

## Zur Geschichte von Espelkamp

---

von Professor Iain Wilson, früher in Bünde.

Anfang Mai 1947 erhielt ich in meiner Eigenschaft als Leiter der Evangelischen Abteilung der Religious affairs branche der Control Commission for Germany in Bünde einen Besuch von Pastor Pawlowski, der das Evangelische Hilfswerk in Westfalen vertrat, und von Pastor B. Forell aus Schweden. Bei dieser Gelegenheit hörte ich zum ersten Mal von Espelkamp.

Espelkamp wurde damals von der Control Commission für eine Fahreinheit gebraucht und wurde als eine militärische Einrichtung betrachtet. Pawloski und Forell schlugen vor, daß das ganze Gebiet dem Evangelischen Hilfswerk der Westfälischen Kirche übergeben werden sollte, damit es für die Ansiedlung von Flüchtlingen, für Kinder und Altersheime und für ein Gebiet für Berufsschulen und als eine Einrichtung gebraucht werden könnte, in welcher heimatlose Jugendliche eine Berufsausbildung erhalten könnten. Der Vorschlag gab bereits an, auf welche besondere Weise die Ökumene bereit sein würde, bei dem Projekt zu helfen. Meine Aufgabe war es, das nötige Verständnis und die nötigen Vollmachten von den britischen Behörden zu erreichen.

Es würde ein mühseliges Werk sein, alle die Einzelheiten der Bemühungen anzugeben, die notwendig waren, um in den kommenden Monaten ein wenig weiterzukommen. Es dauerte lange, bis der Erfolg erzielt wurde. Es möge genügen zu sagen, daß ich am 19. Mai in der Begleitung von Pastor John Gwynne eine wichtige Besprechung bei General Bischof, dem Militärgouverneur der britischen Zone, haben konnte und daß bei dieser Gelegenheit der General uns versicherte, daß er an der Sache interessiert sei und daß er uns helfen würde. Aber obgleich ich daraufhin Herrn Pastor Diehl, einen Mitarbeiter von Herrn Pastor Pawlowski, ermächtigte, eine Anzahl von Arbeiten in Espelkamp anzusetzen, dauerte es noch mehrere Monate, bis die neue Lage gesetzlich geregelt wurde, sodaß ich noch im Oktober 1947 in meinem Tagebuch Bemerkungen darüber finde, wie vergeblich doch alle Bemühungen zu sein schienen.

Endlich gelang es aber doch, den Espelkamp-Plan mit all den britischen und deutschen Behörden zu klären. Jetzt nach 6 Jahren habe ich den Ort wieder besucht und dieser Besuch ist für mich eine überwältigende Bestätigung dessen, daß alle diese Bemühungen, die wir gemacht haben, die Sache Wert gewesen sind: Denn Espelkamp, auch wenn es sich nicht in denselben Linien entwickelt hat, wie wir am Anfang im Auge hatten, ist doch ein wunderbares Zeugnis für die deutsche Energie und Erfindungsgabe und ein großes Wahrzeichen der Hoffnung für den Wiederaufbau einer in den Grundfesten erschütterten Gesellschaft. Mein Gebet ist, daß es in zunehmendem Maße nicht nur sich als ein überraschendes Beispiel sozialer und industrieller Fortschritte erweist, sondern daß es auch ein Beispiel einer echten christlichen Gemeinde zum Lobpreis Gottes werde.

Starting off at 11 a.m. I was driven via Detmold and Paderborn to Buren, where I called on Pastor Max Lackmann, whom I had met at Bielefeld in December. I had three and a half solid hours of talk with him, all in German. He had been in Dachau Concentration Camp for 3 1/2 years, where latterly 200 people died around him every day. He still suffers from an ulcerated stomach. He and his friends in the Camp all prepared themselves to be shot, as the Americans approached to liberate them; but the Americans came too quickly for the Nazis.

Frau Lackmann produced a good bottle of Hock for us, and a fine plate of belegtes Brotchen - buttered bread laid with sliced sausage. He has a large garden - I should say 1 1/2 acres - completely planted with splendid vegetables and laden fruit bushes of every variety.

