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LETTER FROM HAMBURG

IN the summer of 1946, a fifty-nine-year-old naturalized American citizen named Max Brauer made a trip from New York to his former home—the ancient German free port of Hamburg. A prominent Social Democrat and trade-union leader in Hamburg before the days of the Nazis, Brauer had been Mayor of Altona, a suburb of Hamburg, from 1918 to 1933. When Hitler rose to power, Brauer was declared “an enemy of the state,” and had to run for his life. He went to Austria, and then on to Switzerland and France, and, in 1934, to China, where he became a labor adviser to Chiang Kai-shek. Early in 1936 he went to the United States, where his wife and two children later joined him, and for the next ten years he taught and lectured in various parts of the country. His daughter now lives in New Hampshire and his son in New York, and his wife is here with him. The American Federation of Labor sent Brauer back to Hamburg to try to help build up an independent trade-union movement in Germany. He expected to stay for only a few months, but he’s been here ever since.

Almost immediately after his arrival, Brauer, a heavyset, gray-haired man, became a member of Hamburg’s Senate, and shortly after that he became Mayor of the city, a position he held until last November. Holding office in Hamburg meant giving up his American citizenship—which he was reluctant to do—but he felt he had no choice. “I just couldn’t run out on my old friends when I saw what they were up against,” he told me when I paid a call on him the other day. “I’d spent most of my life here, and I felt I had to help rebuild the city. It was quite a job.” It was indeed. In all Germany, only Berlin suffered worse destruction during the war. Hamburg was the target of two hundred and forty air raids, and in the midsummer of 1943 it was hit with a practically continuous nine-day “saturation” bombing, an assault that Hamburgers still refer to as “die Katastrophe.” The big attack came during the hottest part of a dry, hot summer. The water was low in the city’s two beautiful lakes—the Binnen-Alster and the Aussen-Alster, which are separated by the great Lombard Bridge—and even if there had been

plenty of water it wouldn’t have helped much, for the mains were smashed by some of the first bombs. Whole blocks of the city went up in flames, and the asphalt pavements boiled. The Binnen-Alster had been covered with floating camouflage that was supposed to look like streets and buildings from the air, but the bombardiers were not fooled. The port, with its shipyards and industrial installations, and the workers’ districts, with their factories and large, overcrowded tenements, got the worst of it. Many churches were burned out (but not the baroque St. Michaelis Church, where Philipp Emanuel Bach is buried and which is a Ham-



burg landmark; it was heavily damaged but remained standing). For days, the city was covered with a thick blanket of gray ashes, and a pall of black smoke hung over everything. It took Hamburgers a long time to add up their losses: sixty thousand people dead and fifty thousand badly hurt, out of a population of a little more than a million and a half; three hundred thousand buildings destroyed; three-quarters of a million people left without homes. Hamburg was pretty much out of the running for the rest of the war.

A local truck driver told me that in one night during the big raid, the night of July 27th, he lost his wife, a son, and twelve other relatives. The next morning, he was assigned to a group of emergency workers who were given flame-throwers and sent down into underground air-raid shelters and subway stations that had suffered direct hits. “I suppose there was no other way to dispose of what we found down there,” he said. “And everything had to be disposed of, or there’d have been an epidemic, especially in that weather. They gave us so much brandy that we hardly knew what we were doing. Later on, I began to remember, and now I can’t forget. I’ve made up my mind that if I should ever have to do anything like that again, I’d take an overdose of the sleeping pills I always carry with me.”

At the time Brauer became Mayor, the city was still badly crippled. The water supply had by no means returned to normal, sewage disposal was inadequate, there was little electricity or gas. The streetcars ran infrequently, and

