

THE QUAKER INTERNATIONAL CENTRE IN BERLIN, 1920-1942

The date was April 1917, the place Skipton-in-Craven and the occasion the annual Easter gathering of northern Friends. It was at this meeting that Carl Heath first gave expression to his belief in an active role for Friends in carrying 'the message of the Universal Christ and the humane and democratic spirit to every part of the new Europe that will arise out of the destruction of the old'¹. An integral part of these proposals was the establishment in every European capital of a 'Quaker embassy', later defined by Carl Heath as "centres of mission, service, study and interchange... setting forth anew the way of reconciliation"². The idea and the opportunity captured the imagination of Friends and within two years had been formally endorsed by Friends both in Britain and in Ireland. A Council for International Service was set up in 1918 with Carl Heath as General Secretary with the object of linking up all existing Quaker work abroad and setting up Quaker embassies³. One such embassy was established early in 1920 in Berlin initially in cramped quarters in the Mohrenstrasse.

As in the case of plans for post-war reconstruction formulated during the Second World War, however, the vision of post-war opportunities for Quaker international service in Europe conjured up during the closing months of the First proved in many respects to be unrealistic in the face of actual circumstances. Already by April 1920 the field workers in Berlin had abandoned the description 'Quaker embassies' in favour of the more general title 'Quaker International Centres' which, by January 1922, had been accepted by Carl Heath and had become the accepted orthodoxy⁴. It was the international structure of these centres that gave them their distinctive character, a feature preserved in Berlin throughout the inter-war years. But the actual role played was deeply influenced by external circumstances and in some degree by the experience and insights of the Friends who worked in them.

The circumstances which most deeply affected the work of the Berlin Centre in its early years were the near famine conditions prevailing in Germany resulting from the war and sustained by blockade and inflation. Inevitably the Centre's preoccupation with feeding and medical programmes claimed precedence over other activities. The main relief effort was administered by the American Friends Service Committee using funds made available by the United States

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Government through the American Relief Administration⁵, but owing to official American sponsorship, this programme had to be carried out separately from the relief work of British Friends. A separate and limited child feeding scheme based on the schools was organised by British Friends in Cologne in December 1920. In 1921 a preventive campaign against tuberculosis, which had spread alarmingly during the war, was organised from the Quaker office in the Behrenstrasse and extended to six other centres. The basis of this effort to contain the spread of tuberculosis was the distribution of certain essential foodstuffs, clothing and articles of personal hygiene⁶. Friends also instituted a student feeding scheme in May 1920 in premises in the Breitstrasse in co-operation with Dr. Reinhold Schairer, the head of the economics department of the Studentenschaft. Similar feeding schemes were also set up in other German universities, but in 1921 the responsibility was taken over by their World Student Christian Federation except in Berlin and Tübingen, where Friends remained in charge in conjunction with the Studentenschaft and its rival the Studentendienst⁷.

The Berlin Centre also handled food parcels from London and Melbourne sent by individual Friends to individuals in Germany, though this work proved a distraction from work on more generalized relief programmes for categories in special need⁸. In March 1923 substantial consignments of clothing, potatoes, vegetables and rye were received from Holland and arrangements for distribution in children's homes, orphanages, night shelters and welfare centres were made by the Berlin office⁹. Towards the end of 1921 news came in of the famine conditions in Russia and a letter was sent to the papers appealing for help. The result was the establishment of the 'Russenhilfe der deutschen Freunde der Quäker'. In February 1923, however, the maintenance of this programme proved impracticable and was reluctantly abandoned.¹⁰ While the child feeding programme as a Quaker responsibility was brought to an end in April 1925, there remained certain residual obligations, such as relief for Russian refugees.¹¹ The Centre also served as intermediary in a variety of other ventures. In February 1923 John Percy Fletcher reported on a Danish plan for the reception of German children in Danish families, a scheme subsequently administered by the Danish Red Cross.¹² Under a similar scheme children were received into families in Holland for periods of recuperation of two or three months.¹³

But relief operations, however demanding in time and energy, did not wholly absorb the attention of Friends at the Centre. Soon after its

establishment in 1920 the Centre was busy responding to callers and enquirers interested in knowing more about the Society of Friends and Quaker beliefs. A literature department was established initially in the charge of Corder Catchpool for the distribution of books and pamphlets on Quakerism and for translation and publication.¹⁴ Articles were written for placement in national and provincial papers.¹⁵ Workers from the Centre made widespread contacts among many sections of society, with peace organisations, which proliferated in the early post-war years, and with youth organisations, student clubs and religious groups. One colleague from the Centre worked at a social settlement in East Berlin founded by Friedrich Siegmund-Schulze in 1911 and help was also given in the establishment of a residential offshoot of the settlement at Wilhelmshagen in the outer suburbs.¹⁶

Several notable religious thinkers, such as Rudolf Otto (whose book 'Das Heilige' was translated into English by the Quaker philosopher John Harvey), Rudolf Bultmann, Emil Brunner and Martin Buber, came into close contact with Friends largely through the initiative of Joan Mary Fry and in some cases participated with Friends in conferences of various kinds during this period.¹⁷

Other close contacts were made with Alfons Paquet, playwright and *feuilleton* editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and with Gerhard von Schultze-Gävernitz, author of the 1930 Swarthmore Lecture.¹⁸ Both later become members of the Society.

