

Copy No. 24 of 35

No. M-151

STUDIES OF
MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Memorandum Series

Subject: *German Response to Quaker Relief, 1920*

Date: October 20, 1944

M-151 - German Response to
Quaker Relief - 1920

Study Room 115
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Washington, D. C.

Tel. Republic 5127

October 21, 1944

GERMAN RESPONSE TO QUAKER RELIEF, 1920

This Memorandum, written by Dr. Walter Fales, Archivist of the American Friends Service Committee, Haverford, Pennsylvania, was made available to the Staff of "M" Project.

We are grateful to Dr. Fales for his permission to disseminate this Memorandum to our limited list of recipients.

Minor editorial revisions were made.

Henry Field

CONFIDENTIAL

Summary

The question whether food distribution will help to make friends among the peoples of Europe has recently become a matter of scientific discussion.

"In the long run the mere distribution of food does not make friends but enemies" is the verdict arrived at by Dr. Curt Bondy, formerly Professor of Criminology at the University of Goettingen, now a member of the teaching staff at the Richmond Professional Institute of the College of William and Mary in his article¹ entitled "Food as a weapon: satellites, enemies or friends"?

The following Memorandum prepared by Dr. Walter Fales, Archivist of the American Friends Service Committee, is a further contribution to this subject. As source material for his argument, Dr. Fales has used an extensive collection of clippings from German newspapers of all political complexions preserved at the Archives of the American Friends Service Committee at Haverford, Pennsylvania.

Written independently of Dr. Bondy's theoretical analysis he also thinks that "for a lasting success in a country like Germany, projects like Penncraft² and Flanner House are more important than feeding operations in Germany itself."

1. The Left News, No. 90, December, 1943, London.

2. See R-65 in our Series.

The Social Aspect

By far most of the newspaper clippings surveyed report about the progress of the feeding operations and keep the public informed about technicalities. As a rule, this information is accompanied by some warm words of appreciation. Indeed, there is overwhelming evidence of the gratefulness the Germans felt in accepting the gifts from America. Without any exception, the articles speak of the Friends in terms of highest respect, nor is there any criticism voiced in regard to the regulations which were issued by the Mission.

There are a few points under discussion. Some complain that the children of the middle classes seem to be given preference, and they are answered that starvation has hit the middle class as hard as the factory workers. Some wonder whether 4:00 P. M. would be a better feeding time than 10:00 A. M. because it would make it harder for the parents to consider the Quaker lunch as a substitute for a meal, and also because a loss of twenty-five minutes in the morning shortened the time of instruction.

The question is raised whether it might be possible to extend the help to other groups of the population. One newspaper even publishes a letter of a teacher who thinks it must be in accordance with the intentions of the "pious Christian Friends" to exclude a child from the feeding

because he or rather his parents are not religious-minded. The editor duly brands this parochial view.

Whatever the problems which arise, however, they are dealt with in a way which makes it clear that the Friends are held to be beyond blame, and it is always the German organization, the Deutscher Zentralausschuss (DZA), which is called upon to give the answer. The authority of the Religious Society of Friends is never doubted and its representatives are held in high esteem.

One of the editorials speaks of "What an experience it is to sit across from these fine men who do not know of any enmity or hatred." They are not bureaucrats, it is stated; they know how to keep away from red tape. "They help and help and help rather than argue and talk and blame. Infamous dollarica, the country of unlimited egoism in business, has also produced the other extreme: the purest altruism and genuine humanity glowing over the old world."¹ All papers agree upon this point in grateful recognition of the humanitarian purposes which have driven the Friends to leave their positions in civil life and to live up to their ideals.