there was no gasoline except for essential vehicles. Doctors were woefully short of both anesthetics and bandages. Food supplies were low. Then came the winter of 1946-47—Hamburg's severest in the past hundred years. The lakes were frozen over from December to April—something nobody could remember ever having seen before. Coal trains from the Ruhr were looted en route and arrived almost empty. "The ink froze in our office inkwells," Brauer told me. "When Herbert Hoover came here to attend some relief meetings, they had to wrap a blanket around his knees at each session. Inflation and black markets added to our troubles. Anyway, we set right to work cleaning up the rubble and pulling down the ruins. We wanted to clear the stuff away as quickly as we could, so that people wouldn't be constantly reminded of what had happened. In one respect, we were lucky—the old Inner City had not been burned, so our *Rathaus* [town hall] was usable, and that gave us at least a headquarters. I kept telling the people that we must make the most of a unique opportunity. It wasn't enough just to rebuild the city along its old lines. While I was in the United States, I'd read books by Frank Lloyd Wright and Lewis Mumford, and they'd given me some idea of how to proceed. I saw this as a big chance to make Hamburg a better, healthier place. No more overcrowded tenements. No slums. Plenty of playgrounds and parks. But how can you sell playgrounds and parks when hundreds of thousands of people have nowhere to live? Well, Hamburg was under British military rule, and their Regional Commissioner—he was Sir H. Vaughan Berry, a Fabian Socialist—did a lot to help me. Looking back now, I think we got away with murder. We levied confiscatory taxes, and we collected customs duties, and the money was supposed to go to the Administrative Council that was helping run the country at the time, but of course it didn't. There were plenty of protests, but we went ahead with our plans, and we did it all without going into debt, even though we got less Marshall Plan money than the cities in the American Zone and had to pay two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a day in occupation costs."

It is generally agreed that Hamburg has done just about the best job of rebuilding in all Western Germany. The casual visitor who was not familiar with the city before the war can hardly appreciate the extent of the devastation and the magnitude of the reconstruc-

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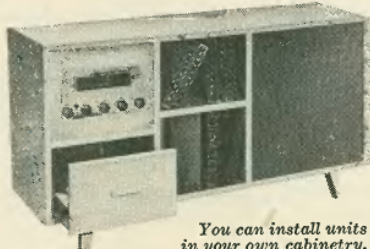
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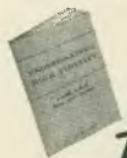
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tion. Around the Binnen-Alster, the ornate marble-and-sandstone buildings, the fine hotels and shops, the Lombard Bridge, and the Alster Pavilion, an eating place that is the pride of Hamburg, at first seem just as they always were; then, here and there, one sees an unexpectedly shiny copper roof or a façade that is obviously of a more recent vintage than the rest of the building. The railroad station has a spick-and-span million-dollar glass roof that most certainly wasn't there in the fall of 1943. At night, even these reminders of *die Katastrophe* are invisible and forgotten as the visitor contemplates the bright lights of the luxurious shopwindows reflected in the waters of the Binnen-Alster—a breathtaking sight. It is the hard-hit outskirts of Hamburg that have undergone the greatest change, and anyone who knew the city in the old days is bound to be staggered by them. Here, in the midst of miles of neat, empty, grassy lots, and wide-open spaces dotted with bushes and clumps of weeds, stands an occasional modern *Hochhaus* (skyscraper) or a large housing development, surrounded by playgrounds and parks. All this land was once covered with noisy streets and shabby five-story tenements, both jammed with people. No one seems to know exactly where all the people have gone. At the city hall, I was told that there is a list of more than a quarter of a million people who live "somewhere"—with in-laws, in Nissen huts—while they are waiting to get into the low-rent apartments the city is running up as fast as it can. During the past four years, the city has been providing new quarters for two thousand families a month. (A new school has been opened every month, too.) Large tax reductions are granted anyone who builds himself a home, and a local joke is "How can I deduct for a new house this year when I'm living in one I deducted for last year?"

Today, Hamburg, with a population of one million seven hundred thousand, is the largest city in Western Germany. And people keep coming, at the rate of seven thousand a month, because they think there may be an opportunity for them here. Brauer, whose constituents called him "our Yankee at the *Rathaus*," also made progress in other fields. Hamburg's municipal power plants now sell twice as much electricity as they did in 1938, and the city's new sports stadium is the biggest in Western Germany. It's a California-style boom, and if the civic-minded Hamburgers were like the people of Los Angeles, they would never let you hear the end

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of it. But the Hamburgers are reticent by nature; they have all the energy of Berliners, but they combine it with a positively English inclination for understatement. When you ask them how they have managed to achieve so much in such a short time, they simply shrug and say, "What else could we do?" Apparently, few of them realize that there are many cities in Europe where even now plans for reconstruction have not got beyond the talking stage. One Hamburger was amazed when I told him that in the Cottage district of Vienna, a pleasant residential section, the ruins of several villas that were hit by stray bombs toward the end of the war have been left untouched; their owners disappeared during the Nazi era and the courts have not yet decided who holds title to them. "That couldn't happen here," my Hamburg acquaintance assured me. "The city would see to it that something was done. It's quite impossible not to do something about such places." An American friend of mine who lives here says that the attitude of the Hamburgers toward the job they have done reminds him of something Toscanini said a few years ago. When an admirer asked the conductor how he had managed to bring off an amazingly fine radio performance of Verdi's "Otello," Toscanini replied, "I followed the score."

