Hand of Friendship

Review of the Six-Week Survey of Germany
By Panel of 11 Prominent American Women

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The little old woman looked about her and smiled at the roomful of earnest faces. Her bright eyes swept the cafe dining room where nearly 100 German women were assembled to meet with 11 representatives of major American women’s organizations, and marveled at what they saw. “It is wonderful to see German women meeting like this,” she said. “I am so glad — for them and for Germany — that it is happening at last.”

The speaker was German-born Mrs. Anna Metcalfe, 80, who had walked five miles from Stuttgart, capital city of the US Zone state of Wuerttemberg-Baden, to the Ulmbach cafe where the meeting, one of many which had been arranged throughout Western Germany and Berlin to cement working ties between German and American women’s groups, was held.

“During my girlhood, the participation of women in German public life was unheard of,” Mrs. Metcalfe recalled. “And now, even though their interest has been aroused, the average German housewife and even those women who are in business or in professions are combating the years and years of Nazi domination during which women had not the slightest freedom of action in community or national affairs. I believe that they are doing splendidly so far, and the encouragement they are receiving from these American women who are now visiting Germany will be really invaluable.”

The echo of little Mrs. Metcalfe’s words was heard in the major cities and the out-of-the-way corners of the Federal Republic as the 11 American women bustled from point to point on their carefully mapped six-week itinerary, speaking here, listening there, discussing, conferring, probing and advising. Through the scenic American zone, the largely rural French Zone, the hurried industrial centers of the British Zone, the city of Berlin, and the nodding university town of Bonn, now Germany’s seat of government, the American women, flagging but unbowed, determinedly settled their jaunty hats more firmly and went out to meet still more people—to exchange more ideas.
Mrs. Willen, center, chats with two of Berlin’s leading Jewish women during a meeting at Harnack House in the US Sector to Berlin. With her are, left, Jeanette Wolff, member of the Berlin House of Representatives and chairman of the Berlin Jewish Women’s club, and Ruth Galinski, who is the deputy chairman of the Berlin Jewish organization.

(PRBE-HICOG photos by Schubert)

The idea for the West Germany-wide tour of the American Women’s Panel originated as Department of Labor officials in Washington and members of HICOG’s Women’s Affairs Branch became even more keenly aware that German women’s organizations needed stimulus in the form of direct personal contact with experienced and successful organizational methods of outside countries.

The Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor, in conjunction with the Department of State, approached various national non-governmental women’s organizations throughout the United States and met with a wave of enthusiasm which sent the already moving ball speeding.

German women’s counterpart organizations were sounded and responded with alacrity. The German women requested HICOG to issue on their behalf an invitation to the American organizations to send delegates on a tour of the Federal Republic in an effort to establish closer relations between the organized women of both countries.

TWELVE US WOMEN’S organizations representing approximately 15,000,000 American women accepted, offering to finance their respective delegates’ travel to and from Germany. Reaching into all areas of American life—business and professions, industry, church work, government, education, and citizenship in both urban and rural communities, the organizations, with the exception of the National Council of Negro Women, have counterpart or similar groups in Germany.

Organizations and delegates participating in the panel, the first of its kind to represent the United States in Germany, were:

Young Women’s Christian Association—Mrs. Arthur Anderson, New York, N.Y.

League of Women Voters—Mrs. Harold D. Dyke, Syracuse, N.Y.

National Council of Negro Women—Dr. Dorothy B. Ferebee, Washington, D.C.

National Council of Women in the United States—Dr. Ferebee.

American Association of University Women—Mrs. Frederic Gilstrap, Albuquerque, N.M.


National Business and Professional Women’s Clubs—Dr. Minnie Lee Maffett, Dallas, Tex.

Congress of Industrial Organizations—Mrs. Marie C. Mengerson, St. Louis, Mo.

United Council of Church Women—Miss Louella Remmeyer, New York, N.Y.

American Federation of Labor—Mrs. Walter Rose, Congers, N.Y.

National Council of Catholic Women—Mrs. Anthony J. Scholter, Milwaukee, Wis.

National Council of Jewish Women—Mrs. Joseph Willen, New York, N.Y.

GERMAN WOMEN’S GROUPS, exhibiting a reticence at first for collective effort, did unite to elect Mrs. Emmi Beckmann, president of the German Federation of University Women and member of the parliament of the Free City of Hamburg, as project chairman, to sit with American, British and French Women’s Affairs officers to plan a comprehensive and fast-moving program.

