

Germany and Russia.

By S. D. STIRK

CANADA is a long way from Germany, even in these days of planes and radio; and conditions in Germany itself make it extremely difficult to find out and judge exactly what is happening there since the war ended. Our newspaper and broadcast reports seem for the most part to remain on the surface; they provide little indication as to what is going on in the hearts and minds of individual Germans, or they say little that is positive and informative about the Russian and Communist side. I find myself relying, therefore, on a careful and comparative study of the letters I receive from all four zones of Germany. There is naturally great divergence in the ways my various correspondents write. Many of them are former colleagues and students at the University of Breslau, where I was Lecturer in English from 1930 to 1936. The great majority live in the three western zones, and only a few are Communists or Communist sympathizers. The anti-Communists in the west write openly against Russia whereas the Anti-Communists in the Russian zone have to be much more careful. The Communists both west and east of the "iron curtain" try to impress me with their views, or even to convert me. But in spite of these and other (more personal) differences, it is possible to trace certain main themes and trends common to them all.

During the first few months after Victory-in-Europe-Day, letters from Germany expressed relief that the war was over, gratitude that one had at least come through the terrible years with one's life, and satisfaction that it was now possible to correspond with someone

in the world outside. But before long a strong note of pessimism began to creep in. This pessimism concentrated on two main themes: firstly, the uncertainty of Germany's political future; and secondly, the lack of food, clothing, and all kinds of consumer goods. This second aspect reached its climax in the exceptionally severe winter of 1946-47; and as the food situation was made worse in many parts of Germany by the great drought of the summer of 1947, it continued to dominate the letters of even the wisest and most idealistic of Germans during the months that followed. But the winter of 1947-48 was mercifully mild, and the spring of 1948 was early and heartening, with the result that the struggle to keep alive has found decreasing and less poignant expression in letters received from Germans during the last few months. On the other hand, a marked revival of political interest accompanied the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in November 1947. The failure of this conference was a great blow to most Germans, and particularly to those who look to the West. Since that time they have never ceased writing in pessimistic and alarmist tones about the unhappy division of Germany into two radically opposed spheres of influence, and of the inevitability of war between Russia and the Western Powers, with Germany as the chief battleground.

This war psychosis has been the dominating note in letters from the western zones during the past six months or so. The nearer the iron curtain, the greater the fear of Russia. A friend in the U.S. zone writes: "We are living only sixty kilometres from Asia, and we shall not survive the coming war." Another expresses the widespread feeling of being caught in a trap: "If only I could get my wife and daughter out of this! I would

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gladly become a waiter in the United States, a shepherd in Australia, a lumberjack in Canada, a coffee-planter in Brazil —anything to get away.’

Two groups of Germans seem to me to be most likely to profit from this almost hysterical expectation of war: the Communists, and the ultra-nationalists. And I strongly suspect that both groups are doing all they can to promote it. “Deutschlands Stimme” (The Voice of Germany), Communist paper published in Berlin, carried a front-page leading article on March 31, 1948, with the title: “Permanent world-crisis—made in USA.” The opening paragraph read: “In the space of a few months the government of the United States has succeeded in destroying the foundations of a peaceful world order laid by the Allies. Those who saw in the splitting up of Germany the first step towards the splitting up of Europe and of the world, have been proved right.” The sub-title of the paper runs: “A weekly organ of the (German) people’s movement for unity and a just peace.” Here then are two of the main directives for recent Communist propaganda to Germans: denunciation of the United States, and stress on German unity. The demand for a united Germany was the ever-recurring theme of the address by Otto Grotewohl (published under the title: “Im Kampf um Deutschland,” Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1947) at the second annual conference of the so-called “Socialist Unity Party,” which met presumably in the autumn of 1947. (The Socialist Unity Party resulted from the compulsory fusion of the Communist and Social Democrat parties in the Russian zone in late 1946.) Much of Grotewohl’s speech was reminiscent of Goebbels, and it is indeed remarkable that the Communists have taken over a great deal of the familiar Nazi propaganda. He began by belittling the power and influence of England and the British Commonwealth. He then “proved” that the United States were out for world domination. He attacked “the danger

of splitting up Germany into federal states,” i.e., the basic American and British policy for Germany’s political reconstruction. He demanded instead a nation-wide referendum for the setting up of a unitary German state, and concluded with the words: “Our attitude is clear; for us there is no question of tearing Germany apart. The German people and the German nation are united in their determination to overcome common suffering by common means.” There is one great weakness in this vigorous and undoubtedly effective Communist propaganda for a united Germany, namely, Russian recognition of the Polish claims to a frontier on the River Oder and the western River Neisse. But evidence from letters and other sources goes to show that behind the scenes and by means of a whispering campaign, Germans are being told that Russia might some day reconsider this decision, and restore some of the eastern territories now held by the Poles.

