

December 4, 1945

At the end of the Holy Mass the German priest says a prayer for the victims. He asks the Lord to enlighten us with the eternal principles of truth from which justice vanquished and the victor must come. Newspaper correspondents, even official reports (for instance, Mr. Price) again and again say that the German people remain dominated by the Nazi spirit and that there is no other movement to speak of. If that is true, the German priests would appeal to eternal principles in which they themselves or at least their people do not believe.

Only a few months ago the same priests, in silent prayer, asked for their salvation from the threat of complete extermination by Nazism. Under the Nazis, in place of the Divine command others were substituted, containing the opposite to the laws of Sinai and all that the natural conscience demands from us. If the Nazi philosophy would actually have penetrated the flesh and blood of the German people, what terrible people would have developed. Thousands of years of culture, especially of Christian culture, would have been extinguished. These people, as the strange Colossus of iron and steel, keeping the sword and whip in their hand as symbols of war and destruction, beating, suppressing and exploiting - these people, horrifying the world, would have existed among the people of the world. The cross would have disappeared, the churches would have been transformed into movies or theaters. The entire Christian past would have been taken from the conscience of the masses. These were the plans "made in Germany" and not the product of an anti-German imagination (Archbishop Groeber. Friburg. in his pastoral letter of June, 1945).

The German Catholics are very well aware of the approaching decision whether the world may find the way back to absolute moral values or may crash. In all announcements of the church and of people close to the church this need for submission to absolute moral values appears to be the focus point. The pastoral letter of Bishop Albert Stohr of Mainz, the idea is expressed as follows:

"In the life of the individual and of the community there are rights neither established by custom nor by state but based on the God-given nature of man and existing independently from the individual principles of each individual community. As much as we support the endeavors to combine all members of the community, we have to stress the dignity of the free individuality. We believe in the philosophy of Bishop Ketteler - 'The dignity of the state depends most on the personal dignity of each of its members. A body whose limbs are sick cannot be sound. As a house built with bad stones cannot be a secure structure, a community of human beings cannot have a high moral dignity if the human dignity of the individuals is suppressed.'

What did the German church do to sustain the faith in these principles during the Nazi time? Bishop Stohr and other bishops refer to the many words of warning which the bishops sent to the Nazi government. Among the lower clergy and laymen very sharp criticism of the weakness of the bishops, especially at the beginning of the Nazi period, can be heard. The most famous professor of church history, I am told, formulated this criticism as follows:

'For the first time the church withdraws when attacked by heresy. However that may be, it is already certain that the decisive actions to save German Catholicism against the most powerful and ruthless attack ever made against

"who were otherwise deprived of their community life. They made a virtue out of the demand of Nazism that the church has to withdraw out of life to the sphere of the sacraments. They developed our transcendental philosophy to the utmost and completely devoted their life to prayer and to spiritual advise. Nazism was wrong in its opinion that such an attitude of the church can have no appeal to a large group of people, especially young people. Nazism overlooked that this attitude and philosophy can give people such psychological force that they can live within the Nazi Germany outside of Nazism, although they cannot politically oppose Nazism. As a matter of fact, each of these priests found among young people who suffered under the pressure of Hitler youth a surprising number of followers. They went through school and labor service where the most radical anti-church propoganda took place without being affected by Nazism. Today they appear in their communities willing to do the most difficult jobs as administrators. They can show to the full satisfaction of Military Government that they never joined the party or even the National Socialist student organization."

The German church leaders seem to agree on the following figures: the Nazis succeeded in conquering about one-third of the German Catholics. This third for the time being has to be considered as lost. "Whoever left the church under the pressure of Nazism or cowardice, or who because he was a coward did not dare any more to participate in a public worship, shall keep in mind the word of the Lord - 'Who does not confess my name before men I will not confess before my Father in Heaven.'" (Pastoral letter of Bishop Antonios of Limborg, August, 1945).