With the spread of knowledge about Quaker thought and beliefs through literature, meetings and personal encounters, it was inevitable that the question of membership should arise. In many cases interest in Quaker thought was the result of pre-war contacts through residence in England and friendships with individual Friends. After the establishment of the Council for International Service in 1918 responsibility for admission to membership of persons abroad was vested in the Council and a number of applications were received by the Council in the early post-war period. As the procedure involved personal interviews with applicants, the task of arranging interviews and making recommendations fell to the Berlin Centre and was undertaken initially by Gertrude Giles and later by Elisa Behrend.¹⁹ On the whole this work appears to have been marked by a certain caution and reflected a feeling in the early years that Quakerism in Germany should be regarded as a movement within the existing churches rather than a sect in its own right. This point of view was given credence by the emergence of a substantial group of people who were not members, but regarded themselves as friends of the Friends.²⁰ An office called the *Mittelstelle*

für Quäkerarbeit in Deutschland, opened by Dr. Elisabeth Rotten, a Swiss Jewess who did not herself apply for membership until many years later, catered for the needs of such people.²¹ On 1st February, 1922, the *Mittelstelle* moved into the same premises at Behrenstrasse 26a into which the Centre had moved in the previous month and on 16-17 December 1922 a conference on the position of Quakerism in Germany was arranged jointly by the Centre and the *Mittelstelle* and was attended by 40 people. It was decided that the *Mittelstelle* should send out regular information to various groups and individuals, should arrange visits and organize occasional lectures leading to district conferences and an annual conference.²² An immediate outcome was a series of eight conferences held respectively at Leipzig (Jan. 6-7), Eisenach (Jan. 13-14), Kassel (Jan. 17-18), Barmen Elberfeld (Jan. 20-21), Frankfurt-am-Main (Jan. 27-28), Stuttgart (Feb. 17-18), Fürth/Nürnberg (Feb. 23-25) and Berlin (Mar. 10-11). These and later conferences appear to have been the joint work of the Centre and the *Mittelstelle*, but it is not possible to establish the respective roles of the two bodies.²³

Members of the Berlin Centre visited Friends and others in various parts of Germany and also called periodical field committees consisting of Friends working in different towns and at the Quaker centres in Frankfurt, Nürnberg and Dresden. Although the Berlin Centre had in practice little operational responsibility for the work undertaken by these scattered Friends, it was regarded by the home committees as their headquarters for Germany with a broad responsibility for the welfare of the workers. In January 1922 the work of the Berlin Centre was seen as consisting of the translation and publication of Quaker pamphlets and the distribution of books and pamphlets on Quakerism and subjects helpful in the dissemination of Quaker principles; the answering of letters of enquiry about Quakerism; the summoning of periodical meetings of the field committee; the tuberculosis relief programme; the student feeding centre at the Breitestrasse premises and the associated student club; the distribution of personal food parcels; correspondence with the German authorities; the work of making widespread contacts and learning about the outlook of Germans and their cultural institutions; and dealing with the applications for membership.²⁴

But the role of the Centre was changing. Already in 1922 the words 'aus England und Amerika - Kommission für Deutschland' were omitted from the Centre's letter-heading under the words 'Religiöse Gesellschaft der Freunde' as seeming to have one-sided and missionary implications.²⁵ The Centre had already become a truly international enterprise and by the end of 1922 the Centre Committee included three

German Friends. More fundamental changes were provoked by the ending of the Quaker child-feeding programme in April 1925 and by the decision taken at a meeting of German Friends in Eisenach on 22 July 1925 to form an independent Germany Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.²⁶ These changes in the environment in which the Centre operated were considered at meetings in Berlin, London and Philadelphia.

Carl Heath drew a distinction between functions rightly handled by the local Society of Friends and functions proper to the International Secretariat. These he described as 'a co-operation of nationalities for specific purposes, namely, the representation as truly as possible of the international life of men as seen from the standpoint of what we conceive the Christian religion to be...'. The functions proper to Germany Yearly Meeting he saw as lying mainly in the field of ministry, 'the local spiritual service of groups', while the International Centre he visualised as concerned with 'such things as the Danzig conference, or the study and action upon minorities questions, or the international club in Berlin, or the problem of the Quäkerverlag'.²⁷ Thomas Kelly, writing from Berlin to Philadelphia, conceived of a Centre as providing a base for the American Friends Service Committee and the German Friends. The staff would be 'in touch with all kinds of persons and movements', would travel in connection with such contacts to all parts of Germany and would respond to invitations to speak or lecture. The Centre would also maintain the Student Club, undertake publicity both in German for local consumption and in English for publication in the home countries and maintain an interest in the Folk High School movement. The Centre would offer services to short-term visitors travelling under concern and would provide a focus for foreign Friends employed at German universities maintaining contact with student life.²⁸

