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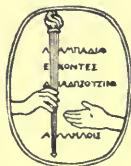
in

The German Empire

By
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GERMAN EMPIRE," "IRELAND IN THE LAST FIFTY YEARS," ETC.



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LINGUISTIC OPPRESSION IN THE GERMAN EMPIRE

FOR the last hundred years a dominant conception among the Germans has been that of "the folk" (*das Volk*). The folk—they have thought and said—is a being and almost a person; and as such it has its corresponding attributes—its sense of right; its way of speech; its songs, its poetry and its music. Law, according to a great German jurist, is the organ of folk-right; folk-music, folk-songs, folk-poetry—all these are the natural outpourings of the *Volksgeist*; while as for the folk-speech, that is not only the medium for the expression, but also the condition of the existence, of these other things.

The philosophy of Hegel represents in many ways the apotheosis of this German idea of the folk. To Hegel the folk, politically organised as a state, is the home of a system of social ethics that inspires and controls the life of the individual, who finds his

peace in its will and his duty in filling duly a station in its system. "The spirit of a nation controls and entirely dominates from within each person," so that "he feels it to be his own very being. . . . he looks upon it as his absolute final aim," and "his life is hid with that of his fellows in the common life of his people." The "culture" of the folk—the nation or people—thus becomes a sacred tradition; and the language in which it is enshrined becomes, as it were, the vehicle which carries the holy ark of the covenant.

Imbued with ideas of this order, the Germans have shown themselves sedulously careful to maintain the purity of their language, seeking to exclude all foreign or "Welsh" words, and to express every idea and every concept by means of native Germanic words. "This movement," it is said, "has grown with the growth of national unity, and a powerful society, the *Sprachverein*, has been recently founded, and has published handbooks of native words for almost every department of modern life." Thus the language of commerce, of chemistry and of every range of thought, is made purely German; and thus the German language, unlike the English, which has borrowed freely, and continues to borrow freely, from almost every language that has been or

now is spoken, remains what we may call "self-sufficient," and indebted to no other.

Much may be said, both for and against this cult of linguistic purity. A language which refuses to borrow from other languages loses that flexibility, subtlety of expression and variety of shades of meaning, which an abundance of "loan-words" enables a language that borrows such words freely to attain; but, on the other hand, linguistic purity conduces to a political result, as indeed it is largely based on a political motive—a conscious and vivid sense of national unity and national uniqueness.*

But whatever may be said of the two ideals—"nationalism in language, as against borrowing; a pure, as opposed to a mixed, language"—a new and difficult problem arises, when we find the people who use the pure German tongue seeking to suppress other tongues that are used within the boundaries of German territory—the Polish, the Danish and the French. This is a policy which the Germans have more and more pursued since they finally attained their own national unity in 1870; and it is a policy which cannot but seem to most of us illogical and

* See Mr. Pearsall Smith's volume in the Home University Library on *The English Language*, Chapter II., and especially pp. 55-62.

inconsistent. If folk-speech is a consecrated thing, because it is the vehicle of folk-culture, surely the folk-speech of Poles and Danes and Frenchmen can plead a title to existence, and a right to be used no less than that of the Germans. To inflict dumbness on a people and to mutilate its tongue, at the same time that you proclaim the pure sanctity of your own speech, is to sin against the spirit of nationality with the same breath with which you proclaim it holy.

Why, then, do the Germans seek to coerce into the use of an alien speech—a speech which is the vehicle of a culture that is not their own culture—those peoples who dwell in German territory, but do not belong by blood or tradition to the German people itself? At bottom, perhaps, the reason is an instinctive feeling that the area of German government should be also the area of German nationality, and that, if there are alien elements in the area of German government, they must be, as it were, chemically changed and transmuted until they are unified with and incorporated into the area of German nationality. Just as foreign words must be purged from the German language, so foreign languages must be purged from the German soil; and just as it is resolved that foreign words must not be used in

German speech, so it is enacted that foreign speech must not be used on German soil.

The analogy here implied and used is not, of course, a true or valid analogy. It is one thing for a German who speaks German to say that he himself will use no word but German, nor does he lose his freedom if he thus abnegates the use of foreign words: it is another thing for a German to say that other peoples within the German borders, who do not speak German, shall use no language but German in schools and courts of law and public meetings, and these other peoples *do* lose their freedom when they are thus compulsorily deprived of the use of their native language. But the analogy, however, untrue, is pressed, as we shall see, to its uttermost consequences.

The instinctive feeling which leads to its application is corroborated by other instincts. There is the German passion for drill and uniformity and *Polizei*. Accustomed to putting men into actual and physical uniform, the German Government has drifted, as it were, by a curious extension of policy, into the habit of seeking to put men into metaphorical and mental uniform. After all, it can be argued, the army needs a uniform language of command; and if the army demands linguistic unity, will not linguistic unity

best suit the needs of the schools, the law-courts, and all public intercourse? The administration of education will be easier if schools are not bilingual; the administration of justice will be simpler if there is only one language for pleading; the whole of public administration will run on a single gear, instead of running on several, if the State addresses its subjects, and can always expect to be addressed by its subjects, in a single language.

Last, but by no means least, we have to remember that spirit of exclusive nationalism which has entered so strongly and so pervasively into German life. There is the feeling that German culture is so large, so embracing, so universal, that it is good for all to use the language which is the key to all its treasures. If men are forced to use it, they are after all being "forced to be free"; and at the cost of a little compulsion in their school-days they are initiated into the large freedom of the mind, which will come from a full and liberal education in German speech, and, through German speech, in German culture.

