MEETING A GROUP of 10 German youth leaders in his Frankfurt office July 18 to discuss youth problems in Germany, Mr. John J. McCloy, US High Commissioner for Germany, made the following statement:

"I am very happy to welcome this delegation of youth leaders from western Germany, including Berlin. I want to thank you very much for coming.

So often youth is told that the future belongs to them that I don't wonder that they sometimes sicken when they hear it repeated. I remember when I was a young man in the United States that every commencement-day orator from the first year I was in school until I graduated from a university spoke this same refrain. We do not advance ourselves by merely repeating this bromide.

Today Germany must find a new life and a new spirit. This does not mean that all the old must be discarded but the old approach was not good enough. Too much destruction ensued from the old order, too many young men's lives were taken or their future impaired. The rebuilding of Germany is today too much for the old, and by the old I include also the middle-aged. The ranks of the old have been decimated by two great wars, and they have been so shaken by the political excesses of the recent past that they need new spirit and new energies.

WE RECOGNIZE that the problems which beset German youth today are very difficult. They have seen and felt the force of the devastating events of the last 15 years. But at least they have vigor, enthusiasm and time on their side. They are still responsive, and if I were asked what was the most important thing that the youth of Germany could contribute to the rehabilitation of the country I would say the same thing to them that I would say to American youth: namely, to instill within themselves and all those with whom they come in contact the importance of consideration for other human beings. This is perhaps more important for Germany than other countries because in Germany's recent past there was such a brutal disregard for the rights and dignities of individuals.

You can state it in different terms. Albert Schweitzer, the famous philosopher, calls it "reverence for life," and he says this principle is sufficient to explain our relationship to the world and those around us. Kant had much the same concept. The Hindu religion, through the principle of the "right means of livelihood," i.e., how to maintain oneself without causing harm to others, carried the concept perhaps further than any of us in the Western world have done.

In the Christian religion we have the principles of the New Testament in the "love thy neighbor" theme. So this concept comes from many different sources and they can all be fused to provide a pattern to serve us in dealing with today's problems. If we acknowledge a reverence for life and refrain from those pursuits likely to do damage to others and love our fellow men, we pass over all differences in race or creed. Only by so doing can we avoid destruction.

Particularly is this true in Germany where people live in such close proximity to each other and where so many interests converge. Jew, refugee, DP, expellee, East German, West German, Bavarian and Prussian, English, French, American — the principle must be applied or there is no hope.

AS OPPOSED TO THIS, the totalitarian state to the East has re-erected on German soil the old Hitlerian appeal of mass and march. The Communists have shown that large sections of German youth will respond or can be forced to respond to such an appeal. Before them, the Nazis showed the same thing, and both proved that minds become dulled by the sound of their own marching feet.

Given what I feel is the most important spiritual appeal that can be made to the German youth, what else can be done is of a physical nature. Whatever is done must be the result of German youth's own genius. If, however, there is anything that we can do to help out, just as we are helping the restoration of the German economy through providing basic food and materials, we would like to help also in restoring the spiritual life of Germany.

I am glad to know that over 1,500,000 young Germans, out of some 5,000,000 in the US Zone, are today engaged in free organized activities. We recognize, however, that more must be done. We are therefore prepared, in cooperation with local, state and federal governments, in fellowship with private organizations and groups, to expand the programs that are now being carried on. In particular we are prepared to support:

New plans for reducing and eliminating unemployment among youth. We think this can be done by developing large and constructive projects out of the ruins of German cities. Such projects will make Germany a happier and healthier place to live in.

Mr. McCloy hears Joseph Rommerskirchen speak on behalf of 10 youth leaders, representing every major youth organization in Western Germany, who called at HICOG headquarters. (Photo by Jacoby, PRD HICOG)
New plans for vocational training and self-improvement.
New opportunities for all young Germans to compete in sports.

ONE THING WE CANNOT DO at least will not do, is to apply pressures or attempt to influence the youth of West Germany to put on a different colored shirt and march about carrying banners. We can and do help by assisting purely German organizations, with no supervision or influence from our part, to provide the means of directing the preparation of German youth for their tasks as citizens of a free society.