I asked him whether the people of Buren had enough food. He said, 'Yes, ample'. It was a rich countryside, he said, and food poured into the small town from every side. Every day many people arrived by train from Dortmund and other Ruhr towns to do a day's begging. They went round the houses of the town and the surrounding country begging 'two potatoes' or sometimes 'three potatoes' at every door. One woman he had spoken to this week had thus collected ten pounds of potatoes. The absenteeism in the Ruhr mines is largely explained by the necessity of having to do this, and having to go out into the country collecting firewood in the winter.

Lackmann has a flourishing church. It seats only 300, but is quite crowded on Sundays for morning service and Holy Communion; and well attended at two week-day services. Before the War it had 200 members; now there are about 1,000. The difference is explained almost entirely by the presence in the parish of large numbers of refugees from Eastern Germany now occupied by the Russians and Poles. These have come to stay. They form, he said, a conspicuously thankful congregation. 'Thankful for what?' I asked. 'Thankful for the opportunity of hearing the Word of God', was the reply.

Lackmann was convinced of the necessity of the Church's finding new means of ministering spiritually to many eager 'seekers' who were willing to listen, but had inhibitions about actually coming to Church. They have been so remote from the Church, that so much as to pass through a Church door would for them be going a long way. He said it was certain that many of the youth really wanted to know about Christianity. He instanced a case where a fellow-pastor, anxious to interest the youth of his parish, proposed a public lecture on Goethe's Faust, only to be met with the reply, 'We don't want to hear about Faust. We want to hear about Christ!.

Lackmann was a student of Barth's at Bonn. He is going to Bonn next week or so to give his lecture on Dostoevsky (which is to be published - he is a Dostoevsky enthusiast) to Barth's class there. He also wrote before the War one of the pamphlets in Barth's Theologische Existenz Heute series, and the Nazis expelled him from Bonn for his pains. He now finds himself, dissenting, however, from Barth's extreme exclusion of natural theology. This is connected with his feeling that the Church must find new approaches to those outside.

Speaking of the Church situation generally, Lackmann thought the Church as a whole was very willingly accepting the (provisional) authority of the Council of Twelve. But within that Council there was developing a significant difference of opinion between those like Niemoeller who thought the Lutherans and Calvinists should make light of the differences between them and feel themselves more and more united in the new situation, and those who like Bishop Meiser thought that a unity so attained was not a real unity. Lackmann agreed rather with Meiser than with Niemoeller.

He also spoke of the necessity of 'purging the roll' of those qualified to vote in Church elections - 'in the election of presbyters' (not of pastors). It was through the votes of unworthy Church members that the Deutsche Christen had won their way in the Church. There was now a proposal to limit the electorate to those members who (a) attended Divine Service and Holy Communion with some regularity, (b) instructed their children in the Christian faith, (c) accepted the Confession of Faith, (d) contributed to Church funds. But some pastors were aware of the dangers attending the creation of an inner circle of this kind, in separation from the rest of the parish. And so a middle way had been suggested by Asmussen, viz. that only the list of men to be elected as presbyters should be so tested, not the list of electors. In either case the pastor of the parish should be the judge on the above four points in each individual case.

Lackmann found a certain parallel between this problem and the political problem which the occupying authorities were now attempting to solve in the 'denazification' of the electoral roll for the coming party elections in October. He himself now served on the Denazification Committee in Buren and district. Like so many others he was very critical of the indiscriminating nature of the purge now being administered by the British Control Commission. He said that two thirds of the party members had not joined out of conviction but out of expediency and for prudential reasons; having themselves little political conviction of any kind and merely accepting the status quo. Accordingly he thought great violence was being done to the real situation. The Council of Twelve of Emden had said that pastors should not serve on the Denazification Committees; but no order can come to him, and he felt very strongly that he should continue to serve. He said that, had he not been present to discriminate in individual cases, half those accepted in his district would have been rejected as Nazis!

But Lackmann's main political concern at the moment was his conviction that it was a very great mistake to be holding the elections as early as next October. How long, I asked, would he wish them postponed? 'Another six months?' He answered, 'At least'. Many of his clerical friends agreed with him. Would most Germans agree with him? I asked. He said, 'No'.