These, then, are some of the reasons why the period between the end of the Franco-Prussian war and the beginning of the present war is filled with examples of linguistic oppression in the German

Empire. That oppression takes four main forms. First and foremost, it affects the school; and since religious instruction is part of the work of the school, it affects religious instruction, and tends to result in something perilously akin to religious persecution. Secondly, it affects the law-court, the post-office and all the organs of public administration. Thirdly, it affects public meetings; and finally—and most striking of all—under decrees like that of April, 1899, which required teachers in Posen to disuse Polish in the family circle, and under police action such as that which entails domiciliary visits for the seizure of Polish literature, it affects the home itself.

Much of the oppression is based on administrative orders, such as the orders of the Minister of Education, which make the use of German compulsory in schools; some of it is based on administrative action by the police; but part of it is based on direct legislation by the German *Reichstag* itself, and oppression of this kind cannot be ascribed to “bureaucratic” methods, but must necessarily be referred to the deliberate will of the German people itself, as expressed by its representatives. It is a law of the *Reichstag* of 1908 which regulates the use of languages other than German in public meetings.

Under Article 12 of that law—the law of associations—the use of German is made compulsory in public meetings, except at election times. An exception is made for those districts in which more than 60 per cent. of the population do not speak German; but even this exception is to disappear at the end of twenty years from the passing of the Act. A Polish deputy, therefore, must speak to his constituents in German, except at election times—or unless the district in which he is speaking is one which contains more than 60 per cent. of inhabitants who do not speak German.*

* In the town of Posen itself the Polish inhabitants, though a majority, are only 57 per cent. of the population, and therefore (except at election times) they cannot be addressed in Polish in any public meeting.

I.—PRUSSIAN POLAND

It is necessary, in order to comprehend the methods and the results of linguistic oppression in the German Empire, to study separately the three main areas of such oppression—Prussian Poland, Danish Slesvig and Alsace-Lorraine. The methods used, and the results attained, are indeed much the same in all the three areas; and the law of 1908 applies to them all equally. But the three areas differ in some respects; and the methods and results of linguistic oppression, so far as it is based on administrative action, which in its nature varies from one area to another, have also shown a number of differences.

In this connection it must be remembered that the Poles and the Danes in the German Empire are subjects of Prussia, and as such are governed by the Prussian Ministry; while the people of Alsace-Lorraine are not included in Prussia, their country being a federal territory (*Reichsland*) which is governed by the federal authority. Another difference, which is also important, is that the Poles are distinct from the Germans of Prussia both in

religion and language; the Danes differ in language, but not in religion; while the majority of the people of Alsace-Lorraine differ in religion (being Roman Catholics), but not in language—speaking, as they do, a German dialect.

In 1815 Frederic William III., in a rescript to his Polish subjects, promised to respect their nationality and to give their language an equal position with German in public meetings. Down to 1870 the promise was on the whole observed. Between 1830 and 1841, it is true, a governor of the province of Posen, Flottwell by name, pursued a policy of Germanisation, founding schools to encourage German culture, and buying land from Polish owners to sell it again to Germans. But his policy was not extreme: the Poles remained loyal subjects of Prussia; and they fought for Prussia in the war against Austria in 1866 and the war against France in 1870. Almost immediately after 1870, however, Bismarck began a campaign against the Poles. In 1872 he embarked on a struggle with the Roman Catholic Church, which is the Church of the Poles. "The beginning of this struggle," he says in his *Reflections and Reminiscences*, "was decided for me preponderantly by its Polish side"; and he refers to statistics which "proved the rapid progress of the Polish nationality at the expense of the Germans," and to official reports which showed that "there

were whole villages in Posen and West Prussia containing thousands of Germans who through the influence of the Catholic section had been educated according to Polish ideas, and were officially described as Poles, though in the previous generation they were officially Germans."* To meet this situation, a law of 1872 deprived the clergy of the right of inspecting schools which they had hitherto enjoyed, and gave the work to Government officials. Next year, 1873, an administrative order required that the German language alone should be employed in schools, except for religious instruction—though even for this purpose German might be used, if the pupils were sufficiently advanced to understand the language.

The war thus begun in the schools was continued and extended in succeeding years. A further step was attempted in 1883, when the provincial Government of Posen ordered that religious instruction should be given in German, if half the students in a school were of German birth. The Prussian Minister of Education at the time disapproved of the order, and it was rescinded; but a later Minister, Dr. Studt, reversed the action of his predecessor, and since the beginning of this century the principle of the order of 1883 has been enforced, the alleged

* Bismarck, *Reflections and Reminiscences*, Vol. II., pp. 138, 139 of the English Translation.

grounds being "the awkwardness of a bilingual system of education, and still more the persistent efforts of the Poles to make their privileged position a means of racial isolation." By thus enforcing on Polish children religious instruction given in a language other than their own, the Prussian Government has practically turned linguistic oppression into religious persecution; and, indeed, as the confession of Bismarck quoted above sufficiently illustrates, the anti-Polish policy of the Government was from the first also anti-Catholic in its motives.

