

The New German Spirit

By KUNO FRANCKE

ONE fast train runs daily from Lindau to Munich. It is a long train consisting of some twenty heavy cars and, in view of the up-hill character of most of the trip, the one little engine seems very inadequate. It made the ascent into the Allgäu Mountains successfully, but toward nightfall we reached the slopes leading to the plateau beyond Kempten, where there is a succession of steep curves. Rain had set in and the rails must have been slippery. At any rate, on one of these curves the train proved too heavy and slowly came to a standstill. Under ordinary circumstances, I suppose, an emergency engine would have been called in. But engines now are scarce in Germany and coal is precious. So the brave little engine tried it alone. We went back a short distance and then forward with additional steam. But at the same spot we stuck again. Then again backward for a longer distance and forward once more, with the same result. And so things went for nearly half an hour, until at last the crucial spot was passed, so that we finally reached Munich only a little overdue.

The little episode, I think, had a larger significance than at first sight might appear. For the whole of German life is now a one-engine affair; and the driver of the engine, the German mind, has got to pull himself together, strain every fiber, and readjust every resource within him in order to reach his goal. Democracy is surely making headway in Germany; the very distress is fostering it by forcing the different classes to live more or less on the same plane. That there is a cheerful assumption of these new duties of common brotherhood among the higher classes, there can be no doubt. In Munich I made the acquaintance of the Bavarian state geologist, whose official duties are largely connected with the water supply of the cities. He is just now participating in the utilization, by the State, of Bavaria's water power for electricity—vast undertakings, employing at high wages tens of thousands of workmen, which will ultimately make three-sevenths of the Bavarian industries independent of coal. This highly cultivated and scholarly man, whose whole life is given to the betterment of public conditions, lives with his wife in two rooms, having been forced by a city regulation to cede the other three rooms of his apartment to homeless persons. The weekly milk ration for himself and his wife is one-quarter of a pint and their food is entirely vegetarian. When I remarked that most of his workmen probably had a more comfortable way of living, he admitted it, adding, however, that the proper feeding of the large masses of the population was the most important task before Germany today and that everybody had to make sacrifices.

In a village near Jena, I spent a week at the home of a former Vice-Governor of Kamerun, who now devotes himself to gardening and farming on a small scale. He, too, had by public ordinance been required to take into his house a workman's family—husband, wife, and two small children, victims of the general housing shortage. The truly Tolstoyan comradeship of work and talk between this Herr Geheimrat and the laboring man's family as well as with the peasants of the neighborhood would be a delightful thing to describe in detail. Nothing could have been further removed from the harshness and arrogance which used to be

considered entirely synonymous with Prussian bureaucracy.

Being a guest in Berlin, at the house of one of the leading members of the Government, one who had served with distinction under the old regime and whose intellectual bent is naturally conservative and aristocratic, I found in him an enthusiastic and determined supporter of democracy, as the only salvation of Germany and the only bulwark against her utter collapse. I saw this aristocrat taking pride in traveling third or even fourth class. I saw one of the shapers of German domestic and foreign policy seriously questioning whether it was right for his wife and children (who were all underfed) to accept little tidbits and nutritious delicacies while so many thousands of German women and children were without the bare necessities of existence. No complaint is heard more frequently in Germany today than that the working classes are having it all their own way, that they are thriving while the middle classes, and especially the intellectuals of the middle classes, are starving. Unhappily this complaint, so far as the suffering of vast numbers of small investors, officials, writers, teachers, tradespeople, and the like is concerned, is only too well founded. And unquestionably there is a large number of persons who are hoping for better things from a restoration of the monarchy. It is unfortunate that these reactionary tendencies should find their chief support in the universities, and that for the moment the majority of the university students seem to be hypnotized by fanatics of the phrase, like the sibyllinic apostle of Prussianism, Oswald Spengler. But the reactionary stand taken by most university professors and students in Germany today will delay but cannot prevent the ultimate democratization even of the universities themselves. There are symptoms of such a change even now. Active, though small, minorities of students and professors are at work everywhere openly denouncing the spirit of chauvinism, class prejudice, and race hatred fostered by the pseudo-patriotic reactionaries. They have found a most excellent literary organ in a new periodical, *Vivos Voco*, edited by the Leipzig biologist, Richard Woltereck, and the poet, Hermann Hesse, which is fast gaining the position of the foremost German monthly devoted to the cause of liberal reform and international reconciliation. The admirably-conducted non-partisan propaganda of Professor Damaschke for a thoroughgoing reform of land tenure is rapidly gaining ground in university circles also, and is undermining belief in the desirability of a return to the old regime.