Brauer was forced out of the *Rathaus* when the Social Democrats were narrowly beaten by the "Hamburg Bloc," a middle-of-the-road coalition that was formed shortly after Adenauer's success in the federal elections. The present city administration is carrying on many of the projects Brauer initiated, and there is a widespread feeling that his political career is not yet over. Since the death of Lord Mayor Ernst Reuter of West Berlin, Brauer has been regarded as the outstanding Social Democrat. He is now serving as the director of a large workers'-insurance company, and not long ago he said to me, "One hears that since the war the German people are spending all their money. Well, that's not true. After losing their savings twice in a lifetime, the Germans are saving again."

I FIRST saw Hamburg when I was ten years old and my parents brought me here to visit my father's oldest brother, who had been banished by my grandfather for marrying a girl he disapproved of. Now Grandfather was getting old and mellow, and my father was to prepare the way for a reconciliation. I'd expected to find my uncle living in

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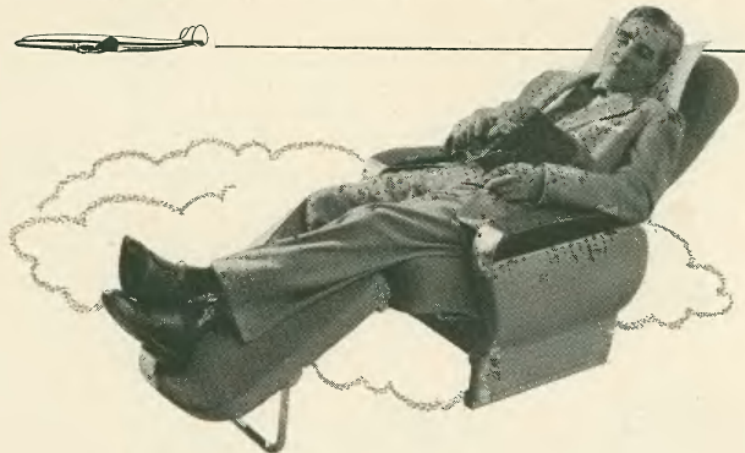
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impoverished exile, sharing a dungeon with rats, and I felt let down when he turned out to be the owner of a beautiful house overlooking the Aussen-Alster. My disappointment was quickly over when my uncle started taking me for sailboat rides on Hamburg's lovely lakes; for years, Hamburg was synonymous to me with fireworks reflected in the water. Years later, I was pleased to learn that the only Hamburg attraction to get two stars in the postwar Baedeker was the Binnen-Alster.

On my second visit, during the inflation days of 1923, I heard a good deal about St. Pauli's Reeperbahn, one of Europe's most famous red-light districts; it was said that the Place Pigalle, in Paris, was as dull as a convent courtyard by comparison. Since then, the Reeperbahn has become a noisy tourist center, shabbier than Times Square and jammed with "bachelors' clubs" and taxi-dance halls, restaurants, a hippodrome where horses drink beer, and bars where hostesses drink anything the customers will buy them. Prostitution is now licensed in Hamburg, and restricted to certain of the Reeperbahn's alleys, at the entrance to which are signs reading, "*Für Jugendliche Verboten*" ("Young People Forbidden"). To these the British have added, "Out of Bounds for All Allied Personnel." Behind large windows on the ground floor of the houses, the tenants exhibit their charms for the benefit of passersby. Despite the signs, these passersby often include children from the neighborhood, and sometimes their mothers, all of whom must either use the alleys on errands or else make long detours. A few years ago, the respectable women of Hamburg protested against this constant proximity to sin, and the prostitutes were banished from the alleys. Thereupon the Jungfernstieg, the city's most elegant shopping street, took on the after-nightfall aspect of Piccadilly or the Boulevard des Capucines. It was the turn of Hamburg's merchants to protest. In a town devoted to trade and commerce, merchants' complaints carry greater weight than housewives', and the alleys were reopened to prostitutes. Police President Bruno Georges feels that it's just as well. "There are no rackets in the alleys," he told me. "The people who own the houses are permitted to collect room rent only, and no percentage of the girls' earnings. Many of the girls are refugees from the Soviet Zone who were unable to get jobs, and at least they're not starving. I must say I'm much less concerned about what goes on in those alleys than

