
THE OPEN FORUM



GERMAN REPARATIONS AND MR. PAULEY

SIR: Personally, I believe the Berlin Protocol, otherwise known as the Potsdam Agreement, was badly conceived. The zonal division of Germany between four occupying powers with widely divergent economic and political purposes was the fatal error. The next most serious error was to rely, for elimination of Germany's war potential, upon merely physical factors such as removal of direct war material producing industry, instead of on democratization and reeducation. And necessarily then the third error lay in the reparations provisions which, as Mr. Pauley has pointed out in his article ["Reparations and World War III," *AMERICAN MERCURY*, December 1946], "provided that reparations be taken from her industrial capital equipment with the aim of removing all equipment in excess of that needed for a peacetime economy" (p. 656).

There is great danger to peace in the assumption of Mr. Pauley that World War III will necessarily result from a Germany with a strong industry, because in the process of preventing the rise of such a Germany the world may stumble into war in quite another quarter of the globe. Much more likely to produce the next war is the disunity among the victors of the last one. In that disunity Germany, whether abject as now or restored to industrial eminence, is bound to be merely a pawn. After the experience they have just gained the Germans know this very well, and the last thing they could possibly wish is to become the battleground of such a war.

Germany, in the world of today, must either be neutral as between the East and the West relying, like the Scandinavian countries, on a strong United Nations for the preservation of the peace, or she must move within the orbit of the USSR. She is too close to Russia and too far away from the United States and Great Britain to choose the third alternative, namely to become the active partner of the Western Powers. Weak

and depressed as she will be if de-industrialized to the extent fixed by the Allied Control Council in March 1946, she will surely drift eastward. She has a possibility of remaining neutral and a proponent of peace only if she is allowed to reunite and support herself by intensive agriculture plus a high degree of industrialization.

No one wants to see an industrial Germany devote herself to the manufacture of armament, for herself or for others. Her continued disarmament should be part and parcel of the general disarmament program of the United Nations. Her existing plants for the production of ultimate war materials should be either converted to peaceful production or destroyed and not turned over to any victor-nation. Then, after a thorough de-Nazification of Germany, the occupying powers should maintain only such forces within her final borders as may be necessary to police the country, and such forces should be placed under the command of a United Nations supreme commander. The zonal system of occupation should be abandoned. Thereafter the German people ought to be permitted to reestablish their own government, preferably on a federal-state basis, and work out its own economic and political salvation. A fixed value for reparations in kind ought to be agreed upon. . . .

It is of paramount importance that German educational and intellectual life be opened up to the most active contact with that of the rest of the world. In isolation and ostracism the Nazis and other authoritarians have their greatest chance of recovering position and prestige. Democratic political institutions and a regeneration of spirit through education are far better foundations for a peaceful Germany than any police methods, punitive or preventive. . . .

BRYN J. HOVDE

*President, New School for Social Research
New York City.*

ATROCITIES IN BUCHENWALD

SIR: It was very meritorious of THE AMERICAN MERCURY to show forth the circumstances in the infamous German concentration camps along another line than it was done before ["Communist Atrocities at Buchenwald," by Donald B. Robinson, October 1946], and to my knowledge this has been the first time that these facts have been cleared up. THE AMERICAN MERCURY has thus been able to destroy the legend that is hotly defended by all circles which tend to friendship with Germany, namely the legend that all those atrocities have been committed solely by the SS-Elite Guard. . . .

I would like to tell out of my own experience the infamous part played by any prisoner who by some chance or other came to any little amount of superiority on his fellow prisoners.

Of course I want to make it perfectly clear that my object is not to excuse the SS-Elite Guard in the slightest way. But I want to state that the major part of the cruelties committed in the concentration camps were not done by the SS, but by those Germans who now are celebrated in Germany as martyrs and who, outside of Germany are frequently spoken of as the living proof of the so-called "good Germans."

My own experience in the camp will make an example for all the above-mentioned facts. . . .

The control of the prisoners, rigorously effected from dawn to the extinction of the lights in the barracks was done by fellow prisoners, the so-called Capos. Those were the men who tortured and oppressed the unfortunate, of course benevolently supported by the SS.