His reason was that the Germans were not ready. We British did not realise how mentally ill (Geisteskrank) Germany was. Voting at the elections would not be based on political convictions; for few Germans had any such. Here in Buren most would vote for the C.D.U. the Christian Democrats; in Biälefeld, which Lackmann also knows well, most would vote for the S.D.P. - the Social Democrats; but in both cases the voting would be determined by 'materialistic considerations', i.e. men would think only of whether their affiliation with this or that party would be likely to bring them material advantages. Men think only of the struggle for food and a job.

The communists would get little support. And communistic

conviction was even less than such support might indicate. Lackmann disagreed with those who say that the down-and out condition of Germany would brood nihilism. Nihilism is a deliberate philosophy, with a fanatic element in it; whereas what the present conditions bred was rather an utter dullness of soul, a meaninglessness with an absence of all philosophy.

People, he said, talked much of the coming war between the West and Russia. He said that they wanted this war to come; it was not a case of merely fearing that it would.

I asked Lackmann if there had been a deterioration in the attitude of the Germans towards the British occupying authorities in the last six months or so. He said he had seen little sign of this. 'The Germans', he said, 'are so little self-critical, that they are not mentally disposed to criticise others'. Public opinion is slow to form itself on any issue. One hears grumbles at this or that that the British do, but these grumbles do not accumulate into anything like a general wave of opinion. Again he said, 'you don't realise the depth of our sickness of soul'. He pointed me out a street of rather nice houses that had recently been cleaned and ear-marked for the occupying authorities, and said there had been grumbles over that. But people had been used to such things, and worse, under Hitler. I asked Lackmann what he himself thought of these houses being taken over. He said, 'Every house and room in the town is so overcrowded that it is unfortunate that these good houses should now be standing empty; but such things are inevitable; part of the general situation'.

When I said that our decision to have early elections was the result of a laudable desire on our part, that the Germans should as soon as possible begin to manage their own affairs, he answered, 'But you talk of occupying Germany for ten or twenty years! Why then should you unnaturally force the pace in forming political parties?' He seemed in no way to resent the proposed long period of occupation.

He asked some questions about British politics. Did I not think that the decision to evacuate Egypt was 'too bold'? Might it not lead to disaster? What was Ernest Bevin's attitude to Christianity and the Church? How good a Christian was Atlee?

Finally, he said nothing was now so necessary for the German Church as contact with the outside Christian world, especially with Britain. Could not small conferences of younger British and German Churchmen and theologians be arranged before too long?

Sunday, 23rd June. I was driven to Herford, and attended morning service at 9.30 a.m. in the large Munsterkirche (Lutheran). There was a large congregation, the central part of the nave of the huge cathedral-like church being well filled; but the church was far from crowded. The congregation seemed neatly but very plainly dressed. There were many children and young women, and a fair number of men, but very young men. All seemed to listen attentively to a half-hour sermon on Acts iv, 31-35. The youngish preacher expatiated on how 'the multitude that believed were of one heart and of one soul', and spoke of the great necessity of such Christian unity in Germany today. He spoke also of how the early Christians after Pentecost had all things in common 'and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need'. He emphasised the great scope and need there was for Christian charity and for such sharing in present

conditions in Germany. But he pointed out the difference between such voluntary sharing and political measures to compel men to share with one another and have all things in common. He did not mention Communism by name, but it was clear he had it in mind.

As we came out of the Church several hundred small children were waiting to come in - to Sunday School or Children's Service. They seemed happy, decently dressed, and most seemed healthy and chubby. I could not feel sure that there were more pale and thin-looking children than one would normally see in such a crowd.

I then attended Matins at 11 a.m. in the Garrison Church, taken by the D.C.G. There might have been 35 people in the huge edifice, and more from the women's than from the men's Services. Such apparently, is the result of the cessation of parade services.

Afterwards I watched many children emerge from the great R.C. Church. Herford is swarming with young children, as indeed the whole of Germany seems to be. The contrast with Britain was striking. Had one seen so many children in a Scottish town, one would think lots of children had been taken there for some sort of fete.