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Organized high jinks such as Cologne's *Fastnacht* carnival and Munich's *Oktoberfest* are unknown in Nordic, Protestant Hamburg, unless one counts the traditional *Domfest*, early in the winter—it was originally a market festival held near a church—when tens of thousands of local families walk out to St. Pauli's Reeperbahn. Showing no interest in such attractions as "Salome Without Her Veils," they pile into the restaurants and consume enormous amounts of roast chicken, *Wurst*, and beer. Most of Salome's customers are burghers from the provinces and tourists from the neighboring Scandinavian countries, who think that Hamburg is the widest-open place on earth. Even the women who make a trip from the north are impressed by what it has to offer. One day, I watched a bus filled with Swedish tourists pull up in front of the railroad station. A number of portly matrons alighted and made for a nearby liquor store, where, since liquor is strictly rationed in Sweden, they cast ecstatic glances at the rows of bottles in the window. They began to discuss labels and prices, and agreed that it was all too good to be true. At last, one of them sighed and said, "What's the use? We can't take it with us." Her companion gave her a stern look. "No," she said, "but we can drink it here." And with that she went into the store, purchased a bottle of Steinhäger, and hurried out with an expression of happy anticipation on her face.

ON May 9, 1189, Frederick Barbarossa, the Holy Roman Emperor, grateful for Hamburg's help during one of the Crusades, signed a charter granting the burghers the right "to pass to and fro with their ships and goods, from the sea to the said city, free of any duty or charge" and stipulating that "no man may build a castle within eight miles of their city [and] that the burghers shall be free of all military service or from the defense of the country." This amounted to a guarantee of independence, and from that time on, except during the Nazi regime, Hamburg has been an independent city, ruled by its own council. (Since 1871, when it joined the German Empire, it has always, of course, been subject to federal laws.) In 1266, when some Hamburg merchants were living in London, Henry III of England recognized them as members of a hanse, or trade league, with the phrase "*quod ipsi habeant hanseam suam*" ("that they have their own

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hanse"). Thus Hamburg joined the loosely knit Hanseatic League, along with such other North German commercial centers as Lübeck, Kiel, Bremen, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, Greifswald, Stettin, and Kolberg. Originally a trade monopoly, the League later became an armed alliance and successfully waged war against Denmark. Hamburgers are proud of their traditional independence. Once, Kaiser Wilhelm II, on an official visit to the city, was greeted by the mayor as "*Lieber Bundesgenosse*" ("Dear Ally"), which delighted the citizens and irritated the Kaiser. Hamburg is a city-state, comparable to Athens and Venice in their day, and has the same rights under the German constitution as the other *Länder*, or states. It elects its own parliament, which in turn elects a twelve-man senate; the senate then elects a mayor. Hamburg has three members in Bonn's *Bundesrat*, which is made up of representatives from the nine *Länder* in West Germany.

For centuries, Hamburg's shipbuilders, shipowners, and merchant princes considered themselves the equals of the nobility in other parts of Germany. The old families of Hamburg—the Petersens, Sломans, Godefroys, Chapeaurouges, Sievekings, and so on—repeatedly refused to accept titles from German rulers. Members of the old German nobility moved into the city when it grew in importance, and some of their descendants still use their titles; there are a number of men here with dazzling ones, such as Heinrich Freiherr von Berenberg-Gossler and Freiherr Achim-Helgs von Beust—but among the younger set there is a tendency to drop even the "von" from their names, and titles actually mean little unless they are backed up with money. The old families no longer play a dominant role in the city. After the First World War, some of them were left without their fortunes, and after the Second World War, others were left without even their ancestral homes. Those who still own large houses are tormented by taxes and servant problems, and find it difficult to run them in style. There is still a group of shipping magnates and merchant princes who live in splendid isolation and will have nothing to do with anyone who doesn't "belong," but the tide is running against them and their ways. A social revolution of sorts is going on in Hamburg, which, with two hundred thousand workers employed in its factories, is now the largest industrial city in Germany. The owners and managers of



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these factories—they turn out machinery, electrical equipment, chemicals, rubber, asbestos, and so on—are taking the place of the old families. Until recently, people connected with industry were looked down upon. Now the presidency of Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce, a position that had nearly always been held by a shipping magnate, is held by an industrialist—the general manager of the Phoenix Rubber Company.