Besides interfering with religious instruction, the Prussian Government has also interfered with the life of the family. A decree of 1899, already mentioned above, required teachers—German teachers who had married Polish wives—to cease to use the Polish language in their homes. Children who are deaf-mutes are instructed in German—with the result that they cannot converse with their father and mother, their sisters and brothers. The possession of Polish books dealing with Polish history and literature renders a pupil liable to exclusion from secondary schools. Domiciliary visits by the police are the inevitable result of this rule; and such visits, in their turn, inevitably result in "incidents" and misery. At Thorn, for instance, a town in West Prussia, the police suspected a secret society of school-boys. They visited the homes of a number

of boys attending one of the schools, which they thought to be the centre of the "conspiracy," and in six of the homes they found historical and religious books printed in Polish, which were immediately confiscated. Sixty of the boys were charged with belonging to an illegal society, and brought to trial. That there was a society among the boys, and that the object of the society was to study Polish history and literature (subjects excluded from the curriculum of the schools), was not denied; that there was any "conspiracy," or any "illegal" intention, was not and could not be proved. None the less, a number of the boys were expelled from the town and the district—only to be aided, by a sum of £1,000 raised by Polish students in Switzerland, to pursue their studies at Lemberg and Cracow, in Austrian Poland, where the Government was not so impossibly rigorous.

Under conditions such as these, school life becomes a burden and a torment. The German schoolmaster becomes a rigorous martinet: the Polish school-boy becomes a sullen rebel: the school becomes a battleground. Children are punished by the police for misdemeanours committed in school: one pupil may be confined in a house of correction for not giving his answers in German during a lesson on the catechism; another may be condemned to four months' imprisonment for *lèse-majesté*, because he has spoken

“treasonably” about current politics. While children are punished, parents are fined. A French author, writing in 1910, estimates the total of the fines up to that date at a sum of £10,000. The result of the whole system is truancy *en masse* and a system of school-strikes. A series of such strikes began in 1906, and lasted into the spring of 1907. They began in Posen, but they extended as far as Breslau in Silesia. In October, 1906, there were 40,000 children on strike, and in the course of 1907 as many as 60,000. The Government replied with a heavy hand, by wholesale dismissals, imprisonments and fines. For “incitement” to school-strikes 35 priests were sentenced to periods of imprisonment amounting in the aggregate to 20 months, and to fines amounting to £317; 1,450 parents were fined £900 for the non-attendance of their children at school; other persons were sentenced to terms of imprisonment amounting in the aggregate to 6½ years for offences connected with the school-strikes.

So far of the schools. Linguistic oppression, however, has also invaded other areas than that of the school. In 1870 Polish was still used in the law-courts and Government offices: a Pole might still address the Government in Polish, and still be answered in Polish. That has all been changed. German is now the only language of justice and administration; and just before the war, in 1913, Prussian postmen

were refusing to transmit or deliver letters addressed in Polish. Persons with Polish names are pressed or forced to change them to a German form; a Pole called Szulc or Szuman may be fined if he fails to write himself Schultz or Schumann. Villages and streets have been rebaptized in German; over 2,000 streets, it is said, have been thus renamed in the dominant language. Shop signs must be in German; the very inscriptions on tomb-stones must be in German; railway book-stalls must not sell Polish papers. A Polish deputy, speaking in the Prussian Parliament not long ago, could say: "No Pole can plead his own cause before the courts in his mother tongue, and should he wish to employ it before the administrative authorities, he is not heard. . . . Immemorial names are summarily abolished. . . . Family names are distorted by the authorities. Every class meeting is held under police surveillance, and open-air meetings are prohibited altogether, Polish theatrical performances are for the most part forbidden or stopped."

The interference of the Government with public meetings and with the drama—it should also be added, with the Press—is an interference with freedom of thought and its expression only second, if indeed it is second, to interference with freedom of education. The law of 1908 on public meetings has already been mentioned. Polish drama is every-

where prohibited, except, it is said, in the town of Posen during the winter; and Polish amateurs cannot produce a Polish play, because a translation has to be presented to the police in order that their consent may be obtained—a consent which always arrives too late. Polish papers are subject to rigorous supervision, and their editors often find their way to prison, though this, it should be added, is a fate not unknown to editors of German papers. The result of this repression is intellectual stagnation. It is hard for the things of the mind to flourish under a censorship of this order; and the intellectual life of the Poles has migrated steadily from Prussian Poland to the milder air of Austrian Poland.

Yet, in spite of all oppression, the unconquerable spirit of the Poles has striven to maintain its life and vigour. Voluntary effort and voluntary associations—which have played a great part in Poland, particularly in the economic sphere, but also, and with almost equal vigour, in the intellectual—have been directed to the preservation of the national life. The “Sokol” associations of the Poles, for social and educational purposes, are numerous; there are said to be as many as 1,000, each with a membership of about 100. The congress of Sokols at Posen in 1905 decided to organise courses of lectures and conferences on literary and historical subjects. If Polish culture is excluded from the official schools,

it is thus fostered by the voluntary agency of educational associations, which correspond, in their way, to our own "Workers' Educational Association"; and as long as these associations are active, Polish speech and Polish culture cannot die. The Polish Press, whatever the surveillance to which it is subject, continues to exist; its chief organ is said to have a circulation of 70,000. Popular libraries are also flourishing; they disseminate the national literature, and serve, along with the Press, as an instrument of national education.

