The Birth of a City

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Before World War II, the trademark "Made in Gablonz" on glassware and costume jewelry meant quality merchandise to millions of people throughout the world.

Gablonz, located in the harsh, northern regions of Czechoslovakian Sudetenland, had become a world center for these industries. Many residents of the region, turning from their rocky fields, had combined the area's plentiful raw materials with the abundant supply of charcoal nearby, and pioneered what was to become a famous glass industry.

Glass blowing and related arts became family tradition in the Gablonz area. Later glass buttons, beads and novelties started new world trends in jewelry. And as this fad developed, metal crafts and shops were added at Gablonz.

By 1939 more than 100,000 persons, mostly of ethnic German stock, were employed in 5,000 Gablonz industries which were yearly producing more than $30,000,000 in goods, 90 percent of which was exported.

When, in 1945, the greatest mass migration in history began—the movement of ethnic Germans to Germany—most of the craftsmen of Gablonz were forced to leave their homes and businesses in Czechoslovakia.

Finding conditions suitable for glass manufacture in the Allgaeu region of southwestern Bavaria, a contingent of the expelled Gablonz people began to settle in and around Kaufbeuren in 1946.

Later the Bavarian government arranged to have an old German ammunition depot in Kaufbeuren-Hart turned over to representatives of the newly formed Allgaeu Glass, Metal and Jewelry Association.

The great Gablonz industries of other days had been based on a principle of individual ownership of small business units, but with co-operation in the maintenance of quality and through export.

There are today 1,153 small industries in Germany which can trace their origin back to Gablonz. Of these 611 are located in the Kaufbeuren area and 451 are mem-

With the aid of Marshall Plan counterpart funds, New Gablonz has already completed five large housing units like those pictured. This particular project will provide 60 new homes. Under ambitious plan conceived by Dr. Fritz Enz, president of the Allgaeu Glass, Metal and Jewelry Association, Sudeten Germans of the district hope to construct 3,000 apartments and workshops to house and to furnish jobs for 3,000 skilled workers.

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bers of the Allgaeu association. Of these, 225, located for
the most part in overcrowded buildings designed to store
ammunition, are glassware manufacturers, 130 are gird-
ders, five produce glass needed by the finished product
units, and 91 firms handle export.

Starting from scratch in 1946, these firms have produced,
to date, more than $1,000,000 worth of export goods.

To build up such an industry in so short a time is
regarded by some people as a near miracle.

The people in Kaufbeuren feel that it is only a start, and
pass along the conviction that business will be doubled
in the future.

This new Gablonz complex of expellee industries has
retained its independent spirit. Whether the company is
manufacturing glass or other raw materials, making fin-
ished products, handling the export of the goods or pur-
chasing raw materials, each of the Gablonz firms retains
its individual identity. Family names such as Thos. Hub-
ner & Sons and Georg Schmitt & Son are the rule; many of
the small firms carry the word Gablonz in their name.

Dr. Fritz Enz, who carries the title of president of the
Allgaeu Glass, Metal and Jewelry Association, is in reality
a combination mayor, chamber of commerce secretary
and over-all co-ordinator.

The association itself can best be compared to
the farmer's marketing co-operatives of the United
States. The office of Dr. Enz is the statistical nerve center
of a great complex of individual enterprises.

Most of the goods manufactured by other former Gab-
lonz enterprises in other areas of Germany — at Bay-
reuth, Schwäbisch Gmuend, Trappakenkamp, Oberursel and
Karlsruhe — are exported through the Kaufbeuren ex-
porters. Dr. Enz's office procures materials, co-ordinates
efforts and handles public relations.

During the past nine months 311 buyers from foreign
firms have visited the offices of the Allgaeu association,
with 52 coming from North America. Dr. Enz reports or-
ders from these and other sources, some stemming from
the recent Chicago trade fair, have built up an order
backlog of more than $1,000,000, an amount equal to that
produced by the co-operative since its start. Sixty percent
of this export will go to the United States — thus aiding
Germany in her effort to close the dollar gap — while
the rest will go to 22 other foreign countries.