What really counts for the future of Germany, what has in it the germs either of utter destruction or of genuine recovery, is the attitude of the working millions. It is obvious that the overwhelming majority of these millions are in favor of the Republic. The Republic has done its best to improve the economic condition of the workers. It has kept intact the admirable social legislation initiated by Bismarck, and it has been generous in adjusting the sickness and old-age insurance benefits, as well as wages, to the enormous rise in the cost of living. The result is that the mass of industrial workers in Germany, in so far as they have work, live better today than they did before the war; it must not be overlooked, however, that their present

ease and comfort rest upon a fictitious basis—the unlimited issue of paper money unprotected by a gold reserve. For the time being, even the farmers have been benefited by this fiat money legislation. They have been enabled thereby to pay off their mortgages on very advantageous terms and, in addition, they have been the gainers, while the middle classes of the city population have been the principal losers, from the extraordinary increase in the price of foodstuffs. So the farmers, too, have reaped advantage from the revolution and are unlikely to be made the tool of any hazardous scheme for the restoration of the monarchy.

One very serious question, however, remains. Remarkable as has been thus far the orderly working of the new republican regime, incontestable as has been the proof given thereby of German administrative and recuperative power, will this orderly advance of democracy last or will it degenerate into mob rule? The answer to this momentous question lies largely in the hands of Germany's former enemies, particularly the French and the British. If they should be determined to cripple German industries, already reduced to half of their former working capacity, still further; if they should thereby swell the number of the unemployed, with its attendant popular misery, to uncontrollable proportions, then the extremists of the left will seize the opportunity to strike a decisive blow; a counter blow from the extremists of the right will inevitably follow, and chaos will ensue.

But democracy is not the only ideal that acts as a stimulus upon the nerves of lacerated Germany. Her habitual devotion to science, literature, and art stands her in good stead in this hour of national misery. I was privileged to witness many manifestations of the healing power of this devotion. I doubt whether any other city in the world offered during any part of the year dramatic and operatic productions comparable to those seen and heard in Munich theaters during the first week of last August. It was the opening week of the Munich "Festspiele," resumed for the first time since before the war; and the long repertory of classic, romantic, and new operas, scheduled for production during a season extending to the middle of October, was gloriously inaugurated by a performance of "Parsifal." The second evening, apart from other operas, I had a choice between Goethe's "Faust" and two plays by Strindberg. I chose Strindberg and was compensated for the acidity of his spleen by the well-nigh cruel perfection of the acting, and by reading between the acts a Shakespeare program, the gift of the management, containing essays on Shakespeare by half a dozen writers from Herder to Emerson with several of the sonnets in translation. The third evening, I had a choice between Hebbel and Schiller and a modernization of a fifteenth-century French passion play, Greban's "Christ." I chose the "Christ," chiefly because I wanted to compare its compact artistic effect with that of an indigenous passion play which was to be produced a few days later as an open-air performance on the banks of the Isar. I had to rub my eyes to make sure that all these things were really happening in the same Munich where the Spartacists had indulged in their wildest orgies. And I could not repress my sense of pride that my old university town, undisturbed by the stupid ostracism of German art in other countries, had preserved the best traditions of German literary cosmopolitanism.