The shop windows had absolutely nothing of value in them; mainly crudely hand-made trinkets, knick-knacks and toys - and amateurish little water-colours.

Laing then fetched me and together we lunched at the Officers' Club in Herford as guests of Colonel Ware, Head of Army Welfare. Afterwards we went to his billet. He discussed with us at length problems connected with the proposed scheme of bringing British wives to Germany - the wives of officers and men of the B.A.O.R. and Control Commission. What could be done for their welfare on the pattern of parish institutes and so on? Who could best give advice about the organisation of such groups?

We discussed what the effect might be on the Germans of seeing the British bring their wives out here? Could the ordinary German be really convinced that they were not 'living on the country', but were getting all their food from Britain?

Monday, 24th June. A Y.M.C.A. Area Secretaries' Conference meets today in Bad Salzflun. At 9.45 I conducted morning prayers, with a short address, for them together with the H.Q. Staff, the C. of S. Huts people etc.

I then drove to Mennighüffen, near Löhne, and had a long talk with the Lutheran Pastor Wilm. He is one of the prominent young churchmen, reputed to be an outstanding preacher. He spent three years in Dachau Concentration Camp. He had opposed the Nazis, and was arrested after preaching in protest against the Nazi proposals to kill off the aged and mentally defective. He suffered much from inadequate feeding, and at one time thought he was going to die of it. In Dachau all the arrested priests and pastors from Germany and all occupied countries, including France, were collected; 1,200 Polish priests died in the camp while he was there.

Pastor Wilm's mother-in-law who lives in Mennighüffen, is a daughter of the late Professor Eggeling, Professor of Sanskrit in Edinburgh, and sister of Dr. Hans Eggeling. She therefore lived much of her youth in Edinburgh.

Mennighüffen is a community of 6,000 souls. Of these about 1,500 now attend Sunday morning service, i.e. on any one Sunday there are congregations of 1,500 between the two Churches. Also they get 600 children (included in the 6000) at Sunday School. Mennighüffen was much affected by the revival in this part of Germany in the 19th Century, and the good effects are still felt. They are a Church-going people.

Pastor Wilm would not say there had recently been much sign of further revival, but a good many who had stayed away from church during the period of Nazi ascendancy are now coming back. His church has not, like Lackmann's, been much strengthened by refugees, since a large number of the refugees in his district are R.C. But he now gives his church to the R.C.'s for a service every Sunday.

The people of Mennighüffen are on the whole not badly off for food, but there is now a shortage of potatoes until the new ones are ready for lifting. Wilm thinks the growing boys and girls suffer from lack of fats. But the chief sufferers are the refugees in the parish, who have no gardens of their own. Things were not too bad here however; but Wilm thought they were very bad in the big industrial towns.

Wilm, unlike Lackmann, thought there had been an evident deterioration in the attitude of the Germans towards the occupying British. He said there were all sorts of grumbles. People were resentful that so many suspected Nazis, who were not true Nazis at all, were kept on indefinitely in the prison camps, without any knowledge as to whether they were going to be kept for three months or three years. He thought the whole administration of the Denazification policy was bad. This was his own chief grumble against the British. But the people had other grumbles. Most of these were stupid, such as that proceeding from the widespread belief that the British were eating German food - especially vegetables. People said German butter was going to Holland in boats to be used for fishing etc. Wilm spent a good deal of time trying to debunk these rumours; but (a) some of them were so circumstantial as to be hard to debunk (entmächtigen) and (b) he had to be careful not to compromise himself by appearing too much as a defender of the British.

Most of the people in his parish were without any political interest. The C.D.U. (Christian Democratic Union), being a new party was little organised. Older parties such as the S.D.P. (Social Democratic Party) might therefore secure more votes in October. There was little Communistic sentiment here, but he thought it growing in the Ruhr and such places. A year ago the fear and hatred of Russia had been universal, but this had changed somewhat; as some people now said that things were better in the Russian Zone than they are here.

