Back from America

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WHY NOT HAVE THIS WORK both ways and also send American youths to our homes in Germany? many families whose boys and girls are spending a year in the United States under HICOG's Exchanges Program. As more and more German families experience the cordiality and friendliness with which their children are received in American homes, they express a wish to extend this same hospitality to young Americans who can bring American ideas to German communities and acquire a better knowledge of Germany and Europe.

To a limited degree of exchange of American young people and students to Germany has been carried on, but postwar conditions here have precluded much of this. Five American students spent a year at the University of Munich on scholarships last year, and Munich is offering scholarships to 10 American students for the coming year. A number of German universities have exchange agreements with American universities, for example, the University of Chicago with the University of Frankfurt, and Georgia Institute of Technology with the Stuttgart Technische Hochschule.

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Many “foster” parents of German exchangees in the United States correspond with families in Germany and a sponsoring agency’s program of visitation to German homes showed that parents appreciated the purpose of the program. Visitors inquired particularly about plans for the children’s futures upon return from the United States.

WHILE INGEBOURG JULIUS-KREBING is in Wabash, Indiana, her mother is anxiously awaiting her return to Rocholt, in North Rhein-Westphalia, where the people of the community are interested in hearing her tell them of American life. Ingeborg is the only exchangee in her area; her weekly letters are read, not only by her mother, but by all their friends, and a writer is planning to edit and publish them. Her mother feels that Ingeborg’s friends will be receptive to many ideas she can give them, such as teacher-pupil relationship, about which she has enthusiastically written.

The family of Paul Herzog, who is now living on a farm in Pennsylvania, feel that he will be active in rural youth groups and agricultural school in and around Hochstetten, in Laupheim county, Wuerttemberg-Hohenlohe. Paul’s foster-parents write that he has done well in school; is very popular; and they hope the short dairy course which he took at Pennsylvania State College has given him some useful information to bring back with him.

The father of one exchangee, who is presently living on a farm in Indiana, is already telling his associates in

Eleven hundred German teen-agers have gone to the United States on the US exchange program during the last two and a half years. American families in every one of the 48 states have been hosts to these German youth, under the sponsorship of church, welfare, civic and farm organizations. Rural teen-agers have been sponsored by the Brotherhood Service Commission, the National Grange, the American Farm Bureau and the National Catholic Welfare Council. Rotary Clubs, the American Field Service and the National Catholic Welfare Council have sponsored urban teen-agers.

Christa Schacht (right) presents souvenir book to Mr. and Mrs. Wib Justi in appreciation of help on exchange program. Mr. Justi is youth director of National Grange, which sponsored 77 German boys and girls on exchange projects.
farm meetings about his son's experiences and is looking forward to the many ideas which will be brought back to the group by the young "American" farmer when he returns to work as a farm apprentice.

Some parents were so enthusiastic they were already inquiring about the possibilities of another son or daughter going to the United States "as soon as Hans returns!"

IT IS NOT INFREQUENT that young Germans find their life in America so appealing that they wish to emigrate, and this is a very serious point which must be considered at the time of selection and preparation for the US trip. American foster-parents and sponsoring agencies must be aware of this, too, and though strong family ties are made, they must not lose sight of the fact that this is basically an "exchange" program — rather than an emigration plan.

A teen-ager from Hesse writes: "I heard many of our group say that they would like to return to the United States right away. Some even planned to do that. Yes, I love the United States, too, but I know that I can't go back right away. Did some of us forget the purpose of this year's stay? I certainly hope not. I lost my real home in Mecklenburg when we had to leave it because of the Russians, and I must say that I found a new home across the ocean. But momentarily I have to do something more important than to go back. We all have to carry on the idea of our program. I feel sorry for each one of us who forgets that."

Georg Siebert, a teen-ager from Hetzbach, near Erbach, in the Odenwald Mountains, Hesse, is one youth who certainly has the proper idea about the program. Georg returned on June 13 from a year with a family on a farm in Pennsylvania, and farmers in Hetzbach and Erbach have already decided that one of the ideas he brought back is outstanding. They are now making plans to acquire the necessary machinery to put into effect in their county a new system of hay drying by using electric cold-air fans.

Besides talking with farm groups, Georg has also spoken at the local adult evening school and met with other groups at the home of the US resident officer. In addition, he has become more active in youth groups and since his return has been chosen as Kreislejendebetreuer, which means he is chairman of a group similar to the American Future Farmers and 4-H organizations.

TEEN-AGERS HAVE HELPED one another in working out ways to utilize and apply their experiences in Germany and in overcoming problems that sometimes face them upon returning.

At a conference, of which Guenther Dressler, teen-ager from Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, was chairman, some youths reported difficulties when their communities objected to their "loud" shirts, ties and socks, and the girls' use of lipstick. The majority, however, felt that their communities would have been disappointed if they had not shown these external signs of their year in the States. They agreed that they should not flaunt their new manners, take it easy on chewing gum and try to make good grades and lead exemplary lives so others could see how they had benefited.

Heinrich Lehmann of Hamburg, writes these hints to other teen-agers: "I believe all of us came back so loaded with experiences, impressions and new ideas that we were ready to explode any time and at any chance of a contact with other Germans; and we often were astonished and offended, meeting denial and reluctance. In most cases we had forgotten that Germans have been fed with slogans such as 'freedom,' 'democracy,' 'better schools,' 'better living,' 'modern machinery,' etc. ever since 1945. They have developed a certain sensitiveness.

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Ingeborg Steckel, who spent a year at Lake Village, Ind., is interviewed in Frankfurt by Harold Mehlem of the United Press. Lake Village is 60 miles from Chicago.

* The Prussian province of Mecklenburg is in the Soviet Zone.