As outward memoriam from my time of sufferings in the concentration camps I can offer a broken nose (by Capo Bertl), a broken jaw and the loss of my teeth (by Capo Beer), and a still-visible scar (by Capo Sack). On arrival at Buchenwald, I was immediately given a broken nose by Bertl, who was at that time the "eldest" of my barrack, and later became "eldest" of the camp. Before Hitler, Bertl had been the youngest Communist deputy of Germany. After the American liberation, he was made boss of the camp.

He is a leading figure in the German Communist Party.

I could give a long and impressive list of names, but they would not mean anything to the American reader. . . .

OTTO GUNTHER

New York City.

GOOD FOOD AND BAD

SIR: The article "Our Tasteless Food" [THE AMERICAN MERCURY, October 1946] is interesting and important. John C. Ross does your readers a favor when he tells them how and where to get good food.

However, if he had done just a little more research he would not have written: "Our food is certainly cleaner, fresher, more nutritious, more healthful than at any other time or place in the world's history." The "cleaner" and "fresher" are true but not "more nutritious" and "more healthful." . . .

Friends of the Land, a non-profit, non-partisan society for the conservation of soil, rain and man have been making an approach to food and health that goes to the source. To their two-day conference on conservation, nutrition and human health come each June many of the country's top-flight authorities in medicine, dentistry, plant and animal ecology, soil and water conservation, rural economics, philosophy and education. A summary of the papers and remarks at this conference is given in the autumn issue of the Land magazine. Some excerpts are given below.

Dr. Fred D. Miller, a dentist of Altoona, Pennsylvania, speaking on "Dentation and Nutrition" said: "Having practiced dentistry for more than thirty years I am thoroughly convinced — speaking from the biological point of view, not the moral aspect — that refined white flour and its products — bread, crackers, cookies, pastries — and refined sugar and its products — candies, hard candies and soft drinks — are doing more harm in this country than hard liquor."

Dr. James Asa Shield, assistant professor of neuropsychiatry, Medical College of Virginia, speaking on "Soil and Nerves" said: "Man living on depleted soils may unwarily be sick and starving for vitamins and minerals which affect his personality. We know that many of the diseases, including nervous and mental disorders, are directly traceable in whole or in part to nutrition. There is an increasing body of evidence to support the view that an important, if not the controlling factor in today's social and moral confusion is the deterioration in the quality of the food supply, resulting directly from the depletion and improper treatment of the soil." . . .

F. L. SUTTLES

Greensboro, N. C.

SIR: Mr. Suttles is certainly right about the poor nutritional values of refined white flour

products and refined white sugar products. These are, however, the two great exceptions to my general proposition that modern advances in dietetics, the discoveries concerning vitamins, the widespread dissemination of nutritional information, the advances in food processing, and modern transportation are getting us a wider variety of better and more nutritional foods than ever before.

The slow depletion of our soils may well be causing a counter-trend which could do great future harm to generations to come, but so far, each succeeding generation of Americans is taller, more robust and by all evidence healthier than previous generations.

Of course we are wasting our resources. We are not beginning to serve as healthful diets as we could. The ignorance of food processors (especially in the kitchen) wastes some of the most valuable nutritional elements. But it was not many years ago that rickets and even beriberi were fairly common diseases in the United States. My impression is that they are rare today and that beriberi especially is virtually nonexistent. These exemplify the general trend.

JOHN C. ROSS

Chicago, Ill.

SHANGHAI GESTURE

SIR: Mr. Armstrong [THE AMERICAN MERCURY, December 1946] may have done considerable research on the origin of "shanghai" but seemingly not among men who go down to the sea in ships. Otherwise he would not have spoken of "square-rigged wooden schooners." A square circle or a four-sided triangle could more easily be imagined. A schooner-rigged vessel has triangular sails; a square-rigged vessel (or square rigger) has square sails. And don't speak of a schooner-rigged ship. There aint no sech. A ship is always a square rigger (Webster to the contrary notwithstanding, who uses the term ship generically).

I have never come across an article on the gentle art of shanghai. The gentry who practiced (perpetrated?) this sort of plesantry were a lusty lot of highbinders and their history should make a sparkling page in annals of the sea. Mr. Armstrong's reference to them as "shipping agents" who undertook their little assignments "for a regular fee" is as amusingly artless as his "square-rigged schooners" is unconsciously comic. These birds (Shanghai Brown who cruised the waterfront of San Francisco before the turn of the century was one of the most noted) were called

crimps or runners who did what they did for a sailors' boardinghouse master. And their "fee" was called head money and sometimes blood money. And, believe me, there was nothing regular or fixed about that fee. Nay, brother, there was nothing regular about the entire transaction. The only thing fixed was the poor guy who was shanghaied.

