

WHY GERMANY IS NATIONALIST. I¹

BY COLONEL LEBAUD, RETIRED

[EXCEPT for a few outstanding literary figures like Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse, France's ultra-Nationalists almost monopolize attention in the foreign press. This article presents a different aspect of French opinion, and one by no means undeserving of attention.]

I KNEW Germany slightly before the war, having spent several vacations in that country. Visits to Berlin and Munich, and bicycle tours over her Imperial highways, had given me some insight into the German mind. I was therefore not an utter stranger when I got off the train in October 1921 at the station of Kaiserslautern in the Palatinate, where I had been ordered to report as second in command of the French garrison.

I was glad to join the Army of Occupation. Having traveled over Germany as a civilian tourist, a little intimidated by her *Verboten* signs, I now came back in uniform as one of the victors. How many times before the war I had dreamed, when passing through a German town, of marching through it in triumph behind a brass band playing the 'Sambre-et-Meuse'! My dream had in part come true.

But I was even more curious than elated. What was going on in Germany? How were our people getting along with the Boches? How did the latter regard us and treat us? Kaiserslautern is a city of sixty-five thousand people, two

thirds of whom are Protestants and one third Catholics. It is encircled by magnificent forests that come down to its very edge; and it manufactures furniture, bicycles, sewing machines, and many other things. The business centre is old, gray, and gloomy, although busy and animated; and the suburbs, which date from after 1870, have grown up planlessly, without conventional German regularity, and lack order and beauty — on the whole, a rather ugly place.

The people, who all seemed to wear angular, dull-colored clothing, did not impress me as sympathetic. When I met them on the street they would not look at me. But they showed no hostility — simply indifference. In a word, their attitude impressed me as dignified, and not obsequious as it had been immediately after the Armistice, when they still expected reprisals from us.

I could not look forward to a particularly agreeable time under these gray heavens and among these gray and sombre people, but I was pleased to think that the post promised at least variety. How many interesting problems it presented! And besides, I imagined that I might, in a modest way, be of some real service to my country.

I wanted to know at the outset how to conduct myself toward the inhabitants. 'What are our instructions on this point?' was my first question on arriving.

'Instructions? There are n't any. You don't have to conduct yourself

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toward the Boche. We've licked them, have n't we? Well, we've only got to keep them respectful — and at a distance.'

I soon discovered, however, that they were the ones who kept us at a distance. It was impossible to secure entrée to a German family. I comforted myself at first with the assumption that the people of Paris must have some ideas on the subject, which they had not yet communicated to us. Besides, it would be mighty strange if our French boys, who were such good fellows at heart, failed to win the affection of the natives. Little by little the Germans would begin to compare to our advantage our amiable manners with the brusque rudeness of their own officials and officers.

But it did not take long to undeceive me on these points. Evidently nothing was further from the minds of our superiors than to have us ingratiate ourselves with the Germans. Neither were the honest little French peasants in their sky-blue uniforms, who constituted the rank and file of my regiment, likely to impress the people among whom they were quartered by their manners or their appearance. Their old army-coats, whose original horizon-blue had faded to a dirty yellow, their frayed and sloppily wound puttees, their police caps generally worn hind side before, did not exactly recommend them to the eyes of people still filled with retrospective admiration for their own soldiers before the war. The Germans did not see, and would not have admitted in any case, the courage and initiative of our troops — their real capacity as fighting men. They judged them only by their externals. What chiefly impressed them was the negligence of a Government that dressed the troops representing it abroad so shabbily.

Everything else was in accord with

this. Here were people who loved order, discipline, and propriety to excess. Yet they saw floating over their town five tricolored banners, symbols of the victorious nation — above the headquarters, the coöperative, the soldiers' club, the offices of the Interallied Delegation, and the gendarme headquarters. I shall surprise no one when I say that these colors resembled strikingly the weathered flags that adorn some of our public monuments in France — the blue had become a greenish yellow, the white was a dirty gray, and the red had run lamentably.

From our point of view the German people have many faults, but we all credit them with one excellent quality — a love of music. We are even surprised that a country with so little artistic taste in architecture, clothing, cooking, and other things, should be so musical. Now, every month the city orchestra gave excellent classical concerts within reach of the most modest purse. The concert-hall was invariably packed, not only with the best people of the city, but also with clerks, salesmen, and workmen. It was a pleasure to watch this audience, absolutely motionless, listening devotedly for two hours to the works of their great composers, Bach, Schumann, Beethoven, or to classicists of the younger school like Boellmann and Max Reger.

Now what did we do to give the natives a favorable impression of our own music? It would not have been a bad thing to have had a few of our best military bands tour the occupied territory, or to have brought a few good symphony orchestras from France. That was done on a few occasions at Wiesbaden and Mainz when General Mangin, who was himself an excellent musician, was in command. But Wiesbaden and Mainz are not all the Rhine country. Nowhere else did we hear any good French music during my

period of service. Our regimental band, consisting entirely of our own recruits, who had to learn music during their two years of service and sometimes within eighteen months, played so badly that its leader 'was ashamed,' as he himself declared to the Colonel, to have it play in the public square the two steps with drum and trumpet accompaniment, the waltzes, and the medleys which constituted its only repertoire. Later the people of Kaiserslautern were treated also to the native music of our African Scouts, which they called *Katzenmusik*.

