EUROPEAN JOURNEYS

The longer the war lasts, the more difficult it is to keep up with the course of events outside of East Asia. In this issue we have tried to supply our readers with information on Europe written by people on the spot or who, like F. J. Spahn, were there until a short time ago. We have assembled material on present conditions in five countries: Germany, Switzerland, France, England, and Rumania.

The following two articles were written by German journalists. Wolfgang Höpker spent some time not long ago in Lorraine, and Georg Bräutigam recently made a trip from Portugal via Spain to Switzerland.—K.M.

LORRAINE LOST ITS HYPHEN

By Wolfgang Höpker

“O

H, of course, you’re going to Alsace-Lorraine,” people said to us when we left Munich for Metz; and when we return home we shall be asked how we found things in Alsace-Lorraine. The hyphen by which Lorraine was connected to Alsace in 1871 has led to a collective idea which has stuck in people’s minds to this day. In the political sphere perhaps more than anywhere else, colloquial usage only too often determines mental processes. Yet political practice has long since arrived at other solutions. After having been returned to Germany in 1940, Alsace was united with Baden on the opposite bank of the Upper Rhine into one administrative area. Lorraine, on the other hand, was united with the Saar district and the Palatinate, that is, with its eastern neighbors, to form the new German administrative area of “Westmark.”

The hyphen has thus been removed. It was with full intention that the two border countries which have returned to Germany were not joined in a new compulsory marriage; for this is what one might call that administrative creation which existed from 1871 to 1918. It was born from the jealousies of the German dynasties, none of which was willing to hand over the newly acquired territories of the Franco-Prussian War to any other dynasty. And, indeed, the jointly administered Reich province in southwestern Germany developed into a new, immature federal state with all the flaws and difficulties of an artificial constitutional product. It was Lorraine which suffered most from these difficulties: for, behind the fatal hyphen, it appeared as nothing but an appendage to Alsace, which has always stood out far more plastically in Germany’s national history.

The German people were inclined to see the problems of Lorraine through Alsatian eyes. In doing so, they overlooked the fact that Alsatians and the people of Lorraine are of entirely different German stock. The Lorrainian is of Franconian origin and thus related not to the Alemannian Alsatians but to the people of the Saar and the Palatinate, the Franconians of the Rhine and the Maine. When one walks from Saarbrücken to Forbach today, it is hard to imagine that, until less than four years ago, the German-French borderline ran here. On both sides of this line there are the same houses, and the tones of the same German dialect which to the Alsatian have always seemed somehow funny.

This slight feeling of foreignness between the two hyphenated peoples could never be entirely overcome, although it was temporarily spanned by common political interests. This applies less to the forty-seven years between 1871 and 1918 than to the French period following
upon this. For the centralist policy of the Paris administration provoked an unmistakable turn toward autonomism. Although Alsace, which is more flexible in a political sense, led in this movement, the echo it aroused in Lorraine soon united the two in a common front.

The basis for this movement was the feeling of having been degraded to a French colonial status, and moreover a colony in which Paris was interested only so far as it could serve for André Maginot's super-fortresses. Indeed, those excavations and structures of concrete and steel were practically the only investment by which France made herself felt in her eastern provinces gained in 1919. In other respects, the clock stopped during these twenty years. Or, more correctly: it was turned back if, for instance, one looks at the belt of fortifications of the Maginot zone where in 1918 there had still been corn fields while in 1940 the countryside consisted of waste land and meadows full of weeds.

Since 1918 little has been done for Lorraine. This applies equally to the country's economies and its soul, which had once been so vociferously claimed for the French genius by such expatriates as Maurice Barrès and Poincaré that the "question of Lorraine" was by no means the smallest spark to set off the conflagration of the first world war. And it is hardly a coincidence that De Gaulle has raised the cross of Lorraine as the symbol for his hate-inspired agitation in which he has gone even further than Poincaré, the apostle of revenge. Those circles which regard a Franco-German rapprochement as the greatest disaster for their career still hope to see in Lorraine a key position for their efforts at smashing this rapprochement.

