

# Debate on the Rim of Hell: Germany—to West or East?

By ALAN SET

**M**ost Western observers believe that ten years of Soviet rule in Eastern Germany have turned out to be a complete failure. Politically and economically, the now “sovereign” state called German Democratic Republic remains, to the Western eye, approximately the same soulless, war-ridden wreck it was in 1945, after the advancing Red Army had pounded everything to bits, while in its rear Soviet engineers had dismantled and shipped to Russia every piece of machinery overlooked by the “liberators.”

“It suffices to walk a couple of

blocks from the splendors of West Berlin to the shabbiness of East Berlin to learn in a few minutes what the Cold War is being fought for,” a psychological warfare specialist, just back from a ten-day junket told me the other day.

“But are we winning this war?” I ventured to ask him.

“Well, that is a different story,” was his rather cryptic answer.

## **An Anti-Communist Disillusioned With the West**

Quite recently I had another very frank and therefore most disturbing

conversation on Germany with a militant anti-Communist, this time with a German from a once wealthy family of cloth manufacturers in Saxony, whom I happened to know before the war. For years he had been working at all sorts of jobs in Karl-Marx-Stadt [Chemnitz before the Communists changed its name], until last summer when he joined his brother in Munich, with whom he is at present in profitable business partnership.

After having told me everything about the prevailing apathy of the East German population and having denounced the flagrant inefficiency of the Ulbricht-Grotewohl clique, with its overgrown bureaucracy and Communist favoritism, he spoke about present East Germany's thinking. And what he had to say on this subject was significant enough to make me wonder whether the ten years of Soviet rule really were such a complete failure as most Western reports assert.

This is the main part of his story.

*"Yes, life in East Germany is pretty hard indeed, and you would surely find it unbearable. True, you haven't been in that part of the world either after the war or during the war. What you should keep in mind, however, is that even before the war the standard of living in Germany's East was remarkably lower than in our West. Peasants in poor patched clothes, barefoot children, customers queueing patiently at the door of the village store, all this you could have found in our*

*East in the early 'twenties and in the late 'thirties as well. The only difference is that the rags are today shabbier, the queues are longer, the village store is emptier, and there are no outward signs, as there were before, that some of the people are immensely more well-to-do and more powerful than the rest. The rumpled, faded blue uniform of a "people's policeman" has nothing of the dreadful elegance of the Gestapo finery, but the two men are not only alike — they are almost the same. One often forgets that East Germany has lived under totalitarian rule for more than twenty years now.*

*"While life in East Germany is still miserable when compared to the West, it would be denying the truth to maintain that people are not today somewhat better off than they were one year ago. There is now at least enough food for everyone, and if an H.O. State Store runs out of rolls, it offers you cake; if there are no potatoes, one can replace them with cabbage. There is plenty of cheap beer and occasionally some meat and butter. Clothing is better, and if the official figures are true we should produce this year a number of shoes corresponding to one pair for each inhabitant of the country.*

*"There are even some luxuries — for those who can afford them — such as Russian caviar, Rhine wines, reflex cameras and Tiroler hats. One year ago things seemed to be worse, though they were better than the year before, and the people do recognize this. The Soviet technique of taking away everything and then playing Santa Claus by*

*giving it back bit by bit proved not so bad at all.*

*"It is, however, in the field of moulding the thoughts and feelings not of the broad masses but of the ruling elite that the Soviet technique proved to be eminently successful. The workers and the peasants who, after all, do not count in a police state have to feel contented enough and be sufficiently terrorized to avoid any repetition of the June, 1953, riots, which only confirmed how dangerous it is to rely on any aid from the West.*

*"But apart from the Moscow-sold Communists, there is today in East Germany's upper classes an ever increasing number of honest but utterly disillusioned people, who sincerely believe that the vacillating and short-sighted West is doomed by the Soviet monolith, that it has nothing to offer to Germany but a disastrous war, a losing war to be fought for American interests with German divisions and on German soil. All the rest — peace, unification, markets for German goods, very slowly but steadily rising standards of living, together with some form of independence and the possibility of influencing Moscow's policy itself — all this, they say, is offered to Germany only by Soviet Russia. To accept this offer gives Germany at least a chance of survival; to reject it means suicide."*

I am reporting the above opinions because there is good reason to believe that they do strictly correspond to what an ever increasing number of Germans behind the Iron

Curtain — Germans who are genuinely anti-Communist, but who also have lost their faith in the West — are more and more thinking.