Secondly, the prevailing war psychosis in Germany would seem to be somehow connected with the incipient revival of ultra-nationalism. According to reliable accounts, National Socialism is as dead as Hitler; the Nazis played for high stakes and lost, and as a result they are discredited and under a very dark cloud; the small minority of fanatical and pathological Nazis which still exists is compelled to remain underground, and cannot hope at present for popular support. But it would be unwise to assume that the ultra-nationalist forces which made Hitler possible are also dead. Now that the victor powers have failed to create a reasonably healthy and truly democratic Germany, they probably feel that their new day has dawned. The best prospect for such Germans is assuredly a Third World War, in which they might this time be on the winning side. They are naturally quite pleased to note the dissensions between Russia and the Western Allies; and one can picture them rubbing their hands, in

the hope that they will be able to exploit the deteriorating situation in Germany and Europe. Here is some of the evidence which indicates that these forces are again very much alive.

A teacher in a high school near Heidelberg writes grimly that he knows himself to be the only "democrat" on the staff, and that he feels his days there are numbered. A distinguished authority on the history of German literature writes sadly that he has no chance of a post at any University in the American zone, because he lacks "nationalist" (or, failing that, "Catholic") connections. The novelist Ernst Wiechert opposed the Nazis from 1933 on; in 1938 he was arrested by the Gestapo and put in Buchenwald concentration camp; after the war he denounced Nazi crimes and called on all Germans to do penance and make a fresh start. The threats against his life reached such a pitch during recent months that he decided in March to leave his home in Bavaria, and go to Switzerland. The climax of the threats was the message that all the deaths in the Nazi concentration camps put together would be nothing compared with the death which would one day be inflicted on Ernst Wiechert! This, of course, is nationalist thuggery, reminiscent of the years immediately after the First World War, and of a well-known German brand; and there will certainly be much more of it before long. It is not clear whether Karl Jaspers, the famous "Existentialist" philosopher of Heidelberg University and one of the outstanding anti-Nazis in public office in post-war Germany, received similar threats; but it is difficult to avoid interpreting as a defeat for the democratic forces in Germany, and at least indirectly as a triumph for reaction, his acceptance in March of a call to the University of Basle.

The root of the matter may well lie in German history, and in German national and individual character. Germany is the land in the centre of things (das Land der Mitte), in which for a thousand

years or more opposing forces and ideas have clashed. Every student of German literature knows the "Faust" quotation about the two souls warring in a single breast. In a significant passage (p.162f.) in his "Reflections of an Unpolitical Man" (1922), Thomas Mann expressed the view that Germany was the country in which the spiritual and intellectual antitheses in Europe must inevitably be fought out, and that European wars must always develop into German civil wars. These words would seem to have special application to Germany since the Second World War. The German word for "civil war" is "Bruderkrieg"—the war between brothers; and already in the "cold" war between East and West, Germans are taking sides quite apart from the division into zones. German Communism is, moreover, much more than a movement of the proletariat; it has its fervent intellectuals, and its "nationalist" supporters. In this connection it is useful to remember that friendship with Russia was a guiding factor in Prussian foreign policy from Frederick the Great to Bismarck; and that in the German General Staff there was always a strong pro-Russian element. Much more consideration should also be given to the movement known as "National (or Prussian) Bolshevism," initiated and led during the twenties and thirties by Ernst Niekisch.

One of my correspondents in the Russian zone is a very gifted University student. His name denotes that he is a member of an old Prussian family; and the name of the girl he married a few months ago speaks even more of Prussian nobility and "Junkertum." Yet he is enthusiastically pro-Russian; and Ernst Niekisch is his great hero and inspiration. The account of Ernst Niekisch and National Bolshevism which he sent me in a recent letter, is the best that has come my way so far.