In April 1924 the 26 groups of Friends in various parts of Germany were loosely associated in the Bund deutscher Freunde with Heinrich Becker as secretary, which took over the functions of Elisabeth Rotten's Mittelstelle. At a meeting of German Friends at Eisenach on 22 July, 1925 the decision was taken to form a German Yearly Meeting as an independent unit in the world family of Friends. It was also decided, with the full agreement of Thomas Kelly, to remove the focal point of the new Yearly Meeting from Berlin to the historic Quaker centre of Bad Pyrmont.²⁹ The Quäkerverlag was transferred to Leipzig in charge of Heinrich Becker³⁰ and from 1933 of Leonhard Friedrich, who moved the office to Bad Pyrmont in the following year. Meanwhile, the

capacious offices at Dorotheenstrasse 2 were closed on 8 December 1924 and the employment of Ernst Lorenz, Elisabeth Rotten and Elisa Behrend at the Centre came to an end.³¹ The Centre was reopened in more modest premises at Prinz-Louis-Ferdinandstrasse 5. Apart from the Centre, the new premises provided accommodation for Berlin Friends for meetings for worship and other gatherings and for the Student Club, which continued to meet after the ending of the student feeding programme.³² Hitherto, the Centre had been managed by a Centre Committee involving all the principal workers, but with the establishment of Germany Yearly Meeting management was entrusted to an International Secretariat consisting of one representative each from the American Friends Service Committee, the Council for International Service in London and Germany Yearly Meeting.

Work with students had always been regarded by Friends as having special importance, not only because of the destitution prevailing among students in the early days, but also on account of their critical importance as potential leaders. In a letter to Carl Heath in November 1922, Joan Mary Fry wrote that 'the student situation is very complicated and very serious. The forces telling for reaction and militarism are naturally reinforced almost every day by the financial distress and it would be foolish to shut our eyes to the possibility that the supervision of student feeding may fall into the hands of reactionaries, when it would necessarily be directed on political lines'.³⁴ Students in those days included older men who had been to the front and had postponed their studies until the end of the war and numbers were inflated by widespread unemployment and a desperate search for higher qualifications acceptable in the labour market. These circumstances together with the humiliations suffered by Germany in the aftermath of the Treaty of Versailles contributed to the widespread radicalisation of a whole generation of students, which had dire consequences in the Nazi period.

The work of the Centre after the move to the new offices was largely concerned with international relations. Gilbert MacMaster had a special concern for the pockets of Germans who, as a result of the Treaty, now lived as minorities in neighbouring countries, in some cases under difficult conditions, providing a continuing excuse for irredentist ambitions. This concern led him to make numerous visits to Poland, the Baltic States, Czechoslovakia, Italy and France and to attend most of the Minorities Conferences under the League of Nations that were a feature of political endeavour at this time.³⁵ Joint conferences were organised by the Centre for the examination of border problems and other

questions of common concern. A Franco-German Conference was followed by Polish-German meetings.³⁶ Arrangements for a German-Danish Conference were called off when a new Prussian law on education provided for language rights in Danish in North Schleswig.³⁷ The staff of the Centre also maintained close contacts with peace movements within Germany and attended some of their gatherings. At the first Yearly Meeting of German Friends held at Sonnenfeld in April 1926 the desire of Yearly Meeting to take an active part in the international work of the Centre was affirmed.³⁸

Meantime the Student Club continued to be an important concern of the Centre at first in the hands of Anna L. Curtis and from March 1926 of Bertha Bracey.³⁹ The club continued to meet until 1935, when it was closed in view of the political situation. The Centre continued to provide services for visiting Friends and gave help and advice on request to other organisations concerned with contacts between Britain and Germany, such as the Wayfarer's Travel Association and the Holiday Fellowship Association, with both of which Friends had at some time been associated.⁴⁰ Beyond these specific tasks the Centre continued an administrative role and the maintenance of necessary financial records. Finance for the centres at Frankfurt am Main, Nürnberg and Dresden was routed through the Berlin Centre.

After Easter 1931 Corder and Gwen Catchpool returned to the Centre. Their first preoccupation was with the continuation of the work for reconciliation and in 1932 Corder visited France with a German Friend, Gerhard Halle, who as an officer during the Great War had been responsible for implementing a scorched earth policy in the Pas-de-Calais during the German retreat and wished to express his horror and remorse before audiences in the area devastated.⁴¹ But such activities came to an end with the accession of Hitler to power in January 1933. Corder was briefly detained by the GESTAPO on charges of subversion. After this his efforts were devoted to an endeavour to understand the motives that underlay the Nazi revolution and seemed to be attracting the loyalty and support of so many. At the same time he responded to urgent appeals for help from the relatives of those imprisoned by the Nazis, necessitating in some cases visits to the GESTAPO. Together with William Hughes and Gilbert MacMaster he visited several concentration camps and in 1935 he paid a second visit to Esterwegen to see the well-known pacifist Carl von Ossietzky, the social democrat Ernst Heilmann and some others.⁴² Financial aid from a support group in Paris for Frau von Ossietzky, who was rendered destitute by her husband's imprisonment, was channelled through the Berlin Centre.⁴³

