

by

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I. Background

The importance of Germany in Europe hardly requires restatement. It is the most highly industrialized country on the Continent; its disciplined labor forces and its deposits of raw materials make it in many respects the keystone of American efforts in Europe. It was hoped that the signing of the Peace Treaty would transform Germany into a willing partner of the Atlantic community; its contribution all the more meaningful because freely given. It was assumed that a feeling of satisfaction would greet the achievement of quasi-sovereignty only seven years after unconditional surrender culminating a remarkable recovery inconceivable as late as 1948.

Such has not been the case, however. This writer spent several weeks in Germany at a period coinciding with the signing of the Peace Treaty. During this time he was in a position to visit various sections of Germany and to talk to a wide range of individuals. German reaction to the Peace Treaty and to U.S. policy in general can best be summed up as "hysterical". Whether expressed as the refusal by the Laender of Adenauer's request that the Peace Treaty be celebrated by school holidays and by the exhibition of flags on public buildings; whether revealed in newspaper editorials or in conversations of leading figures, the Peace Contract and its companion instruments have led to an outburst of anti-American feeling totally out of proportion to the specific criticism advanced. No indigenous advocate of the U.S. position has yet appeared. Even Adenauer and, more markedly, his supporters tend to support the Peace Contract as making the best of a bad situation and advocate its ratification merely because it exists (See F.E. Adenauer's interview with Friedlaender, the Editor of Die Zeit.). Under these circumstances the consequences of the Peace Treaty may be totally different from what had been hoped. It is certain that in the present psychological climate a German contribution to the West European Defense Force will be of doubtful usefulness. What is the source of this German distrust of the U.S. extending over all sections of the population and threatening to ruin the whole German policy of the U.S.?

II. Specific German Criticisms

German criticism of the U.S. focuses on the Peace Treaty, on rearmament and on the problem of German unity. Specific criticisms tend to vary with the interests of the group concerned, but it is fair to state that they are general and are reducible to one underlying cause: A pervasive distrust of the U.S.

The criticism of the Peace Contract takes many forms, most of it directed against the U.S. The decartelization clause is considered by many an infringement of the very sovereignty the Treaty attempts to restore. The industrialists naturally deplore the clause for obvious reasons. But it is opposed almost as violently by the SPD as another example of U.S. encouragement of "reactionary free enterprise capitalism". The provision regarding the review of sentences of war criminals has aroused the violent opposition of veterans' groups. Many individuals who really have a vested interest in rearmament balk because of this alleged slur on the honor of the German army. The former Chief of Staff of the German High Command expressed a general attitude to the writer when he stated: "If I am going to be asked about the staffing of the German Officers' Corp, I shall recommend that its personnel be drawn from the ranks of the lawyers, so that they will know how to behave after the war."

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These criticisms may be unreasonable and would probably be much less effective had Soviet propaganda not succeeded in stimulating a two-fold fear: a) that the Peace Treaty perpetuates (or in the words of a leading FDP politician "eternizes") the division of Germany, and b) that rearmament will make war inevitable. Soviet propaganda has succeeded in shifting the onus for the division of Germany on the U.S. The apparent rejection of the Soviet proposal for a four-power conference has made ratification of the Peace Treaty by the Bundestag extremely difficult. The pressure for unification is powerful and cannot be assuaged by a priori assertions of Soviet bad faith. A leading member of Adenauer's party told this writer that the bad faith of the Soviet Union could not have been better exposed than through a four-power conference; that in his opinion a peace treaty should have been advertised as a last resort not as the beginning of a new era in European policies. This is undoubtedly the motivation behind the recent advocacy of a four-power conference by Jacob Kaiser, Adenauer's Minister for All-German Affairs, who is certainly an ardent anti-Communist.

In an atmosphere which is becoming increasingly inflexible because of the pressures of both the SPD and extreme right-wing groups the government coalition finds its position almost untenable if it constantly is forced to defend itself against charges of being an instrument of the Allies (see Schumacher's description of Adenauer as Chancellor of the Allies). Much of the anti-American bitterness of particularly the FDP is due to their belief that American policy puts them before impossible alternatives: Either to leave the government coalition or to vote for unpopular measures and commit political suicide. On the day of the ratification of the Peace Treaty this writer dined with the head of the Foreign Policy Commission of the FDP. He was greeted by his host with the words, "Why did you do this to us?"