On the whole, the German policy of linguistic oppression has failed to attain its object in Prussian Poland. Indirectly it has even benefited the Poles. Taught to be bilingual, they have found their gift of tongues to be economically valuable, and they have been successful competitors for business with German rivals, who only knew and could only use a single language. This is an undesigned mercy, which can hardly excuse those who have been its involuntary donors. It has won the Prussian Government no gratitude; while the design and the execution of its linguistic policy have turned the Poles, loyal subjects of Prussia fifty years ago, into the ways of passive resistance and resolute, if quiet, defiance. A race which was, and might have continued to be, loyal, if it had been left free to speak and to use its own language, has lost its loyalty

when it was commanded to speak and to use an alien language as a sign of loyalty.

The perverse policy of the German Government has naturally had perverse results. Intended to Germanise the Poles, it has made them more Polish. Intended to incorporate them in German culture, it has driven them back on the ardent cultivation of their own. Intended to create loyalty, it has destroyed loyalty. Intended to strengthen Germanism, it has strengthened the Poles at the expense of the Germans.

“The Polish language,” wrote a German professor in 1914, “gains not only in the country districts, but also in the towns, and even in the town of Posen. The Polish middle class grows, while the German decreases.” But it is always so. He who sows dragons’ teeth can only reap a crop of armed and defiant warriors.

II.—DANISH SLESVIG

SUCH is the treatment of their language that has been meted out to the 3,500,000 Poles in Prussia. That treatment has been the model which the Germans have followed in dealing with the Danes of Northern Slesvig. At first sight it is curious that they should have done so. There are only some 150,000 Danes in Northern Slesvig; and it could hardly have threatened German culture if they had continued to use their own language freely. The Danes, again, are Protestant, like the majority of the Germans of Prussia; and one might have expected to find a natural bond of religious sympathy between Prussia and the Danes, such as could not exist between Prussia and the Catholic Poles.

But the Prussian passion for uniformity and rule has triumphed over these differences; and the Danes, in spite of the differences of their position, have been treated on parallel lines with the Poles. "To conquer the school is to conquer the future," said Bismarck; and on that line, as we have seen, he acted in dealing with the Poles. It is exactly on

the same line that the Prussian Government has acted towards the Danes.

It is one of the tragedies of the history of German education that the school, instead of being used as an end in itself, should have been used as a means to political objects. This is the real meaning of Bismarck's saying; and it has been the real motive of much of the educational policy of the Prussian Government. Dr. Studt (the Prussian Minister of Education who was responsible for the order that religious instruction should be given to the Poles in German if half of the pupils of a school were of German birth) is reported to have said in 1907, in visiting North Slesvig: "Teachers should always remember that it is their mission to educate children by inculcating the sentiments of loyalty and love to the German fatherland." To import a political motive into education is fatal to a free and liberal education; and when that political motive results in the use of compulsion, and the drilling of a non-German population in German speech and history and culture, it is fatal to any sort of education at all. This has been the experience of North Slesvig.

North Slesvig came definitely under the rule of Prussia in 1866. It was with reluctance that the Danes of the district came under her rule; and it is important to bear in mind that, under a treaty of the

year 1866, it had been agreed between Prussia and Austria that North Slesvig should be ceded to Denmark if its inhabitants, on a free vote being taken, should express a desire for union. The agreement was never fulfilled, but the Danes long hoped that it might be, and that hope was a fact which for many years complicated their relations with the Prussian Government, determined as it was to retain the Danes in its allegiance, and to use every means in its power to encourage their "loyalty and love to the German fatherland."

A decree of 1871 commenced—it is true, on a modest scale—the application of the principle of linguistic compulsion in the elementary schools of North Slesvig. By this decree the Danish language was left as the *medium* of instruction; but the German language was made compulsory as a *subject* of instruction in the middle and upper classes of all schools. The number of lessons was fixed at six a week, but it might be increased to eight or ten, if the majority expressed a desire to that effect—the additional lessons being devoted, in that case, to the study of the history of the German Empire.

The next step was taken in 1878, and it went much further. By a law of 1876 German had been made the official language of business in North Slesvig, and by an order of 1878 the German language, which had been since 1871 a necessary *subject* of instruction

in elementary schools, was made henceforth a *medium* of instruction on the same footing as Danish. Infants were henceforth to have six half-hours of teaching in German; the middle classes of elementary schools were to have ten lessons in German; the upper classes were to have twelve lessons in German (three in reading, two in writing, one in grammar, one in singing, two in geography, two in history and one in mental arithmetic), in addition to two lessons in German gymnastics. It was also ordered that German might be used as the medium of all instruction if a majority presented a request to that effect—or if it was required by the official authorities of the district.

This was not all. Under a number of regulations subsequently made, private or free Danish schools were suppressed, on the ground that they were not necessary; parents were forbidden to send children of school age to schools in Denmark; private education in the home was limited; teachers were ordered to talk to their pupils in German during games and out of school, and women teachers to talk to girls in German while they were giving them manual instruction. These last orders have, it is true, remained a dead letter in some districts even to the present time. Teachers whose natural language is Danish unconsciously fall into Danish in spite of official orders. But the order shows the spirit of

the Government; and that spirit equally appeared in another order, requiring inspectors of elementary schools to take notice of clergymen who, in their capacity of local inspectors of schools, used the Danish language in writing or speaking to teachers.