Inevitably the rough methods used by the new rulers towards their opponents created new and serious problems. Large numbers of Jews and persons considered unfriendly to the regime lost their jobs. The arbitrary imprisonment of communists and social democrats caused great fear and anguish and often resulted in severe economic problems for their families, while the first wave of persecution of the Jews in the form of a boycott of Jewish shops and premises in April 1933 contributed to the atmosphere of fear and alarm. Many despairing people turned to the Centre for help. In London the Quaker reaction was twofold. First, a German Emergency Committee was set up on 7 April 1933 to provide help for the refugees who began to pour into the country and, secondly, William Hughes was sent to Germany in October to investigate the situation and to give to those affected such help and moral support as lay within his powers. He was provided by Germany Emergency Committee with a modest fund of about £1,500 during the twenty months of his service in Germany in this capacity, with which he made small grants in special cases of need.⁴⁴

William Hughes did not use the Centre as his base and interviewed applicants in their homes, or in cafés. Some relief work, however, continued at the Centre. Corder Catchpool received monthly remittances of £20 from Friends Service Council, which he used to help non-aryans and others reaching the Centre. In addition, he received two grants of \$215 each from Clarence E. Pickett, the General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, which he employed almost entirely to support the work of other organisations and individuals active in providing relief for the victims of persecution. A letter to Clarence Pickett written from Switzerland gave details of the organisations in question and provided a picture of the relief facilities, other than those available to the members of the Jewish community, existing in July 1936, which, as Corder himself recorded, fell sadly short of the urgent needs then arising.⁴⁵

During this period Olga Halle was recruited to help at the Centre. On two occasions she was summoned by the GESTAPO to explain her attitude towards the Jews. With characteristic courage she affirmed her belief that all people of whatever colour or race were children of God.⁴⁶ Leonard Kenworthy, too, was interrogated by GESTAPO agents on more than one occasion during his service at the Centre in 1941-42.⁴⁷ Whether the survival of the Centre was a grudging recognition by the government of the services rendered by Friends in the aftermath of the Great War, or a desire to avoid needless foreign policy complications, or a reflexion of the small scale of relief work at the Centre, or a

combination of these causes, must remain a matter for speculation. It may well be that the brief arrest of Corder Catchpool and the interrogation of Olga Halle and Leonard Kenworthy were intended as warnings not to go too far.

In July 1935 Gilbert MacMaster received word from an acquaintance that 83 members of the German minority in Memelland, a strip of territory on the German border administered by Lithuania, had been sentenced to prison for treason by a court in Kovno and were suffering from bad prison conditions. One of the prisoners was reported to have died and another, whose life was considered to be in danger, was suffering from lung infection and was unable to get proper medical help.⁴⁸ At Gilbert MacMaster's suggestion, Corder went to Lithuania and managed, after much delay and difficulty, to visit the prisons. His report, made jointly with a representative of the Howard League for Penal Reform to the Lithuanian authorities, was followed by some amelioration in prison conditions. The prisoners were released in batches and by 1938 only six of the original defendants remained in prison. Corder saw this outcome not only from the point of view of the prisoners and their families, but also as a vindication of Friends' humanitarian values.⁴⁹

After the promulgation of the Nürnberg laws, which devastated the rights of Jews and robbed them of their German citizenship, the number of Jewish families deciding on emigration steadily increased. This worsening situation deteriorated dramatically on the night of 9-10 November 1938, when synagogues all over the country were set on fire, shop windows smashed, 91 Jews killed and over 30,000 removed to concentration camps. An immense 'fine' was imposed on the Jewish community in retribution, it was said, for the murder of an embassy official in Paris by a mentally unhinged Jew. Persons of Jewish race according to German law, that is, members of the Jewish community and persons of Jewish extraction, who had ceased to belong to the synagogue and become Christians, or had no religious affiliation, were all 'Jews' in the eyes of the government and equally in danger, as were to a lesser degree persons who were the product of mixed marriages. Those who had still hoped against hope that some kind of accommodation with the regime might still be possible, or retained some vestige of hope that the situation might improve with time, now turned to emigration as offering the only remaining way of escape.⁵⁰ For the moment the Jüdischer Hilfsverein, paralysed by the arrests, closed its doors and despairing and frightened people filled the courtyard outside the Quaker Centre. A few days later Philadelphia cabled to say

that 'ample funds' were available if relief work could be organised, while London sent Ben Greene for consultations on steps that might appropriately be taken in response to the emergency. The Centre had never been registered by the authorities for relief purposes and it was considered that no substantial scheme would be possible without government endorsement. Furthermore, the Centre, for which German Yearly Meeting shared responsibility, could scarcely undertake relief work on any scale without the full concurrence of German Friends. Those who were consulted, including Hans Albrecht, Gerhard and Olga Halle and Ewald Nass, were far from enthusiastic. In any case, the distancing of any relief operation from the Berlin Centre was seen to be necessary, though the suggestion that Cologne might be a convenient centre of operations was not looked upon with favour by Wilfrid Israel and other Jewish leaders.⁵¹