Free peoples are sometimes slow to start, but they soon gather tremendous momentum. They are always able to overwhelm, and if necessary destroy, those who rule by dictatorship, by fear and who impress unsuspecting youth into their service. Free peoples have amply demonstrated their superior strength and determination in the past and they will soon do so again.

I say again that it is not our business to organize, but only to assist where we can when it is wanted and when it is sought. The sum total of what we do in the way of help is very large and I think it might be well if you gentlemen acquainted yourselves with what is going on in this direction. I wish it could be larger, and if any of you have thoughts as to how we could be of greater aid, I would be glad to have your suggestions.

IN REPLY, JOSEPH ROMMER SKIRCHEN, spokesman for the group, made the following statement:
“We thank the High Commissioner, Mr. McCloy, and the Government of the United States for the opportunity they cordially have given us to present the problems of German youth in a free discussion.

We should like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our thanks for the aid rendered by the citizens and the Government of the United States to German youth during the past years.

Our thanks go simultaneously to the people and governments of all countries who have supported German youth.

We are speaking in the interest of more than 13,000,000 German youths in all Germany, the unity of which is the premise of all our thoughts and acts, despite various political circumstances.

Our proposals and efforts are designed for those who have associated themselves in youth organizations as well as for the unorganized, the homeless and the unemployed youth.

Accomplishing unity in variety is the absolute demand of the hour, which requires joint efforts for a relief of the great distress. Our preparedness is expressed in voluntary pooling of all our individual forces, wherever this is necessary and possible.

The German youth reject, after the bitter years of no freedom, every totalitarian system. They declare themselves for freedom of belief and conscience, of the individual as well as of society, and demand social justice for all segments of the people. They know that their ideals can be realized only in a free democracy. They are, therefore, ready to participate with all their strength in the construction of a democratic Germany as a member of a free and peaceful world. The German youth desire a close co-operation with the youth of all nations and request that all paths to this be opened.

The young Germans comprising the various youth organizations are prepared jointly to tackle the task facing youth in general. They deliberately reject a rigid, uniform youth organization. In the vigorous versatility of their organizations and programs, every young German should be given the possibility, according to his capabilities and inclinations in school, work and leisure, to be able to experience the character of a free society in which he learns to decide for himself as an individual and voluntarily to bear responsibility for others.

The German youth are determined to approach their task systematically and under their own direction, in order to achieve the above goals; they hope that the communities, the states and the Federal Republic help them and quickly make available the necessary means, and that the youth officers of the High Commissioner on their part, too, will help spiritually and materially as they have helped in the past, and will co-ordinate their plans with the responsible committees of German youth organizations.

Please communicate our opinion to the youth of the entire world.”

FOLLOWING THE MEETING with the US High Commissioner, the delegates conferred with other HICOG officials. The members of the group at the meeting with the US High Commissioner were:
Joseph Rommerskirchen, president of the Federation of German Youth Organizations and leader of the Catholic Youth Movement in Germany, with headquarters at Altenberg, near Cologne, North Rhine-Westphalia.
Willi Ginhold, federal youth secretary of the German Trade Union Federation, with headquarters at Dusseldorf.
Dr. Fridolin Kreckl, director of the Youth Leadership Training Center of the Federation of Bavarian Youth Organizations, with headquarters at Niederpoehing, near Munich.
Werner Jentsch, secretary general of the German Section of the YMCA, with headquarters at Kassel.
Hans Schwartlaender, president of the Federation of German Students' Associations, with headquarters at Bonn.
Dr. Heinrich Lades, youth welfare officer, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Bonn.
Dr. Rolf Lenhardt, business manager, Youth Reconstruction Work, with headquarters at Munich.
Herbert Stettner, president of German Youth Organizations in Hesse and leader of the Falcon Youth Movement in Southern Hesse, with headquarters at Frankfurt.
John Punke, general manager, German Section, International Self-Help Association, with headquarters at Frankfurt.

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