

God; Job's comforters tried that dodge. *We* are God in such cases, and often it is *our* will, not God's, which ordains the suffering. And we are visible. Visible in our kindness and in our indifference and hypocrisy. If we fail in making our own epiphanies we run a risk of disaster greater than that of the psalmist. 'Imprisoned, I cannot escape'. We become imprisoned in the selfishness of our own narrow lives. We ourselves will be walking in darkness, none the less impenetrable for the fact that we mistake it for light.

There is no happy ending to this psalm: 'My one companion is darkness'. The unhappiness is tinged with a glimmer of hope, as we have seen. But there would have been far more hope had the man who wrote this psalm realised that God was not punishing him, that God was not far from him, not trying to drown him beneath the waves. We cannot blame him for thinking as he did. He had the misfortune to be born before Christ, as many have the misfortune to be born in parts of the world that are almost uninhabitable. No, it was not God who withdrew himself, but his friends who shrank from him. His friends may have been able to do little to take away his calamity, but he seems to find their absence a very important part of his unhappiness. Well, that man is now dead, his restlessness quieted. But the poem lives on, and it is the inspired word of God. Not a mere literary elegy, but a message. A message not merely of comfort for those of us in similar circumstances—an attitude often taken towards this kind of psalm—but a message to those who can help. For they, in a sense, are the God to whom this poor man calls in vain.

No Soup Kitchens

by Edward Quinn

Lorsque les effets d'une politique intérieure menacent de démoraliser et d'exiler des centaines de milliers d'êtres humains, les considérations de correction diplomatique doivent faire place à des préoccupations de simple humanité. Je manquerais à mon devoir si je n'attirais l'attention du Conseil sur la situation actuelle et si je ne plaçais pour que l'opinion du monde, par l'intermédiaire de la Société des Nations, des Etats membres et non membres, fasse le nécessaire afin de remédier à la situation actuelle et écarter la tragédie menaçante.

(James G. McDonald, High Commissioner for Refugees from Germany, Letter of Resignation 27 December 1935.)

McDonald's letter exposing the deep roots of the Nazi persecution of the Jews and all opponents of racialism and other heresies naturally irritated the German authorities at the time, but it was also considered by the British Foreign Office as 'a very ill-advised document' and its author 'a tiresome individual'. Not that our government lacked sympathy for the victims of Hitler's policy, but it was hoped that a smoother diplomacy might in the long run prove more helpful to the Jews themselves and in the short run it seemed far too dangerous to tackle this still little known adversary on a matter of purely internal policy. And, like Pilate, they had no time to investigate the truth behind this policy. They simply could not grasp the fact that Hitler from the beginning to end was concerned to apply with ruthless logic the *Weltanschauung* he had worked out in bad German but with utter clarity in *Mein Kampf*.

McDonald, as A. J. Sherman explains in his very full account of Britain's record on German refugees from 1933 to 1939,¹ had been appointed, in spite of his inexperience in European affairs and that *Realpolitik* which the British know how to practise quite as well as the Germans, because he might attract substantial funds from America and might be more easily refused than a British subject if he asked for relaxations on immigration into Palestine. But his very innocence enabled him to perceive a new phenomenon on the European scene. The Russian revolutionaries had massacred millions and persecuted religion in the name of Marxism, but the aims of Marxism had long been known and Russia had always been regarded as much as a projection of Asia as a part of Europe. And Western Europe had treated Jews cruelly before, dissidents had been liquidated in a variety of ways and Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* showed German Catholics what they might expect in a conflict with the laws of the state. But none of this was the result of a carefully worked out doctrine. McDonald saw little or no hope for Jews or anyone who thought differently from the new German government, based on 'the theory of the supremacy of the nordic race . . . and the conception of the absolute subordination of the individual to the state', and with a large section of the national-socialist party 'determined to revive a neopaganism opposed both to the Old Testament and to certain parts of the New'. The task, therefore, beyond the resources of private organisations, was not so much to provide hospitality for refugees, but 'to eliminate the causes of this emigration or at least to soften its effects'.

Being much more of an innocent than James McDonald, that was the way I too saw the problem at the end of 1935. Released from seven years of seminary confinement in 1933, with the details of a long course of Denzinger theology still fresh in my mind, I revised what I had learned of German in the grammar school long before

¹A. J. Sherman, *Island Refuge* (Elek, £3.80).

that, paid a few visits to Germany and started to read *Mein Kampf*. Equipped as it was with an excellent index, there was no difficulty in discovering Hitler's views on the Jews and his intentions in their regard; his attitude to the Churches was also crystal clear. Protestant and Catholic Churches were *gleich wertvolle Stützen*: equally valuable props of the state. But there could be no compromise if their ideas ran contrary to those of the state: 'Political parties can compromise; *Weltanschauungen* never'. But Christianity by its very nature involves a philosophy of life, a world-view; and, unlike any other Western government, Nazism had not only come to power by brutal means and not only offered a programme, but was determined to impose by law and force its own philosophy of life. It was perfectly clear that National Socialism was a heresy or even a false religion which must be condemned as such, if not formally and at the highest level, then at any rate by all right-minded Catholics.

