

Peaceful Invasion

EDWARD W. BARRETT

More than eleven hundred German teen-age boys and girls have now experienced life in American homes, according to Edward W. Barrett, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. This program in international good will is guided by the U. S. Department of State and sponsored by private organizations.

FOR MORE than two years now, the United States has been undergoing a small-scale but by no means negligible invasion. Invasion and subsequent conquest take place with the full consent of the American people and with the collaboration of the United States Government acting through the Department of State and in cooperation with various groups of American citizens. At this time, the invaders have penetrated into every state of the Union, into small communities and large, into the average American home throughout the country, into American high schools, churches, community organizations, and particularly into the hearts of the American people. They traffic in good will, creating it wherever they go and carrying much of it away with them. In fact, they are often called "ambassadors of good will" and "ministers without portfolio."

They are high-school-age boys and girls from Germany who come to the United States under the Department of State's student-exchange program, to live the life of the average American adolescent and to see for themselves at firsthand how democracy operates in everyday life in a country that has been working at democratic living for a long time.

Why the United States Government Supports This Program

As soon as the privilege of foreign travel was restored to German nationals, our Government began to bring groups of Germany's young people to this country to study and absorb what they could of a freer way of life than any they had known. The basic aim of this entire program is to provide the rising republic of Germany with a source of democratically trained youthful leadership. The present leadership of Germany is middle-aged to elderly, and there is a dearth of replacement material in the age group that would normally take over, the 30- to 40-year-old group. That section of the male population was decimated by war. Leadership will before long shift to the young, and we want the German people to have a supply of responsible youthful leaders to draw from.

Including high-school-age boys and girls in the exchange program has proved a wise move, but at the time the decision to include them was made, it seemed a daring venture. There were high hopes, for adolescence is a formative, idealistic, and responsive age. There were misgivings, too, for high-school-age boys and girls are only mid-

way between childhood and maturity. What if these youngsters should be too homesick to benefit by the experience? the planners wondered. Or, on the other hand, what if they put down such deep roots in America that they would be unable to readjust to conditions in Germany afterward? The point of the program was to help the boys and girls to become good German citizens, not to turn them into Americans.

Trial Run

In September 1949 the first group of German teen-agers came to the United States. There were 90 of them, selected on the basis of intelligence, character and personality from the rural areas of Germany. They were farm boys and girls because the American Church of the Brethren, which is composed largely of farmers, had volunteered to provide homes in rural communities for them. Every youngster lived as a son or a daughter of the family selected, helped with the work, attended the local high school, and shared in the everyday life of household, school and community.

Most of the young people spoke very little English. Many of them had become refugees in their own country and had known hunger and privation. America was a fabulous land in their imaginations, and many had been taught that it was a godless land. They were fearful, in spite of letters that they had received from the unknown "foster families" in America, that they would meet with hostility because they were children of America's former enemy. They were the pilot group of the program, paving the way for others and without benefit of anyone else's experience.

Life for this group in the first weeks of the new venture was a round of amazement. Without exception they found themselves welcomed as if they were indeed members of the family. They found it even more astonishing that neighbors took a personal interest in them, that the foster family's minister welcomed them, in many instances coming to call on them within a day or two of their arrival. Every community tended to regard its German student as a prize possession. High schools were proud of having them, and teachers were friends. Not a member of that first group of teen-agers or any subsequent group has failed to express wonderment at the relationship between students and teachers in America and deep appreciation of the helpfulness of the teachers. In no time at all they were speaking English without groping for words and understanding the speech of others. Within a few months they were in demand as speakers, at school, in churches, at businessmen's club meetings. They learned to drive the family car, and the boys learned to operate tractors and combines and the various unfamiliar machines around the farm. They were elected to the student council. They joined the glee club, took part in athletics, joined the 4-H Club and started a project at home. They went to parties, had dates, drank cokes, went on picnics, had fun. They became lighter-hearted, seemed younger, as the year went on.

Everyone was pleased with the experiment, so pleased that the Department of State began to arrange for many more German teen-agers to come to the United States in the summer of 1950, when the first group would be re-

turning. Other organizations volunteered to sponsor groups of the young Germans. The National Grange became responsible for a group of rural youngsters, and the Farm Bureau Federation for another. The American Field Service sponsored boys and girls from German cities. The Kiwanis Club of Georgia took over a few. The Church of the Brethren more than doubled its first quota. Many of the foster families of the first group applied for a student for a second year. Nearly five hundred teen-agers came to the United States in 1950. Currently there are 479 German teen-agers here. In 1951 the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the Rotarians of Michigan have become sponsors.