I asked Wilm if he believed this. He said, 'No'. His sister and her husband are in Halle a/d Saale, which is in the Russian Zone and they report that things are very difficult. The Russians have a graded system of rationing - A cards, B cards and so on; and old people get very little. But Halle University is now open; and Professor Schniewind (whom I met before the War) is teaching there. Wilm said reports from the Russian Zone were so contradictory that it was difficult to know the truth.

Wilm said that as the War went on, the people grew more and more disaffected towards the Nazis, and when the Americans came the people welcomed them as liberators. In the latter stages they wanted the Nazis to be defeated.

Wilm, like Lackmann, thought the Protestant Church in Germany was faced with a serious choice between the view of Marahrans and Meiser who stood on the ground of their own Lutheran or Calvinist Confessions, and the view of Niemoeller and his friends of the Bekennende Kirche who stood on the ground of the Barmen Confession; but Wilm, unlike Lackmann, agreed with Niemoeller; "Though", he said, 'I nevertheless count myself as loyal a Lutheran as anybody'.

People were very critical of Niemoeller. Many pastors were critical of him on the above grounds. But others as well as pastors were critical of his talk about German guilt. People said that the R.C. bishops had spoken boldly at the Vatican about conditions in Germany, but that the Protestant Church had shown no such boldness - in protesting, e.g. against the detention of so many in the prison camps. Niemoeller had preached in Mennighüffen some months ago. 3000 people flocked to hear him, and he had so won them that they were uncritical of him; but others, who had not heard him, were critical.

Finally, Dr. Wilm said that in the prison camps in Germany there really was something of a revival of Christianity. He had heard some wonderful accounts of the interest there shown by the internees.

Sunday, 30th June. In Bad Salzufflen, where I spent much of the day writing letters and bringing this diary up to date. In the morning I attended service in one of the Garrison Churches, where a Padre Johnstone preached.

In the afternoon I went out for a walk and climbed up the slope to the big Protestant Church. There a service for old people, held twice a year was just ending. There was a large congregation, and I watched it disperse, talking to some of the people. Then the two pastors who had been taking the service introduced themselves to me. They were Pastor Brandt (the local Pastor) and Pastor Quistopf of Bielefeld - a fine old man with a shaky voice. They soon engaged me in hot discussion, and we stood there talking for an hour or so. We began by talking about Church matters. They complained that the other Protestant Church in the town had been taken over by the British as the Garrison Church, where they had tiny congregations, whereas the Germans could fill it.

But they soon gave vent to numerous other complaints about the British control of the Zone, and about the British government's policy towards Germany. I encouraged them to say what was on their minds, and they certainly did. They were more comprehensive in their grievances than any other pastors I have talked to. They thought we were trying to oppress Germany, being motivated by retribution.

They detailed the usual grievances - the indiscriminateness of our Entnazifizierung attempts; our keeping so many good Germans indefinitely as prisoners of war in Rechlingshausen and other camps our detailing of superior young men to work in the mines etc. Quistopf, with a tear in his old eye, told of a man in Bad Oeynhau- sen whom we had dismissed from his job because of something in his dossier, and whose family was now in penury, though he was an excellent man and Churchman. Brandt said that Rudolf Kittel, the Tübingen New Testament scholar now in detention in the French (or American?) zone for having written a couple of anti-Jewish pamphlets,

had been visited by an American officer who had struck him on the face with his swaggerstick.

They said we were trying to break the spirit of German Youth, but actually were creating a new nationalism among them.

They spoke of the dreadful things that were happening in the Russian Zone. I said that if such things were actually being done, we in England did not approve; and that after all Hitler and those who obeyed him must take the responsibility for the Russians being in Germany, as it was Germany who had attacked Russia and not vice versa. Brandt said that if Hitler had not attacked Russia, Stalin would have attacked Germany. I said, 'That is your guess, and it may have been Hitler's guess; but you must take the consequences of having made it'.

When they pressed the point of the German sufferings in the East, I said, 'Dreadful and to be deplored as they may be, they do not yet approach what the Russians and Poles suffered at German hands. Brandt at once threw up his hands and said 'Ah! Retribution (Vergeltung), I thought so! You talk retribution!' I said I saw little sign of retribution in the staunch efforts of the Control Commission to do everything possible for the Germans. He said 'Padre Gunion Told me there must be first retribution and then forgiveness; but I said to him, take care lest your retribution go so far that no repentance is possible but only a hardening!