By the time the American women’s panel arrived at the Rhine-Main airport outside Frankfurt, headquarters for the Office of the US High Commissioner in Germany, on April 20, the six-week schedule was so tightly jammed

Mrs. Jones shakes hands with a little girl who lives with her refugee parents in an overcrowded hostel maintained by the Welfare Section of the City of Hamburg. Hostel houses 30 families.

(PRBE HICOG photos by Jacoby)
with events ranging from social teas to visits to German prisons, refugee camps, labor meetings, consultations and German-American "get-togethers" that the visitors stifled astonished gasps as they viewed their itinerary.

German women, anxious that their guests get a well-rounded picture of German life and burning to meet and talk with the first group of American women to come to their country since the war to learn, to help and to understand, were eager to open their homes, their schools, their institutions and their hearts and fearful lest the Americans miss any tucked-away corner of German life.

The American women plunged in with zest. They had tea with US High Commissioner and Mrs. John J. McCloy, met with many other HICOG officials, then temporarily turned backs on Americans. They wanted to meet the German women.

**THEIR FIRST WEEK** was set at whirlwind tempo. In Frankfurt and nearby Wiesbaden, capital of the state of Hesse, panel delegates held exhaustive consultations with German women's groups. The meetings showed the Americans that their German counterpart organizations have a long way to go before they can achieve the active role and effective influence in community affairs which come as second nature to American women's groups.

German women leaders, conscious that their groups are functioning below their potential, told their visitors that the German women's movement has not fully recovered from the demoralizing blow dealt it by the Nazis and that economic problems and the "children, church and kitchen" tradition were still slowing the pace to a walking trot.

Scribbling notes, listening and absorbing, the American women got a firsthand, person-to-person briefing on current organizational life in Germany from their German hostesses. They learned that women in Germany — there are 3,700,000 (1950 census) more women than men in the Federal Republic — constitute 68 percent of the population and represent two-thirds of the voters; that through their numbers German women are in a decisive position today either to promote or retard the development of Germany as a democratic state.

But German women because of the traditional social system are ill prepared for the responsibility circumstances have placed upon them. The lack of active participation of women in civic affairs shows that the great majority are politically unaware, uninformed on public issues, unconscious of their responsibility as citizens and reluctant to identify themselves with public issues.

But there are encouraging signs, too. German women leaders are alert, fully aware of deficiencies where they exist and eager to conquer them. New groups formed after the Hitler era are steadily growing in effectiveness. Many of the organizations have incorporated objectives in their programs which were adopted by German groups 30 years ago and later wiped out by the Nazis:

"Equal rights for women;"

"Equal pay and job opportunities;"

"Admission of women to all legal institutions;"

"Revision of family laws;" and

"More women in leading educational posts;"

**AND THERE ARE NEW TRENDS.** The modern organizations are not direct copies of the old. The new groups do not show the nationalistic tendencies characteristic of the period after the first World War. There is more programming emphasis on social and cultural issues, and the post-World War II groups include a wider representative cross-section of the population.

The consultations were punctuated by visits to enterprises initiated or helped by progressive women's groups illustrative of the new patterns developing: an old bunker whose three-feet-thick walls once protected citizens from air-raids now houses a training school for girls established by funds raised by Frankfurt women's associations; a women's prison where women's groups have been influential in organizing handicraft work, trade training and discussion programs to provide a rehabilitative diversion from the traditional gray monotony of German prison routine.

Sandwiching in luncheons with the mayors of Frankfurt and Wiesbaden, and a lightning trip to the ancient city of Marburg for a chat with university students there, the panel took off from the Frankfurt area for a series of similar visits in Mainz, Heidelberg, Stuttgart, Freiburg, Munich, Nuremberg, Berlin, Hamburg, Hanover, Bremen, Kiel, Duesseldorf, Bonn and the surrounding countryside.

**EVERYWHERE GERMAN WOMEN turned out en masse to greet the panel.** In Stuttgart where the American women spent May Day and Ascension Day (May 3), both long-accepted family holidays in Germany. HICOH Women's Affairs officers estimated that more than 1,000 German women attended meetings in the area to meet the Americans. All meetings were characterized by a frank "give and take" between the Germans and Ameri-
Mrs. Dyke reaches for trinket made by a child at the Waller Park Children's City Day-Home, one of the most modern and progressive institutions of its kind in Bremen. (Photo by Georg Schmidt, PRB OLCE Bremen)

cans. German women seized the opportunity to unburden their problems while the Americans listened, advised and suggested, and sometimes told them to forget their past woes and look to the future.

Typical of meetings between the groups were those held in the famous city of Munich, capital of Bavaria, and Freiburg, capital of the Black Forest state of Baden, in southwest Germany.