What the Sponsoring Organizations Do

The sponsors of the teen-ager program are responsible for the personal welfare of every youngster in their groups. The individual who shoulders this responsibility is the director of the youth program. He—or she—makes contacts with families that apply for a student, working through state and local units of the organization. A family has to measure up to certain well-defined standards to qualify as host to a teen-ager. The director has to make sure that the high school will accept and welcome a German student. The director meets each incoming group at the ship in New York and conducts a two- or three-day welcoming and orientation program for them. Some agencies keep the boys and girls in New York for this purpose. Those with headquarters in Washington entertain the students there. The Brethren's director brings his contingent to the large Breth-

ren Service Center in New Windsor, Maryland. In the course of this orientation period the director has a personal talk with each member of the group to establish a bond of friendship and trust and to answer any questions or problems the youngster may have on his mind. Every director tells his charges to write him about any worries or dissatisfactions that arise in the new home and implores them *not* to write to their mothers about troubles that will probably have passed long before the letter gets to Germany. The directors maintain regular correspondence with all their teen-agers and an intermittent one with families in Germany and foster families in America. They get the youngsters on trains or buses to go to their new homes, arrange to have them met and escorted to the right train if they must change in Chicago or elsewhere.

At the end of the year they gather all their charges together for a farewell program of several days, take them sightseeing in Washington and in New York, and finally see them off on the plane or the ship that carries them homeward. The sponsors' youth directors are hard-working people, and they love their work. They work together and coordinate their procedures. Last summer the National Grange director chaperoned the group sponsored by the National Catholic Welfare Conference, along with his own, on the voyage from Germany.

The Major Problem

We have one persistent problem in connection with the teen-ager program. It stems from the kind hearts of American people. Every teen-ager who

comes to this country signs a statement that he has never applied for emigration, never been in the United States, and that he will return to Germany at the end of the year. The host families and the school authorities know that the object of the program is to provide Germany with good youthful leadership. However, foster families get so fond of their teen-agers that they beg to keep them at least another year; many want to adopt them. Mayors of small communities have been known to press the matter of keeping Friedrich or Ilse another year. Every community feels confident that its teen-ager is a special, an exceptional human being; many of them feel that the United States ought to acquire the youngster permanently. A number of Americans have written to their Congressmen to get special permission to keep a German teen-ager in this country—usually because he is exceptional.

All the teen-agers who come are exceptional. They are hand-picked for mentality, emotional balance, health and attractiveness. They are delightful and lovable youngsters, and there is no question but that they would be admirable United States citizens. The point is that we want them to be admirable German citizens. Their own country needs them badly. They have heavy responsibilities ahead of them. How well they will fulfill them, only time will tell, but those who have known these boys and girls have great faith in them. We hear nothing but good of those who have returned to Germany.

After the Year Is Over

There is no question but that the boys and girls suffer a wrench at part-

ing with their foster families and their many American friends. Some of them suffer a deep nostalgia for America itself, for the piece of American earth that they called home for one year. Some of them cherish the hope of emigrating but, as one girl put it, "not till I have fulfilled my obligation to the American people by doing everything I can to practice in Germany what I learned from them in America."

These boys and girls are remarkably tactful and considerate of the feelings of their fellow countrymen. For instance, they tend to retire a good many of the smart American clothes that they take home with them. They refrain from mentioning the fact that they often drove the family car in America. What they do most faithfully is to correct the misinformation of their neighbors about the United States. They are asked to talk before youth groups and at schools about their discoveries in America. Some of them speak before adult audiences. Many speak in English to groups of young Germans who are studying the English language. They get together whenever they can and develop plans and programs that will make use of their experience and be helpful to their country. For instance, they have been instrumental in organizing a project in Germany that is comparable to the American 4-H Club. At the time of the recent Communist Festival for Youth in the Soviet sector of Berlin, half a dozen returned German teen-agers spent their time at West Berlin's *Amerika Haus* answering questions put to them about America by their young compatriots from Soviet-dominated East Germany. Their answers are respected because they can

say, "I know, for I have been there and seen these things with my own eyes."

In Conclusion

More than 1,100 teen-agers have had or are now having the experience of a year of American life. The State Department believes in this program and so do the sponsoring agencies, the foster families, the teachers, and the communities that have shared the experience.

The sponsors say they could easily double their quotas. The National

Grange director is sure that he could find homes for at least 700. The Department provides transportation, \$75 a year clothing allowance, \$12 a month spending money, and \$20 a month toward maintenance for each teen-ager. We believe that it is money well spent. We hope that the program can be continued and expanded. We look to the high school teachers to continue the good work they are doing in helping and befriending these children of our former enemy to help make them future friends and leaders.

Education for International Understanding

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How can a large school system best organize a program to improve the international understanding of teachers and of boys and girls in their classrooms? Reuben R. Palm is director, Division of Secondary Education, County of Los Angeles Public Schools, California.

FROM the time of the organization of the Delphic Amphictyony and the Achaean League, federations of independent city states, to the present United Nations, peoples have attempted through political organization to gain increased protection against the likelihood of war. To date none of the many attempts has succeeded to the extent desired. One reason is that the task of maintaining peace is dependent not only upon effective political organization, but also upon adequate international understanding. Up to the present, cultural differences between groups of peoples comprising states or nations have been so great that the degree of understanding necessary in order to

maintain adequate international organization for peace has been insufficient.

To achieve the necessary understanding, provision for thorough and extensive education is needed, education which will equip people with the knowledges, skills and concepts which they must have in order to be effective world citizens in addition to being citizens of their own member nations. Education is also needed which will develop on the part of youth and adults an unflagging feeling of necessity and concern for the importance of peace for the future of civilization. At the same time, education must also provide people with the necessary information and

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