It must be mentioned here that the moderate German demands of 1871, to which Germany also adhered in 1940, claimed no more than a quarter of actual Lorraine, viz., the ancient duchy between the Vosges and the Argonne, which since the thirteenth century had been broken off by France bit by bit from the German Empire. Except for the border strip around the town of Metz, all of present-day Lorraine is populated by pure German stock. It is amazing how stationary the linguistic border has remained since the sixth century, when at this point the people began to split up into Germans and Gallo-Romans.

Since then the country on the right bank of the Moselle has suffered the tragic fate of being a borderland, a fate which has affected even individual and family life. The saying that in Lorraine history has shaped less than it has smashed and destroyed contains a lot of bitter truth. It explains the shy reserve of the inhabitants, which sets them apart just as much from their more lively and open neighbors of the Palatinate as from the stubborn, hot-tempered, blistering Alsatians. The melancholy overlying the plateau of Lorraine has led to an inclination to shut themselves off from the outer world, to retire into a shell, an inclination which often prevents them from seeing things in their wider significance. The fact that this does not necessarily mean a simultaneous withering of spiritual life is proved by the wealth of legend, song, and fairy tale which, by countless subterranean channels, has kept alive the contact with the main body of Germans.

![Map of the Franco-German border since 1940](image-url)
Lorraine is one of the richest homes of German folk songs. The collection of songs made by the German-Lorrainian pastor Ludwig Pinck fills four volumes; and that of fairy stories, legends, and folk tales made by his sister Angelika Merkelbach-Pinck runs into six volumes.

Over this unchanging, almost intact racial basis, history staged its shifting scenes, which finally culminated in the country’s changing masters three times in the seventy years since 1870. It would be surprising if this tug of war had had no effect upon the mentality of the inhabitants of Lorraine. The people of this country do not easily say yes or no; they have no liking for the loud or the distinct. They prefer a compromise to a clear decision—an inclination which is supported by the geography of their country, open as it is to all sides (whereas Alsace possesses a well-defined barrier toward the west in the range of the Vosges). No intelligent Lorrainian will deny the danger that this may lead to a sterile cultural twilight. He will also smile at the mention of that dreamland “Lotharingia,” the illusion of the rebirth of a buffer state that is neither clearly Germanic nor clearly Romanic, as it existed before the division of Verdun in 843 and continued to exist for a few decades after that. Between 843 and 1943 a lot of things have happened which quickly make any idea of a sovereign individual existence between the two great neighboring nations evaporate into thin air.

The change of masters of 1940, which brought Lorraine back into the Reich, must be looked at against the wide background of the revision of Germany’s western border, which in turn was made possible only by the creation of a firm national unity. The “question of Lorraine” reflects the age-old problem of Germany’s western border especially clearly. The spasmodic advance into the territory of Lorraine was never an end in itself for France but always only a stage in her advance toward the middle Rhine. Her postwar struggle for the Saar, the Palatinate, the Rhineland, and the Ruhr which had been initiated by the Versailles solution of 1919 seemed to have brought her within grasp of her centuries-old goal. Since then the Reich has stubbornly and audaciously reconquered one position after another. The coming into being of the new “Westmark” shows this very markedly. The liberation of the Palatinate from French occupation and separatist treason was followed in 1936 by the plebiscite victory in the Saar territory and finally in 1940 by the reconquest of Lorraine. The linking up of Lorraine with its natural hinterland of the east has spared it the fate of an administrative outsider. At the same time, it has facilitated its union with the Reich in a more organic manner than by the hyphen experiment of 1871.

All the essentials are provided for this taciturn, austere, beautiful country attaining rank and voice in the polyphony of Greater Germany. But only a true condition of peace founded on realistic understanding can release Lorraine after the fluctuations of the centuries from the tragic spell of being a borderland, a spell which has paralyzed and isolated its rich gifts. In the European spirit of tomorrow there is no place for the petty national jealousies of yesterday.

SWITZERLAND—ISLAND OF NEUTRALITY

By Georg Bräutigam

It is a curious experience nowadays to travel in a wide arc through three European countries which have all managed to keep themselves out of actual warfare. Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland: what possibilities of comparison are offered merely by the fact of having, within a short period of time, seen the streets of Lisbon, the avenues of Madrid, and the side roads and squares of the city of Bern.

In the train I read one of the sparkling essays of the Spanish philosopher Ortega y