In an informal meeting in Munich where approximately 40 women of German counterpart agencies sat down for a two-hour "woman to woman" chat on questions of mutual interest, Mrs. Dyke told the Germans she was impressed with the relief and welfare work they were doing but was disappointed in their "citizenship work."

"Particularly in your work with young people," the League of Women Voters' delegate said, "I have seen little evidence of an effective parent-teacher group working with the schools or of your teaching the child the value of democratic government at an early age by instituting self-government in your schools."

Answering Mrs. Dyke, the German women explained that, because of the shattered illusions of the Hitler era, women in Germany were hesitant to join new organizations and many were apathetic toward politics and their civic responsibilities.

One German teacher explained that in her school of 70 girls she had inaugurated self-government but found that the students were suspicious of it and felt that it was being imposed upon them from a higher authority. "It is too early for this type of training," she stated.

BECAUSE OF THE SHORTAGE of young teachers, another German woman told the American panel, "we must use those who taught under the Nazis and after teaching Nazism for 12 years it is difficult for those teachers to turn around and teach democracy."

"In America we have Parent-Teacher Associations," Mrs. Rose, representing the American Federation of Labor, told the German women. "When we think the teachers aren't good for our children we take action through that organization. Why don't the mothers in Germany take similar action against the faults in the school system?"

"In the schools I have visited so far," Mrs. Rose continued, "I have found that the young people are interested in politics and citizenship, but they are not getting the proper instruction in these subjects. That is the problem which you women must face.

"You have told us that your schools are overcrowded and space limited, but you are rebuilding industry and civic buildings first while school space is so cramped that rural schools intended to accommodate 30 students are now crowded with as many as 80 pupils. Again, it is up to the German women to make their voices heard and to find a remedy for the situation."

DR. FEREBEE, REPRESENTING the National Council of Negro Women and the National Council of Women in the United States, asked the assembled German women if the great mass of German people were convinced that democracy is what they want.

"After the Nazi era," a German woman answered, showing that the "Fuehrer Princip" (principle of strong leadership) is still alive in Germany, "it is impossible to switch over quickly and be told 'you must be democrats.' In this period of transition there must be some strong leading personality."

In Freiburg, in the French Zone, where Paul A. Neuland, US state observer, threw open his home for an evening meeting between the German and American women, the panel members were told that the German Hausfrau (housewife) with her waking hours devoted to the problems of feeding and clothing her children under postwar conditions has little time in which to take an active interest in civic affairs.

Panel members inspect the Henkel works, Germany's largest manufacturer of cleansing agents, at Dusseldorf, in the Ruhr district. The visitors are seen in the packaging department. (Photo by PRB OLCE)
While the American housewife is assured of spare time made possible through the modern technical equipment in her kitchen and home, the German woman’s duties are a fulltime job, a young German mother told the discussion meeting. "It is for this reason," she said, "that Germany is a man’s country."

Mrs. Rose, mother of two children, informed the German women that they must correct their impression that all American women enjoy a large measure of leisure time. On the contrary, she pointed out, "thousands of women in the United States like myself work an eight-hour day outside the home and return at night to face our household duties. At the same time we work in our organizations and still find time to develop our civic responsibilities. We have educated our husbands that the home is a 50-50 partnership and they must do their share of the work if their wives have an outside job."

Dr. Maffett, representing the National Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, reminded the German women that there are millions more women than men in Germany. "And yet," the Texas physician said, "you are still asking men to give you an occasional crumb. It is through your vote that you get what you want, so why don’t you get it?"

Discussing women’s role in world peace, a German representative of the local Social Democratic Party (SPD), which opposes Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer’s policy of German participation in European defense, declared that, in the midst of current world rearmament, women should refuse to work in munitions or allied industries.

"We all hate war," Dr. Ferebee answered the SPD representative, "but in these times of stress our best protection is a strong country. For our united defense effort military strength is essential."

BUT THE TOUR WAS NOT CONFINED to meetings. The women inspected schools and kindergartens, labor schools, farms and bunkers. They took a quick look into the refugee problem — one of the greatest confront-
help or push for the refugees trickling over the border into western Germany. Outside Hanover, ancient capital of Lower Saxony, several panel members toured the Poggenhagen refugee camp, maintained by the local district government and local private enterprise.

Dr. Franz Frensen, director of the camp — once a manor house of the kings of Hanover — explained that he was "in the happy position of taking the young people in without conditions and excess questioning." The camp is merely used for transients, Dr. Frensen said, and the boys and girls remain there only for a two or three week period after which jobs are found for them in suitable places all over western Germany.

