Captain Liddell Hart made this clear when he pointed out last year that the Nazis are able to say to the German people, "If we disappear, the British will give you hell, and the Treaty of Versailles will be a feather-bed compared to a Treaty of Berlin drafted by Sir Robert Vansittart."

Fortunately, Sir Robert has now retired from his official position, and I hope it will be found, when the full story is told, that he was encouraged to do so because his activities as a propagandist had proved embarrassing to the British Government and prejudicial to the democratic cause.—"AUDAX II" (Wellington).

Sir,—Seeing that the argument is slightly one-sided, I would like to reply to those misguided individuals who have so far let their super-patriotism carry them away as to swallow Sir Robert Vansittart's "Black Record," "rod, line and sinker." The text of E. A. W. Smith's letter rather refutes his supposition that he and other "Black Record" supporters are (to quote him), "ordinary men of the world."

The German Minister of Propaganda, a man whom, I presume, Paul Nicklinson and his colleagues do not love, uses the same type of propaganda as "Black Record." We are taught to despise this low form of strategy, and yet, when such a book is published, especially by such a type of man as Sir Robert Vansittart, we find those who will swallow it without even the proverbial pinch of salt.

As for the suggestion that "Black Record" be used in our schools, I always understood that our nation was fighting for freedom. Nazi children may be brought up that way, perhaps. But in New Zealand I hope it shall never be. Surely those who wish to duplicate the Nazi methods must have some of the Nazi traits within them.

Anonymity is poor audacity, as E.A.W. Smith says, and Smith is a pretty hard name to trace.

—JOHN F. JOHNSON (Summer).

BIBLE GENEALOGY.

Sir,—My object in giving examples of Egyptian civilisation and culture (*Listener*, May 23) was to show that the dates, which from a study of Biblical genealogy were set by Bishop Ussher at 4004 B.C. and 2348 B.C. respectively, could not possibly be correct since the oldest of civilisations has flourished continuously from centuries before those dates. Moreover, a fact which seems highly significant is that nowhere in African and Egyptian mythology or religion is there any record of such a deluge. Archaeological discoveries have shown that at some remote period a flood, purely local, did occur in the Euphrates valley, and obviously this is the deluge of Sumerian and Babylonian legend, later introduced with embellishments into Hebrew literature.

Speaking of Ussher's date for creation, *Everyman's Encyclopaedia* says: "The value of such a method of computation (that is adding together the years in the generations of the Patriarchs in Gen. 5) is now considered to be nil; the beginnings of life must have taken place many millions of years ago, and man has been differentiated from other animals for at least 100,000 years." If the dates of the Biblical creation and flood, presuming that they did occur, are remote and obscure, and the events obviously in the realm of myth and legend, what credence can be placed in Biblical Genealogy? Evolution, which precludes any such belief at least has scientific backing, but the idea of a special creation is what Chapman Cohen calls a "verbal splash." R. Heal recognises this position of early Old Testament dates, but W. Pettitt, E. Stinson, and "1066" still cling to the now generally discredited fundamentalist view.

However, as regards R. Heal's contention that "no scientific discovery to date has been found to disprove this unique book," I would ask what has been the verdict of science on geocentrism, demonology, witchcraft and wizardry, etc.? Did not Huxley say "that extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science like snakes beside that of Hercules?" As for W. Pettitt's accusation that I have made facts of a mere congeries of allegations, may I suggest that he is taking a shot in the dark. Let me quote directly from Sir Leonard Woolley's book, "Digging up the Past," where he says: "the whole history of Egypt has been recovered by archaeological work, and that in astonishing detail."

In conclusion let me refer the defenders of Biblical genealogy to Matthew Chapter 1 and Luke Chapter 3, where the genealogies of the founder of Christianity will be seen to be utterly at variance.

—L. COONEY (Auckland).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

POINTS FROM LETTERS

"Elephant and Castle" (Gisborne) and "Two Old Country Listeners" (Waituna West) write expressing appreciation for Big Ben and hoping that he will not be silenced. "Little Audrey" (Kumara) suggests that the chimes are "like medicine—nasty but necessary."

"Britisher" (Raglan) wants to know why we have so much Italian music when there are so many excellent "old British songs" available.

Ada Darlow (Birkenhead) wants to know if *Dad and Dave*, "the only serial to remind us of our childhood backblocks days," could not be broadcast before elderly people and semi-invalids have gone to bed.