

BRITISH ACADEMY

Report on visit to Germany by Sir Harold Bell and Sir Charles Webster

We present the following report on our mission to Germany in the belief that a written record will provide a better basis for discussion than a merely oral statement.

1. Owing to circumstances beyond our control it was impossible to time our visit before the second half of September, and the professional duties of one of us made it necessary to be back by the 6th October. The limited time at our disposal compelled us to abandon our original intention of visiting the American Zone, and even in the British Zone the itinerary arranged for us, in view of the difficult transport conditions, prevented our seeing Hamburg or Münster. To save time we went out by air, flying on the 18th September from Northolt to Berlin, which we reached at 2 p.m. At Berlin we spent a full week. This was longer than was necessary for our purpose, but the officials of the Education Branch were anxious that we should attend a two-day conference of the University Education Control Officers on the 24th and 25th. This conference, on the second day of which representatives of the American, French and Russian Zones were present, we found both interesting and informative; and though education as such was not the primary object of our attention the conference afforded us an opportunity, which we took, of stressing the importance of research, a point hardly dealt with in the report of the Association of University Teachers and one which we felt was in some danger of being overlooked by our Control Officers. It is clear that reform is needed in the German universities and that, for reasons stated below, research is at present difficult, but we emphasized the fact that research must go hand in hand with instruction and that no reform is likely to be successful if it ignores the great traditions of German scholarship. We venture to think that some effect was produced.

On the day after our arrival we saw Prof. Stroux, the Rector of Berlin University, who is also President of the Deutsche Akademie. He kindly arranged a meeting of representative scholars for the 23rd September. This was held in the (temporary) Senatssaal of the University and was attended by 27 Professors and others. After opening speeches by Prof. Stroux and one of ourselves a very full and fruitful discussion followed, and we were subsequently entertained to lunch in a "club for intellectuals" established under Russian influence in what used to be von Papen's Herrenclub. The atmosphere throughout was most cordial and welcoming.

During our stay in Berlin we had opportunities of discussions with Mr. Birley, and one of us visited the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. The other paid a visit to Meinecke. This grand old man, though rather deaf and with failing eyesight, has already produced a book on the Hitler régime since the end of the war and is engaged in writing an introduction to a study of the revolution of 1848 now being made by the Archivist of the City of Berlin. By the action of the British Government, procured by the suggestion of a member of our Academy, he is now living in reasonable comfort at Dahlem after having endured much hardship at the end of the war. He sent warm greetings to his English friends.

We left Berlin by the night train for Hanover on the 25th. At Berlin a car had been placed at our exclusive disposal, and another

*Formerly the Preussische Akademie. The claim implicit in the change was criticized to us in other German Universities.

met us at Hanover, in which we went on to Göttingen. The time of our visit there was a little unfortunate in that the Rector and other members of the University, after the conclusion of the summer school, were absent on holiday, but we saw five Professors, from one of whom, Kahrstedt, we obtained useful information concerning the Göttingen Academy and various publications.

Having done all that seemed possible at Göttingen by the evening of the 27th, we left the following morning for Bonn, where we remained till Saturday the 4th October. On the 29th we met the Rector, Prof. Konen, and the Deans of the Faculties and also Hertz, Professor of Celtic Studies. Subsequently, by invitation, we visited certain Professors at their houses and had further opportunities of discussion. On the 1st October we visited Cologne, where a meeting with the Rector, Prof. Kroll, and four other Professors had been arranged. Later we were taken round the University and shown the Seminars and the Archaeological Institute. On the 2nd, following an invitation from the French representative at the Berlin conference, we motored to Mainz and inspected the University recently established there. We were conducted by M. Armand, the French Education Officer, and the Pro-Rector. Throughout our visit to Germany we met with every kindness and a warmth of welcome which was certainly genuine and spontaneous.

2. We assumed that the objects of our visit were as follows:-

- (a) To make contact with German scholars and so help to re-establish the unity of European scholarship.
- (b) To ascertain the conditions prevailing in the learned world of Germany, the possibility or otherwise of fruitful research, and the main difficulties with which scholars have to contend.
- (c) To invite suggestions which we could submit to the Council of the British Academy for its consideration.
- (d) To obtain information concerning the great undertakings of international concern which are centred in Germany.
- (e) To enquire as to the desirability and possibility of mutual visits by scholars of the two countries.