B. J. RAISCH

Austin, Texas.

SIR: Mr. Raisch has me dead to right. The expression "square-rigged wooden schooner" is as wrong as "irregardless." In apology I can say only what Samuel Johnson is supposed to have said when he was asked why he had defined "fetlock" as the knee of a horse: "It was due to ignorance, sheer ignorance." Nor are there any extenuating circumstances. My father, who sailed the seas for years, spotted the error in the printed copy. Unfortunately the manuscript on this item was not shown to him. He told me I was a little too big to spank, but added with a merry twinkle in his frish brown eyes that I deserved it.

When I used the term "regular" I did not mean to imply there was a set price for everyone concerned in the matter of shanghaiing sailors. There seldom is a set fee in black market, bootleg, or illegal transactions, at least for the runners or crimps. However, there are reports that certain boarding house masters would contract with captains to supply a certain number of men for an agreed-upon fee. The boarding house masters in turn would engage a number of runners to pick up the required men. These runners got what they could bargain out of the boarding house master.

In some instances these runners were not sailors because men who sail before the mast are known by their gait. Sailors in ports where a number of ships, or even one, were waiting to set sail were suspicious of other sailors whom they did not know. They were not always suspicious of ordinary men, or women, with whom they sometimes struck up an acquaintance that led to an unplanned-for passage to somewhere in the world they would rather not go.

DAVID T. ARMSTRONG

Weehawken, N. J.

THE VETERAN PROBLEM

SIR: "Veterans and the Civil Service" in the December [1946] MERCURY is splendid, and . . . showed remarkable courage . . . especially since so many groups and organizations view the

eterans and their rights as something sacrosanct.

Those men who actually did fight on the battlefield are entitled to the best that an intelligent government can give them, but there were millions that never even went across the water. We had an air-field here in La Junta, and here were men here during the entire duration of the war, not even being transferred to other places. We had three here in our own block who came in from California with the first contingent, were married and had children while here. One man across the street had two children. Not one of these men had trades and being in the Army was a boon for them. . . .

I drove over to Fort Lyon one morning on business and going down the corridor looked in at the various offices. I think they were all war veterans, and many looked as though they should be shoveling coal. But there they were, pecking at the typewriter, as though they had first met it that very morning. Regardless of what the government thinks they owe the veteran, surely they shouldn't clog the wheels of administrative bureaus with incompetents.

MARY GAINES

La Junta, Col.

WOLFE IN RETROSPECT

SIR: I have just finished reading [the] extremely astute estimate of Tom Wolfe in the *MERCURY* ["Reminiscences of Tom Wolfe," by L. Ruth Middlebrook, November 1946], and I trust it isn't too presumptuous to drop you a line. . . .

I was profoundly shocked to learn from your article that Wolfe, like most Southerners, believed that "the Negro has his place." How this escaped me in reading his books I can't imagine. Had I known it, I would certainly have thought less of him.

About a year ago I had a conversation with a Jewish girl in Greenwich Village. She was one of those neurotics who thought herself a heroine because she washed out her own stockings and customarily walked six blocks or so to Cooper Union in the rain. At any rate, she told me that Wolfe's writings reveal that he was anti-Semitic, a charge which I vigorously denied. I cited his love for Esther Jack and also mentioned the affection that Wolfe had for Abraham Jones, the name he gives one of his NYU students. . . .

So, since I sincerely believe that Wolfe was free from any stupid anti-Semitism, your obviously true story of his attitude towards the Negro causes me great disappointment. It also causes me

to reconsider my previous evaluation of Wolfe as the greatest writer of our time.

This brings up an interesting point. Is a writer's work so divorced from his personality that we shouldn't consider the man's opinions when evaluating his work? Frankly, I don't know. I can't help but think less of Ezra Pound because of his deterioration that led to his embracing Fascism, even though my better instincts tell me that his political beliefs are irrelevant when judging his poetry.

Somehow we expect too much of our literary heroes. But to hear that Wolfe's attitude on the racial question was like that of a merchant in Hattiesburg, Miss. is rather like learning that Sinclair Lewis had joined the Elks.

