

Alarms and Skirmishes

THE CREEPING INFLATION—the kind that carries the price-index up gently and steadily has reached the post-war center of the European free market—West Germany. Prices are inching higher for almost everything; clothes, food, furniture, cars. The *Suddeutscher Zeitung* in May reported that a market basket full of groceries had cost 15.96 marks in March, 1960, and two years later in March of this year, cost 18.19 marks; 62 per cent of retail prices are up and 17 per cent are lower. The automobile industry has raised its prices despite the entreaties of the government and when the Volkswagen, that mighty symbol of Germany's recovery, announced higher prices

ranging from \$60—\$125 for three of its models, Chancellor Adenauer's entire cabinet protested and then voted to reduce the tariff by 50 per cent for competing foreign cars. Thus the high priests of the free market who since the currency reform of 1948 have opposed, in principle, political interference in its operations are moved not only to shake their fingers but to pick up a big stick.

For Germany has lived through two ruinous inflations and the first sign of a wage-price spiral sends alarm signals through the web of the society. As a result of the over-employment, 550,000 foreign workers have migrated to West Germany beginning with

a trickle of 7,000 in 1957 that rose to more than 100,000 in 1960 and to 150,000 last year. Half of them are Italian, thousands come from Greece and Spain, and although no German labor commissions have journeyed to Yugoslavia as they have to the other countries, some 13,000 Yugoslavians, having heard of the promised land and the jobs to be had, have sought work in the Bundesrepublik. Some of them come "black," as political refugees from Tito and must remain in camps until they get work; others obtain the proper visa from the French government, acting on behalf of West Germany in Belgrade. But getting a job in any event is no problem; workers of all trades are wanted: barbers, construction workers, household help, technicians, common laborers—and the real wages are the highest in German's history. But despite this spectacular effect of the operations of the free market, the Communist party in Italy has a special department to tell the Italian workers in West Germany how exploited they are, and the Czechoslovakian radio broadcasts a similar half-hour program in Italian beamed to them daily.

Across the border, East German soldiers are photographed goose-stepping in parade formations, wearing the uniform of the People's Democratic Republic that closely resembles the Russian, although in the early years of East German rearmament the helmet was that of the old German Wehrmacht. In West Germany the creeping inflation has not affected important diversions of the Bundeswehr. In one camp in Bavaria whose spare amenities German and American soldiers share, the German troops on a beer evening pay twenty pfennigs (five cents) for a stein of beer, or a sandwich, and they spend the time in convivial comradeship with the Americans, half of whom are Negro, restricted in telling one another their opinion of army life and dis-

cussing other common problems only by the speech barriers. Nothing like this, of course, occurs between the East German troops and those of their great ally Soviet Russia: the wall between them is higher than the one in Berlin. Nor is there a visible inflation in the East—there are only shortages, sometimes acute ones of food and clothing and of young people, hundreds of thousands of whom, while they could, fled to the west.

West Germany is the number two target of Soviet intelligence and propaganda; it comes second just after the United States. Berlin is only the most dramatic and visible center of the unrelenting pressure. Nothing can happen in Germany's relations with other countries that is unaffected by the Soviet offensive and sometimes even modest occasions show how intense and wide-spread it is. In late March, a meeting of scholars, writers and people in public life from Western Europe and the United States was held in Chicago to discuss the problem: "Berlin and the Future of Eastern Europe." Held under the combined auspices of the Foundation for Foreign Affairs, of Chicago, and of the Herder Institute, of Marburg, the purpose was to bring Polish, Czech, Hungarian, German, French, English and American experts together to discover if it might not be possible to find a scholarly consensus on what the future of this fought-over area might be in the light of the political and economic realities of the 1960's. Papers were read by Poles who had taken part in the Warsaw rising against the Germans in 1944; by American scholars of many shades of political opinion as well as by German historians and members of the Bundestag, two of them from Chancellor Adenauer's CDU and one, the leader of the German delegation, Wenzel Jaksch, from the SPD. Jaksch before the war had been a member of the Czechoslovakian parliament and although a

German, a Sudetenlander, he had opposed the Munich Agreement of 1938 because he was anti-Nazi. When Hitler took over the rest of Czechoslovakia Jaksch had escaped with the Czech government in London where he had spent the war years. Because he was as much anti-Communist as anti-Nazi, he did his best during their common exile to dissuade Benes and his Ministry from their ill-fated policy of post-war collaboration with Soviet Russia.

Like other participants in the Conference, Jaksch spoke on behalf of a genuine new order in Europe, one that takes account of the ethnic and historic differences between its peoples but creates workable devices like NATO and the Common Market that bind them together for their self-preservation. The speakers in the Conference were agreed that if such freely adopted, pan-European measures could be extended to Eastern Europe with the will to make them work the animosities would begin to wither as they have in France and Germany where, for example, the historical woes of Alsace-Lorraine have simply disappeared. But in Eastern Europe the enmities are kept flourishing by the boundaries of the Iron Curtain and the propaganda of the Communist occupation, as well as by the professional ethnics of the exile movements whose accounts of the past are limited by the need to defend their own errors and whose hopes of the future would perpetuate them.