1. Karlsruher Tageblatt, June 13, 1920.

The Political Aspect

There were, however, in the acceptance of help from a former enemy country, political issues involved which gave the Germans something to think about. In order to overcome this psychological factor the newspapers kept emphasizing the fact that the Society of Friends, in 1914 and 1917 as well as before, had objected to the war, that its members had suffered for their pacifism, and that they had done all within their power in order to mitigate the terrors of warfare while the war was still on. "For 250 years, the Friends have done deeds of love all over the world regardless of national hatred. If friendship and fellowship among all nations is possible at all they have shown which way to go in order to achieve this golden aim."¹ Similar statements are repeated throughout the German Press.

Nevertheless, it was with reluctance that the help was accepted, at least in the beginning. In a city like Berlin, it was hard to find the 100,000 children for whom provision had been made. The Kieler Neueste Nachrichten comments on the fact that, on April 27, 1920, only 40,000 children had registered for the feeding. Looking for an explanation, the writer says: "Of course, it is bitter to accept relief from the hands which recently hurt us so violently. We also know that the Anglo-Saxon race likes to stage the invasion

1. Berliner Lokalanzeiger, April 23, 1920.

of Bible societies and to give public alms after having broken the backbone of a people. However, the Friends have preached against war and vandalism ever since they came into being and are not responsible for the treason of their nation."

The inhibitions became even more obvious when the English Friends prepared a relief action on behalf of German students and asked for material exhibiting the appalling need among them. The students in Munich answered this request by a statement which reveals the mentality then prevailing in the minds of the so-called upper classes. They declare in twisted terms that they are giving consideration to the fact that the Friends, in offering help, want to co-operate in an effort to undo the atrocities of war and the injustice of the infamous peace (Schandfriede). The material they were turning over to the Friends would allow them to study the effects of the peace and would support their presumptive efforts for its revision.

The students in Erlangen went further and bluntly refused any help. They said they did not want to be given preference over any other class of the population. They rather demanded the revision of the treaty which aimed "at the physical, economic, and spiritual destruction of the

whole German nation." This declaration was even topped by the students in Marburg. Not only were they too proud to accept any help for themselves but they resented the idea of the children getting help from outside. They thought that this was "incompatible with the honor of a nation which was defeated but not dishonored" and they initiated a campaign for funds which might render superfluous the support from outside. These statements, made in February, 1920, did not express the opinions of all students nor do they seem to have hampered the relief operations to any extent. But they reveal the psychological conditions with which the Friends had to reckon.

The embarrassment which some circles in Germany felt about the feeding program is also reflected in a number of articles which try to prove that the German-Americans were almost the only ones to support the relief work. "The attitude of the Yankees is as full of hatred as ever, save the Friends, pacifists and a few socialists who, from the beginning, were, on principle, against hate and war."¹

Similar editorials appeared in a number of papers which represented right-wing parties. They usually quote from letters received by German-Americans. An article written by Georg von Skal, New York correspondent of the

1. Der Türmer, January 15, 1920.

Weser Zeitung,¹ reveals how apologetic the German-Americans felt about their attitude during and immediately after the war. Some irresponsible individuals, in their letters to Germany, slightly exaggerated whatever could be said to the credit of their groups, and these letters were easily misinterpreted. The DZA met the challenge of these editorials by a statement which made it known that less than one-quarter of the money invested in the relief action had come from German-American sources.

It was most unfortunate that the idea of pacifism, in Germany, was linked up with the ideology of the left-wing parties. In a speech on "Secularized and Religious Pacifism,"² Minna Cauor points out that the basis of pacifism may be either religious or social or philanthropic or political. In 1920, the idea of a Civitas Dei or of an international order based on Christianity did not carry much weight in Germany. Social and humanitarian impulses were stronger. In the main, however, the idea of pacifism seemed to be represented by the socialistic idea of an Internationale des Proletariats. A pacifist could hardly avoid being identified as a "Marxist." Probably a great deal of political tact was required on the part of the Quaker representatives in Germany in order to avoid situations which could be interpreted as a liaison between the Friends and the left-wing parties.