Hamburg's rich men are a conservative lot, whatever the source of their money, and they make little display of their wealth. The other evening, in the dining room of the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, Hamburg's—and probably Germany's—finest hotel, I saw two men in threadbare clothes being treated with conspicuous deference by the manager and the waiters. The pair ordered the cheapest dish on the menu—*Seemanns-Labskaus*, which is the local version of corned-beef hash. (Hamburger steak is as unknown in Hamburg as vichyssoise is in Vichy. In Hamburg, a hamburger is called *Deutsches Beefsteak*, and anyone who likes the American-style hamburger should definitely steer clear of it.) After dinner, the manager told me that the two seedy-looking guests were among Hamburg's greatest merchant princes, and that they came to the hotel every day for *Börsenfrühstück*, or the stock-exchange lunch, an inexpensive blue-plate special that is included on the menu especially for thrifty millionaires. "We make out all right in the long run," the manager assured me. "Last year, one of those two gentlemen you saw gave a wedding breakfast here when his youngest daughter got married. Five hundred guests. There was plenty of the best French champagne, but the waiters had orders to serve it in water glasses and to keep the bottles, with their famous labels, out of sight. A Hamburger will entertain a hundred people at dinner with three wines, and the next morning at his office he will give orders to save the backs of used envelopes for note-



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WE HAVE an old friend in Wall Street. He is highly conservative. He was the last man on the Street to give up white piping on his vest.

Some years ago we had lunch with him at his club. He said to the waiter, "A Scotch Old Fashioned, please, with no fruit. And no sugar. And no bitters."

When the waiter left, we remarked, "This may be news to you, but the young men today have a way of simplifying things. The drink you want is now known as *Scotch on the rocks*."

He reflected a moment, then added, "Scotch on the rocks, eh? Not bad. Very handy. It will save me a lot of time in ordering."

Last week we lunched with him again at his club. He gave his order, "*Regal on the rocks, please!*" The waiter took off, and we raised a question: "Wouldn't it be clearer to order "*Chivas Regal on the rocks?*" (We have a certain feeling for the full name, because we are associated with the importers of Scotland's Prince of Whiskies.)

Our friend snorted: "This may be news to *you*. Today any good barman knows that "*Regal on the rocks*" means Chivas Regal." Then he added, "There's something you'd better explain to me. You fellows have brought over a whisky so good that it has spoiled my taste for any other, and then you don't have enough to sell me every time I want to buy it. *Why?*"

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paper. One of our most distinguished guests keeps telling me that you can't make a fortune, you can only save one."

Prior to the Second World War, it was customary for the sons of Hamburg's traders and merchants to serve an apprenticeship abroad—in a Wall Street office, perhaps, or in the City of London. They would return home to become members of the Ibero-Amerikanische Verein, the Amerikanische Gesellschaft, or some other cosmopolitan-minded group of businessmen favoring free trade. Hamburg is more interested in economic prosperity than in the complexities of politics. In the beer halls and waterfront saloons of Hamburg, people talk about business, jobs, taxes, and money. Most Hamburgers are disgusted with politicians and "want to be left in peace." At the last municipal election, only three and two-tenths per cent of the population voted Communist—fewer than in 1917. Hamburg's shipyard workers make only fourteen marks (\$3.50) a day, but they get cheap housing, seven-cent meals in their canteens, and other benefits; in 1951, a Communist attempt to organize a wildcat waterfront strike failed badly. Three years ago, the Deutsche Partei and other neo-Nazi groups were active in town, but now they operate mostly in the outlying areas of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, among rich, ultraconservative farmers, who seem to have learned little from recent history. Hamburgers admit that many Nazis hold important jobs in the city but explain that they are "technical experts," whose advice is needed. Anti-Western feeling, which was strong immediately after the war, has subsided. In Paris, Rome, and Vienna, one hears frequently of acts of vandalism committed against cars with United States Army license plates; in Hamburg, one night a few weeks ago, the windshield of a car belonging to a British colonel was broken, and the police and the populace were more indignant about it than the colonel was. It was generally felt that the incident was a disgrace to the city of Hamburg.