The psychological effect of the Peace Treaty is further reduced by the fact that it was tied to a Defense Pact. Even more than in Japan, this is construed as a form of blackmail, as granting sovereignty to achieve essentially American ends in the U.S. strategy against Russia. But rearmament is opposed for other reasons as well. The younger generation is cynical and bitter. Having witnessed the collapse of Germany after fighting a hopeless war for several years, they are disillusioned and "neutralist". In conversations with university youth a pacifist strain with religious overtones appears, not easily overcome by a leadership with as little prestige as the present West German government. Others oppose rearmament on the basis of military considerations. They emphasize the indefensibility of the Elbe, Allied troop dispositions which point to a stand at the Rhine and to the futility of fighting a rear-guard action which will again leave Germany devastated and many hostages in Soviet hands.

III. Psychological Climate

The above remarks are perhaps one-sided. The sympathies of many, if not most, Germans are with the West. But they are not vocal. Their feelings are not organized and however opposed to the Soviet Union, they are often as distrustful of the U.S., though not as afraid. The real dilemma of the U.S. position in Germany does not derive from the specific complaints advanced, but from a general lack of confidence in the U.S. which prevents the creation of a psychological climate for the execution of integrated, long-range policies and which prevents the Germans from seeing such measures as the Atlantic Pact in terms of their own interest.

It is, of course, unfortunate that it should have been the Peace Contract which became the focal point of the frustration and resentments of the past fifteen years. Perhaps it would have been wiser to sign a Peace Contract only after the failure of a four-power conference; to keep the Peace Contract very short and to leave such details as decartelization and the disposition of war criminals for negotiation with a sovereign West Germany as an implementing instrument of the Peace Contract. Rearmament, too, would be psychologically much more meaningful were it negotiated by a government already sovereign, rather than by one seemingly accepting it as the price of sovereignty.

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plaints except as symptoms of a more fundamental resentment. Indeed an attempt to meet specific criticisms by ad hoc measures would probably worsen rather than improve the situation in two ways: a) they would be taken as another symptom of American weakness and encourage the notion that intransigence is the best bargaining weapon in dealing with the U.S. This seeming weakness would make the Germans all the more nervous since it would be interpreted as the reverse side of Soviet strength. b) Any concessions, although they would remove specific criticisms, would probably raise others as has proved to be the case through the past four years. They would, if anything, increase the existing bitterness by intensifying the prevalent self-righteousness and frustration. They would be taken as one more indication that the U.S. never understands what really moves the German people; that it is talking about legal instruments while the Germans describe an historical experience.

This gives a tragic and almost inextricable quality to American-German relations. The Germans have experienced three upheavals in the past thirty years: the collapse of the Empire, of the Weimar Republic, of Nazi Germany. The older generation is of a cynicism that knows only one impetus: to be, by all means, on the winning side next time. The younger generation is confused and groping. American invocations of a Communist peril seem to them all too reminiscent of the propaganda of Goebbels and all too shallow in terms of their own experience with the Soviet Union.

Germany, too, is just emerging from the shock of defeat and of denazification and demilitarization, and from the expulsion of millions of its cities from East Germany and from economic chaos. Denazification has created a sense of identification among many former party members and denazification is ascribed, rightly or wrongly, to the U.S. A leading civil servant told this writer that up to the American Occupation and his own imprisonment he had considered the SS sub-human, but that the internment camp had taught him their qualities. The memory of a period when America was speaking of "reeducation", of the villainy of German militarism and authoritarianism is still pervasive and is constantly invoked in conversations. The sudden shift of American policy in 1950 is considered by most Germans not as magnanimity but as utter cynicism. Above all, the Germans are weary and almost neurotic and any exhortation is apt to be resented because of its very existence. The fear of a new war, new bombings, and new occupation is pervasive.