Brandt went on to say that the British could not divest themselves of all responsibility for what their Russian allies were doing. We could only do so by breaking with the Russians, and he thought we should do this at once! He said Germany had formerly been a wall to keep this 'Asiatic Russian Godlessness' from breaking into the West with its hordes; and we were now working to destroy the last remnants of that wall!

Brandt said further that he thought we in England did not sufficiently appreciate the fight they in Germany had put up against the Nazis. He thought we were too much inclined to say 'It can't happen here' (Bei uns konnte es nicht geschehen). He also thought we were drunk with the spirit of victory!

The conversation drifted variously into theology. Brandt said he thought the Church of England was riddled with liberalism, and especially that we no longer believed in a personal and 'conscious' Devil.

Quistopf had been in Edinburgh at the World Missionary Conference of 1910.

I have written mainly (following my practice in these notes) what they said to me, not what I said to them. But I gave them as good as I got. Finally we agreed that there was a Christian Koinonia which abided beneath our manifest differences; and agreed also that it would require many such conversations even to understand one another's points of view, let alone to reach any agreement. We parted with mutual courtesies and blessings. Both were good men, and highly intelligent and well educated: good types.



Wednesday 3rd July. I drove to the Spandau suburb of Berlin and called to see Pastor Rudolf Weckerling and his wife (who is also a trained theologian). They are young people in their thirties. He is now pastor of the Protestant Church in Spandau, which had been served during the war by two German Christians, one of whom has been expelled from the Ministry and the other given a charge elsewhere after full proof of change of heart.

Weckerling, then pastor of the Lutheran Church of Giessen, was expelled from Hesse by the Nazis at the end of 1938. In 1940 he was arrested and spent nine weeks in prison. Soon after he was taken to Gestapo H.Q. in Berlin and forbidden to speak publicly anywhere in Germany; but later on he was allowed to take summer of 1941 he was called up, refused a commission, but was compelled to serve as an army telephonist - carrying arms but having no ordinary occasion to use them. From then to the end of the War he served on the Russian front. Often his unit was surrounded, and escaped through the Russian ring with difficulty. He was all through the retreat, and the Armistice found him in Czechoslovakia - in Sudeten land. He found a horse and crossed the Sudetan Mountains on its back; found a bicycle and got a bit further north; then walked, and succeeded in crossing the Oder and getting within 30 miles of the place, near Landsberg/Warte, where his wife was acting as ordained pastor. Then the Russians arrested him, but (as he was a pastor) released him after a month. He was soon appointed to Spandau, where his wife developed typhoid and almost died. In his student days Weckerling had had a period of theological study at Richmond College; and because he knows English (though he did not talk it to me - doubtless owing to his wife's being a party to our conversation), he was attached as liaison man to G. Clutton-Brock when the latter came to Berlin with the Military Government.

While they told me this story the Weckerlings served Ersatz tea, without sugar or milk or anything to eat with it. The address of their flat is Kersbenweg 4, Spandau.

Weckerling's attitude to Russia and the Russians was different from that of any of the churchmen I had so far seen. He takes the view that the Germans must learn to get on with them. He says that on the whole, and apart from individual cases, the attitude of the that on the whole, and apart from individual cases, the attitude of the Russians to the German Church in their zone is 'correct'. There is no interference with Church activities of the narrower kind. General relations between the Russians and the German population vary from place to place, depending on the local Russian commander. But many German youths are taken, deported into Russia, and there is no further word from them. At first many cattle were driven away, and farm implements were collected and taken, but this is now at an end. When the Russians first came in, there was wholesale rape of women - of all ages, 14 to 70. Frau Weckerling, having then been in Landsber, knew this situation in detail, and was most thankful that she herself had escaped, though many of her kind had not. This was still going on, though now no longer on any general scale.