1. February 26, 1920.

2. Reviewed in Vossische Zeitung, January 23, 1920.

This problem does, however, not come to the surface in the newspaper clippings. There is but one exception. In July, 1920, a number of cities arranged meetings in which Carolina Wood interpreted the message of the Friends. These speeches provoked enthusiastic comment everywhere. In Munich, however, it so happened that the meeting, brought about by the Frauenliga für Frieden und Völkerversöhnung, was presided over by women who were known as representatives of the left-wing parties. The Münchener Neueste Nachrichten, in its report on this meeting, is full of praise regarding Carolina's speech but strikes a very disagreeable note regarding the following discussion and it appears that Carolina Wood, through no fault of her own, had been drawn into a precarious situation. Less extreme newspapers report on the same meeting in a neutral way. Of course, this sort of thing cannot quite be avoided by anyone who has contact with the public.

The extent to which political tendencies interfered with relief operations became particularly clear in a case in which the Friends were not immediately involved. German children were invited to spend a time of recreation in Switzerland. In order to save their political prestige, the Germans, at first, selected good-looking children

and left the most needy behind. Not many would believe this rather incredible story if it were told by a person of less authority than Abderhalden. While the sending of German children to Switzerland was in progress the Bund der Landwirte, a conservative organization, made plans for a stay of Austrian children in Germany. The circumstances left no doubt about the political background of this step.

At once, the Swiss declared they would rather take the Austrian children and let the German farmers look after the children of their own country. Abderhalden, Swiss by birth, had initiated the sending of German children to Switzerland. Now he saw his work virtually sabotaged and revealed the facts in two articles. He intimated that the need in Germany was greater than in Austria, but that the Austrians tried to display their predicament while the Germans tried to hide it. Some American observers concurred in this statement, which if true may be derived from psychological as well as political factors.

Incidentally, the sending of German children to Denmark suffered disturbances of the same nature.

The Ethical Aspect

There is no doubt that the Quaker work in Germany bore its finest fruit in a remarkable bolstering of German

morale. The message which went with the relief operations was well understood. According to The Berliner Tageblatt,¹ Friends "make it a point that, in enjoying the material benefit of their mission, we should not forget their message--a message of love and good will, of reconciliation and fellowship among all men..... In accepting this help which is offered to us in love we should feel called upon to tax our own strength to the utmost."

In the Frankfurter Zeitung,² an article signed M.Z. closes by saying that the feeding "must also become an experience of the heart and a source of insight for the children. The teachers and those in charge should see to it; they should tell the children about the suffering and the activities of the Society of Friends; the children should conceive the spirit which enables a small community to engage in the great work of saving the children in Central and Southeastern Europe from starvation." One teacher indeed went as far as to suggest that the history of the Society of Friends should become a regular part of the curriculum in all German schools.

1. April 10, 1920.

2. June 23, 1920.

The expectation of what the spirit of the Friends might be able to achieve was high. Max Reich,¹ says: "Today Quakerism gains new roots in Germany. The old order in government and church has failed and many are seeking a new community. More and more, the conviction is growing that a sound rehabilitation of war-torn mankind is possible through the application of spiritual methods rather than through political means and physical force."

The Ostseezeitung of Stettin² writes: "The genuine pioneers of the League of Nations, the only great community which even in wartime did not know enemies but only friends and needy--now they have come to us bringing their message of good will. They are also willing and able to help us spiritually, i.e., only if the like-minded among us pull ourselves together for energetic self-help in the same spirit. This association may bring about a renaissance of our private and public life in all of its aspects if the effort is continued. Would it be possible for congenial groups to unite in this spirit and lay the foundations of a religious and ethical renaissance? This would mean salvation. Let us study the spirit and the success of the Friends."

1. Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, January 19, 1920.

2. July 16, 1920.

These and similar editorials give as much evidence as may be expected from newspaper clippings bearing out the fact that the work of the Friends strengthened the moral forces in the German people. There is evidence obtainable from other sources which shows that such words were followed by action.