Among the products which will be shipped are many
kinds of buttons. They are also shipping necklaces, armb-
ands, earrings, rings, brooches and, occasionally, crowns
for some of the lesser potentates in the world today.

Among the unusual jobs tackled by Allgaeu craftsmen
is that of copying the real jewels of wealthy American
women who desire to wear exact imitations as a safeguard
against robbery.

The Allgaeu co-operative has a display of more than
20,000 different designs in jewelry, and the craftsmen have
noted that tastes vary greatly from country to country.

Raw materials used by the co-operative are glass and
plastics, manufactured in Gablonz, and non-precious
metals. Gold and silver are used for plating, but gems,
precious stones and other metals generally are not used.

To assure a never-ending supply of skilled
craftsmen, a trade school is maintained at Kauf-
beuren, with the aid of the Bavarian State Ministry of
Education and Culture. The three-year course, enrolling
100, trains young people between the ages of 14 and 20
in the intricacies of glass and metal work.

Originally the school was opened for children of the
expellee families, but recently many native families have
asked, and been granted, permission to enroll their
children.

The big problem that faces the Allgaeu people now is
filling the tremendous backlog of orders within a rea-
sonable length of time. With ERP aid, five bright new
housing units, virtually completed, have been erected in
the heart of the Kaufbeuren district. These new homes
have, before their occupancy, become the center of small
grocery and attendant stores.

Handmade goods of quality have brought New Gablonz
growing volume of orders, with exports earning dollars.
Apprentices work beside artisans in variety of small but highly active industries which make up busy, thriving New Gablonz.

Watching this development, and counting his ever-increasing orders, has given Dr. Enz a bold idea. He wants to construct 3,000 apartments and workshops to house and furnish jobs for 3,000 skilled workers and their families, all of them other Gablonz expellees who now live elsewhere in the German Republic. This program would cost DM 10,000,000 ($2,380,000).

Dr. Enz feels that by embarking on such a course, the Allgaeu group would double capacity and be able to pay all debts by the time the project is completed.

ALTHOUGH THE SECTION where the most building is going on still bears the name of Kaufbeuren-Hart, to most residents it has already taken the name of New Gablonz, and more and more the people of the district refer to their new living center by that name.

If the workers and officials of “New Gablonz” continue at the pace they have already shown, by the time the cartographers of Bavaria are ready to place New Gablonz at its proper place on the map, the appropriate name for the town will be “Gross Gablonz.”

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**German Cultural Activities in Spotlight**

GREAT INTEREST in the integration of Germany into the democratic cultural community — even despite the atmosphere of tension resulting from recent war developments — was shown by both American and foreign delegates to the National Conference on Occupied Countries held during December in Washington, DC. So reported Dr. James M. Read, chief of HICOG Education and Cultural Relations Division, who participated in the meeting.

The December conference marked the first time that western Germans participated in the meeting sponsored by 175 private US agencies.

Dr. Read stressed the importance of the work of private agencies in the field of German social change and cultural interchange. “In the future,” he stated, “we will devote more of our efforts to backing German organizations which will operate in all western Germany and continue long after HICOG has disappeared.”

Summing up the important results of the conference attended by delegates from philanthropic, educational, labor, religious, social welfare and women’s groups, Dr. Read cited the following conference resolutions as the most significant:

Whatever changes in American policy be necessary for the future, these changes should not reduce attention on education, cultural interchange and the forces that make for peace.

Immediate revision of the Internal Security Act, which is disrupting the exchange of persons program with the occupied countries and adversely affecting the public affairs efforts of the United States.

The governments of the US and of ERP countries should make counterpart funds available for educational reconstruction and for cultural interchange among the European countries receiving American economic aid.

American relations with occupied areas should be designed to assist the nationals of those countries in broadening their participation in the United Nations and other international agencies, particularly UNESCO.

Edward W. Barrett (right), US assistant secretary of state for public affairs, and Geoffrey Lewis (left), deputy director of the US State Department’s Bureau of German Affairs, confer in Munich with Shepard Stone, director of HICOG’s Office of Public Affairs. Mr. Barrett and Mr. Lewis arrived in late December to survey the US Information program in Germany.

(PRIB OLCB photo)