Weckerling thought the German communists were more mischievous in their attitude than the Russians themselves. He thought that many of the things laid at the door of the Russians by German Churchmen were owing to the German communists - at whom, he said, the Russians laughed. Yet he thought it a great mistake that nearly all his fellow-churchmen should remain so suspicious of everything belonging to the left, using Russia, Communism., Bolshevism and Marcism as synonymous terms. He was ready to acknowledge an element of idealism in the Russian regime that had been absent from

National Socialism. He deeply regretted the formation of the C.D.U. party in politics (Christian Democratic Union). He characterized this as a 'catholicization' of the Protestant Church. He thought not all Christians should belong to one political party, forming a Christian bloc against the others. He would like to see some Christian Social Democrats; and would not object even to the existence of some Christian Communists.

He thought that, though the Russian soldiers had wrought great havoc when they came in as conquerors, and though the taking away of factory and farm equipment and livestock had made conditions terribly difficult in the Russian Zone, yet the Russian authorities were now trying their best to administer the Zone well.

Weckerling greatly regretted the increasing tension between the Beckennende Church and those who wished to fall back on their separate Lutheran and Calvinist Confessions. He agreed with Niemoeller and regretted the rising opinion against him - though he thought he had been undiplomatic. He was annoyed with Max Lackmann (see above in Buren) because, though originally a Calvinist (i.e. Reformed Churchman) and a Barthian, he was now falling back on Lutheran Confessionalism.

Leaving the Weckerlings' flat, I drove to the Johannesstift at the other end of Spandau. There a two-day meeting of the Synod of the Bekennende Kirche was in process, under the Chairmanship of Bishop Otto Dibelius; and I had been invited to lunch.

Some 80 to 100 clergy sat down to lunch. This consisted of vegetable soup - a clearish liquid very full of whole green peas and a small amount of potato (there being now a potato famine in Germany). There was also, I think, a tiny amount of onion in it. It was well-seasoned and palatable. Nothing else was served, not even a bit of bread to eat with it. Most of the men took three large plates of it. But for three who came in very late nothing was left but the thick pea porridge at the bottom of the pot, with absolutely no liquid; yet I noticed that they slowly chewed their way through two large platefuls of it - I should say they each ate 2 lbs of the stuff.

I had a brief talk with Bishop Dibelius, and a long talk with Probst Bohm, pastor Lokies and Pastor Bthge (Dibelius' Chaplain and son-in-law of Professor Bondhoeffler), all of whom I had seen in December. Bohm and Lokies are very leading churchmen in Berlin; I had met Bohm at the Oxford Conference in 1937.

I told these of my talk with Weckerling. Bohm and Lokies at least were quite out of sympathy with him, and followed the usual attitude towards both Russia and Marxism-Communism. They said Weckerling had been strongly influenced in his opinions by Clutton-Brock; and this Miss Mary Bailey afterwards confirmed. They greatly distrusted Weckerling's statement that the Russians were 'correct' in their attitude to the Churches.

The clergy present had come from the Russian Zone of Germany, a number of them from Pomerania and Silesia. They had had great difficulty in getting permission to travel, and means of travel; and some had slipped through without permission. They seemed very poorly clothed, and many seemed solemn and oppressed - very cheerless-looking. I asked if any were there from that part of Silesia which is now part of Poland. They said one had come, and I asked to speak to him. But first I spoke to an old pastor who said that the young pastor from what is now Polish Silesia could not answer all my questions.

He himself was this young pastor's confessor, and in confession had heard all the young man had to say of his experiences, but he could not repeat it, and neither could the young man tell me. He had been taken by the Poles, and had returned terribly 'broken'; but of what the Poles had done to him I must not ask. I then spoke to the young man. He said the Germans were all being deported from that area to westwards. The pastors were being allowed to remain and continue their work until the Germans had all been deported, and then they too would have to leave. He said the presence of a British Mission in this part of Germany was the only alleviating circumstance; not that this Mission had power to do much, but that their presence prevented the Poles from being more extreme in their oppression than they actually were.

These various people told me there were 58 students of theology (Protestant) in the University of Berlin; but some 80 others were being trained in the Johannesstift itself. The Russians strictly limited the number of students in each Faculty of the University, and 58 was all they would allow in the Protestant Faculty of Theology. There was a most critical shortage of pastors; so many had fled from the Russian Zone; and not others would now accept a call from the West into it; fearing to bring their families there.