One-third of the German Catholics however, deepened their allegiance to the principles of the church in one or another way. They are affected by the spirit of

complete devotion to the supernatural life. The last one-third remained within the church but without fighting spirit and with a compromise here and there. The church certainly opens the door to them for their full return but without urging them too much, since the priests believe that these people should go through a period of probation to make sure that no one uses professed allegiance to the church for showing an actually not existing anti-Nazi attitude.

The Catholics find themselves in an absolute common front with the remaining Protestants who are under the leadership of Bishop Wurm of Wurttemberg. The two Christian groups find themselves in complete agreement in the conviction that the fight for reestablishment of absolute moral values in public life is of extreme importance. This cooperation which has been stressed^{by} the prior of a famous German monastery, excludes the possibility of a reestablishment of the old Centralist party. The two Christian groups look for a new form of expression of their philosophy in public life -- the Christian social movement. It is completely mistaken to consider this movement as the reestablishment of any political party existing before. It is neither a Rightist nor a Leftist movement. It is a group of people who do not want to oppose any one else's theories or demands against which a defensive position is taken but who want to fight for a cultural conservative but social radical European organization. They want to bring the others on the defensive in which they have remained all too long.

The movement has enough potential leaders. Concentration camps and prisons have educated a new type of political and cultural personalities. Dr. Hilbert, an outspoken Catholic, was in Buchenwalde for six years, where he met people from all other opposition camps and other European countries. In their common sufferings the new philosophy was built. Today he influences the Christian movement in

Hessen as similar persons influence the movement in Bavaria and other states. On the Protestant side, members of the University of Friburg, especially economists and historians, remained unbroken, although whipped and tortured. The reaction of all these people is not to do the same to the representatives of Nazi philosophy as they did to them, but to overcome the whole spirit from which such terrible happenings occur.

Correspondents often express their surprise that in Germany no one admits "guilt". Why do these correspondents not listen to all these people? The two most far-reaching documents on German guilt published by Germans are the pastoral letters of the Archbishop of Friburg (distress and hope) and of the Bishop of Mainz. Never has there been a more complete list of every crime committed in the name of the German people than that published by Archbishop Groeber. However, these discussions of guilt are all made in the spirit which Bishop Stohr expresses as follows: "Which human being could find out to what degree a people is guilty? Who is unbiased enough to compare guilt and excuse? With open eyes we went through the last years. We suffered inexpressibly under the fact that our people committed so many sins. We do not hesitate to do before God what the humble penitent did in the temple - to kneel and to say - 'God have mercy on us poor sinners!'. However, we have so much self-dignity that we cannot cry to the world our guilty conscience, because we learn from history how questionable human judgments are and how often a general acknowledgment of guilt have very undesirable effects. We pray: "Save us, O Lord, save your people". We come to the Lord in the spirit of humility and with broken hearts. We are convinced that He will again give us His mercy the more honestly we do penance and acknowledge guilt.

"A very serious problem for the Christian leadership in Germany today is how to find their way to the people. They complain that Military Government in our zone has given a monopoly for the publication of newspapers to one man or one group in each district and these people are exclusively people of the Left. Even the church papers in our zone (much different from the French and British policy) can almost bring nothing else but the schedule of services. No outspoken publishing house obtained a license to publish any books. The complete lack of understanding within agencies dealing with the issuance of licenses for publication becomes most clear by their statement that the printing of prayer books, of which there is a very great shortage, will be the very last to be permitted. Under such a complete news blackout it is certainly very difficult to spread the most radical anti-totalitarian philosophy there is. Mr. Price's surprise that American propaganda against totalitarian philosophy did not succeed better is understandable, because we really cannot speak of such an existing propaganda or of any encouragement given to German groups willing to fight against totalitarian influence. In discussions with Social Democrats it became very clear to me that they too would prefer if printing licenses would be given to people of different philosophies to open a free discussion, from which alone a clarification of the issues can come. A German Jesuit who suffered tremendously for his loyalty to the faith, expressed his intellectual hunger as follows: "The Nazis have made us dumb and you keep us dumb."