The next few days brought the reopening of the Jüdischer Hilfsverein and steps taken by Pastor Grüber of the Confessional Church. A meeting was called at the Centre of 29 November presided over by Pastor Grüber, which included pastors from many parts of Germany facing despairing appeals for help from their parishioners, Professor Rutgers and the Rev. Hylkema from the Comite voor Niet Arische Christen in Amsterdam, William Hughes and Joan Clapham from Friends Service Council in London, Laura Livingstone of the Anglican Church and Luise Lieftinck of the Amsterdam Centre of the Society of Friends. A number of decisions were taken with regard to the establishment of a central office to which non-aryan Christians might appeal for help with emigration and other concerns.⁵² The result was the opening by Pastor Grüber of an office at Oranienburgerstrasse 20 in December and a much larger office at An der Stechbahn 3-4 on 25 January 1939, to which all work on emigration was transferred.⁵³ The Centre took an active part in the negotiations with the established bodies concerned with the rescue and relief of non-aryan Christians, such as the Büro Livingstone and the Büro Spiero, and discussions took place as to the future case work role of the Centre.⁵⁴ It was arranged that Hertha Israel, a German Friend who had been helping in the work at the Centre, should be transferred to the Büro Grüber at An der Stechbahn and that in future the Centre should limit itself to the cases of persons without religious affiliation, the so-called 'dissidents' and any other cases lying outside the scope of the denominational organisations. Work on such cases at the Centre was entrusted mainly to Irmgard Wedemeyer, who continued in this role until the closure of the office in 1942.⁵⁵

Meantime, the Centre had been in touch with the *Comite voor Niet Arische Christen* in Amsterdam concerning a plan to provide refuge for non-aryan Christian children in Dutch families. The Centre also took part in the arrangements at the German end for the inclusion of the children of non-aryan Christian and 'dissident' families in transports to England that were being organised by the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. It was arranged that the *Büro Grüber* should provide for the administration of such work at *Oranienburgerstrasse 20* under *Frau Dräger* and the Christian families helped in this way should include both protestants and catholics. The main responsibility for the physical movement of the children lay with the *Jüdischer Hilfsverein*.⁵⁶

Notwithstanding the pressure of work that fell on the Centre after the *Kristallnacht*, it still proved possible for members of the staff of the Centre to visit Friends in various parts of the country, some of whom were deeply involved in helping persons suffering from persecution and welcomed the chance for consultation.⁵⁷ The Centre drew up a list of some 22 Friends in different parts of Germany who were active in this work and with whom the Centre corresponded on administrative matters.⁵⁸

One member of the Secretariat made several visits to Ommen in Holland on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee, where a Quaker school had been set up to provide Jewish children with education denied to them in Germany. A visit was paid to the Vienna Centre in February 1939 partly for discussions on the relief programme.⁵⁹ In September 1938 came a visit to Prague in company with *Corder Catchpool* and *Clarence Pickett*, the General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, at the time of the Munich crisis, partly to assess the political situation and partly to visit Czech Friends at a time of great sadness and stress.⁶⁰ A further visit to Prague took place in February 1939. In the early summer of 1939 a member of the Secretariat visited Danzig with *Charles Roden Buxton*.⁶¹

Under an amendment to the *Reichsbürgergesetz* in June 1939, money was set aside by the government out of sums plundered from the Jews to finance emigration, welfare and children's schooling for Jews and non-aryans.⁶² The Centre was represented by *Frau Wedemeyer* on a committee charged with the use of these funds. There was also a Centre representation on a committee set up to deal with welfare problems among non-aryan families and also on the committee responsible for the inclusion of non-aryan children in the transports to England and Holland.⁶³

Thus by the middle of 1939 the various organisations had completed arrangements to deal, so far as circumstances allowed, with the formidable problems exacerbated by the German government in the previous November and by subsequent oppressive measures. In this work the Centre was to play a marginal part, while continuing in a supportive role of the work of rescue and relief as a whole. With the outbreak of the war the British member of the Secretariat withdrew and responsibility for the Centre fell to American and German Friends, notably Howard Elkinton, Elizabeth Shipley, who left finally early in 1940, Martha Roehn and Olga Halle. In 1940 the staff was strengthened by the arrival from America of Leonard Kenworthy. In 1941, with the entry of America into the war, he returned to the United States and the residual functions of the Centre lay in the devoted hands of German Friends. Olga Halle records that after Leonard Kenworthy's departure they succeeded in enabling but one child and one stateless Jew to emigrate safely through Lisbon, a sad reminder of the hideous fate that was overtaking what remained of the Jewish community at that time.⁶⁴ In July 1942 the work of the Centre came to a final end.