I then drove from Spandau into the centre of Berlin, and to the City Chambers (Sentralmagistrat) in the Parochialstrasse. There I visited Probat Gruber, whom I had seen in December. He is the Church Representative on the newly-formed City Council, and sits all day in his office in the Chambers.

He agrees with Weckerling, being only the second of this way of thinking whom I have met. It is his business to work together with the Communist, Social Democrat and other members of the City Council and also to negotiate with the Russians in all matters concerning the Protestant Churches. His view is that the Germans must learn to get on with the Russians.

Personally he gets on with the Russian officials fairly well. They are quite friendly, and he thinks that in a sense they are anxious to do the right thing. Their policy is to be neutral in religious matters. Previously there had been in Berlin various anti-Christian organisations, but the Russians have suppressed these. They give freedom alike to communists and Christians, but will not allow either to engage in active propaganda against the other. The local Russian authorities have instructions to follow this neutral line, and Gruber thinks they are really trying to follow it.

Gruber (a very alert and business-like person in late middle life), being on good terms with the officials, explains to them that from a Christian point of view there can be no neutrality. 'Achristlich ist widerchristlich' he tells them; non-Christian is anti-Christian. They hear this with friendly interest, but they say their business is to be neutral.

When I was talking to Gruber, the Communist member of the City Council came into the room to discuss a letter with him for a moment. He was a very young man, and keen-looking. Gruber says he gets on with him very well; but he too thought the German communists were causing more difficulty for the Churches etc. than were the Russians.

Gruber went to London with Lilje a couple of months ago, and spoke with interest of the talks he had had there with British Churchmen. Like Lilje, Gruber had had his spell in a Nazi Concentration Camp.

In the afternoon I drove to Bielefeld, and called on Praeses Koch (now Bishop of Westphalia) at Stapenhurst-strasse 24. He was out when I arrived, but meanwhile had a chat with Frau Koch, and soon he come in.

Frau Koch said that her own household was not so badly off, as one of her sons-in-law had a farm not far away and brought them some of his produce. But the other day she found one family of her acquaintance dining off a single cauliflower which five had to share.

Frau Koch told me, and her husband afterwards repeated, that they had lived in Bad Oeynhausen until the British Headquarters there had turned them out, when they had come to the present house in Bielefeld, which belongs to a relative. They had had to leave all their furniture for the use of the British officers. Also the church in Bad Oeynhausen had been taken over as the British Garrison Church. He wondered if these two things could be reconsidered; or at least if some reasonably-sized hall in Oeynhausen could be assigned for the congregations use.

Koch had a further request. Could we not send them a ton of pewter (or tin, Zinne) from England for the making of communion plate, of which they stood greatly in need. He greatly admired the quality of English pewter.

They had had three sons fighting in the war. One was still a prisoner in Russia, apparently near Moscow, but no letters were coming through from him, though six months ago they had had an indirect message that he was still alive. Another son had been in Greece, and had a long trek home, being captured en route near Constance by the French, but afterwards released. A third son had been on the Russian front, and still gets news from friends in the Russian zone - at Dessau (?) near Leipzig. They say that things there are not so bad, and that the Russians are behaving not too badly. Their son says he believes just about half of the rumours current here in the West about what is happening in the Russian Zone.

Koch said that when the British first arrived, the people welcomed them with open arms, but that all that was now very much changed. He thought a main reason was our misguided attempts at denazification. He hoped we would become more merciful (barmherzig). I admitted we might have made mistakes, but tried to show him the point of view from which we were acting.

He said he thought the Church in Germany had two great tasks in the near future. The first was to address itself to the disillusioned youth. The second was to impress upon the German civil authorities the necessity of obeying the laws of God - and of seeing that they were obeyed in the community. And not only the commandments 'Thou shalt not steal' and 'Thou shalt not kill', but also the Fourth (or in his Lutheran order, the Third) Commandment - to keep the sabbath Day Holy. He thought that Germany must recognize itself as a Christian state, on which such a law also was obligatory.

He asked me in some detail about our Scottish Church courts - about the constitution of our General Assembly etc.