Americans attempt to deal with these frustrations with an open-minded matter-of-factness. They examine the "objective" merit of individual complaints; more often than not they meet German objections. They speak of the evils of Communism, but not in terms which mean anything to the Germans--and, therefore, they compound German bitterness, German self-righteousness and the feeling that Americans simply are incapable of understanding. The editor of a leading German cultural and political review, a former inmate of a concentration camp, a man of considerable influence in intellectual circles told this writer: "If an American visits my friends or myself, we always have a very pleasant conversation. But afterwards we feel like throwing the nearest convenient object against a wall. We simply cannot stand this 'Goddamned American good-will' any longer. We would like to talk about things that move us, whose solution, I assure you, is not to be achieved by good will."

It is this feeling of impotent frustration with Americans that accounts for the present stalemate in Germany. The ratification of the Peace Contract will not remove it; on the contrary, it will intensify it and cause the election next year to be fought on issues of narrow nationalism and freedom from subservience to the U.S. One should not count much on the often-expressed dislike of the Soviet Union. To be sure, the USSR is disliked, and even hated, but it is also respected and feared--and this may suffice for the neutralization of Germany. It is significant that Remer, who in the U.S. Zone called General Clay a petty criminal (Halunke) has not used similar epithets against Soviet commanders--even from the safety of the Western zones.

The exaltation of Soviet strength is, it must be repeated, the reverse of the situation for the U.S. There has grown up a stereotype of the American as arrogant, brutal, inconsiderate, without sensibilities and animated by a shallow cynicism. A recent survey by the Institute fur Social-Forschung in Frankfurt illustrates this point. A sample of Germans in the Western zones of Germany were asked to compare the national characteristics of Germans, Russians, and Americans on the points mentioned above. In every instance the Germans were predictably considered most favorably (least arrogant, least brutal, etc.), but surprisingly on every point the Americans appeared as worse than the Russians. (More people thought Americans were brutal or arrogant, than Russians.)

Another example may be permissible. A leading German intellectual told the following story to this writer. During the non-fraternization period Cardinal Faulhaber met the Commanding General of the U.S. troops occupying Munich and extended his hand as a greeting. The American General refused to accept it. At the same time, the Bishop of Trier met a French General. He, too, extended his hand but the French General, obedient to his orders, refused to shake it. An hour later, a French civilian visited the Bishop of Trier and demonstratively extended his hand. It was the French General. The story, this writer's acquaintance points out, was apocryphal, but it was plausible. We Germans, he added, would never believe it were an American substituted for the Frenchman.

These attitudes are the real source of U.S. difficulties in Germany, if not in Europe. They facilitate Soviet propaganda because they make even the most outrageous fabrication psychologically plausible. The attacks on General Ridgway as General Microbe may not convince Europeans that the U.S. is engaging in germ warfare in Korea. They do add to the picture of an overbearing U.S. bullying small nations. The lack of confidence in the U.S. makes even friendly governments tentative in their defense of measures they inwardly agree to. No indigenous advocates arise to defend U.S. policies with even a fraction of the fervor of their critics. This puts the burden of defense squarely on organs officially identified with the U.S.: the Voice of AMERICA, THE America Houses, and American-sponsored publications such as the Monat and Die Neue Zeitung. And, in this manner, policies such as rearmament and the Peace Treaty are even more clearly labeled as American, not as German, policies and become even more vulnerable.

The German situation is critical; not because Germany is apt to go Communist--there is practically no danger of this. The real threat is that a nationalist reaction fed on a dogmatic anti-Americanism may bring to power a government which will lean on the USSR to achieve its independence from the West whatever its ideological differences. This reverse Titoism is by no means impossible and may be encouraged by the violent debate the Peace Contract and rearmament are certain to evoke.

IV. A Psychological Program

The fundamental cause of the difficulties of the U.S. position in Germany can be summarized as follows: The U.S. has attempted to create a framework of legal relationships and neglected the psychological climate which would make these relationships effective. In attempting to do so, the U.S. has frequently acted as if German participation in the Western Defense Community depended on its approbation of the U.S. It has consequently attempted to meet specific complaints. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has pursued its minimum objective, the neutralization of Germany by emphasizing the German interests involved, with little regard for approbation. Indeed, German hatred of the Soviet Union may be a Soviet asset, for it is based on a fear which paralyzes all action. By advocating German unity, by playing on German fears of rearmament, by emphasizing the devastation of Korea, they are creating the conditions of a neutralism which seems achievable only by opposition to the U.S.