The Religious Aspect

The strengthening of German morale was all the Friends had ever hoped to achieve in Germany. They had not come in order to make proselytes, and the Germans recognized this fact. "How many obstacles they put in the way of some who applied for membership only he knows who tried it."¹ It was, however, natural that the interest aroused in the Germans exceeded the social, political, and ethical implications of Quakerism. They wanted to know the depth of the religious sources which nourished the spirit of the Friends. The question was raised as to what the deepest convictions of the Friends were and whether they had a chance to spread in Germany.

Quite a number of articles deal with this topic in great earnest. Many of them betray a good knowledge

1. In Darmstaedter Zeitung, July 21, 1920.

of Quakerism and are written with heartening warmth and sympathy. A few may be mentioned:

Max Reich, Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, January 19, 1920
Dr. Margarete Rothbart, Frankfurter Nachrichten, January 30, 1920
Pfarrer Holstein, Die Post, Berlin, February 13, 1920
Jukundus Bruttler, Karlsruher Tageblatt, June 13, 1920
"Kloined," Neuer Görlitzer Anzeiger, June 25, 1920
Alfons Paquet, Frankfurter Zeitung, June 27, 1920
Wilhelm Schäfer, Frankfurter Zeitung, July 11, 1920
Anonymous, Ostseezeitung, Stettin, July 16, 1920
P. Riedel, Die Freiheit, July 23, 1920
Otto Herpel, Darmstaeder Zeitung, July 21, 1920
Herbert Kühnert, Sozialistische Monatshefte, August, 1920
Lilly Jannasch, Das Mittagsblatt, Frankfurt am Main, August 20, 1920
Anonymous, Das Neue Deutschland, Gotha, September 1920.

All writers are deeply impressed by what the Frankfurter Zeitung¹ calls "the simplicity and beauty and grandeur of the Quaker idea." They all reverence the basic beliefs of the Friends, their tendency--as Schäfer puts it--to do good rather than to rest in God, the complete absence of a creed or a dogma, or a sacrament or a symbol, of a method or a clergy, the ways of worshipping, the democratic order of their business meetings. Wilhelm Schäfer goes as far as to say that the Friends have fulfilled what Luther at first had in mind but later failed to accomplish: complete emancipation from the letter.

1. July 10, 1920.

"If this is so, I do not know why we still consider you as strangers. Why do we not stand up and say: you are what we wanted to be and couldn't." He is near the point of suggesting that the whole nation should join the Society of Friends.

The other writers do not seem to be too far away from this point. Some of them, however, in weighing this issue, ask whether the movement of the Friends is open to criticism.

Paul Riedel says that the Friends still regard the Bible as a revelation, and for this reason he wonders whether their religion would attract enlightened German workers. This objection is obviously based on an error and has nowhere been repeated. Whatever else is said in the German newspapers as criticism against the Friends hits the history of their movement rather than their principles. The criticism centers around three points:

1. The Friends form a sect; their faith does not have the power to develop into a religion of world-wide range.

2. People of the bourgeois type have taken the lead in the movement of the Friends.

3. Quakerism is typical of the Anglo-Saxon way of thinking.

1. The first argument emphasizes that the Religious Society of Friends is a sect, apt to split into minor sects rather than to expand. Riedel thinks that the simplicity of the Quaker doctrine accounts for the fact that "the Friends are in danger of splitting as has happened in America." Others seem to feel that the particular characteristics of Quakerism are prohibitive of a movement which would carry real momentum. The basis as they see it is too small. Das Neue Deutschland quotes the great German historian Ranke as saying that "Penn's religion exceeded the conceptions of his sect." The author of this article adds that "whatever has been accomplished in Quakerism has been accomplished by individuals." Such remarks are easily refuted. I looked in vain for a good representation of this oft-repeated argument. Its background seems to be the impression that the beliefs and ways of the Friends are highly individualized and exclusive.