Most of the available jobs are on farms, the director said. There 50 percent of the young fugitives from Communism find their niche while 15 percent go voluntarily into the Ruhr coal mines, and the remainder find work in various trades in which they are interested. Everything in the camp, the women found, is on a voluntary basis. The boys and girls come and go as they wish and there are no fences to remind them they are camp inmates.

The Americans found some of the youths who were slated to leave shortly for the Ruhr mines laughing over a Soviet Zone newspaper story which depicted life in the Poggenhagen camp from a Communist viewpoint. In an effort to discourage young Germans from leaving the Communist fold, the party-line newspaper warned of the "horrors" of the refugee camp in the West where young fugitives from Communism were "beaten" daily and kept "behind barbed-wire." The German boys showed the newspaper to the American visitors and told them:

"Stories like these discourage no one. We in the East zone know the true story all too well, and more young people will follow us to Poggenhagen."

ALTHOUGH PANEL MEMBERS traveled mostly as a group, individuals found time to pursue their specialized interests as related to their organizations.

Mrs. Jones, identifying herself to German women as "the farmer's wife," for instance, took time off from the crowded schedule to visit German farm women in their homes, to view farming methods and inspect livestock.

She reported that farming in Germany is far behind that in the United States and on many farms primitive methods are still in use. She expressed her astonishment at the number of uses to which cows are put. "In Germany," she said, "they are a five-purpose animal, all beginning with the letter 'M' — milk, meat, maternity, motive power and manure."

Dr. Maffett, practicing physician in Dallas, Tex., left the group at times to visit hospitals, and to talk with doctors and nurses. Although not too hopeful about the medical situation as a whole today in a country which once led the world in medical thought and research, Dr. Maffett said she was impressed with the excellent work being done in a number of larger German hospitals despite many handicaps. She pointed in particular to the research work being carried on in Hamburg in the field of virus diseases, especially polio.

PANEL MEMBERS, REPRESENTING America's two large labor organizations, detached themselves from the panel schedule to visit a trade union school at Kochel, near Munich, one of eight schools of its kind in West Germany now providing an extensive educational program for workers. Eighty trade union members representing 16 unions are currently enrolled in the training classes, which cover two to three week studies. Workers,
both men and women, are taught economics, social politics, union history, wage and other legislation and union leadership.

Guided on their tour of the classrooms and living quarters by Mrs. Margarete Kempe, women's secretary for Bavaria of the German Trade Union Federation, Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Mengerson were able to observe at firsthand what German labor is doing to promote its own welfare. They learned that women workers are often hampered in their efforts to obtain equal pay, working conditions and other equal rights with men workers, most of whom continue to harbor a traditionally inherent belief that a woman is a less productive worker than a man. Mrs. Kempe told the Americans that information she received during a recent three-months' visit to America under the US Department of State's exchange program has been invaluable in her efforts to make German workers aware of the need for improvement in their status as employees, both within and without the union.

At still another labor school, the Hans Boeckler school, outside Nuremberg in Bavaria, which is financed by the German Trade Union Federation and aided by grants from the HICOG Special Projects Fund, Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Mengerson were told by the all-male student body that women's participation in union activities is a problem throughout the trade unions. Organized trade union men, the two panel members were told, are trying to make women realize that the union is also their responsibility, but German women are more interested in their household problems. "We have never seen women as enthusiastic as you about labor problems," one of the boys informed the American visitors.

WHEN THE GROUP REACHED Berlin in the fourth week of their trip they discovered a changed picture from that in the western zones. The American women found that Berlin women's organizations are making forceful impact on the social and political life of the island city.

Meeting as usual with their counterpart groups, the Americans expressed astonishment at the vigorous program set by the Berlin women in contrast to that of their sisters in the Federal Republic.

Mrs. Else Ulrich-Beil, chairman of the Citizens League (Staatsbuergerinnen-Verband) explained the difference by pointing out that Berlin women had lived for several years in the center of East-West conflict. "The force of women's organizations is essential in such times of stress," she said, "and we have had to assume more active role than women's groups in the western zones have yet learned to do."

The Berlin women, the panel members found, among other enterprises are helping refugee university students from the eastern zone to establish a free life in West Berlin. They are helping single women with their housing problems by renting large apartment units and converting them to smaller apartments to accommodate several women. All groups are working to educate both Berlin men and women toward better citizenship through information programs on city government affairs, while

representatives of women's organizations are being invited to the different states of the Federal Republic to spur the efforts of the more lagging groups in the western zones.