A new and still more drastic epoch opened in 1888. William II. had just succeeded to the throne, and an order of December, 1888, signalised his accession by what has been called the "assassination" of the Danish language in the elementary schools of North Slesvig. The ordinance consisted of five articles. According to the first sentence of the first article, "Instruction in the schools of North Slesvig must be given in German in all subjects except religion." According to the second article, religious instruction may be given in Danish in parishes where Danish is the language used in churches, provided that German has not already been used for that purpose—but the Government may authorise the use of German if conditions demand it and the district expresses a desire for it. According to the third article, six lessons a week may be devoted to religious instruction in Danish, but two supplementary lessons must be given in German in the middle and upper classes of schools. According to the last article, school inspectors and teachers are to use the German language, *and to see that it is used in the intercourse of children with one another.*

It is difficult to understand the policy of this order of 1888. When the order was issued the Danish language was in no sense a political symbol or rallying-ground in North Slesvig. Many of the inhabitants of the province who were German in sympathy spoke Danish; and at the very time when the order was published, the governor of the province was using Danish papers to promote a German propaganda. The effect of the order was simply to turn the Danish language into the political symbol which it had never been before. It also served to produce a definite set-back in education throughout the province. Instruction given to Danish children exclusively in German (as all education in secular subjects had to be) was necessarily mechanical and external—a matter of memorisation of German text-books, through which, instead of acquiring knowledge, children acquired the technique of a foreign language.

Finally, even religious instruction, though it might be given in Danish, was impeded and hampered. Children received religious instruction in their native tongue without receiving any instruction in their native tongue itself; and the result was that they failed to understand the terms and the phrases in which religious instruction was given. It is one thing to use a language colloquially in the house; it is another thing to comprehend its syntax and the

exact sense of its vocabulary. Deprived of such comprehension, the pupils who were granted the concession of religious instruction in Danish soon found that the concession was illusory. Under these conditions it was natural that a movement should be started in North Slesvig for securing some amount of instruction in Danish (it was suggested that there should be two lessons a week) as an antecedent and necessary condition of the proper comprehension of religious instruction in Danish. The basis of the movement was the argument that the order of 1888 was a danger to the religious life of the school children of the province; and the synods of the various deaneries pressed the argument and supported the movement, which was also backed by powerful minorities in the general provincial synod. The movement, though it continued steadily from 1888 to the outbreak of the present war, has had no success; and a system which, while seeming to favour, really discourages religious instruction is still in vogue in North Slesvig.* Once more, as we have

* One feature of the system is curious. Children who receive religious instruction in Danish have two supplementary lessons for religious instruction in German every week. Children who receive religious instruction in German have no such supplementary lessons. Children do not love "supplementary lessons," and are tempted to receive religious instruction in German in order to escape them. This provision suggests, what other evidence also seems to indicate, that the Prussian authorities are ready, by any manner of inducement, to abolish religious instruction in Danish, and with it all instruction in Danish whatsoever.

already had occasion to notice in treating of Poland, linguistic oppression comes very near to religious persecution.

It might have been expected that the Danish clergy of North Slesvig would have taken the lead in the movement for improving religious instruction in Danish. This has not been the case. The clergy are forced to take an oath to the Prussian King, and they are dependent on the Prussian State. The movement has thus been left, on the whole, to the laity, who are strongly represented in the synods of the deaneries and are also represented in the general provincial synod. It would be unfair to the clergy, however, not to add that many of them have protested that religious life was gravely menaced by the system of 1888 and that, as a result of that system, few of the children could take an active part in divine service. In the general provincial synod of 1912, many of the leading clergy supported the opposition to the system, and forty votes out of eighty-two were cast in favour of change.

In spite of all opposition to the Prussian Government, however, the cause of religious instruction in Danish would seem to be a losing cause. An elementary inspector remarked to a Danish teacher, not long ago, that it was curious that religious instruction in Danish had not ceased in his school, and that he was to blame for its continuance. When

the teacher replied that parents were free to choose the language in which they wished their children to be instructed, the inspector rejoined that it was easy for teachers to influence parents, and that to God the question was indifferent, since He understood German as well as Danish. Official influence, it is obvious, is hardly favourable to religious instruction in Danish. And when once religious instruction has ceased to be given in Danish in any school, it cannot be begun again. A Government order of 1910, which amplifies the original order of 1888, makes it clear that "to recommence religious instruction in Danish in a school where it has ceased to be given is impossible."

It may illustrate the actual position of the whole question if we quote some statistics of the year 1910. Of 250 school districts, it appears that in thirty, even before the order of 1888, religious instruction was entirely given in German, while in twenty-five religious instruction had since 1888 ceased to be given in Danish, and had come by 1910 to be given exclusively in German. In five, religious instruction was given entirely in Danish: in 190 it was given both in German and in Danish, 40 per cent. of the children in these districts receiving religious instruction in German, and 60 per cent. in Danish.

Hitherto we have been concerned with the elementary schools of North Slesvig. The principle

of compulsion has also been applied to secondary schools. The school age, during which children are bound to attend elementary schools, stops at the age of confirmation—that is to say, about the age of 16. But the Prussian Government has been anxious for a link which would connect the German influence of the elementary school with the German influence of the barracks. This has been found in what we may call continuation schools. Originally organised for apprentices in commerce and industry, they were extended by a provincial law of 1912 to agriculture. Henceforth boys in the country under 18 might be required in the winter to attend four lessons—of course in German—every week. It is significant that the Government caused it to be understood that the law would only be applied in districts which were “menaced from a national point of view.”