Another thing. I have always thought that I would not have enjoyed knowing Tom Wolfe personally. I say this in spite of the fact that I consider him one of the most interesting and gifted figures of recent history. But he must have been a colossal bore at times. I know that on his last journey west in 1938 he spent some time with a friend of mine in Seattle. He was a source of considerable embarrassment to his hosts because he wanted to spend all his time in saloons on "skid row" talking to degenerates. This is perfectly okay as an incidental pastime, but for a steady diet it would pall. . . .

However, I feel that my life is richer because of having read Tom Wolfe's books. As long as I live, I will never forget the portrait of Uncle Bascom, or the strange and sad fate of Francis Starwick, or Judge Rumford Bland, or Nebraska Crane. Speaking of the latter, I have been told that Clifton Fadiman has a theory that Nebraska Crane is pure fiction, one of the few Wolfe characters not based on any real person. Where Fadiman obtained this information I cannot imagine, nor do I know whether it is true, but I spent five years doing publicity for a major league baseball team and I can say that the portrait of Nebraska Crane is the only valid picture of a baseball player I have seen in literature.

Your mention of Wolfe's relationship with his mother is unusually discerning, and I can't imagine how the literary boys fell for that Oedipus myth. . . .

But, in spite of his faults, the guy could write like hell, couldn't he? And I imagine that Clarence Darrow or John P. Altgeld or some other hero of mine would be charitable about him and view him as I do. . . .

LEE ALLEN

Huntington, W. Va.

THE SEX PROBLEM

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SIR: I was very glad to see Dr. Benjamin's letter on prostitution in the December issue. There is probably no popular magazine in America today which would print an article giving the views of the most enlightened modern sexologists and sociologists on this question; and there has been a perfect flood of articles recently presenting the conventional unscientific view . . .

May I supplement it by a reference to the most valuable writings on the subject, which should have the earnest study of all those who have an important part to play in building a happier World of Tomorrow? I would cite Maurice Parmelee, *Personality and Conduct*, Chaps. 13-16; William J. Robinson, *Sex, Love and Morality*, Chap. 15; Max Miller, *Reno*, Chap. 14; Harry Elmer Barnes, *Society in Transition*, pp. 773-803; Harry Benjamin, *Prostitution and Venereal Disease*; William J. Robinson, *The Oldest Profession in the World*; and René Guyon, *The Persecution of Sexual Acts: Courtesans*.

Mention of the last item, however, requires some comment on what has been called "the most important work for Western civilization written in our generation," and what is certainly the most important and most monumental work on sex ever written: René Guyon's *Studies in Sexual Ethics*. Its scope and value will be amply demonstrated by merely citing the titles of the nine volumes: Vol. I, *The Legitimate Nature of Sexual Acts*; Vol. II, *Sexual Freedom*; Vol. III, *Revision of the Classic Institutions: Marriage and the Family*; Vol. IV, *A Rational Sexual Policy: Human Reproduction*; Vol. V, *A Rational Sexual Policy: Sexual Pleasure*; Vol. VI, *The Persecution of Sexual Acts: Courtesans*; Vol. VII, *The Persecution of Sexual Acts: Intermediaries; Venereal Diseases*; Vol. VIII, *The Persecution of Sexual Acts: the Sexual Slavery of Minors; the Bluff of Pornography*; Vol. IX, *Society and Sexual Acts: the Puritan Terror*.

This mighty work, which thoroughly analyzes the present unscientific sexual structure of Western society, and presents a detailed blueprint for a scientific and pro-sexual society of the future, is supplemented by two other important volumes: *The League of Nations in the Hands of the Puritans* (which should have the earnest study of the present United Nations organization) and *The Necessity of Abolishing Sexual Offenses in Penal Law* (which should have the earnest study of all law-makers).

It is no exaggeration to say that René Guyon is the most important writer in the world today. In addition to the above definitive volumes, his works include *Cruelty*, *Reflections on Tolerance*,

The Wide Gate (in 4 volumes), *The Metaphysics of Materialism*, *The Materialist Philosophy of Biology*, *The Materialist Philosophy of Psychology*, and *Two Thousand Years of Christian Dictatorship* (in 3 volumes). Yet he is almost unknown in America today, and only two of his books have been translated into English. It is urgently desirable that his works be translated as rapidly as possible, and published here and in England. It is as dangerous as it is disgraceful that humanity should be laying plans for a future civilization without taking any account of . . . its best minds.