MEETING WITH PROFESSOR Ernst Reuter, governing mayor of Berlin, at a reception given in their honor by the world-famed city executive, the organization delegates were told that there was no chance for peace in the world until Germany's "guests from the East" have returned to their homelands.

During a welcoming speech to the American women, Mayor Reuter spoke of Berlin as a "frontier city" and said because Berliners live on the fringe of Communism they are fully aware of what they are fighting. The

Miss Reckmeyer and Mrs. Scholter talk with two Soviet Zone refugees living in the ruins of a bombed out Hamburg church.
mayor told his guests he hoped they would have a chance to visit the eastern sector of the city, so that they might contrast "two worlds in one city." In West Berlin, he declared, there is spirit and life. There is that in the air, Professor Reuter said, which says this city of Berlin has the will to survive. "The best export commodity we have is the Berlin spirit."

Later in the week some of the women followed Mayor Reuter's advice, and visited the Soviet Sector of the divided city. They talked with school children on their way home from a Communist-dominated classroom, thumbed through the youngsters' textbooks, and struck up conversations with women still clearing the rubble from badly-bombed streets.

In interviews and discussions with West Berliners the panel received a one-week's intensive briefing on the East-West tension in the city. Ernst Tillich of the Fighting Group Against Inhumanity, an organization which has become synonomous with German resistance against Communism, in one evening meeting painted a depressing picture of the subjugation of 18,000,000 East Germans to their Russian masters. Political conditions existing before 1945, when the Nazi totalitarian regime separated the entire nation from the rest of the world, are being repeated in the Soviet Zone, Mr. Tillich pointed out.

He urged the women to help in urging a strong link between the Germans imprisoned behind the Iron Curtain and the other nations of the free world by a warm flow of messages and food parcels. Letters will tell East Germans that they are not forgotten by the free world, he said, and food parcels will bolster their courage in the face of an almost hopeless situation. Good books and information about the free world will go a long way toward keeping these oppressed people united — spiritually, at least — with the West.

As the tour neared its last lap, the women, frayed but undaunted, smoothed their wrinkled dresses, donned fresh white gloves, and went to tea at the Bonn home of the first lady of Germany, Frau Elly Heuss-Knapp, wife of the president of the Federal Republic.

In the next few days, the Americans met with high officials of the German federal government, many of whom are women. The Americans expressed amazement at the large number of women holding important governmental posts and acknowledged that more women in Germany hold federal offices than in the United States.

Entertained at a dinner reception by members of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and the German Foreign Office, Hans Ritter von Lex, state secretary for the Interior Ministry, reminded his American guests that the women's movement in Germany started from the "grass-roots" only in 1945. Paying tribute to the help given German women from abroad in their efforts to create effective organizations through letters of encouragement and understanding, he said: "We have done more than just organize women's groups. We included a statement on women's equality with men in our constitution and our federal chancellor (Konrad Adenauer) insisted on a women's division in our Ministry of Interior."

Mrs. Aileen S. Miles (right), HICOG press officer who escorted the panel on its tour and is the author of accompanying article, chats with Mrs. Rose, left, and Mrs. Jones, during a tour of the port of Hamburg in the launch of Dr. J. K. Dunlop, British state commissioner for Hamburg.

During their six-week stay in Germany, he said, the American women probably found many incidents of imperfection. "But," he added, "give us time. We have the serious intention of bringing full equality between men and women, but you must help us to put this into effect."

Following their Bonn social whirl, the Americans retired to the staid and quiet Hotel Lorelei in Koenigswinter, across the Rhine from the capital, where they dug in for a two-day workshop meeting with their German counterparts who came to participate from all over the Republic, and to confer on the role of women's organizations in both domestic and international life, and to listen to women members of the German parliament define their role in national life.

In a verbal flashback of the tour following the conclusion of the Bonn workshop, German and American women were deep in assessing its value. Speaking to Mrs. Gilstrap of the American Association of University Women, Mrs. Beckmann said simply: "We German women feel very strongly that your trip about Germany has made a most important contribution to the lasting friendship of the two countries. Its effect will be felt long after you have returned home. There is one thing, however, which stands out in most of our minds, and that is this: the mere fact that you came at all — regardless of anything which was accomplished while you were here — proves to all of us that the bond of friendship was extended in good faith. We have clasped it, too, in friendship, and that alone is a remarkable beginning."

"However diversified the efforts of our individual organizations will be in the continuance of the relationship we have begun," Mrs. Gilstrap returned, "we as an entire group have found here a corresponding 'united front' which cannot fail in the years ahead."

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