Even this did not appear at all obvious to the Catholics I knew in England. The Catholic Press was certainly less enthusiastic about Hitler than it was about the other dictators, but the Editor of *The Tablet* at quite a late stage expressed the hope to me that German Catholics would imitate von Papen, 'get into the Nazi party and purge it of its radical tendencies'; and *The Catholic Times* positively rejoiced at Hitler's entry into Vienna where—it was hoped—he would break the power of international finance. I am grateful, however, particularly to *The Tablet* which published intact an article on Austria first commissioned and then dropped by *The Yorkshire Post* and after that every review or article which I chose to write on the disastrous course of events in Central Europe before and during the war. When I planned an article on 'The Religion of National Socialism' for *The Hibbert Journal*, I asked Bishop Poskitt of Leeds for permission to publish it. Permission was granted by return of post, but the bishop asked: 'Can National Socialism be a religion? If it were, wouldn't the Holy Father have condemned it as such?' This was after *Mit brennender Sorge* which did precisely that.²

When I had seen for myself what was really happening—at first only isolated examples, a Jewish family in Bonn slowly forced out of security and the respect of their neighbours, a monk at Maria Laach admitting cautiously; 'many will be lost to the Church'; but with the passing years more of the accumulated cruelty and a manifestly anti-Christian, inhuman policy ruthlessly carried out—I was even more amazed at the lack of concern on the part of Catholics. It was not a question of political action, even of stirring up governments to act. But in the simple relief of human misery and the aid given to the growing num-

²Now it can be told. Cardinal Godfrey, then Archbishop and Apostolic Delegate, always scrupulously careful in public to maintain the neutrality of the Holy See, told me privately of an occasion when Pius XI was waxing indignant about the German dictator's behaviour: 'And there was Pacelli with his hands together as if he were praying, "Oh good Lord, don't let him say too much".'

ber of Christian refugees (political or—in Hitler's sense—racially Jewish, or 'non-Aryan'), it seemed odd that the Quakers were so active while we—belonging to a universal Church and with a very dogmatic faith utterly opposed to National Socialism and its works—were slow to organise aid and certainly little interested in telling the world about the unparalleled suffering of Hitler's victims. After a while, out of the occasional assistance of the Catholic Council for International Relations there emerged a Catholic Committee for Refugees from Germany, which, after the large influx of Austrian refugees in 1938, was well supported by the Catholic public and frustrated mainly as all the organisations were frustrated by the weight of applications for admission and the insistence by the government on limiting admission to individuals who could be guaranteed not to be a burden on the economy. Perhaps, in view of the overlapping of organisations, the amalgamation of our adult case-work with that of the Society of Friends in September 1939 was not a bad thing. Children continued to be in the exclusive care of the Catholic Committee, but as secretary of that committee and later assistant secretary of the Friends' committee I felt there was something of a failure here of Catholic witness.

In December 1938, when I had been invited to become secretary to the Catholic Committee, a school-teacher friend offered to come and help with the soup-kitchens. 'But there are no soup-kitchens', I told her. 'There must be soup-kitchens. There are always soup-kitchens for refugees'. This was what made the problem so hard for anyone to cope with. There was no precedent for the movement of Jewish refugees from Germany. There was talk at one time of providing them with something equivalent to the 'Nansen passport'. But they were not escaping in multitudes or being physically driven out, like the refugees after the first world-war. Strictly speaking, they were not even a 'minority': they formed to some extent a single religious group, but alongside Protestant, Catholic and other religious groups; racial differences as a result of inter-marriage did not make them any the less German in the way that recent immigrants of other races could be regarded as legally outsiders, and in fact there were more marriages between Jews and Christians in Central Europe than we had known in England. But conversion or marriage to a Christian made no difference in Nazi Germany. 'Non-Aryans' of varying degrees, irrespective of their religious allegiance, were declared an undesirable minority by Nazi legislation and deprived of any economic and very soon physical security. They were not forced out, but most of them naturally wanted to leave. But the wealthy were largely mulcted of their possessions before they could leave Germany and the poor could not be admitted to a country anxious about the burden they would create in the midst of a serious unemployment problem.

At government level some efforts were made to persuade the German authorities to allow refugees to take with them a modest amount to establish themselves abroad, but with little effect. The

heart-breaking task of the voluntary organisations was to select among the thousands of applications those few individuals who had a friend in England who could guarantee their support for an indefinite time. A number were admitted without such guarantees if they were willing to enter domestic service, where there was no competition for employment. There were some odd results when the willing servants turned out to be counts and countesses, with a quite splendid flow of English but little knowledge of what had happened even in their own kitchens in Vienna. Nor was it easy to make large-scale plans for overseas settlement, even for refugees of lesser rank ready to adapt to new conditions. Palestine, Guiana, Northern Rhodesia, all presented difficulties of their own. America, quick to criticise European policy, in 1939 was admitting immigrants on a rigid quota system at exactly the same monthly rate as Great Britain. The South American countries were unwilling to accept Jews anyway and wanted only young immigrants capable of very hard work. One of them wrote to me of the difficulties of adaptation in Brazil: *Alles in allem, man stirbt nicht in der Hitze* ('all in all, you don't die in the heat'). One of the most appalling features of the whole problem was that any relaxation of their immigrant policy on the part of the Western countries would be instantly followed by Poland, Hungary and Rumania clamouring for a speedy solution to their 'Jewish problem'. One of the most sickening things revealed in this book is the way in which Catholic Poland, soon to be invaded by Hitler's armies, repeatedly asked the League of Nations to take its Jewish population off its hands and even finance the emigration. 'The confiscation and expulsion techniques refined in Berlin were eminently exportable', writes Sherman.

In face of all the complications, internal and external, the British record of admitting refugees is not unsatisfactory. In the period covered by this book we admitted 50,000 from Germany and Austria and 6,000 from Czechoslovakia. Perhaps a concerted effort of the Western powers to let the German authorities know from the very beginning that this internal policy was an affront to the standards on which Western Europe, for all its shortcomings in practice, had been agreed in this enlightened century, might have forced them to hesitate in their brutal measures. On the other hand, it might have hastened the march to the gas-chambers.