GEORGE R. WEAVER

Brooklyn, N. Y.

ELECTION POST-MORTEM

SIR: Regarding the article by Lowell M. Limpus, "Will the Elections Forecast 1948?" in the November *MERCURY*:

In all of his reasoning and statistics, Mr. Limpus seems to have ignored a simple fact: in the last 13 presidential contests, only once has the party that secured the greater number of House seats in the preceding off-year election failed to get the presidency two years later. The exception took place when the Republicans in 1930 won the greater number of seats in the House of Representatives, but lost the presidency in 1932 to Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Now that the Republicans have taken both the House and the Senate, it would seem that they have a more-than-even chance of getting the presidency in 1948, if the results of past campaigns are any indication. This is not what Mr. Limpus would have us believe.

R. S. FRIES

Bridgewater, Mass.

SIR: Mr. Fries is quite correct, both with regard to his statistics and "what Mr. Limpus would have us believe." I ignored his "simple fact" because it could be applied to a *change* in the party capturing the presidency only twice in 50 years (1912 and 1920). And I was dealing with the prospects of the Outs ousting the Ins; not with those of the party already in power remaining so. I wrote my article *before* the election; he wrote his letter *after* it. The article merely discounted in advance the claims which would follow the almost certain gains of the Outs and I was certainly right about the results of this election. Let's wait patiently and see who's right about the next one. I could be wrong. (Oddly enough, I have been once or twice in the past.) I wonder if Mr. Fries ever makes mistakes, too.

LOWELL M. LIMPUS

New York City.

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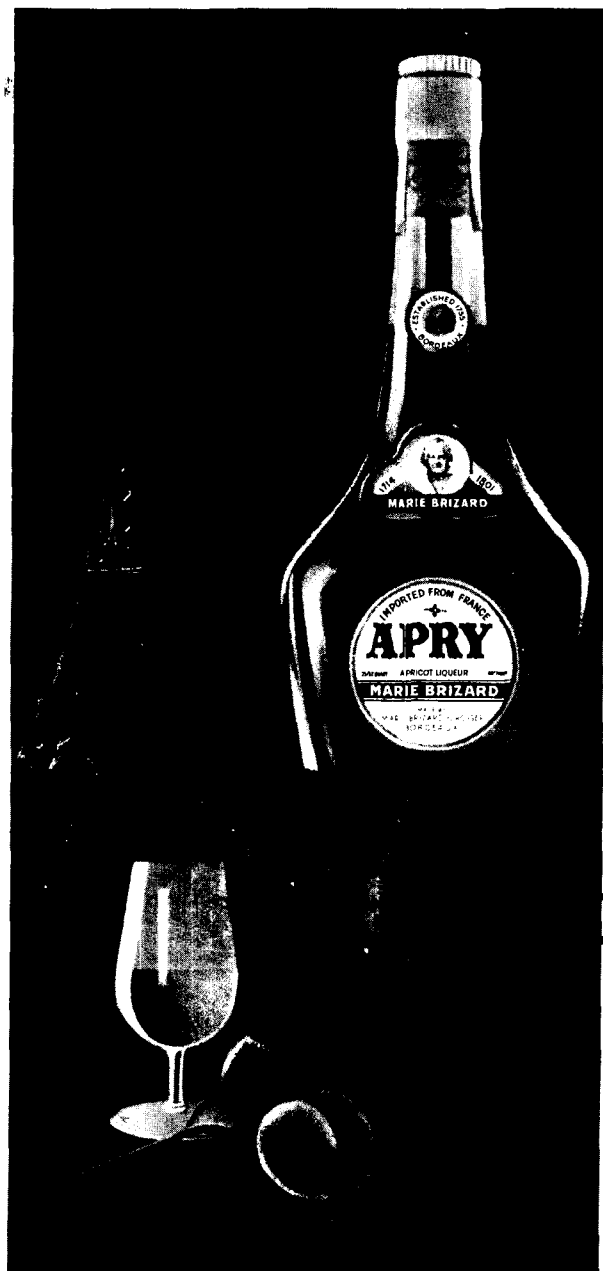
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