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## HAMBURG VISIT.

The twin-engined BEA Viking touched down on the Fuhlsbüttel tarmac at 6.45 p.m. The flight from Northolt had been uneventful except for minor repairs to the starboard engine which prevented our retaking the air at Amsterdam for some twenty minutes. It was our first experience of this most modern means of transportation. We found the noise from the engines less wearisome than the constant racket of the railway wheels, and the occasional "bumps", owing probably to their infrequency, less upsetting than the roll of a ship. The great speed achieved over the long distance is, of course, the greatest advantage of flying, while a possible disadvantage is in the landscape appearing uniformly flat, one's interest being aroused only over large urban areas or over country with unusual features. Thus as we came through the clouds looking for Schipol airport we saw Holland, a chessboard of canals.

As darkness had already fallen over Hamburg there was little to be observed from the 'bus that took us to the BEA offices on the Ballindamm. But on crossing the broad Lombard bridge on the way to our hotel we noticed the blazing neon-light display on the three-sided front reflected in its many colours, with the moon above, in the still waters of the Binnen-Alster. This dammed-up stream, which here has the appearance of a small lake in the midst of the modern part of the city, is also a highway for on it ply numerous water 'buses.

We were reassured because this fascinating view told us that we had come back to a different Hamburg from the one we had left behind some four years ago. Then wherever one looked one beheld destruction, a demoralized people. Men in crumpled uniforms with downcast eyes eternally searching the ground for cigarette ends. The women wearing knee-high stockings and jerseys knit from spliced artificial silk parachute cord. Now the streets have all been cleared of rubble and are thronged with figures clad on more orthodox though somewhat dowdy lines.

No longer are there regimental headquarters or messes in every sound building; these have given way to shops the windows of which are filled with goods to make even an Englishman's mouth water. Here, too, there is a "dollar campaign" but it appears that the home market is not neglected. Prices, however, are high, and those articles on which at home purchase tax is levied are no cheaper here with the possible exception of jewellery. We received the impression that turnover in the shops is slow; at present income levels, the greater part of the population cannot afford anyhing beyond the most urgent household needs. This remark applies equally to food. The shops are full but the prices are out of reach of the majority. In every street there is at least one stall displaying in lavish quantities long thin sausages; these are eaten on the spot on a cardboard tray with a dollop of mustard and a slice of bread for one mark (1/8d.). An average meal, in an average restaurant, consisting of soup, a generous portion of meat with two vegetables, and a nominal sweet, will cost DM.3.— to which is added 10% for service, or for us 6/-.

Not all prices are in multiples of five Pfennige, but as coins of one and two Pfennige are scarce one must settle at the nearest 5. During our short stay the coining of the one mark piece was announced to replace the small, thick, dirty little squares of paper straining one's wallet to bursting point. Like the notes, the coins are issued by the central bank for the 3 Western Zones of occupation, the Bank Deutscher Länder, whose name appears on the coins themselves. These are unique also for they have no "head."

Another innovation that surprised us was the abandonment of Gothic type by the local Press, the newspapers being printed in Latin characters.

It was studying our morning paper that we learned a great deal about Western Germany and its efforts at reconstruction. The "Hansestadt Hamburg" in particular boasts of unremitting endeavours to resurrect itself, to make itself once again Germany's foremost commercial centre and "Gateway into the World."

To this city which still describes itself a member of the medieval Hansa league of North Sea and Baltic ports, destruction was no new experience for it has been laid low no less than nine times, the first at the hands of the Wends in A.D. 810 some six years after its foundation by Charlemagne under the name of Hammaburg. By A.D. 1072 it had suffered the same fate seven times in wars between Normans, Wends and Slavs. Frederick Barbarossa granted it a Charter upon which the city laws are still based. During the fourteenth century it underwent considerable expansion; the Bourse was opened in 1558, and the first Bank in 1619. From the 17th Century onwards the free city rose steadily in wealth and importance, its population soon exceeding the million mark, only to be completely destroyed once again by a disastrous fire in 1842. This catastrophe was only surpassed in horror

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in Hamburg history by the terrible ordeal in the recent war. For eleven days and nights, from the 23rd July to the 3rd August, 1943, fire and high explosive literally rained from the sky causing 55,000 deaths and the loss of 300,000 homes. The sun shone red through the smoke clouds; ashes fell over Lübeck some 50 miles away and in Southern Sweden. The mass of debris has been estimated at 50 million cubic yards.

Since the cessation of hostilities great efforts have been made at clearance and although many buildings amongst which famous churches still remain empty shells, a good deal of business and residential property has been repaired and even rebuilt. In the main streets along bombed sites temporary shops have sprung up built of timber, of briseblocks or of corrugated asbestos. In the centre of the town around the Binnen-Alster war damage is no longer noticeable, but large overgrown expanses in the port and in the more residential areas still bear silent witness to modern war's fury.

Among notable buildings in the New Town to escape destruction is Hamburg's largest office block, the Chilehaus, in the proximity of the Free Port. Completed in 1924 its 9 floors provide a total area of 1000,000 sq. ft. while balconies of the receding three top floors as well as its rounded sides tapering to a sharp point in the direction of the sea make it resemble a giant ship on land.

Despite difficulties owing to destroyed installations life in this important North Sea port is slowly creeping back so that once again it vies with its old rival, Bremen, in handling the export trade of its vast Central European hinterland, somewhat restricted at the moment by the Iron Curtain. In pre-war days with its 53 docks, its deep water channel which made it accessible to the largest ships, Hamburg claimed with Rotterdam the distinction of the world's third largest port after London and New York. Significant of the leeway still to be made up is the fact that during 1949 the turnover of goods was only 37% of 1938 against 74% at Bremen. Partly as a result of this and also that Hamburg stood aside from the Bonn Government sponsored scheme unemployment within the city remains high: at the end of September it showed a drop of 8.4% on the March figure, while over the whole Federal Republic area the decrease was 28%.