AT the end of the last war, the port of Hamburg was a shambles, its pier sheds and warehouses destroyed, its rail and road facilities shattered. The hulls of thirty-five hundred vessels lay at the bottom of the harbor, blocking all approaches from the sea. The Allies needed the port for the maintenance of their armies on the Continent, and on May 3, 1945, the day the first British troops entered the city, a group of



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Allied specialists moved into the harbor area, equipped with the technical resources of a modern army and helped by a good many Hamburgers, who take a very personal interest in their waterfront. Three weeks later, the port was partly reopened, and pilots could steer ships through narrow channels between wrecks and mines to reach the docks and discharge their cargoes. Then the British began to blow up the shipyards that had been used to build the Nazi fleet. This almost caused a revolt in Hamburg. No one dared object openly when forty submarines were blown up in underwater bunkers with the help of their own torpedoes, but each time a drydock was destroyed, there were angry mutterings about the British being afraid of German competition. The mutterings came to the ears of even the notoriously hard-of-hearing British officials when it was announced that a drydock located near the vehicular tunnel under the Elbe River was about to be demolished. (Motorists accustomed to the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels would hardly be impressed by the Elbtunnel's two narrow fourteen-hundred-and-seventy-foot tubes, but Hamburgers appear to hold the conviction that their tunnel, which was completed in 1911, is the greatest engineering achievement since the completion of the Great Wall of China.) Into the tense situation stepped Dr. J. K. Dunlop, the Allied Land Commissioner for Hamburg, and later the British Consul-General. He announced that the demolition of the drydock would not harm the Elbtunnel, and that to demonstrate his confidence, he would take a chair down into the tunnel and sit there while the drydock was blown up. After Dr. Dunlop had made this gallant offer, his engineers informed him that no one knew much about the effect of such an explosion's shock in the water and that it might not be quite safe to sit it out in the tunnel, but the Commissioner refused to listen to them. While thousands of Hamburgers looked on, Dr. Dunlop seized a chair and marched down into the tunnel, more bothered by an attack of influenza that had sent his temperature to a hundred and three than by fear of being blown up. The explosion slightly shook, but didn't harm, the tunnel and Dr. Dunlop, and it strengthened the British position in Hamburg.

Under Allied orders, the Hamburg shipyards were at first permitted to do only repair work, but as the controls were gradually relaxed, the yards began to build coastal vessels for foreign owners, and then larger ships. Since

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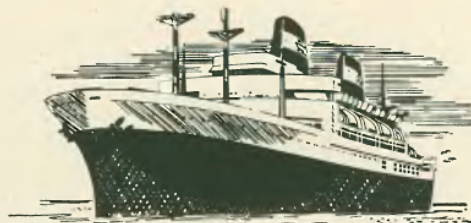
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April, 1951, all controls have been off except for a restriction against raising the total capacity of the yards without the consent of the Allies. Last year, the Deutsche Werft, Howaldtswerke, Stülckerwerft, and several of Hamburg's smaller yards launched fifty-nine ships, among them what was then the largest tanker in the world—the forty-five-thousand-ton Tina Onassis, built for Aristotle Socrates Onassis, the Greek-born shipping king, who lives in New York.

The one shipyard that has not yet been allowed to resume operations is the biggest of them all—Blohm & Voss, which employed seventeen thousand workers before the war. This shipyard has become a “national symbol” in Hamburg and a fine talking point for nationalist orators, who refer to Blohm & Voss the way Hitler and Goebbels used to refer to “the chains of Versailles.” The other day, I went along with some German sightseers who were being taken on a boat trip around the harbor, and as we passed the broken debris that had once been the gantries and shipways of Blohm & Voss, the guide, an otherwise sober and business-like fellow, became quite emotional. “The Europa, the Vaterland, and the Cap Arcona were built in these yards!” he exclaimed. Everybody stopped talking, and a tall man got up out of his deck chair and stood at attention, as at a funeral. The guide didn't mention that the German battleship Bismarck and other vessels in Hitler's navy had also been built by Blohm & Voss, but they were, and that, of course, is why it has not been restored.