In retrospect it is clear that the original vision of a 'Quaker Embassy' was never realised. Nevertheless, in the cataclysmic years between the wars the Centre was able within its limitations to play a useful part. In the earlier years the relief programme and what was called message work occupied much of the time and thought of the Centre staff, while other activities, including international concerns, contacts with peace organisations and continuing support for the student club were also pursued during this period. When crisis struck in 1933, Elizabeth Fox Howard suggested to the International Secretariat at a meeting on 21 September 1933 that relief work, which had never been completely run down since the early post-war years, might again be expanded in response to the new emergency. But conditions were completely different from the early twenties and the idea met with unanimous disapproval from the four German Friends present at the meeting.⁶⁵ Any major co-operative Quaker relief scheme involving German and foreign personnel on the precedent of the child feeding programme would only have been possible with official blessing and it is unthinkable that such approval would have been forthcoming for a scheme targeted, at that stage, mainly at the government's political opponents and their families. Later, when the main objective of relief action was the succour of persons of non-aryan parentage, there emerged a certain tacit coincidence of aim between the government and the relief organisations. The government wanted to get rid of as many

Jews as possible and the relief bodies were trying to get them out. In these circumstances, the Büro Grüber of the Confessional Church and the Raphaelsverein of the Catholic Church gained explicit recognition as special branches of the government sponsored Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland.⁶⁶ Even so, however, it is extremely unlikely that the government would ever have tolerated a major role for an organisation sponsored by Friends in Britain or America. The continuing resistance of German Friends to any substantial commitment of the Centre to relief may be explained in part by their more acute sense of the true situation than prevailed in London or Philadelphia at that time.

But there were other considerations in the minds of at least some Friends that weighed in the scales against any substantial direct involvement in relief. In the first place, it was seen to be a diversion from the true purposes of the Centre as an instrument of contact between Friends in Germany, Britain and America and a source of information about Quaker beliefs. But some German Friends also felt that the child feeding programme, though it had brought unquestionable material benefits and conveyed a message of hope and concern, had nevertheless stamped 'the Quakers' in the minds of many as a charitable organisation, neglecting altogether its religious basis. It was feared that any renewed large-scale relief effort could reinforce such erroneous ideas at a time when the Germany Yearly Meeting was finding its feet in very difficult circumstances and establishing its rightful place in the religious life of the country.⁶⁷ Moreover, so far as German Friends were concerned, any major corporate relief programme in which they might be involved would run counter to the advice offered by the Executive Committee of the Yearly Meeting in April 1933, which included the following words: 'We urge all Members, with a full inward sense of responsibility and preparedness, to bear witness to and express this spirit of non-violence, friendship and service wherever they are brought face to face with spiritual or other needs. But we ask them to act with careful restraint and on their own responsibility and not to assume that they must act as Quakers, or could achieve more by acting in the name of Friends than on their own'.⁶⁸ Action in the face of suffering was to be a matter of individual conscience rather than corporate concern. Many Friends responded with the utmost courage to the call of conscience, in particular the 22 Friends in various parts of Germany, who looked to the Berlin Centre for information and guidance in the course of their work for the victims of persecution. In the circumstances of Hitler's Germany this steadfastness, so often unrecognized and

unrecorded, upheld and fortified many in the hour of need.

J. Roger Carter

NOTES AND REFERENCES

A shorter account of the work of the Quaker Centre by Käte Tacke and Friedrich Huth appeared in 'Zeichen der Zeit, evangelische Monatsschrift für Mitarbeiter der Kirchen', 42. Jahrgang, November 1988, and also in *Der Quäker* for June and July 1989.

¹John Ormerod Greenwood, *Quaker Encounters* Vol. 3, 200-201.

²Greenwood, Vol. 3, 214-215. These words were said at a Jordans conference on Friends' activities abroad in September 1919.

³Greenwood, Vol. 3, 204.

⁴Greenwood, Vol. 3, 213.

⁵Greenwood, Vol. 1, 221-222.

⁶Greenwood, Vol. 1, 223.

⁷Greenwood, Vol. 1, 223-224.

⁸Greenwood, Vol. 1, 219.

⁹Ernst Lorenz to Carl Heath, 29-3-23: Minutes of the Berlin Centre Committee, 9-1-23.

¹⁰From a memorandum dated 19-12-21. It seems that the Berlin Meeting was also associated with this initiative, but no other information has come to light. The Minutes of the Field Committee of 14-2-23 record that the scheme was reluctantly abandoned and converted into 'Heimathilfe'. Possibly the severe deprivation caused by run-away inflation was the cause.

¹¹Henry Harris to Carl Heath, 4-9-24.

¹²John Percy Fletcher to Carl Heath, 8-2-23: also Ernst Lorenz to Carl Heath, 16-3-23 and John Percy Fletcher to Carl Heath, 20-3-23.

¹³Memorandum, Ernst Lorenz, 13-3-23: also Memorandum, Anna Lorenz, 10-4-23.

¹⁴William Hughes, 'Indomitable Friend', 57: also John Percy Fletcher to Carl Heath, 21-12-22.

¹⁵Draft letter to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* by Joan Mary Fry, 10-3-21. It ended with a description of the Quaker message as being 'not in a tiny ecclesiastical enclosure, fenced round with creeds, but out in the great wide world of God, where His law of love always works, when men will trust themselves to its upholding power, as the swimmer trusts himself to the upholding ocean'. An article by Martha Steinitz also appeared in the *Breslauer Volkswacht*.

