ONE SINGLE group of more than 8,000,000 persons — the refugees (Flüchtlinge), expellees (Vertriebene) an new citizens (Neubürger) — accounts for about one-fifth of the total population of western Germany, but they have had a relatively small share in the general prosperity which followed Germany's currency reform.

Even before the introduction of the new money in June 1948, their social status and standard of living had been, broadly speaking, much inferior in various ways to that of the rest of the population, but there can be little doubt that these differences have become significantly wider during the past 12 months.

This development, if not halted in time, may lead to the formation of two different "nations" fighting each other in western Germany — the one defending their superior status, the other fighting for survival and a fairer share in the opportunities that defeated Germany's recovery and perhaps even her survival. So far, however, the governments of the German states under Polish administration, although the expulsion of German nationals from this area was not contemplated by the Western Powers at the time of the signing of the agreement.

About 4,200,000 of them had been brought to the Soviet Zone, the rest to western Germany. In 1948-1949 approximately an additional million Germans had to be admitted to western Germany; they were mainly refugees from the Soviet Zone of Germany and the countries of Eastern Europe, although a considerable number were transferred from camps in Denmark.

I T SHOULD be noted that they are all of German origin and that their transfer was carried out with a view to settling them permanently within the territory left to Germany after her defeat. They should not be confused with displaced persons (DP's). These DP's are of foreign nationality, many of them having been brought to Germany as slave labor during the war. They are "under the care and maintenance" of the International Refugee Organization and are being repatriated or resettled outside Germany. Roughly 150,000 foreigners who cannot be repatriated

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or resettled are, however, likely to remain in western Germany.

As pointed out before, there is a common link between the old residents and the newcomers: their German background. It is true that those who had come from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia acquired the legal status of German nationals only after Hitler invaded their countries.

Originally however they had come as immigrants from Germany — in many cases centuries ago — and had preserved the German language and their cultural background, thus forming national minorities in their countries of residence. But in spite of this common background, each group has developed characteristics, traditions, habits and dialects of its own, so that it is not difficult even for an outsider to distinguish the various groups.

BROADLY SPEAKING, they have three main characteristics in common by virtue of which they can be regarded as one large single group opposed to the other large group, the old citizens.

In the first place, they arrived in western Germany almost penniless. Only very few had been able to take with them any money or belongings of value. They had to be housed where housing was available, that is to say in more or less dilapidated camps or as billettes in the districts which had suffered relatively little war damage.

The result was that newcomers were largely concentrated in rural districts while relatively few were given accommodation in the large towns where opportunities of employment are much better. Only relatively few of the skilled workers, the black-coated workers, civil servants or members of the professions found jobs in their own calling.

It was easier to get jobs in the lowest paid manual occupations, mainly on the farms, but a considerable percentage of all newcomers was unemployable and depended on relief, which provided a standard of living hardly above subsistence level.

IN THIS situation friction and even open hostility between the old residents and the newcomers was almost bound to occur. A law had given the latter equal legal status and equal political rights. But they experienced or fancied that they experienced discrimination in every sphere of life. They were often treated by their “hosts” as unwelcome intruders; particularly so in those German states which had a long tradition of isolationism such as Bavaria, where a non-Bavarian German had always been prone to be regarded with suspicion and treated as an undesirable alien.

On the other hand, the newcomers were not always very considerate or grateful, too. They felt that it was the duty of their new fellow-countrymen to share with them on an equal basis the wealth and opportunities still left to Germany. Thus very soon the two groups became separated by an ominous abyss. On the one side there was the front of the old residents defending their vested interests, on the other side stood the refugees and expellees, fighting for a share and against discrimination.

This is, of course, a very simplified picture of what in reality is a very complex situation. Cordial relations between old and new citizens have developed in many individual cases. Some local authorities have done their utmost in helping refugees to start a new career or to make the best use of their qualifications.

Refugee entrepreneurs were often able with financial and other help from the authorities to reestablish their old industries in the new environment, in some cases with outstanding success.

Artisans were given licenses and loans with a view to resuming their trade. A certain percentage of civil servants found openings in the administration and many members of the professions were able to resume their activities, although usually under very primitive conditions. But in spite of these numerous exceptions the over-all picture is one of frustration, dissatisfaction and hostility on the part of the refugees and of aggressive defense on the part of the old residents.

THE THIRD characteristic that the German refugees have in common is that they do not recognize their expulsion from their old homes as definite. In a public opinion poll taken in the US Zone in January 1949, 85 percent of all refugees questioned stated that “they would go back to their homeland if they should be permitted to, sometime in the future”. They are still closely attached to their traditions and are making great efforts to keep them alive in their new surroundings.

This is one object of the numerous refugee organizations which have been formed by the various groups. Another is mutual aid among members. There is, however, a strong tendency in these organizations to shift the emphasis from mutual aid and cultural activities to party politics. The occupying powers have so far refused to license refugee parties at the state level, but in local and county elections lists were admitted and were in many cases very successful, mainly because the existing parties had failed to take an active part in the election campaigns.

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(SEPTMBER 6, 1949)

Dr. James M. Egan (center), chief of OMGB Religious Affairs Branch, and Dr. Johannes Neuhäusler, auxiliary bishop of Munich, distribute at the Dachau refugee camp 200 blankets donated by OMGB Director Murray D. Van Wagoner to Cardinal Michael Faulhaber, archbishop of Munich, on the latter’s birthday, for redistribution among refugees.

(photos by L. S. Portegas for PIO OMGB)