3. In the first of these objects we feel that our visit was eminently successful. As already said, we were everywhere received with great cordiality; gratitude was freely expressed for our action in coming, and several people, particularly in Berlin, where the University is in the Russian Sector, spoke of the spiritual isolation in which they had been living and which our visit had done something to remove.

The teachers whom we met were of course all unanimous in condemning in the most uncompromising fashion the Nazi régime. But they were, for the most part, seeking to restore a past which has vanished for ever rather than to adapt their institutions to the new world that now exists. It is right that they should seek inspiration in the great traditions of German scholarship and we encouraged them to revive them, especially in the humane studies to which they have contributed so much. Our visit was, we believe, welcomed by them because they saw our respect for what German scholarship had accomplished and our desire that it should again produce scholars of integrity and learning. But we felt compelled to point out that in our view the Universities needed to be adjusted to the great social changes which had taken place and that the scholars of the future should be sought in much larger social classes than heretofore. In order that this may be done in Germany action has to be taken over the whole field of education and in much of this the Universities have only a limited influence. But only in a few cases did there

seem to be a desire to make scholarship more easily attainable by those who had not had the same advantages as themselves. The educational standard of the entrants is of course at present lamentably low. One Professor called the new entrants "barbarians" and wished to restrict his teaching to a favoured few. But unless the scholars can find a way to interest the mass of students in their disciplines and to find means to educate those who show the most aptitude for them, the great tradition of the German Universities will die out completely for lack of new recruits.

4. We were impressed by the difficulties under which scholarship labours in Germany at present. The shortage of paper in the British Zone is calamitous. Mr. Birley told us, for example, that if every child at school in the Zone were given only one sheet of paper per day this would require four times the total amount of paper available for every purpose. A questionnaire circulated to the students of Cologne University shows that only 27% have enough exercise books to take down adequate notes of the lectures, only 41% enough for their exercises. Nor is there enough paper for doctoral theses. The supply in the American Zone is slightly but not greatly better. The French and Russian Zones are probably better supplied. Naturally this paper shortage militates against research.

Even more serious is the lack of books. Of all the University libraries in Germany only five, Erlangen, Greifswald, Halle, Heidelberg, and Tübingen, are undamaged; at Cologne and Marburg the damage is slight. Some, like Bonn, Giessen, Hamburg, Munich, and Würzburg, are totally destroyed. Seminar libraries, municipal and state libraries, have suffered equally. Even where no serious damage has occurred the isolation of Germany from the rest of the world has entailed the almost total lack of recent publications; indeed more than one person stressed the difficulty of even discovering what works of importance had appeared during the war. A difficulty in the way of publishing, besides the shortage of paper, is the insufficiency of electric power; indeed we gathered that in some cases this is even more serious than the lack of paper.

A further difficulty is the shortage of university staffs and the urgent claims of teaching as against research. Twelve years of Nazi dominance, the war, and the process of denazification have led to many gaps in the ranks of the teachers. There is a special lack of highly qualified younger Dozenten; and this fact not only makes drastic reform more difficult (since the older Professors, who predominate, naturally prefer the old ways) but probably means for the Professors more lecturing and less time for research. Despite the existence of a numerus clausus, the number of students is large. At the University of Mainz, only recently established, 6000 have registered for the coming session; and we heard elsewhere of seminar classes of up to thirty or more students. The low standard of scholarship among the students already referred to entails much instruction of a comparatively elementary character.

So far as our observation extended it would seem that it has been easier to resume research in classical and humane studies than in mediaeval and modern history. A greater proportion of teachers in the last subject, which was already in a somewhat precarious position, were removed by the Nazis and of those who remained a greater proportion identified themselves with the Nazi régime and cannot, therefore, be now allowed to continue in their posts. It is very difficult to find younger men to take their place and there seems a certain reluctance for teachers to specialize in the 19th and 20th centuries and thus be compelled to put forward views which may be considered by one or more of the parties of the present day as hostile to their purposes. Nevertheless in our discussions we pointed out the necessity for the objective study of recent modern history and in particular the period 1919-1939. When this point was made, there was generally full agreement, but it is perhaps natural that there seemed

to be little sign of preparation for such study. The lack of documentation and books in modern history was most noticeable. It is almost impossible at present in the Universities which we visited for such study to take place. It may be hoped, therefore, that the British Government, in the British Zone at any rate, may supply the Universities with as many British official publications as they can make available. They would be eagerly read by students and gradually some of these might be led to make a serious study of the subject.

We were not able to make any very serious review of the position of the social sciences as a whole. In one University (Cologne) they had a special faculty but in the others they were as before part of the legal faculty. A chair of political science has been established (on paper) at Göttingen, but so far it has proved impossible to fill it. At Münster the students themselves have expressed a desire for a chair of social science. Some study in economics is certainly going on but here again it seems certain that modern treatises and statistical material are lacking. Since movement even within the zones is very difficult it is not possible for teachers and students to go in search of it as one teacher bitterly complained. The suggestion was made by us to the Conference of University Officers that it might be well to set up Institutes for the study of some of the social sciences such as existed before 1933 at Berlin, Frankfurt and Hamburg. These should be loosely connected with the Universities but with more control over the curriculum and appointment of teachers than would be possible if they were Faculties. We understand that one such institution has been set up at Dortmund in connection with the University of Münster, which is specially designed for Trade Unionists. The Germany of to-day provides in itself so much material for the social scientist which even limited local surveys could at least illustrate and make tangible. But our visit was too short for us to ascertain how far the teachers of these subjects were alive to their opportunity. We were given at one University an interesting summary of the social and economic position of the students, based on a questionnaire.

Berlin University is in the Russian Zone of Berlin and Mainz is in the French Zone. We also heard an exposition by Russian and French officials of the methods being used at the Universities in their sphere of influence. So far as the Russians were concerned it was clear that the intention was so to reform the Universities that they might eventually reflect the view of the Communist party, though the older teachers of humane studies do not appear to be much interfered with at present. The new University of Mainz shows admirably how much greater value the French Government attaches to intellectual matters than the British, but their control though more subtly exercised seems to be pretty complete. It is of course necessary to remove the Nazi influence from the Universities. But we thought it our duty to defend the academic freedom of teachers and scholars once they had been appointed. We believe that this principle is fully recognized by the British authorities and that their method of using influence rather than authority is likely in the long run to produce better results if they show the same enterprise and understanding as the French.

5. As regards (c) we shall deal with suggestions made to us at the end of this report. Under (d) our visit was certainly fruitful in eliciting valuable information. Despite all the difficulties detailed in the last section the prospects are encouraging in the sphere of classical and mediaeval studies. A new publishing firm for books of a scientific character has been established under academic auspices at Berlin, where also a Research Institute for Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy has been set up. At Bonn a Papyrological Institute is being established. It is hoped to resume publication of Klio at Wiesbaden (Verlag Dieterich), and a new periodical, Athena, specializing in inscriptions and papyri, is planned by Lütze (at present at Minden). Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll is being continued by the same pub-

lisher as of old (information can be obtained from Conrad Ziegler, Hollemann Promenade 12, Osterode, Harz). All the manuscripts written for it have been preserved, and if paper and power can be obtained the printing can be started at once. At Berlin we were taken to a room in the Academy where work was proceeding on the Corpus Inscriptionum. At the moment possibilities are limited, and the work in progress is largely that of indexing and the like. It is proposed to finish old undertakings before embarking on new ones, first the inscriptions of Middle Greece, then those of other districts. The corpus of Macedonian inscriptions has also been started, and a supplement to the inscriptions of Thessaly is hoped for. The Egyptian Dictionary has been completely saved, and Grapow, in collaboration with the Swedish Academy, is editing it, helped by some assistants. At present a new German-Egyptian index is being prepared. Coptic and Arabic indices are finished. The MS. of Wilcken's collection of Ptolemaic papyri (U.P.Z.) is in Klaffenbach's hands, and Schubart has been asked to continue the work. Work is to be resumed this month by the Kirchenväterkommission, which has an ambitious programme. Unfortunately the deaths of the editors of some volumes have left gaps not easy to fill, and it seems probable that progress will for some time be exceedingly slow. The MS. of the Wiegendruckkatalog has been fully preserved, and work can be continued. There are, however, two serious difficulties: (i) Only a small number of incunables can at present be consulted; the majority are in the American or the French Zone, others in Silesia, where also is the whole Handapparat. (ii) There is a shortage of expert workers, most of whom are in Western Germany. The promoters would be grateful for any help, whether in the way of textbooks or in grants of money. Prof. Stroux explained to us that the standpoint of the German Academy is that it wishes to continue to be responsible for the undertakings begun by it. Co-operation by other German academies and similar bodies might be useful and acceptable, but the Academy is not prepared to surrender control to an international body.