The U.S. will not be able to remedy its position until it emphasizes the psychological component of its political strategy. This is all the more true as the power to influence events directly is rapidly slipping out of the hands of the U.S. It should be the aim of any U.S. psychological effort to create

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indigenous pressures which parallel the main lines of U.S. policies. This program involves a technical and a substantive aspect: a consideration of the conceptions underlying U.S. psychological strategy and a discussion of its form and content.

American propaganda in Germany has stressed a mass appeal and official auspices: the Voice of America, officially sponsored publications, and America Houses. But this inevitably compounds U.S. difficulties. Twelve years of Nazi rule and seven years of military occupation have left a residue of distrust of the printed word, particularly from official sources. Indeed the more unofficial the source, the greater is credibility; the more obscure a rumor, the stronger its impact. Officially-sponsored publications moreover suffer from the very inhibitions they attempt to remove; they tend to reach only those who are already convinced. This distrust of official sources, in particular those identified with the Occupation, is best revealed by the difficulty faced by former staff members of the Neue Zeitung in finding new employment. The Voice of America again aims for a mass appeal. Its impact on the opinion-forming segment of the population seems doubtful.

It is, however, precisely the opinion-making element of the population (leading intellectuals, political figures, editors, etc.) who are the source of U.S. difficulties in Germany. It is their distrust of U.S. intentions which creates an atmosphere of rigidity for policy makers. This distrust is all the more pervasive because this group on the whole knows extremely little about the U.S. Throughout his travels this writer met a surprising number of influential Germans who had had almost no contact with Americans. It is fair to say that German reaction to U.S. official personnel, both HICOG and Army, is extremely mixed. Typical attitudes were that they represented "second-rates" or that they constituted a means to relieve unemployment in the U.S. The writer is in no position to pass on the merit of these complaints; on the other hand, their existence is an objective fact of considerable importance.

For these reasons neither official sources nor official personnel are in a position to fundamentally affect the psychological climate. It is therefore important to create a basis of understanding on an unofficial basis on all levels by sending a few, highly selected individuals to Germany, to give them a "cover" which will permit them to travel widely and to establish contacts. A university, large foundation, newspaper and similar organizations would seem most suitable. Many doubts could well be resolved in such a manner and on an unofficial basis; many questions could be answered before they become political issues. Above all, it is important to engage Germans and Americans on cooperative projects so that by working together a community of interests might be created. This could take the form of study groups, cultural congresses, exchange professorships and intern programs, wherever possible under non-governmental auspices.

Exchange programs are undoubtedly useful. On the other hand, the German youth would be even more effectively reached through a number of young Americans strategically placed into key universities. Their selection as of all personnel for these programs should not be on the basis of paper qualifications but should stress understanding of German conditions, personality and inward aliveness. It is, above all, crucial to find individuals who can assist in removing the German feeling that America never "understands," that it is cynically sacrificing weaker nations to its overall purposes.

There exists in Germany a large undercurrent of hatred of the Soviet-Union kept alive by expellees from Eastern Germany, by former prisoners of war in Russia and by Russian behavior in Eastern Germany. Nevertheless, this feeling cannot gain expression because it is unorganized and lacks a focus. It should be possible to encourage German structures to channel these feelings: associations of former war prisoners (probably existing clandestinely in any case) might provide excellent vehicles.

There exists also the problem of gaining some influence over veterans groups. This all the more important because their power is constantly growing. In this task the army in Germany might help by inviting German

V. A Psychological Program - Possible Propaganda Measures

American propaganda in Germany has at various times employed the following themes: a) The Soviet danger is exaggerated and German fears are therefore unfounded. b) Soviet bad faith is so self-evident that it need hardly be discussed. c) The Peace Contract and rearmament are logical concomitants of "containment," d) The Soviet Union is so strong that the defense of Europe will be impossible without German divisions and the U.S. may be forced to abandon Germany without a German Defense contribution.

