

OBITUARIES

Sir Philip Hartog

SIR PHILIP HARTOG, who died on the 27th June 1947 at the age of 83, left a name which should be honoured and revered in this School for centuries to come, since he was in a very real sense its Founder. True, he was never in a position, such as were the founders of the great colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, to grant an endowment or to obtain it from others; and in deciding the policy of His Majesty's Government, which ultimately led to the opening of the School, the position which he filled was no more than that of secretary to the successive committees presided over by Lord Reay, 1907-09, and Lord Cromer, 1910-17. He had been identified with the cause from 1905, when he became Secretary to the University Committee whose memorial to the Prime Minister first awakened Government interest in the subject. During this long period of twelve years Mr. Hartog (who was also filling the onerous post of Academic Registrar) was the sole permanent element. Distinguished members of the committees came and went; Reay, Cromer, Curzon, Sir Alfred and Sir Charles Lyall; and the greater and more distinguished the member, the more readily he yielded to the spell of Hartog's long-sighted shrewdness and almost missionary enthusiasm. Cromer and Curzon were his staunchest admirers. His knowledge of European Universities enabled him to see from the very outset what was necessary, and to bring before the committees the evidence of distinguished foreign scholars such as Sachau and Sylvain Lévi. He had a gift for marshalling evidence and for managing men; and his lively sense of what was practical kept the proposals on lines which the Treasury could be induced to accept. He foresaw clearly that expansion would inevitably follow. The report of the Reay Committee and all three reports of the Cromer Committee were from Hartog's pen, and the acknowledgments which both committees make of his "unwearying assiduity, attention to detail, and personal tact" are certainly not an over-statement of their debt to him. His services were throughout rendered gratuitously, though it is true that they were ultimately recognized with the award of a C.I.E. and a small honorarium. No doubt, also, it was his work on these committees, no less than his successful Academic Registrarship, which led to his appointment as the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dacca, an appointment described by Lord Curzon in a letter to Hartog as the best thing which had happened for India for many years.

It is an open secret that on the foundation of the School Hartog might, had he been willing, have been appointed its first Director. There was sometimes a wistful note in the way in which he spoke of this in after years; but he never wavered in his view that he did right to refuse and that the Director of the School of Oriental Studies must be a scholar of recognized eminence in some

field of such studies. He remained, however, keenly interested in the School ; instead of the Directorship he undertook, on the first opening of the School, to serve it for some months in a humbler capacity as unpaid secretary. He was a member of the Governing Body, appointed by the Crown, from 1916 to 1946 ; and acted as Vice-Chairman from December 1942 to February 1943, during the greater part of which time the absence of Lord Harlech and Lord Hailey on national duty abroad, together with the ill health of Sir John Cumming, made him the effective chairman. Those of us who had the pleasure of working with him during this period to secure a just settlement between the School and the Ministry of Information will cherish a memorable example of unshakeable tenacity of purpose, combined with extraordinary skill in the management of those in high position. When Hartog took charge of the negotiations, the matter had been apparently disposed of by the summary decision of a tribunal which had refused to listen to material evidence. Hartog saw the danger of attacking this decision on legal grounds, strong though they might be : “ *inter arma silent leges* ” ; men who have a great war on their hands are not much interested in the niceties of justice. It was his statesmanship which ensured the reopening of the whole matter and saw the way to a solution satisfactory both to the Ministry of Information and to the School ; and it was his strategy which ensured that in the final stages of the negotiations no less than four Secretaries of State (not to mention other members of the Cabinet) spoke up for the School.

Another memory which will long remain with those who had the privilege of working with him in those negotiations is of his wonderful vitality. He would arrive at the School fresh and vigorous after a sleepless night and would recount with glee the stratagems which had occurred to him in the small hours for advancing the cause which he had at heart ; he would work, and expect a Christian colleague to work, through the whole of the Jewish and Christian sabbaths, pointing out that there was precedent for this in the readiness of the Maccabees (I Macc., ii, 41) to defend themselves on the Sabbath. Physically he might tire, as was natural at his age ; but his brain seemed to be absolutely tireless.

It was during the war years also that he took part in the approach to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs which led to the appointment of the Scarbrough Commission : and before he died he had the satisfaction of seeing something of the prospect which the report of that Commission opens up before the School.

Hartog's education and early training were in the physical sciences ; but his mind was too keen and his vitality too strong to be confined by the imaginary borderline between science and the humanities. He was interested in all forms of liberal study, perhaps most of all in the scientific study of the art and practice of education and the correct use of the English language, topics with which his posthumous work *Words in Action* is concerned. He was happy in the width of his interests, happy in his religion, and happy in his home life. Though completely free from any tinge of self-seeking, he enjoyed such honours and

distinctions as came his way ; he enjoyed the society of his fellow men, and could tell a good story and appreciate a good story told by others. But perhaps his most noticeable characteristic was the zest which he put into the work of academic administration for which he was so pre-eminently gifted ; and he was fortunate in being able to continue working with all his faculties unimpaired to within a few weeks of his death.

One final anecdote : in 1889, when that eo-fascist, General Boulanger, was plotting to seize power in France, Hartog was a young English student at the University of Paris and the Collège de France. The students organized a big procession to the Chamber of Deputies to express their support of the Republican régime and their opposition to Boulanger ; and Hartog, not being a French citizen, modestly took his place at the rear of the procession to see the fun. But somehow or other, before they had got very far, he found himself one of the leaders and in that capacity was eventually thanked for his services to the cause of liberty. His own account of the incident was that the police had halted the procession, which thereupon turned about and proceeded by another route—in fact that his presence in the front rank was a pure accident. That is no doubt true ; but the situation was appropriate. Hartog would never have thrust himself forward ; but he was naturally a leader and would be found in his proper place.

Carl Meinhof

Carl Meinhof died in his eighty-fifth year during the last days of the War in Europe, but it was many months before the news reached the outside world. Even at this date, however, it should not be out of place to say a word of appreciation of the man himself and his contribution to African studies. Although he himself never visited the School, his philosophy was well known here and promulgated by his ardent disciple, the late Professor Alice Werner, whose name also stands in the first rank of African language authorities.

Scientific interest in African languages was almost a German monopoly when Meinhof founded his school in Hamburg in 1910 and issued his journal, *Zeitschrift für Kolonialsprachen* (to become later *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-sprachen*). But by that time his philosophy in one particular sphere, the Bantu languages, was already crystallizing. And it is here, I think, that we owe our greatest debt to him, for he pulled the study of Bantu languages out of the slough of wild speculation in which it was floundering (some of the etymologies of the early linguistic giants themselves are strange, to say the least of it), and based it upon a foundation already tested and retested by years of patient and methodic study in the field of Germanic philology. Seeing the urgent need of accuracy before any valuable study could be made of these almost totally undocumented languages, he was one of the first to stress the importance of