During the worst days of the war there did not occur in Germany one major epidemic of sickness. One can only find the explanation for this extraordinary fact in the traditional training of the average German citizen in the sanitation that is so much a part of his culture. The German people have an international reputation for searching for the best hygienic methods.

It is this fact, as much as any other, that prevented serious outbreaks of disease when the whole German population was under the pressure of war. But now we have peace. Let us briefly consider what can be done for the public health in peacetime. What are some of the major health problems in Bavaria?

It is important that you know that in 1950 there were more cases of diphtheria in Bavaria, the population of which is only 9,100,000, than there were in the United States in 1950 — and the population of the United States in that year was approximately 150,000,000. More than 200 children died of diphtheria in Bavaria in 1950. Diphtheria is an easily preventable disease. That is, it can today be prevented by the injection of a harmless material which has been used all over the world for many years.

And was it that invented this material? It was a world famous German scientist, Emil von Behring, who was born in 1854 in Hansdorf. Professor von Behring made many medical discoveries; his serum against diphtheria was but one. There is also his famous method of producing active diphtheria protection in the human body.

There have been many refinements in these procedures since von Behring died in 1917; but even today his serum and his method are basic for protection against diphtheria, and are used throughout the world. Moreover, they have saved the lives of countless children. In Bavaria, however, what Emil von Behring discovered so many years ago is still not adequately used.

Years ago an American, Louis W. Sauer, discovered a way to prevent whooping cough. Last year in Bavaria there were more than 14,000 reported cases of whooping cough, and 61 children died of this disease. It can be prevented if harmless injections are given early enough. Again the Bavarian people must know this, and must cooperate with and seek help from their local health department.

I must note, incidentally, as an American, that in the United States we still have far to go in the prevention of whooping cough just as we had so far to go in the prevention of diphtheria 20 years ago. These diseases, diphtheria and whooping cough, can be prevented by means of harmless injections which should be begun not later than at the age of six months.

Another serious disease occurs far too frequently in Bavaria. Last year there were reported by the Bavarian State Health Department almost 12,000 infectious cases of tuberculosis of the organs of respiration, and almost 3,000 cases of tuberculosis of other organs, such as the bone, the skin and the glands. An infectious case of tuberculosis is one which can be given to another person over a short period of time. Again it was the masterly work of Dr. Robert Koch, the immortal German bacteriologist, which proved that a germ is the cause of tuberculosis.

As Dr. Koch pointed out in 1882, the problem of tuberculosis is in part tied up with poverty and inadequate housing. The Bavarian government is doing much to help to solve these problems just as the State Health Department, under the splendid leadership of Professor Gustav Seiffert, is doing everything it can to meet the situation. But they need the active support of the citizens of Bavaria.

Another problem with which Bavaria is faced is the problem of unsafe water supplies. In 1948, in Neuötting, there was a disastrous epidemic of typhoid fever. More than 1,000 persons contracted typhoid fever, and almost 100 died of this disease. Yet it could have been prevented by adequate chlorination of the water supply.

A German scientist of Halle, Karl Joseph Ebert, discovered the germ which is now known to be the cause of typhoid fever. I repeat that it is absolutely clear that adequate chlorination of water kills the germs that cause typhoid fever, as well as other germs which are dangerous to the public health. Yet in Neuötting, as late as 1948 — almost 70 years after Karl Joseph Ebert discovered the cause of typhoid fever — approximately 100 persons died of this preventable disease.

There is hardly a county in Bavaria which does not have human carriers of this disease. The Bavarian State Health Department knows this, and is doing all it can, but again the active support of the people is essential.

The picture is not entirely discouraging. Even though diphtheria, for example, is so much more common in Bavaria than it should be, it has decreased in the past five years. Milk sanitation is still another example of the improvement effected. Much is being done in Bavaria to prevent the transmission of tuberculosis from infected cows to the people who drink milk. This is particularly true at Nuremberg and Munich.