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Science and Intellectual Liberty

A LITTLE more than a year ago, a number of scientific workers and scholars formed themselves into an Academic Assistance Council with the intention of helping university teachers and investigators "who on grounds of religion, political opinion or race were unable to carry on their work in their own country". The Council consists of forty-two members, representative of all sides of British intellectual activity, and its first annual report, which has just been issued, is a document worthy of careful study*. Upon the Council's records are the names of 1,202 scholars and scientific workers who have been displaced. Of these, rather more than a quarter, 389, have been permanently or temporarily—in the majority of instances only temporarily—enabled to continue their work, 178 in the British Isles, 211 abroad. There remain 813 so far unsuccessful.

Although the Council does not confine its aid to those of German origin, nearly all these distressed intellectuals have come from, or still suffer in, Germany. It might seem, then, that the Germany of to-day is not a very kindly soil for the cultivation of science and scholarship. Prof. J. Stark, president of the Physikalisch-Technische Reichsanstalt, Berlin, has, however, been at some pains to demonstrate both in our correspondence columns and also in a pamphlet entitled "Nationalsozialismus und Wissenschaft"†, that, far from seeking to diminish scientific freedom, it is the mission of the National-Socialist Government to free German science from the influences which were strangling it.

It is necessary first of all to realise the distinction in the German political mind at the present time between *Germanen* and *Juden*. To *Germanen* has been vouchsafed the gift of seeing things as they really are, with the result that practically all *Naturwissenschaft* is regarded as the creation of the Nordic-German branch of the Aryan peoples. The *Juden*, on the other hand, are entirely centred on themselves, cannot, or rather will not, see things as they really are, and only respect facts which can be made subservient to their own ends. They are consequently quite incapable of making any great discoveries in *Naturwissenschaft*. It is true that Heinrich Hertz made an important discovery, but then Hertz had a Germanic mother.

* The Academic Assistance Council. Annual Report, 1st May, 1934. (London: c/o Royal Society, Burlington House, London, W.1.)
 † Zentralverlag der N.S.D.A.P. München, 1934.

We might also mention names, such as those of Jakob Henle and Paul Ehrlich; whether anatomy and immunology are not *Naturwissenschaften* at all, or the pedigrees of Henle and Ehrlich have been insufficiently scrutinised, we do not know. The result of the moral and intellectual limitations of the *Juden* has been, not only that they have devoted themselves to unreal theorising, but also that little Jewish coteries have succeeded in strangling genuine German science. One of these *jüdische Wissenschaftler-Konzerne* founded by Klein and Hilbert no doubt discouraged that stern objectivity which should characterise Nordic-German mathematics; another, controlled by Einstein and Sommerfeld, tampered with physics; a third, the Haber-*Konzern*, has strangled physical chemistry. What *Konzern* has suppressed Germanic biology is not disclosed. Anyhow, we are apparently led to the conclusion that, instead of discovering anything important, Germany has been simply putting on the market dogmatic theories, such as Einstein's theory of relativity.

It may be difficult for the English reader, recalling the often painful elaboration of genuine Germanic humour, not to suppose that "Nationalsozialismus und Wissenschaft" is a facetious essay, but the consequences of its acceptance in Germany are too plainly evident. No one can suppose, however, that this kind of 'reasoning' will be taken seriously long. Even the Committee of Public Safety was not wholly composed of Barères: more temperate counsels will prevail in Germany in good time. Meanwhile, however, a good deal of 'sand' is being thrown into the intellectual machinery of the world.

One function of the Academic Assistance Council has been to enable serious workers to escape from an atmosphere of noise and truculence and to continue their researches. The reports of what has already been done by grantees show the success of the policy. One (a mathematician) "has finished an exceptional piece of work which will make a considerable sensation when it appears and add greatly to his status". Another (a physiologist) has done work which, the referee thinks, "may well be revolutionary". Another (an art historian) "has been doing quite invaluable work"; and so the story goes on.

These are the products of a single year's work and of comparatively trifling expenditure. Were we only concerned for the credit of Great Britain and the enrichment of its intellectual life, we

might almost pray that the present vogue in Germany would be long. It would be difficult indeed to invest capital at a more usurious rate of interest—we are securing some of the best intellects in Europe, perhaps permanently. However, we all hope that the restraint of German intellectual activity will not continue; but common prudence must warn us that, for some years to come, much of the burden of maintaining the intellectual life of Europe will have to be borne by us. The Academic Assistance Council estimates that £25,000 a year for the next two years will be necessary to enable it to continue and consolidate its work. In 1931–32, according to the return of the University Grants Committee, the expenditure in Great Britain on salaries (including payments for superannuation) of teaching staff in university institutions of Great Britain was £2,856,216. The annual sum required by the Academic Assistance Council is less than one per cent of this. While it would be preposterous to suggest that the whole of the burden can be, or should be, borne by the academic staffs of British universities, and reasonable to expect that enlightened men of wealth will contribute to this deserving object, it does at least appear that the Council is not asking for a sum beyond the means of those who value science and scholarship to supply.

We doubt whether an appeal more worthy of support than this has ever been made to the educated public. We have the ordinary appeal to decent human sympathy which the story of oppression makes, but beyond that is the appeal to our imagination. The individuals suffering at present will pass away and be forgotten: the revocation of academic freedom in Germany will no more be forgotten than the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

A Poet Looks at Religion and Science

The Unknown God. By Alfred Noyes. Pp. 383. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934.) 7s. 6d. net.

MR. ALFRED NOYES is one of a not inconsiderable number of literary intellectuals who, having begun thirty or forty years ago as agnostics, have become in their maturity orthodox and practising Catholics. This spectacle of agnostic poets leaving the waste land and returning *ad limina* is a sign of the times. Now that the traditional European culture, which was