

Europe's Biggest Problem is Germany's Future

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Whether Germany will go communist or align herself with the democracies is now Europe's biggest question. Her place in European defence and her rearmament are now being actively discussed in political circles. The spirit and attitude of post-war Germany are here discussed by a writer well known to South African reading and radio public. Major-General Kirby is now on a visit to Britain and Germany.

THE control and re-education of Germany after her defeat in 1945 did not present the victors with any insuperable difficulties provided always that they worked in co-operation on an agreed long-term plan. Differences between the ideologies of east and west were such, however, that co-operation became impossible, and as a result Germany became divided into two distinct portions controlled and educated in different manners.

The problem of the future of Germany became therefore most complex and provided a headache for the leaders of the Western Powers, a headache which persists and shows little sign of being dispersed.

Western statesmen ask themselves dare they ignore history over the past 100 years and treat Western Germany as an equal, stopping dismantling German factories, and permitting her complete freedom with the right to rearm: Will the new Germany utilize such freedom to become once again a menace to the peace of Europe? Will she fall beneath the control of the Comintern and become a Russian satellite? Or will she enter wholeheartedly into the Western Union which is being painfully built up out of the diverse European Nations, becoming a strong partner in such a Union and thus ensuring peace for the remainder of the century? And again, if they take such a step, will it not be an act which will unleash once again war in Europe?

German Herd Instinct

THE answers to these questions are just as difficult to provide to-day as they were a few years ago, possibly more difficult, but an indication of the future may perhaps be gained by studying the various influences acting upon the German people and their probable reactions to them.

In 1945 the Germans were a leaderless rabble, stunned by the complete failure of the Nazi regime and the military defeat which they had been taught to consider impossible. They realized that Nazism had failed them and they were prepared to accept any ideology which offered them something concrete, which would show them the way out of their immediate economic difficulties and would ensure them years of peace.

They tended naturally to examine the ideologies of their conquerors, the nations who had achieved the impossible in inflicting defeat on them. Communism they knew and feared, and as can be seen from the results of the free elections of 1946/7, they rejected that ideology out of hand. Their reaction to British and American democracies was, however, one of curiosity, and many Germans hoped that they would be able to find in these ideologies something which would suit them mentally, and which would provide the answer to their problem.

Conditions were unfortunately such that they were unable to obtain a true picture of these ideologies at work. Their country was occupied by the British and American Armies, but these initially exhibited the tendencies and excesses of victorious armies throughout the ages, and later were interested only in getting home, with a resulting loss of morale.

Germans Watch Keenly

IT became obvious to Germans during these years that their victors were unable to work harmoniously together, and that they could gain much out of the struggle for dominance between eastern and western ideologies provided they played their cards carefully.

They have therefore followed every phase of this struggle with keen interest, and now that they have gained a measure of freedom and self-government, they are rapidly reaching the position where they will be able to play off the two combatants to their own advantage.

Russia has completely absorbed the eastern zone into the communist system and has perpetuated under other names systems similar to those which Eastern Germany enjoyed under the Nazi regime. There is within this area of Germany a strong armed police force and Gestapo which constitutes the nucleus of an Eastern German army under Russian control, and even as it stands this police force is a distinct threat in certain circumstances to an unarmed Western Germany.

Communist influence in Western Germany, while politically weak, is, as in other western countries, very strong among the official organizations of the industrial workers, particularly in the key industries of the Ruhr, and thus Russia has a very potent weapon with which to paralyse Western German economy should she require it.

Communist influence is also being felt in higher circles. There are many Germans in positions of authority who, realizing the weakness of their military position and the inability of the Western Powers to defend them if the Russian armies marched westwards, fear a communist coup d'etat such as comparatively recently took place in Czechoslovakia, and therefore do not wish to be caught on the wrong side of the fence should such an event occur. They therefore tend to keep a foot in both camps, which is not in the interests of their country.

Great Britain, America and France, on the other hand, while keeping Germany disarmed, have given her a great measure of self-government and freedom, extended to her Marshall Aid, thus enabling German economy

to recover to the 1936 standard in a remarkably short space of time, and have announced their intention to admit Western Germany into a Western European Union as an equal partner in the near future.

Western German leaders can thus see prospects of their country becoming economically sound and within reasonable time the strongest partner on the continent in the Western Union. Such advantages are so

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great that they could not possibly be thrown over now, and certainly not till they feel that they are strong enough in themselves to stand as a buffer between east and west without falling under the control of either.

A Vital Question

THE German leaders, in fact, see in the present position a wonderful opportunity to obtain concessions from both east and west which should enable them to regain their position of strength in Central Europe, an opportunity which can only be upset by the outbreak of war.

Since, provided that war is avoided, the rise of a strong Germany is inevitable, we have to answer the question: Will this new Germany exhibit the same characteristics as the Germany of 1865-1945, or will she have learnt from the defeats of 1918 and 1945, and from the failure of the Nazi regime, that co-operation with her neighbours in some form of United States of Western Europe should

produce better results than a determination to conquer and rule alone?

The issue is at present in the balance. The Germans see nothing in the ideologies of western democracy. The ideology of communism, which is so akin to nazism, appeals to many Germans, but the results of its acceptance frightens them, so that it is unlikely that they will tend in that direction except under duress.

Unless something untoward occurs, therefore, we must expect the old spirit of Germany to reappear in some form or other, and the German leaders, instead of co-operating fully with the west, will risk all in an attempt to take advantage of the present alignment and obtain for themselves a dominant position in Europe, then becoming once again a threat to European peace.

There are signs, however, that something untoward may occur. The ideology preached by the Moral Rearmament Group from their European headquarters at Caux has seized the imagination of many of the German leaders as the only answer to their problems. Many hundreds of Germans have been to Caux to learn of this ideology, and M.R.A. centres have been set up with governmental backing at the seat of government of the "Lande", and M.R.A. teams are operating in Germany teaching the ideology of co-operation, unselfishness and the introduction of the Christian principles into the official life of the country, as well as in the private life of her citizens.

Progress has already been sufficiently rapid to have altered in several respects the relationship between Germany and France on the highest levels, and from all reports it would appear that in the spread of this ideology and in its taking root within the western nations the great hope for the future lies.