The climax, however, of these aesthetic experiences was reached in the "Kieler Herbstwoche für Kunst und Wissen-

schaft," September 11-19. Being myself a native of Kiel, I could feel with particular vividness the tragedy of the city's recent history, from the beginning of the revolution in her harbor to the dismantling of her forts, the surrender of her floating docks and the destruction of the whole fleet that was once her pride. In the midst of all this gloom, a deliberate and determined resolution was made some months ago to open a new and hopeful chapter in the city's history. Kiel, the ruined naval station, was to be replaced by an enlarged intellectual Kiel, the university town. And to accentuate this new departure, to signalize it by a worthy symbolic act, a new "Kiel Week" was planned, not a week of naval displays and diplomatic dinners and dances, but a week of scholarly discussions and lectures, of choice performances, of dramatic and operatic masterpieces, of symphony concerts and song festivals.

The initial impulse came from Professor Harms, director of the "Institut für Seeverkehr und Weltwirtschaft." His idea proved infectious beyond all expectation. It was taken up by all the political parties of the town, from ultra-conservatives to ultra-radicals; the city government pledged its financial support and from all over Germany came messages of approval and support. The result was that for a week in mid-September there were assembled in the old city representative men from German universities; some of the foremost actors, singers, and conductors from the leading Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Frankfurt, and Munich theaters; deputations from other city governments; and throngs of visitors from every town and village of Schleswig and Holstein, while the national character of the demonstration was emphasized by the presence of the correspondents of all the great German dailies. Of foreign papers, to be sure, only the Milan *Secolo* had sent a special reporter. The outward aspects of the city during those days was such that one felt transported back to the days of the old "Kiel Week." The same festive displays were in the shops, the same flags hung from every house and steeple, the same gay crowds filled the streets. Only the complete absence of uniforms, the stillness of the harbor, and the towering hulk of the last huge floating dock ready to be towed away reminded one of the tragedy underlying it all.

Addresses by men like Einstein, Zittelmann, Oncken, Köster, and Kerscheneiner; operas such as "Die Meistersinger" and "Tristan und Isolde"; dramas such as Hauptmann's "Weber," Schiller's "Räuber," Byron's "Manfred," Björnson's "Ueber unsre Kraft," and, in addition, Low German plays of great diversity of scope and appeal; Beethoven's Ninth and Schubert's Unfinished Symphony; Strauss's "Tod und Verklärung"; an open air concert in front of the city hall by the combined singing societies of greater Kiel furnished numerous stirring sensations for the participants of this festive week.

Indeed the whole week was unforgettable. It was one long apotheosis of the spirit. No one could leave Kiel after that week without feeling that there was no need to despair of the German people. If on the very spot where, two years before, the political collapse of Germany had assumed its most striking and threatening form, a celebration of such grandeur, massiveness, and loftiness of mind could be carried through, one was tempted to bless the misfortune that led to such an inner purging and heightening of purpose. And the paradox of old Sebastian Franck so often confirmed in the history of nations acquires a new meaning, "Victory is with the defeated."

The Nonpartisan League Defeated

By C. R. JOHNSON

THE tide of public opinion has turned and the Nonpartisan League, on the whole the most hopeful democratic movement in the Northwest for a generation, has gone down to defeat. The disaster was more sweeping than either friend or foe had anticipated. In Minnesota not a single State office was carried by the League in this election, although it has apparently held its own in the State legislature. In Montana and Colorado, where it had secured control of the Democratic Party, it was completely routed by the Republicans. In Wisconsin, its candidate, J. J. Blaine, was elected governor, but his election was due much more to the backing of Senator La Follette than to the League. In North Dakota apparently only the fact that the League held control of the Republican Party in a presidential year saved it from being wiped off the map. As it is, the League has lost three out of nine State officials and fifty per cent of its representatives in Congress. They have retained only a majority of one in the North Dakota Senate and at this writing appear to have lost control of the lower house.