The building of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut has been badly shattered, though a few rooms have been repaired and are now in use. The Institute continues its work, and two volumes of its series are in the press. The Göttingen Academy is much hampered by shortage of paper and electric power, and there is no prospect at present of any publication of the G.G.A. or the Nachrichten, so far as humanistic studies are concerned, though the Nachrichten for 1945 have just appeared.

Lastly we may mention that Dr. Haenisch of the State Library, Berlin, kindly sent us a typed "Liste der bisher in Deutschland erschienenen geisteswissenschaftlichen Zeitschriften", which will be on the table for consultation.

6. It remains to state our general conclusions and recommendations, having regard to the suggestions made to us in the course of our tour.

(i) The prevailing impression and the central problem is the urgent need of books. In comparison with this all else is of minor importance. Unfortunately this difficulty is particularly intractable. It is quite impossible for Germans to buy foreign books, and our own position makes international transactions very hard for us. The suggestion most frequently made was exchange, which is indeed at present the only method; but here the obstacles are great. As a preliminary it is necessary to know what books are most needed, and as already said German scholars are not at present well informed as to recent publications. The most hopeful suggestion in this respect was that it should be made possible for young Docenten to come to England, visit libraries here, and make lists of recent works which would be welcomed. This seems a matter in which the British Council might perhaps be of assistance. Other suggestions, as that some English scholar should supply information concerning recent literature, that

the British and German (Berlin) Academies should exchange information, etc., would assist individual institutions only and would not be of general utility.

Before actual exchange can begin it is necessary to find some standard of value, however rough and ready. Exchanges are actually proceeding in some cases, e.g. between the Berlin State Library and the Bodleian, and a suggested rate of exchange is to take 1 Mark as = 1 shilling. Thus an English book published at 10s. would be roughly equivalent to one in German at 10 M.

A distinction must be made, in this matter of exchange, between new books and old ones. It was pointed out to us that many libraries in Germany have duplicates, as have British libraries, and in such cases exchange might be comparatively easy without exact comparison of cost. It is more necessary in the case of new books, which would have to be purchased, to fix a definite rate.

A further problem is that of manuscript sources. Germans can visit England only with official help and authority, and they cannot possibly purchase photographs of the MSS. they wish to consult. Here again exchange was suggested, and here too the difficulties are formidable.

Something can be done by individual exchange between single scholars and institutions, but clearly the problem can be dealt with as a whole only by the establishment of some central organization in each country to arrange the mutual exchange of (a) books and periodicals, (b) photographic reproductions (microfilms, photostats). This suggestion was indeed made to us. Such an organization could fix a general rate of equivalent values, could supply information as to facilities available, and could receive applications and arrange contacts. It is obvious that the British Academy could not itself undertake this task, but it might sponsor an appeal for the establishment of such an organization and appoint representatives to any committee (on which the principal universities and libraries should be represented) which might be set up. We are aware that this is a proposal which raises large issues and we mention it with reserve, but we see no other effectual way of remedying the difficulties which beset learned institutions in both countries, and we would ask the Council to consider it seriously. It must, however, be added that the division of Germany into zones militates against the effectiveness of a central organization on that side.

(ii) It was clear to us that an exchange of visits would be welcome. The summer schools have been a success. Not the least of the gain from them has been that of the students themselves, who have had the opportunity of meeting young people from other countries, with other points of view than their own, but the teachers also, on both sides, have probably benefited from the contacts established. We have already mentioned a scheme for visits to Britain by young Docenten on bibliographical explorations, and we believe many German scholars would gladly take advantage of any opportunities to visit British colleagues. It is clear from our own experience that visits to Germany by British scholars would be warmly welcomed.

(iii) Lastly we would wish to suggest that a German scholar, distinguished alike for his scholarship and for his integrity, be invited to visit London and lecture, whether in German or English, to the British Academy.

(Signed) H.I. BELL
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