When the Chicago Conference was announced the Polish and Czech embassies in Washington protested to the State Department against the Conference as such and against the presence of Jaksch whom they denounced as revanchist. The State Department courteously and promptly rejected the protest declaring the Conference to be a meeting of scholars and Jaksch a proper member of it. Then the professional foreign bodies set to work; spokes-

men among the émigré groups declaring it, among other things, to be unrepresentative. And Radio Warsaw in its broadcast of March 24 commented on the Conference as follows: "The American journalist, Drew Pearson, gave the right evaluation of this revisionist enterprise . . . [writing]: 'For the first time since the war a conference is taking place on American soil, at which a revision of the German frontier in accordance with Hitler's directives will be discussed. One of its participants, Jaksch, takes part most actively in a movement which demands that the Sudetenlands be separated from Czechoslovakia and Upper Silesia from Poland and both given to Germany. The occupation of the Sudetenlands by Hitler was the first signal that the Second World War was unavoidable and the occupation of Poland was the start of the Second World War. This is the reason why the peoples of Eastern Europe are so disturbed by the support given to the GFR [German Federal Republic] by the U.S. and why they are so opposed to giving West Germany any kind of nuclear weapon'."

How that eminent authority on Eastern Europe, Mr. Pearson, obtained his information, or from whom, I do not know. But the purpose of the émigré spokesmen is easier to understand. They maintain their leadership in the organizations of nationalities by appealing to a sentimental, picture post-card view of the homeland. They preach a solidarity based on fixed and immovable prejudices, they are concerned not with a tradition, which is something living and creative, but with selective memories and antagonisms that confirm a minority in its need for existing as an entity in its uncertain self-esteem amid alien people. They have no cause to refresh the tradition by relating it to compelling facts, or broad perspectives of the contemporary world; on the contrary they

thrive on illusions, the most un nourishing one that they themselves bear no responsibility for the plight of their countries; Fate or other non-ethnic forces rolled the loaded dice. Thus the crimes of the Germans, the blunders of the Hungarians, of the Italians, the Rumanians, the Bulgarians, etc., are preserved not only in the autobiographies but also in the character of the writing of much of the émigré press. The future is seen wholly in terms of this one-sided history. Enlightened editors certainly exist among these papers, some of them have written or will write in these pages; men who can move with the time and who share the sentiments that would like to make a new structure out of a wooden particularism that no more comports with the economic and political exigencies of these years than does the picture post-card view with the moral ones. The Czechoslovakia that was itself divided into mutually suspicious, hostile and frequently warring minorities, the Poland that joined Hitler in its partition are now part of the Eastern bloc. As the Chicago Conference demonstrated, many of the observers coming from those countries are aware not only of the miscalculations of Hitler whose criminal regime was unique in German history, but of those of their own leaders whose mistakes rose from narrow policies fanatically pursued and to which many of the émigrés cling as stubbornly now as they did before they became exiles.

The problem for the West is how to turn to account the traditions of nationality, the pride in a history, in a common effort to reinvigorate a moral order that despite everything, the wars, the persecution, the concentration camps, the bombings, has persisted in Europe. In this effort West Germany is a key area, and this democratic Germany has tried to make amends, and properly so, for the Nazi past and sacrifices for the idea of Europe. But the

existence of the Bundesrepublik does not diminish the importance of the captive nations nor is it a threat to them. Its army is under foreign command as are its chief military supplies; its economy and its purposes are European. The East Germans and the Poles, the Czechs and the Slovaks, the Hungarians, the Ruthenians and the Ukrainians live not only under foreign domination but under a foreign *Weltanschauung* that attempts to infiltrate into every activity. To oppose this more is needed than fanning the hatreds of the centuries that in part account for the predicament of those countries. As speakers at the Conference pointed out, nationalism in the 1960's is taking forms that are no longer mainly linguistic. It is again possible for a European to travel from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean without a visa and to buy without irrational penalties the products of other countries and to sell to them, to seek work regardless of nationality where labor is in demand, to join in a common defense.

The troubles of the West are those of a society where imbalances caused by competing ideas and interests and pressures are in a constant process of adjustment. A traveller landing in the Munich airport in the summer of 1962 will find taxis available as was not likely to be the case in 1961. Up to the present year the guild of taxi owners had been able, with the help of the Department of Public Order, to limit the number of cabs for the entire city to 850, and a suit was brought against the monopoly on the ground that it infringed individual freedom. The complainant won and as many taxis are available as the traffic will bear and the trade support. The case for the free market itself is not won; it perhaps can never be won unconditionally, but even in its imperfect form it is one of the formidable unifying elements in postwar Europe. And if the West will

trouble itself to answer the propaganda, to enable its workers to compare not the blueprints, but the facts of life in the East and West, a comparison for which the testimony of hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled the East is available, it will take a more powerful station than any the com-

munist countries have yet built to convince these Italians, Yugoslavians, Greek and Spanish workers they would be better off, more complete human beings behind the wall and the barbed wire put up by the other side to keep their workers in.—E.D.