

O B I T E R

THE POLITICAL ASPECTS of the crisis in Germany cannot, for Catholics at least, be separated from its religious and intellectual roots. Since the war the remarkable rebirth of Catholic periodicals under unimaginably difficult circumstances gives ground for real hope.

Frankfurter Hefte still continues to be one of the most influential German periodicals. One of the articles in the September issue, dealing with the position of German students, shows that the currency reform is likely to reduce the University population by something like 70 per cent. to 80 per cent. The impotence of German students in face of this situation is attributed by the writer, to some extent, to the gap between the teaching body in German Universities and the student population. In only a few cases do the Dons have any personal acquaintance with their pupils. An article by two young Germans returned from the war stresses the spiritual plight of the younger generation throughout the world. They insist upon the fact that militarism and high finance are only the agents of a much greater evil in the world, which can only be identified with Satan. The article equally reflects what is the fundamental experience of all thinking and sensitive young people in our day—the experience of utter loneliness and the fact that freedom is only to be found in community. (*Nich-einsam-sein*). It contains also the usual complaint against the uncomprehending attitude of the older generation. There is, also, a translation, 'A Night in Prison', from Grahame Greene's 'The Power and the Glory', an article by Walter Dirks on the meaning of our 'daily bread', and an appreciation of Herman Hesse.

The July, August and September issues of *Heiland* are consistently brilliant. The July one is concerned with the problem of providence as applied to the theory of evolution. Particularly interesting is the insistence upon the limitations of a teleological notion of evolution. The September issue attempts to set the problem of Fatima on a scientific basis and examines the scepticism which has arisen in some quarters in relation to the apparitions.

Herder, the German publishers, continue to increase the debt the Catholic world owes to them. Their monthly, (in Germany, *Herder Korrespondenz*; in Austria, *Orbis Catholicus*) is probably the best documented and most international of Catholic papers. There was a conference in Austria from the 24th to the 31st of July, where priests and theologians devoted themselves to the question of the priest and the worker. The Herder account of this conference leaves one in no doubt that the Austrian priesthood is facing up to the difficulties

of the proletariat in a rare fashion. Father Alexander Bredendick pointed out that whereas the Paris mission was sending the priests into the workshops in order to peel off their bourgeois skins, in Austria the solution lay in peeling away the bourgeois crust from the parish, that the parish must remain the centre of Christian life. He insisted that parishes should be as small as was practicable, two thousand being the ideal. There is, also, an account of the new catechisms in Belgium and in France. There is a summary of the debate on the evolution of dogma, which has been exercising the minds of Catholic theologians, particularly during the past thirty years.

(1) It is pointed out that the doctrine of the Trinity involves our regarding logic as a consequence, not as a cause, of dogmatic evolution.

(2) The inadequacy of metaphors taken from Biology is as apparent as the impossibility of treating a syllogism as the final arbiter of dogma. Revelation is neither a 'seed' nor a major proposition: it is a gift.

At a conference in Munich, Professor Hugo Lang, O.S.B., said: 'Apologetics as they have developed in the last hundred years may have plenty to fear from the development of the natural sciences; Divine Truth has nothing to fear therefrom'.

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The practical readiness of German Catholics, which has been so well illustrated from the way in which parties of young Catholics have got down to the business of themselves actually building houses for homeless people, again received proof when German Catholic miners recently offered to dig three to four hundredweight of coal free for the relief of Berlin.

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DOKUMENTE is a co-operative effort of German and French intellectuals to bridge the gap between their two nations. Among the contributors have been such writers as Père Daniélou, Père de Lubac, and Bernanos.

DIE FURCH reports a recent conference at Salzburg devoted to cosmology, anthropology and the philosophy of history. Papers were read by Dietrich von Hildebrand and Oskar Bauhofer, in which he stressed the *epochal* interpretation of history.

THE MORALITY OF PREFRONTAL LOBOTOMY is considered by Fr Patrick O'Brien in *The American Ecclesiastical Review* (September). This 'butchery' (as it has been described even by those who perform it) of the nerves in front of the brain as a means of dispelling a serious psychosis is yet in its experimental stages and is regarded by many with horror. But Fr O'Brien dispassionately concludes that the operation is *per se* illicit, but *per accidens* licit. For the liceity of this lobotomy he lays down four conditions:

- (a) All other means of applicable therapy must be found unavailing.
- (b) It must be a case of a true psychosis which shows itself to be of a permanent character.
- (c) The psychosis must be 'affective' in character and truly disabling.
- (d) The after care of the patient in a healthy circle of family or friends must be assured.

This last point is of great importance as the first effects of the lobotomy are to reduce if not to eliminate the patient's normal emotional and sensitive responses; and it is only over a period of months or years that his emotional powers return and are controllable. Training and environment at this period are of the greatest consequence.

The question will no doubt receive a very thorough thrashing from moral theologians before we can be certain of the morality of prefrontal lobotomy, which has hardly in the medical world emerged from its experimental stages; but Fr O'Brien's article will contribute greatly to clear discussion and decision.

ALDATE.

DESIGN AT WORK

A calculated economy and restraint in the selection of exhibits and scale were two praiseworthy elements in this exhibition at Burlington House, although in no way restricting the range and variety of the works displayed. A word of praise for the organisers, therefore, must be inserted for their skill in contriving to create an illusion of space despite the evident limitations.

The designers themselves, who were all members of the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry, included amongst their ranks the late Edward Johnston and Eric Gill. The former was represented by his famous alphabet specially evolved for the London Transport Executive. This example summarised the essential character and purpose of the show. The intention of the artists was to produce designs for objects possessing a high degree of utility and