Before the First World War Niekisch was a teacher. During the war he reached the rank of sergeant (cf. Lance-Corporal

Hitler) in a Bavarian regiment. Released from the army in 1917, he became editor of a Social Democrat paper; and he wrote a pamphlet in praise of Lenin, called "The Light from the East" (*Das Licht aus dem Osten*). Throughout 1917 and 1918 he demanded in his articles and at numerous political meetings that the Reichstag refuse further war credits, that the Kaiser be compelled to abdicate, and that a proletarian government be put in power, with a mandate to stop the fighting on the Eastern Front, unite with the Russians, and continue the war against the Western Powers until victory was won. On November 8, 1918, he formed the "Red" Workers and Soldiers Council in Augsburg. Early 1919 found him at the head of the Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Council of Bavaria, and he was one of the main leaders of the Bavarian Communist Republic proclaimed in Munich in May, 1919. After the defeat of this Communist regime, he was sentenced to two years imprisonment. In 1925 he founded the so-called Resistance Movement (*Widerstandsbewegung*); its symbol was appropriately enough a black Prussian eagle, with two swords in its claws, and a hammer and sickle on its breast.

In 1932 the publishing house Niekisch had built up (*Widerstandsverlag*) brought out a pamphlet with the title "Hitler, the doom of Germany" (*Hitler, ein deutsches Verhaengnis*). The frontispiece showed a skeleton in the uniform of a Nazi Storm-trooper, his arm raised in the Hitler salute; and one of the illustrations revealed a crowd of Nazis swarming up a hill, and dropping down on the other side into a huge coffin decorated with a swastika. According to my student friend, 40,000 copies of this pamphlet were sold up to the spring of 1933, when it was of course forbidden. The periodical "*Widerstand*," which Niekisch edited and published, was also soon forbidden. The Resistance Movement went underground. A high Gestapo official said to Niekisch in 1934: "I know that

you are one of the most dangerous men in Germany." In 1937 he was arrested, and sentenced to life-imprisonment. He was given injections, partly with the idea of liquidating him, and partly in the interests of Nazi medical science; with the result that when the Russians liberated him in the prison of Brandenburg-Goerden in April 1945, he was almost blind and paralysed in both legs. In August 1945 the Russians made him head of the People's College (*Volks-hochschule*) in Wilmersdorf, a suburb of Berlin.

My student correspondent has sent me two pamphlets by Niekisch. The first is "*Deutsche Daseinsverfehlung*" (*Aufbau Verlag, Berlin 1946*). This title is impossible to translate; but both title and content give a despairing summary of German history, stressing exclusively its futile, tragic and catastrophic aspects. The second pamphlet is entitled "*East and West, Unsystematic Reflections*" (*Ost and West, Unsystematische Betrachtungen, Minerva Verlag, Berlin 1947*). Niekisch here attempts to explain and to bridge the gulf between Russia and the West, or at least between Russia and Germany. The West is individualism, bourgeoisie, monopoly capitalism, political and economic imperialism. Russia is the antithesis of all this. Russia is Asiatic mysticism, Russia is soul; and it is in defence of her soul that she has striven for so long and with such ruthless determination to keep out the West. But she has deliberately taken over the industrial and technical achievements of the West; she has "humanized" them, and it is in this "humanisierter Technizismus" that Niekisch sees the main hope and salvation for Russia and Europe. Niekisch declares: "Capitalism gave to a limited number of individuals . . . and to a select minority of the rich . . . the freedom to develop into mature personalities; (by raising living standards) humanisierter Technizismus" will make all people, including the uncared for prole-

ariat of town and country, into human beings."

I have looked in vain for references to Niekisch in British and American publications so far. Yet he is certainly a force in post-war Germany. I have dealt with him at some length in this article not only for his own sake, but because he is by no means alone; he is a symptom, a type, and a warning. He is a man to watch, and his writings should be translated and studied. It is only in this way that the West can realize the true nature and strength of Communist ideology in Germany and Europe today.

By directing attention to the Communist and ultra-nationalist minorities in Germany to-day, and to the possibility of their unholy alliance, it is far from my intention to belittle the strength and idealism of the democratic and pro-West elements. But it is just as well to realize the difficulties with which these elements are faced, and the nature of the opposition they will be increasingly called upon to overcome. Moreover, it is certain that if the intolerable conditions of life in Germany continue (not to mention the possibility that they will get much worse!) then the ranks of the Communists and ultra-nationalists will be rapidly swelled by Germans who would normally feel out of place in either camp. Such are, in brief, the main psychological and ideological implications of the German situation, as it presents itself to a Canadian observer in the summer of 1948. It remains, finally, to regard the present crisis and deadlock against the background of recent European history, and to link it with the world-wide viewpoint of "Geopolitics."