If we turn to secondary schools proper, as distinct from continuation schools, the first fact to remark is the abolition, in 1871, of the popular Danish high schools in North Slesvig. Henceforth secondary schools in the district were German schools. Under these conditions Danish parents began to send their children to schools in the kingdom of Denmark. This was stopped, by a judicial decision of 1882, so far as children of school age (that is to say, children not yet confirmed) were concerned. But the School

Union of North Slesvig, founded in 1892 as an answer to the order of 1888, has undertaken to finance poor children over school age who desire to attend secondary schools in Denmark. Its membership in 1914 was over 11,000; and within twenty years of its foundation it had helped 5,673 students to attain the secondary education they desired. The provincial Government at first tried to stop its activities, to prevent parents from sending their children to Denmark, and to deprive them of the right of parental control if they persisted; but to the honour of the law-courts it must be said that they refused to recognise the validity of this action of the Government.

It remains to be added that another union (the same principle of voluntary association, which the pressure of Government has produced in Poland, has also been produced by the same pressure in North Slesvig) has also been active. This is the Union for the Defence of the Danish Language, founded about 1880, which has organised popular libraries and distributed Danish literature broadcast.

These facts are sufficient to prove what was said above—that the model of Poland has been followed (in some respects with an increase of stringency) in North Slesvig. In North Slesvig, as in Poland, the imperial law of 1908 is, of course, operative, and Danish can only be used in public meetings

subject to its provisions. It was significant that in 1913 the Norwegian explorer, Amundsen, was forbidden by the local authorities of North Slesvig to deliver a lecture on his travels in his native language—Norwegian—on the ground that it was too closely akin to Danish, and could not therefore be used in a public meeting, though it must be added that the prohibition of the local authorities was afterwards removed by the Prussian Minister of the Interior.

In North Slesvig again, as in Poland, linguistic oppression is backed by oppression of other kinds. One may refer especially to the agrarian policy of the Prussian Government, which leads it to attempt to expropriate Danish landowners in North Slesvig and Polish landowners in Prussian Poland. The Prussian law of 1912 is significant, by which, "in order to render stronger and more settled German agricultural property in those parts of the provinces of East Prussia, Pomerania, Upper Silesia and Schleswig-Holstein, which are menaced from a national point of view," the Prussian Government was armed with a sum of £5,000,000 for purposes of expropriation.

One last fact remains to be noticed. In the days when Slesvig was connected by a personal union with the kingdom of Denmark, before 1864, the Danish kings sought to enforce the use of the

Danish language in the province. The Prussian Government can thus plead that it is only returning measure for measure, and it has sometimes been ingenious enough to repeat, *mutatis mutandis*, the measures of the Danish kings. But the Germans protested strongly, before 1864, against these measures when they were enforced against themselves; and it is at the least curious that they should enforce against the Danes measures of the same order as those which they were indignant at having enforced against themselves. That, however, is what they have done; and they have done it thoroughly. The whips of the Danish kings have become the scorpions of the Prussian Government.

III.—ALSACE-LORRAINE

It might seem impossible that there should be any serious linguistic question in Alsace-Lorraine. The bulk of the population has always spoken German, or rather a *patois* of German; and indeed it was one of the arguments of Germany for the "recovery" of Alsace (if not for the annexation of the part of Lorraine which she took along with Alsace) that its population was predominantly German in speech. But a linguistic question has none the less arisen. The use of the French language, even by a minority, has seemed to the imperial Government, which, as we have seen, administers Alsace-Lorraine, a danger to German culture and a menace to German nationalism; and the French language has accordingly been made taboo.

An instructive contrast may be drawn between the policy of the French Government towards the use of the German language, prior to 1870, and the policy of the German Government towards the use of the French language since 1870. France made no effort to spread her culture (it spread of itself); she

never sought to enforce her language or to deny to the Germans schools of their own. There was a large majority of German-speaking inhabitants before 1870. While 40,000 persons in Alsace, and 140,000 in Lorraine, were reckoned as belonging to purely French districts, 1,340,000 were counted as belonging to German or mixed districts. No attempt was made to alter the balance. When Charles X. visited Strasbourg, some time before 1830, he apologised to the mayor for being unable to answer a German address in the same language. In 1867 a French minister told the French Chamber that it was impossible to banish German from Alsace, since it was indispensable to the inhabitants; and Napoleon III., in the same year, when he visited Strasbourg, thanked the teachers for their pains in teaching French, but advised them not to neglect the teaching of German. In 1868 the local authority for elementary education on the Upper Rhine decided that German ought to be taught with the same care as French. In 1870 the proclamations of the French Government were posted in Alsace in both languages.

The Germans, who enforced in Slesvig a treatment of language modelled on that of the Danish kings, were very far from following the model of the French Government when they annexed Alsace-Lorraine. It is true that they left French law in force until they introduced their own code in 1900. There was

no valid reason why they should not have pursued a similar policy towards the French language. It was the language of a small minority; it was not, any more than Danish was in North Slesvig in 1870, a political symbol or rallying-ground. But an attack on the French language was none the less begun, and begun at once, in 1871. French was suppressed in elementary schools, and in secondary schools it was only allowed to be taught as a foreign language. In 1872 German was made the language of administration; in 1882 it was made the language of the Provincial Council of Alsace-Lorraine; in 1887 it was made the language of the courts.