To combat this serious situation everything is being done to stimulate activity: poster publicity (dollar campaign progress charts) press and meetings; the export trade especially, as at home, is being fostered, and several new ships have left the slipways in the Elbe estuary mainly of small tonnage.

But not only at work is Hamburg getting back into the swing. Before the war it competed with Berlin in providing amusements to suit every taste. This is still the case. It might be observed though that, contrary to London, in Hamburg at present the supply of "pleasure" appears to exceed the demand. At the patched up "Staatsoper" one may listen to German, Italian or French grand opera performed by an efficient resident company, the programme being changed nightly. Similarly the Deutsches Schauspielhaus, is again putting on for small audiences (mainly in the boxes) evening and matinee performances of German classical and modern plays. There are other eight theatres providing a rich choice of German and foreign comedy or drama. Two variety houses, a

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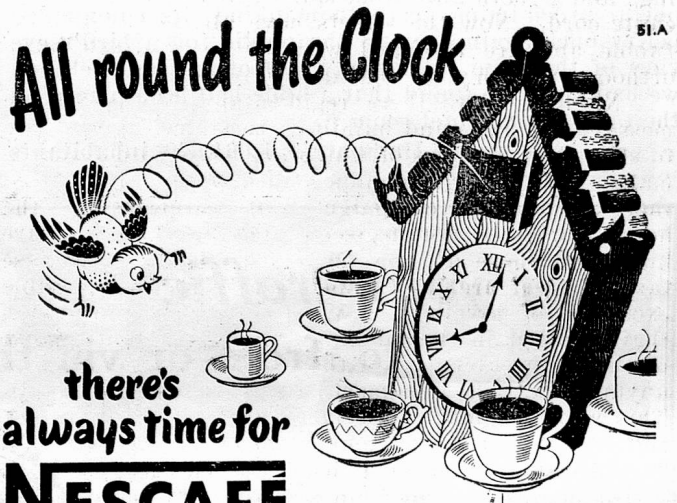

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ANOTHER OF NESTLÉ'S GOOD THINGS

concert hall and numerous cinemas complete the list. A place to which the local student population converge is the Amerika-Haus, which purveys American-English culture in the shape of a vast library, lectures, theatre performances and films, giving free admittance. Of more modest proportions is the British counterpart, " Die Brücke " (the bridge) where admittance is charged: 10 Pfg. for the day, 50 Pfg. for a month, and DM.1.— for a quarter; it is also less favourably situated than Amerika-Haus, which stands on its own at the Ballindamm end of the Lombardbrücke. But for people not so fastidious about culture when on pleasure bent there is the Reeperbahn, the " naughty avenue " in the St. Pauli quarter. There out of the ashes of their pre-war predecessors have risen numerous dance and beer-halls where patrons are entertained nightly with cabaret and other floor shows into the small hours of the morning.

Another attraction is the ambitiously laid out Carl Hagenbeck Zoo, named after the original proprietor and circus king, in the S.E. outskirts of the city. Here too war damage has still to be made good; we found it well stocked but not as compact as its Regent's Park rival. The lions' den is somewhat realistically subterranean, but, oh the odour! A notable feature is the life-size cement-built prehistoric animals place in realistic postures in and around a pond and among the trees. We admired the clever use of trees for lining paths and creating effect.

To turn to a more serious subject, religion also has made great strides in recovering from the crippling blows dealt it by Nazi ideology before, and by bombs during the war. The St. Michaelskirche has just been re-opened for worship although cracks are still visible in the brickwork. It is the Hamburgers main sanctuary, known affectionately as " Grosser Mi "; just as St. Paul's in London it now stands isolated on a hill tou in the old town in the midst of bomb-created open spaces, its surging (copper) Archangel above the portal proclaiming peace to mankind, its colonnaded belfry once again open to the public for a bird's eye view of the town. Another proof of militant religion we had when we found that a bible had been placed on the table in our hotel room.

So once again Hamburg's 1,604,600 inhabitants are challenging the world in their industrious efforts at building for themselves a fine city. Nowhere is a narrow street to be found, but several of its wide avenues still await the road mender's attention. Traffic moves swiftly here, much too swiftly, and moreover, the fast-moving cyclists on the special track alongside the sidewalks (from which it is hardly distinguishable) are a constant menace to the unwary pedestrian. The German being an impatient driver the crossing of streets, especially when one is accustomed to London's snail-like traffic, becomes a veritable nightmare, while the few point-duty policemen seem only too readily inclined to side with the motorist against the hapless pedestrian. During Safety Week we were severely taken to task for walking across the empty street, in between the studded lines, against the hand-operated light-signals.

During our stay we were fortunate in contacting Mr. Spargnapani, who is Chancellor of the Swiss Consulate. From him we learned that there are two Swiss Societies in Hamburg which are the embodiment of the Swiss spirit on German soil: they invariably join forces to organise any patriotic function such as the 1st August, but for the rest of the year they keep very much apart and boast of their robust independence. The colony numbers around 1,500. There is also a well-stocked Swiss bookshop displaying German-Swiss publications on innumerable subjects. The distribution centre of food parcels from home for the Swiss in the Hamburg region immediately after the War was also here. *J.E.*

## ESCALADE 1950.

Genevoises et Genevois sont invités à prendre part au dîner de l'Escalade qui aura lieu le 13 Décembre au Majorca Spanish Restaurant, 66, Brewer Street, W.1, à 6h.30 pour 7 heures.

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