The one conspicuous gain of the League was the election of a United States senator, President Ladd of North Dakota Agricultural College. Senator Ladd's ability and record of distinguished service will place him immediately beside La Follette, Borah, and other liberal leaders in the Senate. In him the farmers of the country will have for the first time a representative in Congress who is honest, who understands their problems, and who is scientific as well as sympathetic. The League might well trade all the rest of its national prospects for one spokesman of such promise.

It remains true, however, that even with Dr. Ladd elected, the League was defeated. Besides the unpopularity of the present Administration which brought about the Republican landslide, there was a strong bi-partisan combination against the League in those States where it was in control or seeking to gain control. Conservatives of both old parties combined cheerfully to beat the League as they did to beat the Socialists in New York City, with the result that in North Dakota, Governor Frazier was returned by a smaller majority than two years ago, although the women had increased the number of voters by more than half. Even if these handicaps had not existed the women's votes would still have defeated the League. Everywhere one hears the conservatives saying, "It was the women who saved the day." And the liberals are recovering sufficiently from their dream of rescue by the newly emancipated half of the human race, for whom they had worked so long, to admit that the joke is on them. The part of the women in defeating liberalism in the Northwest was not so obviously antagonistic, however, as this might seem to imply. It consisted very largely of the failure of certain groups of women to register in the primaries and to vote. In the country districts and the labor wards of the cities the women failed to take any adequate interest in the election, while in the country towns and the well-to-do districts of the cities they registered and voted shoulder to shoulder with the men. In the eighth ward, the most aristocratic in Minneapolis, 12,684 men and 12,803 women registered. In the first ward which is liberal

and radical 3,202 men and 1,396 women voted. Even the actual excess of men over women in the workers' wards, is slight in comparison with the excess in registration. And these figures may be considered typical. Then, too, suffrage workers remember that many of the women in the labor ward, mainly those of foreign birth, were not interested in securing the vote, and more often their husbands and brothers objected to their having it. Thus enough votes were lost through default on November 2 to turn the election against the liberals and the defeat has been so decisive that many friends of the League doubt if it can ever come back, even when there is no presidential campaign or obnoxious presidential program, like the League of Nations, to confuse the local issues. Moreover, the bi-partisan alliance between regular Republicans and Democrats against the League in the Northwest will grow stronger.

For the present the Nonpartisan League efforts at a legislative program must be confined to North Dakota and Wisconsin. The programs of the Republican Party in Wisconsin will show little identification with the League in name, however much there may be in spirit. Consequently the burden of keeping the League movement alive must rest upon North Dakota. Enough of the old organization remains in power in that State—especially the governor and the commissioners of agriculture and labor, who constitute a majority on the Industrial Commission—to maintain the present policy intact. The League majority in the State Senate will be able to neutralize the anti-League majority in the lower house in any attempt to legislate the League program out of existence. The future of the League depends upon how successful the present administration is in making the present program a success which will be recognized at home and abroad. If it wins the approval for its achievements, the League can hope to come back at the polls in other States in 1922. Two years is not a long period in which to mature a complicated industrial and social program, but it is perhaps not an impossible task to perform. And in the next two years the atmosphere will have cleared somewhat. By that time the reaction against Republican bourbonism will be in full swing. By that time possibly, the mass of newspaper falsification and innuendo will have betrayed itself in the light of counter-publicity. Also Townley may no longer be an issue. Perhaps—although this is a perennial hope of liberals, never fully realized—the public intelligence on economic and political issues will have improved to such an extent that it will be swayed less by innuendo and shibboleth and more by fact and reason. The League itself will have opportunity to become chastened by two lean years—if indeed it does not perish. It has been guilty of many political sins—borrowed from its opponents in self-defense, to be sure—but sins which have offended the popular conscience, which is ever more alert than the popular understanding.

Contributors to This Issue

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