### **West Germany Looks to the East**

This would be bad enough, but what is worse is that across the Iron Curtain, the doubts of the East Germans begin to infect the opinions of those of the West.

Pastor Martin Niemöller certainly was not driven by pro-Communist sympathies when, three years ago, he began his pilgrimages to Moscow. Nor was Herr Ollenhauer pro-Communist when with his Socialists he stubbornly opposed any ties with the West before all possibilities of a German settlement with Russia had been thoroughly explored. But there are others, too.

Dr. Karl Pfeleiderer belongs to the violently anti-Communist Free Democratic Party, and Dr. Thomas Dehler is the Party's national chairman, yet both of them fought for months for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the German Federal Republic and the U.S.S.R. Among the personalities who supported this demand was Prince Otto von Bismarck, the grandson of the Chancellor and a prominent member of Dr. Adenauer's Christian Democrats. Former Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, after having spent twelve years in exile in the United States, has warned the Germans of the dangers of becoming too dependent on

America and, together with Hitler's former Ambassador Herbert von Dirksen, he advocated cooperation with Russia as the only sensible path to be followed by Germany.

It was not in the pro-Communist press but in the eminently conservative and eminently respectable pro-Adenauer weekly *Christ und Welt* that we have read that, "Germany must . . . first create a strong Western Europe in whose name the following offer to the Kremlin could be made: Continental Europe would break away from the Atlantic Pact if the Soviets agree to withdraw their forces behind the Pripet Marshes . . ."

And what would happen if the Russians should one day agree to the symbolic gesture of withdrawing their divisions a few hundred miles to the East at the price of Germany's breaking all her ties with the U.S. and the West?

The answer is simple: the U.S.S.R. would become master of the world.

AT THE TIME of this writing, it was not yet sure whether the Paris Agreements would be ratified, and certainly it will remain dubious for some time to come whether the strength of the West will ever be increased by these twelve German divisions we seem not able to dispense with. But is it really of such paramount importance in the hydrogen age whether some time in 1957 or 1958 the West will have at its disposal 500,000 more men under arms? Cannot the East easily

match this force with any number of men recruited out of the unfathomable pool of the Russo-Chinese Empire's billion inhabitants? Will the twelve German divisions stop Russia's progress in the field of H-bombs and guided missiles?

No, the question is not there. The really decisive question, on which may depend our survival, is whether Germany, armed or disarmed, with its very great economic power will be allowed, in the next two or three years, to drift away to the enemy camp, or whether we will find means to keep her at our side.

Just a few figures taken at random will sufficiently illustrate what this power really represents. Less than ten years after the most disastrous war, the West German gross national production reached in 1954 over 33 billion dollars. The production of steel was more than 16 million tons. Over 1,000,000 new housing units have been built in the last 24 months. If German production and German skill find the door open to the East, a new epoch in the world's history might begin, fraught with mortal danger for the Germans, of course, because in the long run Russia would not tolerate an independent and potentially dangerous power at her frontiers, but also mortally dangerous for the whole West. Dealing with an empire encompassing Russia, China and Germany, the only sensible policy for the rest of the world would be peaceful surrender.

OF ALL the Soviet satellites, East Germany is the one which has perhaps the greatest political freedom, but also is the most neglected one. Up to the time of the June, 1953, uprisings, beside the Socialist Unity Party [Communist], some so-called "bourgeois" political factions were allowed to vegetate. It is common knowledge that even to this day they continue to exist in the underground, a thing which would not be tolerated in Poland, Czechoslovakia or in any other Soviet European colony.