¹⁶See 'Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze 1885-1969: Begleitbuch zu einer Ausstellung des Evangelischen Zentralarchivs in Berlin anlässlich seines 100. Geburtstags: Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin 1985, 5-6. Cecilia Garrett Smith worked at the settlement in East Berlin: see Council for International Service, 17-12-24.

¹⁷Greenwood: Vol. 3, 258-259.

¹⁸Gerhard von Schultze-Gävernitz worked with American Friends in the child feeding programme after the First World War. Before the war he resided for some time at Toynbee Hall settlement in London. There were several other Friends who had lived in England before the war, such as Emil Fuchs, who was minister at the German church in Manchester, and Elisa Behrend, who taught at Sheffield High School. See also Greenwood, Vol. 3, 257.

¹⁹Gertrude Giles to Carl Heath, 15-1-21: Elisa Behrend to Carl Heath, 4-4-23.

- ²⁰Elisa Behrend to Carl Heath, 4-4-23. 'We here, in our Centre, are however unanimous in the conviction that the time has not yet come for the formation of a German Society...': also Thomas Kelly to Wilbur Thomas, 4-12-24 '... that it is not good for the Quaker movement to crystallise too soon is extremely important. That fluid, liberal, forward-looking spiritual movement in which Quakerism here stands is far bigger and is found in thousands of people who have no membership with the Bund and who never have heard of the Friends of the Friends. There are many, many people who probably never would unite with an outward organisation, but who belong in spirit with this group. Certainly our task, as an international committee, is with this group...': see also Greenwood, Vol. 3, 264-271.
- ²¹Greenwood, Vol. 3, 266.
- ²²Report on a special conference held at the Centre on 16-17 December, 1922.
- ²³See reports of the Field Committee held on 14-2-23 and 13-3-23. These meetings appear to have been well attended. For instance, the attendance of a public meeting in Fürth was recorded to be 500 and at Nürnberg 350. A report on the Frankfurt conference is given in Elisa Behrend to Carl Heath of 2-2-23.
- ²⁴Minutes of the Field Committee held on 27-1-22.
- ²⁵Jane Bell to Carl Heath, 28-1-22: also Minutes of Field Committee held on 27-1-22.
- ²⁶Greenwood, Vol. 3, 270-271.
- ²⁷Carl Heath to Headley Horsnaill, 8-1-26.
- ²⁸Thomas Kelly to Wilbur Thomas, 22-12-24.
- ²⁹Thomas Kelly to Wilbur Thomas, 10-7-25 and 27-7-25.
- ³⁰Greenwood, Vol. 3, 271.
- ³¹Council for International Service, 31-12-24, minute 397.
- ³²Gilbert MacMaster to Wilbur Thomas, 27-11-25.
- ³³Thomas Kelly to Wilbur Thomas, 4-12-24: also Minutes of the International Secretariat 19-1-22.
- ³⁴Joan Mary Fry to Carl Heath, 10-11-22.
- ³⁵Thomas Kelly to Wilbur Thomas, 2-7-25, reporting on the third international conference of Friends held in Berlin on 27-28 June 1925. At this meeting the respective roles of foreign and German friends was discussed. Thomas Kelly detected a danger of paternalism on the part of the former. Reference was also made to the need for co-operation with German peace organisations: see also Thomas Kelly to Wilbur Thomas, 1-4-25, on the problem of dissatisfied German minorities on Germany's borders.
- ³⁶There are numerous references to the German-Polish conferences, of which at least three were held, in the minutes of the Council for International Service in 1926 and 1927. A report on the conference held on 12-13 February 1926 appears in the minutes of the International Secretariat held on 17 February 1926.
- ³⁷Minutes of the International Secretariat for 24-2-26.
- ³⁸Minutes of the International Secretariat for 13-8-26.
- ³⁹Bertha Bracey to Fred Tritton, 4-3-26. Bertha Bracey moved from Nürnberg to Berlin on 8-2-26.
- ⁴⁰The secretariat's offer of active co-operation with the Holiday Fellowship Association is noted in the minutes of the Council for International Service for 20-4-27: see also Greenwood, Vol. 3, note 66 on 379.
- ⁴¹See the account of this episode written by Gerhard Halle himself on 30-12-53. The enterprise appears to have been suggested by Corder Catchpool, but the impetus certainly came from Gerhard Halle's conscientious longing to seek forgiveness from

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those he had wronged. Another moving account appears in the diaries of André Trocmé, the French protestant pastor at Douai, who organised the tour.

⁴²William R. Hughes, *Indomitable Friend*, chapter 6, *passim*.

⁴³'Carl von Ossietzky und das politische Exil: die Arbeit des Freundeskreises Carl von Ossietzky, 1933-1936', 58.

⁴⁴'An account of the work of the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens, first known as the Germany Emergency Committee of the Society of Friends, 1933-1950', Lawrence Darton, FCRA 1954, 5-6.