2. Alfons Paquet, in his very mature essay, points out that Quakerism, originally a revolutionary movement of the poor, very early was adopted by the conservative middle classes and even by well-to-do people, as Fox himself compromised with the authorities of the State and favored constructive methods keeping in line with the

development of the rising British imperialism. Quakerism thus became a well integrated part of the picture of the British Empire. Paquet reports about these trends in objective fashion and is rather sympathetic.

Others turn this argument into a criticism of the Friends. Das Neue Deutschland quotes Troeltsch, who had seen a connection between asceticism and the morale of the middle classes. It had been the opinion of Troeltsch that the ascetic features of Quakerism made this religion acceptable to the middle classes. In the Germany of 1920, the middle classes had broken down; so had the ideals for which they stood. The Germans, at this time, could not be expected to be in sympathy with what was dear to well-to-do people. They were upset and more easily caught by any sort of radicalism than by the quiet wisdom of the Quakers who--as the Germans saw it--had betrayed the revolutionary spirit of their best ideals. John Bellers' motto, "Industry brings plenty," is quoted as characteristic of the way the Friends looked at life and carried on their tradition.

3. Herbert Kühnert quotes Wernle, great Swiss authority in church history, as saying: "We in Switzerland and Germany are not Friends nor shall we form Quaker communities, being the way we are. But we are followers

of the gospel only if striving for what the Friends are striving for: a life in the vigor of God rather than in rites and words. Like them, we should aim at Right, Love, Faith, Humanity. Many have said that the Friends are not really Christians because they do not have sacraments. But Christ has said: By their fruits you shall know them."

Emphasizing the first of these sentences, which, by the way, were written in 1911, Kühnert points out that the Friends, at times, have been inclined to make the transition from ethics to utilitarianism, from the spirit to the word, from the work to the profit, from a community of love to a community of interest. "No doubt, the Friends have significance in the development of practical religion or rather of religious ethics. They could unfold their activities within the Anglo-Saxon sphere where there is a tendency toward pragmatism. Although the last depth of religion is not exhausted by this spirit, theologians should not underestimate the accomplishments of Quakerism."

In a sweeping statement, the Germans like to identify the members of the Anglo-Saxon race with a race of merchantmen and expect them to produce a philosophy which will be suitable to the needs of merchantmen. In an

attempt to dissociate themselves from the philosophy of the Friends, Kühnert and others are inclined to interpret this philosophy in terms of the pattern which, in their opinion, characterizes the Anglo-Saxon race. If there is any necessity of connecting the racial issue with a study of Quakerism, we like it to be done the way the Weltbühne¹ puts it: the Friends "represent the public conscience of the Anglo-Saxon race."

Conclusion

In so short an essay, only a poor account can be given of the manifold impressions one gets in perusing this collection of newspaper clippings. I saw the main result of my inquiry in a discovery which came to me as a real surprise. May I put it this way: For a lasting success in a country like Germany, projects like Penncraft and Flanner House are more important than feeding operations in Germany itself. Of course, relief operations are important as a captatio benevolentiae. But the Germans like to go further. They apply two methods of testing a religion.

The first test questions the depth of speculation and the purity of the principles. Quakerism stood this test very well in 1920, notwithstanding rare expressions

1. April 15, 1920.

of criticism which, for the purpose of this paper, we have brought to the fore.

The other test is the question as to whether the religion is strong enough to create new patterns of social and international life. Alfred Ehrentreich¹ reports about the manufacturing villages near Birmingham which were created by George Cadbury and about the garden village near York which was built by Joseph Rowntree. Ehrentreich refers to a book by Dietrich von Dobbeler² in an effort to show that the Friends have long since experimented along lines later suggested by the advocates of a land reform (Bodenreformer). However, on the whole it appears that in 1920 the Friends were not prepared to prove by a satisfactory example that they were able to create a new pattern of community life on the foundation of their Christian belief. And this example was what the Germans asked for very, very urgently.

1. Deutsche Warte, Berlin, June 23, 1920.

2. Sozialpolitik der Nächstenliebe, Goslar, 1912.