In spite of the swift pace of reconstruction, wide areas in the harbor are still deserted, and signs reading “DANGER! NO MOORING!” warn ships away from quays whose walls were cracked during one explosion or another. But two-thirds of all the pier sheds and half of all the warehouses have been rebuilt—and rebuilt along the most modern lines. Port experts from other nations who visit Hamburg return home envying the city's new roomy and neon-lit harbor installations built of steel and reinforced concrete, with wide ramps, a minimum of pillars, and paved-in railroad tracks. “First we bomb them and then we dismantle them,” a Briton said to me recently. “And what happens? Today, Hamburg is the most modern port in Europe, famous for its speedy handling of cargo and clearing of ships. It's got over two hundred regular shipping lines making over five hundred regular departures a month,

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The April issue of *Ship Via Hamburg*, a local periodical published in English, observed editorially, "The route via Hamburg seems to be the most natural and rational for most of the East European traffic. . . . Other countries

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also are obviously governed by the aim to promote the East-West trade and traffic. What is more obvious than that we in Hamburg do not want to exclude ourselves from this general trend?" The publication has also expressed hope for "a gradual improvement of the sea-transport relations with the Soviet Union." The British claim that they have the activities of the free port well under control and that little illegal East-West trade gets by. But no one is quite sure. For instance, the Czechoslovakians have an enclave here—a pier established under the Treaty of Versailles to give them a seaport—and it is difficult to control the cargoes of their barges, which ply between the free port and Prague, passing through the Soviet Zone of Germany.

THE most astonishing phenomenon of postwar Hamburg is the city's emergence as one of the chief cultural centers of Germany. A few years ago, people anywhere in the country would have smiled at the thought of such a thing, for Hamburg, with its population of "cold" North Germans, was traditionally interested in commerce rather than culture. Money, not music, was the international language the Hamburgers understood, and few of the town's old families were patrons of the arts. But nowadays Hamburg seems to be more favorably situated, both geographically and economically, than many other German cities, and there has been an influx of gifted refugees. From Leipzig, in the Russian Zone, which once printed most of the nation's books, have come publishers and illustrators; from East Berlin, actors and journalists; and from Dresden, also in the Russian Zone, musicians and painters. As word got around that Hamburg was becoming the Athens of Germany, incredulous members of artists' colonies in Munich came to see for themselves—and stayed on. Hamburg's Kunsthalle is Germany's largest picture gallery, its State Opera is one of Germany's three leading opera houses, its Philharmonic is almost on a par with Furtwängler's Berlin Philharmonic, and its Deutsches Schauspielhaus and Thalia-Theater are among the country's best repertory theatres. "It has become more fashionable to be seen at the Musikhalle during a Philharmonic concert than at the Alster Regatta," a patrician old-timer said to me the other day, with an air of bewilderment.

Hamburg now awards three state prizes: the Lessing Prize for literature, established before the war; the Bach

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Prize for music, established in 1950 (the first winner was Hindemith); and the Lichtwark Prize for fine arts, which was also established before the war, and was given to Oskar Kokoschka, the Austrian expressionist painter, last year. Three years ago, the University of Hamburg awarded its Goethe Prize to Martin Buber, the Israeli philosopher, and it was next given to the Norwegian Bishop Eivind Berggrav. The Fritz Schumacher Prize for architecture—Schumacher, who died in 1947, was Hamburg's greatest city planner, and a private foundation holds an annual competition in his honor—was lately given to Gustav Oelzner, a local architect. Hamburg has Germany's largest motion-picture studios and its most extensive radio network—Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk. Originally run under British control, N.W.D.R. is now a private corporation organized a good deal like the British Broadcasting Corporation. Its programs are unsponsored, and owners of radios support it by paying monthly dues, which are collected by the federal post offices.

Early in 1947, a thirty-five-year-old newspaperman named Axel Springer, whose father owned a small paper here, began bringing out a weekly radio publication called *Hör zu!* It was first edited in an air-raid shelter, and during that cold winter Springer and his associates had to light a fire under the press to make the ink flow properly. Today, Springer is the head of a newspaper-and-magazine empire, and his publications have a total weekly circulation of around eighteen million. In less than two years, he has made his morning paper, *Bild-Zeitung* (described to me by an angry Hamburger as "ten pfennigs' worth of blood and bosom"), Germany's largest-selling daily, with a circulation of a million and a half, and his *Hamburger Abendblatt* sells three hundred thousand copies—more than any other afternoon paper in Germany. Now a rich man, Springer recently bought the respected *Die Welt*, which had been the official newspaper of the British Occupation forces, and from which he expects to gain more prestige than money. He also owns a number of other papers and several magazines, and employs two thousand workers. Last fall, all these workers, along with Springer and the Springer enterprises, moved into a large, brand-new skyscraper, built in the shape of a ship. (Hamburg's largest office building, the Chilehaus, is also in the shape of a ship.) Springer's office is where the captain's bridge would be; instead of a sun



