

One of the best of British illustrators has gone to Europe for us, and here is his first series of impressions

HITLER'S PROBLEM CHILDREN

Drawn by MERVYN PEAKE, with
a commentary by Tom Pocock



HITLER YOUTH

THE Hitler Youths tossed a squib behind an American sentry and hugged themselves in silent laughter. The squib popped and the sentry spun round with his carbine levelled. The Hitler Youths slapped

their brown knees and cackled with mirth. Even the long-faced elderly Germans on the corner allowed themselves a smile. The sentry looked sheepish—there was nothing he could do—and the shock-headed hooligans laughed all the more. Still shaking, they flung off down the street and, staring insolently at an Allied major, went on chattering.

In Western Germany the terror of our assault is wearing off, for the Germans have short memories, and the reaction is setting in. Already the Germans are sorry for themselves and resentfully compare our occupation policy with the Russian. But most marked of all is the arrogance of the Nazi youth. This was brought home when I journeyed up the Rhine with Mervyn Peake from the twin ruins of Mannheim-Ludwigshafen to the rusting scrap-iron of the Ruhr, and then west to the ancient coronation city of Aachen.

Contemptuous Youth

We remember the silently contemptuous boy at Frankenthal who lounged against the new "Whose Guilt?" poster of the Belsen and Dachau horrors, casting an approving eye at the soldier-playing children around him. Then there were the gangling Hitler Youths of Wiesbaden, who sneaked out after dark to tear down. AMGOT notices with the same feeling of petty guilt with which an English boy smokes his first cigarette. As Mervyn Peake sat sketching near the floundering Remagen bridge a mop-haired colt sauntered up to him, picked up his petrol lighter, and demanded, "You give me!" When told to get to hell out of it he sloped off resentfully. They all say with their eyes, "You started the war"—they blame us as damningly as we blame them—"now look what you have done to our beautiful Germany."

The stately flow of the Rhine, between castle-crowned peaks and hanging woods, from Bingen to the Drachen-Fels, is still such a picture postcard that stories of secret Nazi radio stations and Werewolves in the Rhineland become as unreal as the river legends themselves. A number of Hitler Youths have tried their hands at Werewolfing, in the form of snipping telephone wires, but the amusement is palling.

Some swim in deeper waters. Members of the Hitler Jugend have faced the firing squad for espionage. Recently a Trier court sentenced three to fifteen years' imprisonment for carrying arms. Others act as messengers for such fascist organisations as the "Neues Deutschland," just uncovered in Wuppertal, or the Nazi-turned-Communist Parties that are springing up. With their help, SS men seep back into civilian life and live like foxes in ruined towns or try to force doctors to remove the SS tattoo mark from their left armpits. Thus many ruined cities become thug warrens. A typical 24-hour report from Dusseldorf reads: "Crime: 1 accidental death, 2, violent deaths, 1 rape, 4 embezzle-



THE GERMAN BOY LEANS AGAINST THE CONCENTRATION CAMP PICTURES (Wessen Schuld means "Whose Guilt?") AND LOOKS AT THE OCCUPATION FORCES (At Frankenthal)



THE NEW START: SCHOOL AT AACHEN OPENED UNDER ALLIED AUTHORITY (Drawn from the teacher's desk)

ments, 1 assault, 12 stolen bicycles, 8 other thefts."

But, thanks to the German habit of informing on each other, whether to the Gestapo or AMGOT, the outlaw soon exchanges his soggy cellar for a dry cell.

The Hitler Jugend was not without its own "Freedom Movement." In 1943, so they say, the B.B.C. launched the "Edelweiss." Many Hitler Youths, bored with politics and regimentation, jumped at this exciting method of rule-breaking. The Edelweiss held secret meetings, beat up the Hitler Jugend, marched out of step, and laughed in the wrong places during Nazi pep-talks.

The Edelweiss became fashionable but set the fuse to pent-up hooliganism. Lacking any adult advice, the Edelweiss youths degenerated into petty thieves, little better than the Hitler Youth. Juvenile delinquency is high in Germany—eighty per cent. of theft cases concern boys between eleven and seventeen.

One Step Back to Civilisation

For the Hitler Youth there can be no re-education for some time to come. Allied policy must be co-ordinated, teachers sorted out, text-books printed. Gradually the budding SS men are being checked up and set to work clearing up bomb damage and helping the farmers deal with the Colorado beetle potato pest. American authorities say: "It may not be mentally uplifting but it is a job of work. It may give them a pride in a better kind of Germany."

One of the most depressing places in Germany is Aachen, whose first free burghermeister was "executed" by Werewolves. Shot-shattered and smelling of death the jagged ruins hide

many secrets. Hundreds of dead lie under the rubble. Sunken-eyed ex-soldiers slouch along.

Mervyn Peake and I had spent a day in Aachen, watching the restoring of the bones of Charlemagne to the cathedral. It was a grey blustery day; ragged curtains flapped from sightless windows. We thought longingly of distant Brussels, and gay lights and music. We were very down in the mouth and depressed. Then we heard the singing. At first it was very faint and ethereal. We turned a corner and it came floating down the street, shrill and clear—children's voices. We followed the sound.

It came from a school, the first civilised school in Germany for twelve years. Quietly we opened the door. A straight-backed little school mistress stood in front of the class, beating time as they sang an old German nursery rhyme. The last verse ended in a riot of laughter. Quickly she silenced them; and then they were counting on their fingers—"Ein, zwei, drei. . ." The children were all under ten—blond, solid-faced little boys, pigtailed girls. Very like English children, too. There was the Bad Boy, always trying to attract attention; the future flirt, making eyes at the strange male intruders; the little know-all, whose hand flew up for every answer. They were loving the class and drank in every word told by the little straight-backed pioneer. Gone were the old "One German soldier plus two German soldiers equal three German soldiers," text books. Now they were told stories about rabbits and giants, witches and fairies—things that children can understand. This was their first term at school—they, at least, are unspotted by Nazi poison.

Never have I hated Nazi-ism more bitterly than when I thought of the other children that had sat at these desks during the last twelve

years, who had drunk in every twisted word, and had themselves been twisted from carefree children into cannon-fodder and torturers.



VETERAN HITLER YOUTH