⁴⁵Corder Catchpool to Clarence E. Pickett, 7-7-36.

⁴⁶Olga Halle to H.J. Wider, 3-1-73.

⁴⁷'Another Dimension of the Holocaust: an American Quaker inside Nazi Germany', Leonard S. Kenworthy, 1982, 46-48.

⁴⁸Corder Catchpool to Paul Sturge, 15-7-35.

⁴⁹This episode is described in William Hughes, *Indomitable Friend*, 124-132 and in Greenwood, Vol. 3, 310-311.

⁵⁰The various-categories of persons persecuted by the Nazis on account of their Jewish extraction were analysed by Hans Albrecht in a letter to Bertha Bracey of 4-1-36. An account of the situation and the earlier measures taken to bring help to non-aryan Christians is given in Corder Catchpool to Clarence Pickett of 7-7-36.

⁵¹See Roger Carter to Paul Sturge of 22-11-38.

⁵²This meeting is described in an anonymous memorandum in Dutch dated December 1938, believed to have been written by Luise Lieftinck of Amsterdam Meeting, entitled: 'Memorandum over de wenschelijkheid van de stifting van een Zentralstelle für die Auswanderung nicht-arischer Christen, aangeboden an het Comite voor Niet Arische Christen'. Both Jim and Luise Lieftinck visited Berlin during this period and Luise may have been present at the meeting in question. The fact that the Dutch is imperfect lends verisimilitude to the belief that Luise wrote the document, as she was Austrian. In the event the organisation of the Zentralstelle differed in some respects from the recommendations made on this occasion.

⁵³See 'Büro Pfarrer Grüber', published by the Evangelische Hilfsstelle für ehemals Rasseverfolgte in October 1988. Some account of the office 'An der Stechbahn' is given in a commemorative booklet of that name published in 1952 by the Evangelische Verlagsanstalt G.m.b.H., Berlin.

⁵⁴Conversations with Miss Laura Livingstone, Dr. Spiero and others with a view to consolidation with the Büro Grüber are briefly mentioned in Howard Elkinton to Fred Tritton, 14-2-39.

⁵⁵The role of the Centre in relief work is defined in Roger Carter to Dr. Otto Hirsch of the Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland, 21-6-39. The general pattern of relief work for the Jews and the role of the Centre is described in a 'Memorandum on the Relief Work of the Quäkerbüro, August 1939', signed by Roger Carter.

⁵⁶The Netherlands operation is described in a letter from the Kinderkomite, Amsterdam, to Roger Carter of 22-12-38. A conference on child transports was held in Amsterdam on 15 to 19-4-39. See Kinderkomite to Roger Carter, 14-3-39 and Roger Carter to Kinderkomite, 30-3-39. The transports to England are briefly described in Bertha Bracey, 'Quaker Help to Jews', 20-12-71. Mr. G.H. Langdon, the Hon. Organising Secretary of the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, appears to have regarded the Centre as his point of reference in regard to Christian non-aryan children.

⁵⁷See Roger Carter, 'Report on the Work of the Berlin Centre, February 1939'.

- ⁵⁸A list of the 22 German Friends actively helping non-aryans in their areas is attached to Roger Carter to Dr. Otto Hirsch of the Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland, 21-6-39.
- ⁵⁹Roger Carter, 'Report on the Situation of the Vienna Group of the Society of Friends', 1-3-39.
- ⁶⁰Roger Carter, 'Report on a Visit to Prague and Warsaw', 27-9-38.
- ⁶¹Minutes of the Germany and Holland Committee, London, 21-6-39: also Victoria de Bunsen, *Charles Roden Buxton, a Memoire*, 161-162.
- ⁶²Roger Carter, Memorandum an alle Vertrauensleute, 26-3-39.
- ⁶³Roger Carter, 'Relief Work of the Quäkerbüro', August 1939.
- ⁶⁴Olga Halle to H.J. Weider, 3-1-73.
- ⁶⁵The four German Friends present were Hans Albrecht, Gerhard and Olga Halle and Lotte Hoffmann.
- ⁶⁶See 'Büro Pfarrer Grüber', *op. cit.*, 15. The Büro Grüber also acquired the legal status of an 'eingetragener Verein'.
- ⁶⁷Hans Albrecht to Paul Sturge, 8-6-38: also, Roger Carter to Paul Sturge, 22-11-38 (written shortly after the Kristallnacht).
- ⁶⁸Heinrich Otto, *Werden und Wesen des Quäkertums und seine Entwicklung in Deutschland*, Sensen Verlag, Wien, 1972, 299.
- ⁶⁹This personal steadfastness is well illustrated by an article by Anneliese Feurich entitled: 'Auf eigene Verantwortung: Marie Pleissner, 1891-1983', *Kirchliche Bruderschaft Sachsens*, Dresden, 1988. The subject is also treated in more general terms in 'Alle Menschen sind unsere Brüder: über Quäkerhaltung und Quäkerarbeit, 1933-1941', by Anna Sabine Halle in 'Tribüne' No. 90 of 1984.