The East German workers can take the risk, if they dare, of discussing labor regulations and even expressing their wishes, which may bring their leaders a sentence of a few months in jail, but which elsewhere in the Soviet sphere is altogether unthinkable. About 90 per cent of the land still remains in private ownership, as does a quarter of the country's industry.

For this slight departure from the common Communist pattern, East Germany has to pay with even greater hardships than those imposed on the other "peace loving" Republics. Up to the end of last year, meats, fats, milk, sugar and coal continued to be rationed and there is much doubt whether the end of the rationing system, promised for this year, will take effect. Though the collection of reparations, disastrous for the country's economy, officially ended one year

ago, Soviet Russia continues to milk the East Zone by all conceivable means.

Now, next door to this land of misery and terror flourishes—thanks to Western liberal policy and Western generosity — another Germany—a free one—with plenty of food, plenty of clothing and a market so saturated with goods that the only problem is to find foreign outlets for her production!

Then why do the East Germans keep warning their free, rich and happy brothers of the dangers of cooperating with the West, to whom the Federal Republic owes everything it has?

How can we explain that those warnings are not only being listened to, but are being given considerable thought; that the idea of a neutral Germany is slowly taking shape?

The explanation is simple. Economic well-being and political freedom are not enough to keep peoples in our camp if they have no faith that this will last. After ten years of Western vacillation, continuous Western surrenders to the East, and the lack of a clear-cut Western world policy, dynamically opposed to Communist imperialism — this faith is shaken.

"He is a fool who in the atomic age chooses the losing side for a meal and a coat," was the closing remark of my German friend from Karl-Marx-Stadt and, frankly speaking, I found not much to answer.

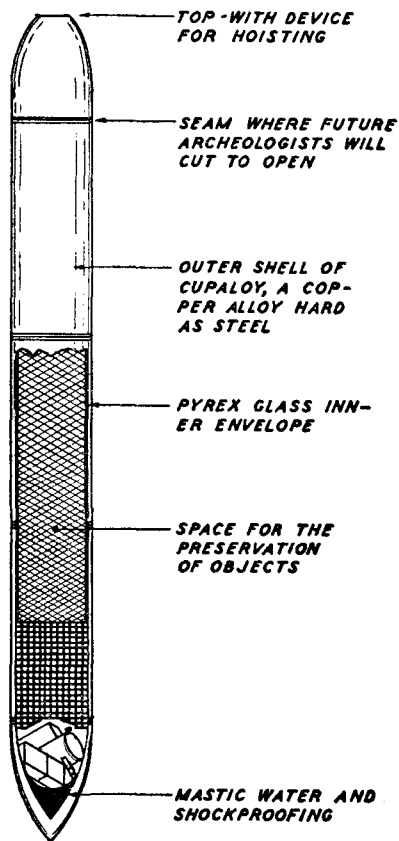
# Our Legacy for 6939 A.D.

By  
R. R. TAGGS

AT THE New York World's Fair, in 1939, humanity's first Time Capsule had begun its long journey into the future: a descent into the 50-foot "Immortal Well" beneath the walls of the Westinghouse Building — a journey which, it is hoped, will extend through 5000 years of time and give future archeologists a considerable insight into our present civilization.

The Time Capsule represented months of careful planning, and the combined production of hundreds of persons, some still living and others deceased. Archeologists, historians, scientists, engineers, librarians, scholars and many others were consulted at every step, so that the project might become as nearly successful as all our present-day arts and sciences could make it.

Leaving a message from our time



DRAWING OF THE  
TIME CAPSULE

to so distant a future presented three distinct problems: How to build a vessel capable of preserving the record; the selection and preservation of the objects to be included; and how to leave word of its whereabouts for future inheritors.

The Capsule, as finally constructed, consists of an outer shell of Cupaloy