Almost none of these appeals has proved effective, because they tend to intensify German fears and leave unanswered the real German doubts. The German fear of the Soviet Union, born out of historical experience, cannot be assuaged by propaganda and should be frankly faced. Up to now it has had a paralyzing effect on German public opinion because the alternatives have been incorrectly stated: Either a German defense contribution and a U.S. defense of Europe or a "neutral Germany" to be perhaps occupied but not fought over. This has enabled the SPD, the right wing group and Soviet propaganda to play on German tiredness of war, the constant reiteration of which has become increasingly effective. It is clear that this fear cannot be overcome by minimizing the Soviet danger; the Germans know better--or think they know better, which in this case amounts to the same thing. Nor can it be dealt with by constant exhortations and calling attention to the need for a German defense contribution. These exhortations merely confirm German fears about the weakness of the U.S. and its own impotence vis-a-vis the U.S.S.R.

The alternative should be differently posed: Either a German contribution to the defense of Germany and therefore some voice in its destiny or a defense of Germany, in any case, but as an impotent object of policy. In his conversations with Germans this writer posed these alternatives in somewhat the following terms: The major problem for Germany is not to avoid war, since that decision will depend on many factors outside Germany's control, primarily on the Soviet Union's estimate of the existing total power relationship. The major problem for Germany is to gain some voice in its destiny and in case of war some power to affect events. It was not certain whether Germany could survive another war; but it was quite certain that it could not survive a generation as impotent object of other policy. This approach always proved extremely effective.

Similarly, it is useless to defend the Peace Contract and Rearmament as easy, because "logical" decisions. It would be much wiser to show some compassion with the turmoil Germany is undergoing internally. American officials and American propaganda should state that we are well aware of German difficulties and hesitations; that the Peace Contract and rearmament are not easy measures, but that policy cannot wait for the coincidence of psychological receptivity and historical or political necessity; that Germany's spiritual contribution to the West at this stage may well consist of undergoing this spiritual turmoil and overcoming it. It is said in Germany that American officials advocate ratification of the Peace Contract to keep Senator Taft and isolationism from the Presidency. This could hardly constitute a reply to German fears.

The above arguments are obviously designed for the opinion-making segment of the population. For the majority of the population simple themes are necessary. The U.S. should not base its appeal on the self-evidence of Soviet bad faith. Rather it should attempt to constantly reiterate it - not in abstract terms of anti-Communist polemic but reinforced by concrete issues and grievances; treatment of prisoners, expulsions, standard of living, etc. These should not be reserved for occasional U.N. sessions but be constantly kept alive through posters, slogans, nucleus groups, etc. Above

all, the U.S. should attempt to wrest the initiative in the psychological struggle from the U.S.S.R. All advantages in this effort are on the side of the U.S. German unity should not be permitted to be preempted by the Soviet Union. If the U.S. appeared as its advocate, much wind would be taken out of the sails of the SPD, right-wing and Soviet propaganda.

German youth is still uncommitted. Its skepticism will make it distrustful of slogans, but its latent idealism causes it to seek new values and new commitments. European unity exercises a powerful appeal on the German youth, though not in the form of economic and military integration. Here the spiritual unity of the West, advocated by individuals of high calibre, would provide a valuable focus of psychological efforts; to be complemented by organizational structures outlined above.

On another plane, the billeting procedures of the Army have provided a constant source of irritation. It hits hardest the very segment of the population potentially most friendly to the U.S., the middle class. By taking houses and barring the entry to their owners, the Army is creating bad feeling totally out of proportion to the importance of billeting. An attempt should be made to have the Army construct its own billeting facilities which could, after the Occupation, be turned over to the Germans. In this manner the presence of the Army could be considered a boon, instead of as at present, a blight.

The above measures represent only an outline of possibilities. No formal statement of a program can guarantee success. This is all the more true since our difficulties in Germany stem not from bad policies, but from bad timing and not from ill-conceived propaganda but from superficial implementation. There is no easy recipe for regaining confidence; there is no technical, pat solution to recapture the initiative in the war of ideas. It is clear, however, that a new approach is needed in Germany lest the latent anti-Americanism determines the shape of events and lest Germany be swallowed up by the Soviet orbit.

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