

NEXT CRISIS: BERLIN?

An analyst of foreign affairs, who recently visited the two Germanys, reviews the background of the Berlin problem and depicts the reality of the divided city.

By Martin Hall

We had hardly emerged, gasping but still safe, from the crisis over Cuba when the West was already preparing us for new and potentially more dangerous developments in Berlin. Before considering the present state of affairs in Germany, however, it is important that one bear in mind the historic background against which the present misunderstandings and controversies arise. At the end of World War II, the Allies agreed that Berlin should become the administrative center of the Four-Power Occupation Authority for Germany. If and when Germany became reunified, Berlin was to become the capital again. It was this agreement upon which the presence of the Four Great Powers in the city was based.

The agreement, however, has ceased to have any force since the Western Powers merged their respective occupation zones, created the German Federal Republic and set up a separate West Berlin occupation authority of their own. These arrangements were so contrary to all the legal arrangements that had been arrived at with the Soviets, that any reference to selected provisions of them is obviously without legal validity. When the Soviet Union countered the Western moves establishing the German Democratic Republic, the division of Germany into two separate states was complete.

It makes no difference that the Western Powers do not recognize the legal existence of the German Democratic Republic. Whether of the two Germanys is an outgrowth of binding international pacts; but the existence of either is no less real because of this circumstance. The German Democratic Republic has a viable government, a Constitution, and a parliament composed of several political parties (only the extreme parties are barred). It also has its own military forces which were organized after the West encouraged and financed the rearming of West Germany.

The territory of East Germany (GDR) is the least promising and the least attractive complex of German real estate. Virtually all the industrial centers of Germany were located in what became West Germany, and the eastern territories were virtually devoid of industry. Some textile manufacturing and lignite mines in Saxony were the only exceptions. The Silesian coal mines, lost to Poland, and the fertile agricultural lands in East and West Prussia went to the Soviet Union and Poland. But truly heroic efforts resulted in the development of a metallurgical industry, many chemical plants and the enlargement of East Germany's only major port, Rostock. Starting

without an industrial base, East Germany has by now become the fifth European country in industrial output, outstripped only by the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The GDR has recognized the Oder-Neisse line as her permanent eastern border and has established friendly relations with all the members of the Warsaw Pact. But West Germany still refers to East and West Prussia and Silesia as the "lost provinces." Its Government encourages and participates in revanchist propaganda using the many refugee organizations for stirring up reconquest ambitions. Recently, I received a map of Germany from the West German Consulate. The map included the eastern territories and designated them as "under Polish administration" or "under Soviet administration," while the territory of the GDR was described as "The Soviet Zone." The West German press has lately begun referring to the territory of the GDR as "Middle Germany," thus taking full cognizance of those outspoken elements which call for the "liberation" of the "lost territories."

In spite of non-recognition and hostility toward East Germany, West German businessmen are carrying on a flourishing trade with the GDR. Each year a trade agreement is negotiated and signed by the representatives of both German states.

There are no illusions in Germany about reunification. Everyone seems resigned to the fact that, short of war, reunification cannot be considered a practical political objective. Only the expellees from the east admit openly that they strive for a "solution" through war. If unification is ever to materialize without war first destroying that which is to be unified, it would have to come in the form of a federation of the two existing states. This would enable each of them to keep its distinct political and social system. Another categorical condition is the neutralization of a unified Germany; West Germany severing her ties to NATO and East Germany severing her ties to the Warsaw Pact. Such a solution could be extended providing for a denuclearized, disarmed and neutralized zone in Europe which would also include Poland and Czechoslovakia. In fact, this kind of a solution has long been proposed by the Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki. Any talk of German reunification which rejects these premises is mere camouflage of determined opposition to the unification of Germany. The purpose of such factual opposition is obviously to prevent the elimination of Germany as the biggest international irritant, as the most important single bone of contention between the power blocs, as the militaristic inspiration for conflict, and as the potential precipitator of a world war.

Important as the German problem is, it

will not be solved in the foreseeable future. It may linger on for years producing crises of various degrees. Berlin, however, poses problems which may not be allowed to linger on. Their solution is of immediate urgency; for without it a conflagration can occur at any time.

While East Berlin has for some time been in fact and officially the capital of the German Democratic Republic, West Berlin presents a conclave, more than one hundred miles inside the territory of the GDR. It has become a haven for all sorts of Western agents who carry on daily activities of sabotage, propaganda, espionage, and subversion against the German Democratic Republic. When President Eisenhower conceded, at the time of his Camp David meeting with Chairman Khrushchev, that the situation in Berlin was "abnormal," it was to these espionage activities that he alluded.

In spite of the fact that Berlin was supposed to constitute an administrative entity separate from the rest of Germany, representatives of West Berlin sit in the Bundestag, the parliament of the Federal Republic. The Bonn Government claims it as part of its territory in flagrant contradiction to all relevant post-war agreements. While there is no legal agreement granting the West access routes to West Berlin through the German Democratic Republic, the Western Powers claim such rights on pain of war. While they have submitted to travel controls by Soviet military personnel, they refuse even to discuss the possibility of such controls being exercised by the GDR authorities.

Neither the Soviet Union nor the German Democratic Republic proposes to capitalize on the fact that no binding international instrument guarantees Western access to Berlin. In fact, both are ready to guarantee such free access. Contrary to all hysterical propaganda contentions, the GDR does not propose to annex West Berlin. On the contrary, it proposes the internationalization of West Berlin under the supervision of the United Nations and with token U.N. forces present in the city. All that the Soviets and the GDR seek is to put an end to the present Western abuses so disruptive to the administration of Berlin as well as of East Germany. The factual existence of an East German state is incompatible with the use of the Berlin enclave as a sabotage center from which hostile activities are directed against the GDR; it is incompatible with the phenomenon of East German frontiers guarded and supervised by Soviet soldiers. Neither the Soviet Union nor the GDR wants to have the soldiers there. That's why the Soviets will ultimately be forced to relinquish to the GDR sovereign authority over access routes to Berlin.

There exists nowhere in the world so explosive and dangerous a situation as that which obtains in Berlin. Only recently,

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Martin Hall, a writer and lecturer on foreign affairs, attended the Congress for Mutual Disarmament and Peace in Moscow as an official delegate from the Unitarian Wharfedale for Social Justice of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles.