PLANS FOR A MENTAL HEALTH movement in Germany were initiated at the International Conference on Health and Human Relations, held at Hiddesen, near Detmold, North Rhine-Westphalia, the first week in August.

Conference members felt that the best way to start a dynamic mental health movement in Germany would be to organize, in communities, small working groups of lay and professional persons. These groups have two functions:

1. To study local mental problems and ways of solving them.
2. To study new books, pamphlets and other materials dealing with human growth and development and human relations.

A committee of six German members was selected by the conference to organize a steering committee which, in turn, is to draft the plans for the mental health movement and to give leadership to its development.

The conference brought together 39 leaders from nine countries, representing 16 professions, to discuss some of the problems of human relationship which seem to be interfering with international understanding in many parts of the world today. Its joint sponsors were the World Federation for Mental Health and the Josiah W. Macy, Jr., Foundation of New York.

THE HIDDENSEN CONFERENCE was the third in a series under the same auspices, all with a similar focus. The first of the previous meetings took place at Princeton, New Jersey, in June 1950; the second at Williamsburg, Virginia, in December of the same year. The sessions at Hiddesen were arranged at the request of a German committee, some of whose members had attended the earlier meetings in the United States.

The theme of the Hiddesen conference, as of those preceding it, was "Health and Human Relations," health here being defined, in the sense of the World Health Organization, as total health — complete physical, mental, social and emotional well-being. Every effort was made to develop a working situation in which participants could freely explore problems relating to the general theme which were of immediate concern to them.

Questions for discussion were proposed in advance of the conference by those expecting to attend. Matters of common interest were considered in plenary sessions.
Four working groups dealt with specific problems classified by the conference under the four following headings:

(1) Mental health and education;
(2) Mental health in an industrial society;
(3) Psychological tensions in postwar Germany, and
(4) Development of a mental health movement in Germany.

It soon became evident that the sponsors had been successful in carrying out their intention of making this conference a truly German experience. The German participants seemed to sense, at once, that here, indeed, the needs of their country, of their own people, would be discussed and remedies sought in a spirit of genuine friendship and understanding, without condescension or pressure. They felt that they were cooperating with colleagues from abroad, with friends working in an attitude they could share, with people who were not trying to help and admonish them at the same time.

IN THE COURSE of the conference, it became clear that the members could come to final agreement on the ultimate goals for education and human relations, in spite of widely different angles of approach. They could also agree, to a great extent, on the means to be adopted to reach these goals.

When language differences had been clarified and the meanings of divergent formulations analyzed, it was found that all four of the groups had accepted the same values as basic in these two areas. This being true, the conference had no real difficulty in wording, coordinating and approving final recommendations.

Members of the conference were unanimous in their conviction that there is a great need for a mental health movement in Germany, that such a movement could do much to ease existing tensions in the relations between groups and individuals in the German population. It was deemed of major importance that all groups, organizations and individuals working with human beings—teachers, doctors, lawyers, social workers, parents, employers who train young workers—all should be given a deeper insight into, and a wider knowledge of, the basic principles of mental health and be trained to apply them to the work they are doing in their special fields.

In the atmosphere of friendliness and mutual respect which developed, members of the conference had unique opportunities to study the group process intimately, as participant-observers; to follow the steps in the resolution of inter-cultural conflicts; to learn to accept differences of opinion and feeling which, at first, seemed insurmountable; to realize how much the different professions need each other, and need lay people, in their work today.

IT IS LIKELY THAT many of the procedures in group problem-solving used in this conference will be tried this winter, in many different places, under many different circumstances. One point emphasized many times in the course of group discussions has tremendous potentiality for easing tensions when people who suffer in race, religion, nationality, economic status or cultural background come together to work together; the cooperative determination and definition of problems is an absolutely essential first step in successful cooperative problem-solving.

Perhaps the most significant evaluation of this conference was made by a young German participant who said, "For us, the great value was to experience such personal communication, and such good will; to get such a strong sense of common thinking, common feeling and common striving."