

## 1. General Political Impressions

There are two major pitfalls of which the foreign political observer must beware. He may be inclined to exaggerate the regional distribution of different political views, and he may attribute too much importance to the intellectual.

There seems to be a great difference in political opinion in Bonn, Munich, Berlin, and Hamburg, the four cities in which most of my interviews have taken place (leaving aside Dusseldorf, Cologne, and Frankfurt).

Talking to officials in the ministries in Bonn one gets an official reaction. Munich is to the visitor as the center of oppositional thinking in foreign policy, not only because the Strauss and Guttenberg reside there, but also because the Munchner Merkur represent the CSU opposition and Professor Roegele, editor-in-chief of the "Gaullist" weekly Rheinischer Merkur teaches journalism at the University of Munich. Berlin, of course, is Willy Brandt's city, lying behind the Iron Curtain, the place where the Christmas past negotiations were conducted with officials of the GDR and where, ever since 1948, the physical closeness of the Communist regime around the city fostered a political climate that differed from the stuffiness to be found in Bonn. Finally, Hamburg looks out on the sea and has been traditionally open toward countries with which West Germany is connected by overseas trade. Its leading newspapers -- and Hamburg is a city of nationwide journalistic importance -- if only through Der Spiegel and Die Zeit, criticize DeGaulle's policies and sometimes, even more stridently, those of Bonn. Moreover, Hamburg has certain commercial interests in the East, if only because of its harbor; for example, Czech exports come down the Elbe River to Hamburg.

This broad-stroke picture of the regional distribution of political views among the four cities needs considerable refinement before it can be said that it reflects the true

facts. There are many people in Bonn critical of Bonn's policy: not only journalists and foreign correspondents, not only socialist deputies, but also members of the ministerial bureaucracy. This seems to be particularly true of the foreign office. Munich is not only the seat of the CSU, but a city with an energetic young Socialist mayor in the place where the best daily liberal newspaper (Sueddeutsche Zeitung) is published. Berlin has a vocal CDU opposition and among the journalists some imminent and intelligent critics of Brandt. Nor is Hamburg a fountainhead of liberalism and nothing else. It has its Gaullists and a goodly number of cynics.

As to the second fallacy, the observer coming from abroad inevitably talks a great deal to professional politicians and to intellectuals who write about foreign policy. He is exposed to a great deal of criticism directed at Bonn, Washington, Paris, London, and interestingly enough, to the impression of meeting comparatively little spontaneous comment in Moscow. If he is not careful, he develops the notion that there is a lively discussion and much controversy among the Germans on issues of foreign policy. Many of the people he talks to appear mildly or strongly dissatisfied with Erhard, Schroeder is often censured, Brandt is attacked, etc. On the same day he meets people who regard DeGaulle as the greatest living statesman, and others who think that he is a man of the past who endangers Europe. Some of his partners in conversation display a rather considerable knowledge of U. S. policy and even more considerable curiosity as to what American foreign policy is going to be after the Presidential elections in the United States, others talk at length about the Sino-Soviet conflict, and on its repercussions in Central Europe. In short, the observer may well believe that there is

a likely concern with foreign policy, a great deal of dissatisfaction with the state of affairs, and much thinking about how to turn to new horizons. All this is quite misleading.

The intellectuals are not representative of the German voter, who is prosperous and on the whole well satisfied. Erhard is a very popular man, as the last election in Baden-Wuerttemberg have shown; and on the surface, at least, there is no widespread opposition to German foreign policy. As a prominent American in Bonn (10) remarked, "Germany is tranquil. She has not been so tranquil since 1958." This view is probably correct for two main reasons: continued economic well-being and almost unqualified support of Schroeder's foreign policy by the so-called opposition party, the SPD. The economic prosperity inhibits political restlessness and the SPD leadership prevents through its tactics any potential opposition to Schroeder from assuming major political importance. In the meantime, the intellectuals exercise their brains, receive good wages and royalties doing so, and remain both interesting and ineffectual.

Among the intellectuals, there is a certain amount of discussion about their role in politics, but on the whole this discussion is carried on in dated language; besides, it is an esoteric discussion of real interest only to themselves.

While Germany appears to be tranquil, American reliance on such tranquility may be dangerous, if it breeds complacency. As some of the following notes will show, the situation is intrinsically unstable. By unfortunate turns of events and in particular in consequence of certain steps that the United States may feel free to take without due concern about the inherent instability of the German situation, things may change

drastically and even suddenly in the Federal Republic.