

## A Nation Rebuilds and the World Watches

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(First of a Series)

# West Germany — A Smell of Power All Over

You can see, smell and sense power in Germany today.

The impression is so strong that it shocks.

All the reports about West Germany's "economic miracle" have given North Americans a permanent picture of Germany as a nation emerging from defeat. We have been hypnotized by the spectacle of German recovery. Few of us have wondered about its implications, either because it seems unmannerly to point the finger of suspicion at Germany again or because the implications are of such chess-like complexity that they seem impossible to fathom.

### Dangerous Notion

It has been more comfortable to think of the Federal Republic as a nation, or half a nation, which has yet to arrive. But this is no longer accurate and like all misconceptions, it is a dangerous notion. West Germany has arrived. This is probably the most important fact in Europe today. It will become increasingly apparent in the remaining years of this decade.

Strangely enough, the war years seem much closer in Canada than in Germany. We

indulge ourselves in a macabre fascination with the Nazi era. War films and books are still immensely popular. After all, it is pleasant to remember that we won. There is a certain amount of comfortable self-righteousness involved in recalling the atrocities of another people.

After 1945, the Germans turned their backs on the war. Artists, novelists and playwrights remembered from time to time but the average German resolutely concentrated on the task at hand. A new generation emerged with little personal involvement in the war. These are the bright young men of present-day Germany. For them, the Nazi era is history, or maybe a gap in history. It ended centuries ago.

Our view of Germany also has been obscured by events in Britain and France. Tied to Britain by language and sentiment, many Canadians have paid undue attention to her domestic politics and Common Market problems. We have a tendency to see Europe through British eyes. Even if we manage to get past Britain, de Gaulle has hogged so much of the spotlight in recent years that neighboring countries are obscured.

At the same time, Germany has been happy to wait in the wings. In foreign affairs, on the whole, she has been a model of good behavior. She is a pillar of the North Atlantic Alliance and a staunch supporter of American foreign policy.

### Powerful Nation

It jolts a Canadian to realize that West Germany alone is, in most important respects, the most powerful nation in western Europe today. She has the highest gross national product and per capita income, with enough left over to provide economic and technical aid to scores of under-developed nations.

Her share in world trade now surpasses that of the entire Reich in 1929. The average German's standard of living is higher than it was before the war. There is no unemployment. In fact, at the height of last summer there were 600,000 vacant jobs and Germany was looking past Greece, Turkey, Italy and Spain to Egypt and the Middle East for workers required by booming industries.

In 1960, the Federal Republic enjoyed a 9.4 percent share of world trade, roughly equal to Britain's share and

far ahead of France's 5.7 per cent. Exports from West Germany increased by about six times in the decade 1950-60.

The statistics come to life as soon as one leaves the Lufthansa jet in Frankfurt. City streets are filled with traffic, not only Volkswagens but new Mercedes and thousands of imported vehicles. Stores are among the most fashionable in the world, filled with quality merchandise displayed with a flair evident in only a few of our most expensive shops.

West Germany is filled with excellent restaurants and people who obviously have been using them. Signs of war damage have all but disappeared. There is a "North American" smell of wood and fresh concrete as contractors push ahead with apartment blocks, commercial buildings, subway extensions, elevated expressways and underground parking garages. Every large city seems to have a new opera house or concert hall or both.

More than in any other European nation, a Canadian in Germany is conscious of hailing from a new, small and rather insecure country.

All the tiny achievements which are dear to the North American ego, the Germans

master more efficiently. Hotels are cleaner. Service is better. The telephone system, unlike the intimidating electronic jungle in France, is simple and fast. Cars travel along the autobahns at speeds that would horrify the Quebec Safety League. Trains leave and arrive not on the minute but on the second.

There is an atmosphere of order and discipline, noticeable in hundreds of trivial ways. Taxis convey visitors straight to their destinations without a hint of inexplicable side-trips. Tourists walk freely at night through the worst honky-tonk district in Hamburg — and it makes "The Main" look like a country tombola. Late-night strollers in Berlin encounter only the adventures they seek. There is none of the apprehension that one feels in certain areas of New York.

### Few Strikes

Workers in West Germany produce without prodding. In 1960, the number of employees involved in strikes — 17,064 in 28 factories — was infinitesimal compared with the total force of 20,400,000 hired workers.

An American professor who visited Germany this year accurately described its inhabitants as "the most populous, the

most disciplined people of Europe, having at their disposal the most productive industrial plant on the continent."

One cannot help asking: What now?

It is dangerous to jump to conclusions after a few weeks' visit under official auspices. But it seems to me that there is a sense of marking time in Germany today. There is still plenty of work to occupy more than 54,000,000 West Germans and hundreds of thousands of imported workers. There is a great deal of internal debate about the distribution of wealth, particularly among supporters of the opposition Social Democratic Party. But it may be true, as Prof. Hans J. Morgenthau of the University of Chicago wrote in The New York Times recently, that "there is a kind of unnatural emptiness in the German mental landscape, a quiet before momentous events, a great people waiting for a new mission and perhaps a new leader."

The "momentous event" awaited by all Germans, at least according to the official propaganda, is reunification. Until this issue is settled, Germany will not be able to live at ease with herself or her neighbors.

Tomorrow: Beyond the Wall.



West German prosperity prevails in the smallest towns. Shoppers pass an ancient fountain in the town of Weissenberg north of the bustling city of Munich.



Prosperous West Germans fill one of the main shopping streets in Stuttgart and not only Volkswagens but new Mercedes and thousands of imported vehicles

are causing the traffic jams. Stores in bustling West German cities are among the most fashionable in the world and are filled with quality merchandise.



High-rise apartment blocks like this one in Stuttgart are changing the faces of all German cities as builders meet a continuing demand for new housing.