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deck, there is a flat roof for helicopters to land on. For all that, Springer doesn't expect to stay in this building very long. In ten years, he says, he'll move to still larger quarters. He credits his success to his theory that people don't like to think about politics. (His critics say he has found that people simply don't like to think.) Springer's lieutenants talk admiringly about their boss, who often walks through his plant like a modern Haroun-al-Rashid, handing out a radio set to a blind worker or a new suit to a badly dressed messenger boy. "The average reader is a fellow who sits on his small balcony, tending his flowers on the sill and drinking a cup of warmed-up coffee," one of these lieutenants told me. "What does he want to read about? He wants to read about flowers, children, pets. No editorials. He's fed up with authority. For years, he's been plagued by *Blockwarten*, *Luftschutzwarten*, and whatnot. He's been so busy doing what other people told him to do that he's had no time to enjoy his neighbors. We want him to meet his neighbors."

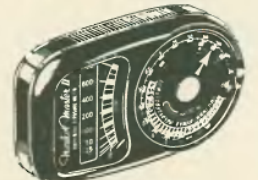
Springer's men have paid close attention to newspaper-promotion stunts in America and England, and have learned a good deal. "Hamburg is Germany's most Americanized city," one of them told me proudly. A Springer scout who found himself in a supermarket in Arizona thought he had hit upon a fine idea when he was handed a bright penny wrapped in cellophane that was inscribed with the slogan "Shop Here and Your Penny Will Go Farther." Back in Hamburg, he distributed highly polished pfennigs wrapped in cellophane that was inscribed "Your Pfennig Lasts Longer When You Advertise in the *Abendblatt*." Many of his intended beneficiaries didn't care for the idea at all. "That's no way to treat money!" one shopkeeper said in horror. Some home-grown promotion ideas seem to have worked out better. Young brides and grooms are driven from the church to their new homes in a carriage drawn by four white horses and decorated with small posters calling attention to the *Hamburger Abendblatt*. A few months ago, at Hamburg's main railroad station, swarms of high-school boys handed out pansies with *Abendblatt* tags attached "to celebrate the arrival of spring." One of Springer's greatest editorial successes has been his campaign to save the lives of stray dogs and cats; his papers claim that such animals are being killed in several German cities and their meat is being sold for human consumption. The *Bundestag* in Bonn is now debating a



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bill forbidding the sale of dog and cat meat.

Springer says he has no interest in becoming a political influence, and that may well be true. No such claim, however, can be made by Rudolf Augstein, the young publisher and editor of *Der Spiegel*, a weekly news magazine he started in 1946, in Hanover, as an obvious imitation of *Time*; it is now Germany's most widely feared publication. (Everybody in Hamburg's publishing world appears to be young—Augstein is in his early thirties and says that he has almost no one over fifty working for him.) Augstein, who has just moved his staff to Hamburg's large Pressehaus, estimates that *Der Spiegel*, with a circulation of a hundred and eighty thousand, is read by over a million people, including many of Germany's leaders in politics, business, and finance. With the help of an agile staff of reporters and practically everyone in Germany who has a complaint to make and feels like writing a letter to the editor, Augstein has earned a reputation as a fast and accurate hitter. (At any rate, he hasn't lost a major libel suit yet.) He is against Communists and neo-Nazis, against the government and the opposition, against the Americans and the Russians and the British and the French, against Bonn and the present administration of Hamburg, against corruption and politicians. No one knows what he is for. "He hasn't come out against God and motherhood yet, but no one in Germany will be surprised if he does," a rival editor told me.

Augstein, a small, blond, soft-spoken man, is unconcerned about the enemies he makes. "Germany needs us," he said not long ago. "There's never been a truly independent publication in this country. We're independent. We're not tied to any political party, financial group, or pressure lobby. And we'll go on printing forty-two pages of interesting news every week whether people like it or not." —JOSEPH WECHSBERG

CLIMBERS

He climbs, cloud-wrapped, through snow and night,
Alone with terror, racked for breath,
And vainly inches toward the height
Only to be swept down to death

From some sheer crumbling mile-high rim
Of cliff. We strain to see him drop.
"Too bad he failed!" we say of him,
And mount our molehill to the top.

—JAMES DILLET FREEMAN

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