H. J. Mackinder's "Democratic Ideals and Reality" is a sadly neglected work. First published early in 1919, it is now available as a Pelican Book (Harmondsworth Press, Middlesex, England), at a very cheap price. His writings gave Mackinder the doubtful reputation of being one of the fathers of "Geopolitics;" and

through Major-General Professor Dr. Karl Haushofer, the head of the Institute of Geopolitics at Munich University, he had a great influence on Nazi foreign policy. Mackinder saw the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa as a single unit which he called the World-Island.

Within the World-Island lies the Heartland, extending from the mouth of the Elbe on the North Sea to the mouth of the Amur on the Pacific Ocean. Mackinder's key-formula for "global strategy" (to use a phrase beloved of the Nazis at the height of their successes in the Second World War) ran as follows:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland:

Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:

Who rules the World-Island commands the World. (Pelican edition, p. 113.)

Looking back on the First World War, Mackinder wrote in 1919: "Had Germany elected to stand on the defensive on her short frontier towards France, and had she thrown her main strength against Russia, it is not improbable that the world would nominally be at peace today, but overshadowed by a German East Europe in command of the Heartland." This was exactly the geopolitical reasoning which led Hitler to attack Russia on June 22, 1941: his greatest blunder, and the turning-point of the war. Looking to the peace treaties after the First World War had been won, Mackinder wrote: "Unless you would lay up trouble for the future, you cannot now accept any outcome of the war which does not finally dispose of the issue between German and Slav in East Europe. You must have a balance between German and Slav, and true independence of each."

Mackinder's solution was a tier of independent states between Germany and Russia; which seems a far-off cry in 1948. His main aim was to prevent further aggression, and the control of the Heartland by Germany; whereas the danger is now just the reverse, and the jackboot is firmly on the Russian

foot, if it is anywhere. He was also writing from the standpoint of sea-power; and a mere historian of German literature must leave it to the experts to decide whether or not the advent of air-power plus guided missiles and the atom bomb (together with the likely addition of bacteriological atrocities) has made Mackinder's strategical concepts out-of-date and invalid. But Mackinder was

surely right about the vital importance of East Europe. And it is something more than personal prejudice or professional bias, when a Professor of German takes it upon himself to underline Mackinder's warnings, and to maintain with him that the fate of the world may well depend on a settlement of the century-old struggle between Teuton and Slav.

Reconversion in Australia.

By LLOYD ROSS

THE major problem of reconversion in Australia, as seen by official advisors during the war, was one of sustaining a high level of employment. The aspect that caused most fear was the belief that difficulties of transfer from war to peace would be so great that a collapse of employment would follow, unless special plans were taken to meet the problem. In a White Paper on Full Employment, issued on May 30, 1945, the Government, however, linked the danger of inflation with the difficulties of conversion, as follows:

In the first place, about 1,000,000 men and women now in the Armed Forces and war industries will be seeking peace-time occupations. Secondly, the war-time excess of spending power will persist at least until more adequate supplies of peace-time goods and services again become available.

The main threat to employment in the transition will come from the physical and organizational difficulties in the way of restoring civilian production of all kinds in time to employ the people who will then be seeking work. Much peace-time employment will not exist until production plans have been prepared, machinery adapted and tooled up and skilled workers located or retrained.

By careful planning and detailed preparation the Commonwealth Govern-

ment hoped to avoid a major collapse in the economy. The theory to be followed was stated in the White Paper, and thus summarized by the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, (Hon. J. J. Dedman):

The policy outlined in the paper is that the Commonwealth and State governments should accept responsibility for stimulating spending on goods and services to the extent necessary to sustain full employment. It will be the object to maintain such a pressure of demand on resources that for the economy as a whole there will be a tendency towards a shortage of men instead of a shortage of jobs.

In the post-war period employment has been maintained; demand for jobs exceeds supply; the number of people at work in peace-time projects is the greatest in Australian history.

The immediate emphasis has, therefore, changed from maintaining employment to avoiding inflation by increasing production and by stabilising prices.

Avoiding Inflation

Introducing a Bill to continue the operation of certain controls for a further twelve months, Mr. Dedman declared in November, 1947, that measures designed to check inflation and maintain economic stability were the control of rents, prices, capital issues and land sales. "To-day, Australia is one of the countries which shows the lowest increase of