Here again the model of Poland has been followed with an exact nicety. In just the same way, French names for streets have been proscribed: the use of French has been forbidden for shop-signs, for inscriptions on tomb-stones, for Christian names, and for the names of firms on the hats of employees. It was said to be unsafe, a few years ago, to write a menu in French; and a policeman might enter a tobacconist's shop to order the taking down of a sign which announced, in French, that French cigarettes were on sale. The vocabulary of the province is regimented: it must say *kaffee*, and not *café*: it must write *modistin* and not *modiste*.

The policy has its comic side; but it has also, and to a still greater extent, a tragic side. When

they are alone, one is told, the children in French districts play in French. When they see a stranger approaching, they betake themselves, as well as they can, to German. And yet, in spite of all these rules and regulations, the knowledge of French has increased. The number of Alsatians who return French as their national language has grown from census to census. Newspapers which were once only printed in German have begun to be also printed in French, or even to be only printed in French. The French language has its own charm and its inevitable vogue; the French culture has its irresistible attraction; and both spread.

In Alsace-Lorraine, as in other parts of the Empire, the imperial law of 1908 checks the use of any language other than German in public meetings. Another imperial law—the law of 1911, under which Alsace-Lorraine was granted a new constitution—has also affected, and affected for the worse, the linguistic question in the province. Under the “paragraph of languages” in this constitution, German is declared, by the legislative act of the German *Reichstag*, to be the language of education and administration in Alsace-Lorraine. It follows from this that the provincial Diet instituted in Alsace-Lorraine by the new constitution is impotent to deal with the use of French in education and administration. The use of German for both purposes is

a "fundamental article," which the *Reichstag* may (but certainly will not) alter, but the Provincial Diet cannot touch. It follows again, as was noticed before in regard to the law of 1908, that the policy of linguistic oppression is not merely the result of bureaucratic government, but is also the deliberate will of the German people, as expressed by its representatives.

The curious thing is that, while French is thus proscribed, the German Government has been wittily and bitterly criticised by the Alsatians *in German*. Some of the best caricatures in Europe were those published, before the war, by Zislin, in a paper called *Dur's Elsass*. It adds to the piquancy of these caricatures for any outsider (for the German it must add to their enormity) that they are published in German—or at any rate in a German *patois*. "What can Germany do," a French writer asks, "with a people who are French at heart, and who speak German?"

IV.—FLANDERS

THE policy of Germany in Belgium, during the military occupation since 1914, throws a flood of light on the German attitude to linguistic questions. Here Germany, apparently reversing her whole attitude, has posed as the liberator of an oppressed language—that of the Flemings. Accusing the Belgian Government of having been guilty, in the years prior to 1914, of linguistic oppression of the Flemings, she has set herself, or rather she has professed to set herself, to redress the wrong of which it had been guilty, and, giving the Flemings a university of their own, to give them their language and their nationality.

Belgium is peopled on the east by Walloons, who speak French, and on the west by Flemings, who speak Flemish, a language which is Teutonic in character. Before the war the champions of the latter language, the Flamigants, were pressing for its recognition, particularly in university teaching. They pointed to the fact that French was the only language used in Belgian Universities, except in Ghent, where (in the year 1911) only twenty-four

courses of lectures, out of a total of 248, were given in Flemish. They sought, at first, to establish a new all-Flemish university in Antwerp, the natural Flemish centre; but as this required a larger endowment than could be found, they proposed that in the existing University of Ghent all lectures should be given in Flemish. This proposal was under discussion when the war began in 1914.

When the Germans established themselves in Belgium, they saw in this internal struggle an opportunity of fostering division, to their own benefit, among the Belgian people. They said to themselves *Divide et Impera*; and their journalists and publicists, under a common inspiration, began to proclaim that Belgium was not a country of a single nationality, but of two; that one of these, the Flemish, had been oppressed by the other, the French; and that it was the duty of Germans to come to the rescue of their cousins, the Flemings, and to resuscitate their national life. It is needless to enquire into the ultimate political objects which lay behind these arguments; what we have to consider is the action to which they led. On the last day of December, 1915, the German Governor-General of Belgium issued a decree that Flemish should be the language used in the University of Ghent. The validity of the decree, under the rules of international law, is perhaps dubious; for it interfered with the internal

affairs of an occupied country in a way which military exigencies could not be said to require. But the German Chancellor, in April of 1916, adopted the policy of the Governor-General, and promised the Flemings every assistance in their struggle against the preponderance of French culture.

How have the Flemings met this policy? Some of them, about a hundred in number, have signed a manifesto in its favour. But not one of the old leaders of the Flamigants was among the signatories; while a number of vigorous protests against the policy, no less from Flemings than from Walloons, have appeared in Belgian papers. The severities and the difficulties into which the German Government has fallen in seeking to enforce its policy are sufficient proof of its unpopularity. The severity which has most astonished the world was the arrest, in March, 1916, of two of the Professors of the University of Ghent, who had a European reputation for scholarship—Professor Pirenne and Professor Fredericq—the latter one of the leaders of the Flemish movement. They were arrested, deported to Germany, and interned in a war-prisoners' camp, because they protested against the policy of the Governor-General, or, as the Governor-General himself somewhat obscurely stated, "because they influenced their colleagues in a prohibited manner

with the object of preventing them from carrying out their official duties."

To give freedom to Flanders through severity of this kind cannot but appear paradoxical. And the difficulties experienced by the German authorities in finding professors in Flanders for a purely Flemish university are also significant. Not till the autumn of 1916 could the new policy be put into execution. Only two members of the old staff consented to serve. Several professors had to be imported from Holland; and these, as Dutch newspapers pointed out, were really German in origin or training, while one of them was a naturalised German who had fought for Germany in the war. The remainder of the new professoriate consisted of persons who had previously been assistant-teachers in Belgium. This was the staff with which the "purely Flemish" university of Ghent opened its first session on October 24, 1916—the same day on which 5,000 of the working-class population of Ghent were deported to Germany.

The composition of the staff would seem to suggest—what several foreign newspapers have openly stated—that the real intention of the Germans was to turn the University of Ghent into a German rather than a Flemish University. Not only is one of the professors a naturalised German who has fought on the German side in the war; another is a

Dutchman who has defended the German violation of Belgian neutrality as a new ethical creation, proceeding from "the higher morals which Germany inaugurated by its epoch-making action." Under conditions such as these the suspicion of a policy of Germanisation is natural. Germany may *seem* to have reversed her old policy, and to have substituted, for once, a policy of linguistic liberation for a policy of linguistic oppression. Has she really done so? Not only does the composition of the staff of the "purely Flemish" University of Ghent suggest a negative answer: there are other facts that point the same way. When, for instance, early in 1915, the German administration ordered the removal of French and English shop signs in Flanders, on the ground that Flemish was henceforth the official language, the old signs were in several places replaced by signs in German. Flemish may prove, after all, to have been a stalking-horse for the introduction of German.

But at present, at any rate, the German Government is wedded to Flemish and to the encouragement (or rather, to be more exact, the enforcement) of the use of Flemish. Flemish, since the beginning of 1916, has been the only language of official intercourse permitted in Flanders, and the education of children in Flemish primary schools has been made compulsory.

It is curious to think of the German conqueror *forcing* the Flemings to speak Flemish; but that is the fact. A statement in the *Kölnische Zeitung* of January 17, 1918, will illustrate the fact. According to this statement, the official record of laws and ordinances for the occupied territories in Belgium has ceased to appear in a single trilingual edition (in German, Flemish and French) and will henceforth appear in two bilingual editions, one in German and Flemish, and the other in German and Walloon. "This measure is a proof of the deliberate execution of the policy of administrative separation. It is of the greatest importance, especially for the administrative district of Flanders. *The local authorities, who have hitherto offered, more or less, a passive resistance to the execution of the linguistic regulations, and have excused themselves on the ground of their defective knowledge of Flemish, are now compelled to master Flemish, because they only receive the German ordinances in this language.*" After this, one is surely justified in talking of the German attempt to force the Flemings to speak Flemish.

What looks like linguistic liberation is at bottom linguistic oppression still. Just as the Germans seek to force Poles, Danes and Frenchmen to speak German in order to gain a political object, so they are now forcing the Flemings to speak Flemish, and Flemish only, in order to gain a political object.

They force Poles, Danes and Frenchmen to speak German in order that they may be incorporated fully in Germany; they force the Flemings to speak Flemish in order that they may be separated from the Walloons.

But if Flanders were (*absit omen*) to remain German, the same policy would be pursued in Flanders that has been pursued in North Slesvig. Just as the Danish tongue has been practically forbidden—though it is no less Teutonic than the Flemish—so, too, would the Flemish tongue be practically forbidden. The policy of encouragement—compulsory encouragement—is only temporary, in order to gain a temporary object. If Flanders were permanently incorporated in Germany, the permanent German policy of linguistic oppression would be pursued in Flanders, as it has been pursued elsewhere, in order to gain the permanent German object of mechanical uniformity.

The facts which have been recited in this paper speak for themselves quite clearly; and it is not necessary to point any moral, or draw any contrast. Any South African, any Canadian, any Irishman, can draw a contrast for himself. And any reader may point one simple moral, which is this, that compulsory annexation is followed by compulsory

assimilation, and that compulsory assimilation brings misery into the school, misery into the home, and misery everywhere. Prussian Poland, North Slesvig, Alsace-Lorraine are all the fruits of compulsory annexation. May no such fruits be gathered in the time to come!

A LIST OF SOME BOOKS

BEARING ON THE SUBJECT

1. PRUSSIAN POLAND:

Marius Ary-Leblond. *La Pologne Vivante*,
Part IV., Book I., c. iii.

W. H. Dawson. *The Evolution of Modern
Germany*, c. xxiii.

H. Moysset. *L'Esprit public en Allemagne*, c. i.

W. Martin. *La Crise politique de l'Allemagne
contemporaine*, Part II., c. ii.

2. NORTH SLESVIG:

Les Associations Slesvicoises Réunies du Dane-
mark. *Le Slesvig du Nord*, Part III., c. i.
(by N. Hansen).

W. Martin. *Op. cit.*, c. iii.

H. Rosendal. *The Problem of Danish Slesvig*.

3. ALSACE-LORRAINE:

W. Martin. *Op. cit.*, I., c. v.

M. Leroy. *L'Alsace-Lorraine*.

Florent-Matter. *L'Alsace-Lorraine de nos jours*.

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