We may joke as much as we will about the prudishness of the Germans, but it is a part of their character with which we had to deal. It may seem very ridiculous to us that a well-bred young lady should consider it hardly good form to linger in front of a show-window display of lingerie, at least if there were men in the vicinity. Nevertheless, this was a feeling to be taken into account if we hoped to impress the Rhinelander with the admirable qualities of France. Imagine my feelings, then, a few days after our arrival, to see posters displayed all over the city advertising a play to be given by the only French theatre troupe officially authorized by our Government to tour the occupied territories. The title itself was idiotic. The poster represented a little lady of the *Vie Parisienne* type in scanty garments, perched on one toe, with the other foot high in the air, and a *vieux polisson* leering at her. I shall never forget as long as I live the contemptuous regard that Germans, and especially German ladies, cast at these announcements of our 'art exports' — a regard that included also any Frenchman who chanced to be in the vicinity. This company played at Kaiserslautern about once a month, and its repertoire was all of the same kind. Needless to say, no German ever entered the theatre when it was there.

To be perfectly fair, our people did hit upon some happy ideas — free courses in French, French reading-rooms, and public soup-kitchens. Unfortunately, however, these, like all our other enterprises, suffered from lack of money. The people of the Palatinate were anxious to improve their French, of which they had learned the rudiments in school; but the emergency teachers appointed by the Interallied High Commission to conduct the classes were too few, and for the most part incompetent. The first time I visited the French reading-room at Kaiserslautern I was overwhelmed with shame. It was designed to attract Germans who wanted to learn more of our better writers, by giving them access to our best books and reviews, especially our illustrated journals. In a word, its purpose was to give the Germans a taste for France and French things. A capital idea! But I found the reading-room installed in a tiny shop in the care of a shabby soldier with unkempt hair, wearing a dirty, ragged overcoat. The books consisted of fifty old volumes on a single shelf, most of them dusty, dirty, and ragged. They were not even works by distinguished authors. The papers and magazines were equally unattractive. It was with a feeling of relief, therefore, that I noticed one day that the place was closed. On inquiry I learned that the garrison, being somewhat depleted at that time, was no longer able to detail a soldier to look after the place.

Our soup kitchens were never able to supply more than a small fraction of the real need, for lack of money. There was a great deal of distress in Germany at this time. It would have taken only a trifling part of the vast sums that were wasted uselessly by the Army of Occupation to maintain them adequately.

So our well-intended but maladroit

efforts to make ourselves popular with the Germans merely amused and disgusted them. Their Nationalists did not need to conduct any propaganda to keep the people from being attracted to France. Our authorities did that for them.

My experience in the Ruhr was a very brief one, for my regiment was transferred there in January and was disbanded during the general reorganization of the army the following March. Furthermore, I was detained at Kaiserslautern for a period, so that I actually spent only thirty days in that district.

Inasmuch as the Germans were offering passive resistance to our occupation; we were quite within our rights in trying to crush that resistance. But it would have been better to remember that we were not at war. Ordinary methods of constraint, including the employment of force, were justified. We had a right to requisition quarters, to take possession of schoolhouses and public buildings for our headquarters and administrative offices, and to use at our discretion such railway rolling stock, coal, and other means of transportation as we found available.

But that did not entitle us to employ brutality — a word that is not French. The *passage à tabac* of people discovered on the street after the hour when our regulations required them to be at home was not to be excused under any pretext. One day two German workmen were brought to me with their faces so bruised and bloody that they scarcely looked like human beings. 'Communists detected distributing tracts to the soldiers!' their guards reported.

I burst out with indignation at the way they had been mishandled.

'Ah, Colonel, you're too kind-hearted. They have done worse than

that in France. You know how they acted there. They respect nothing but force.'

I admit that these very men may have committed certain atrocities in France; but we were then at war. Moreover, were we therefore to imitate the Boches and descend to their level? They may respect nothing but force, but I found them responsive enough to good treatment. They do admire force and authority, no matter by whom exercised. But they also have a sense of justice. I myself insisted that sabotage on the railways, attacks on sentinels, and the assassination of officers should be visited with prompt reprisals. But I still argue that a kindly smile from France would have won more hearts than the riding-whip slashes that some of our officers distributed so prodigally.

But I drop this unpleasant subject to come to the time when I was transferred to a regiment of Algerian Scouts, of which a battalion was garrisoned at Kaiserslautern. This took me back to my old station, where I was invested with the important duties of the commander of a district and of a section of the army. This was early in April 1923. My readers will remember that at this time passive resistance was being carried out all through the occupied territories. I therefore found myself in the same position with regard to the Germans at Kaiserslautern that I should have been in had I remained in the Ruhr.

German railway employees had struck. We were replacing them by French and Belgians. It was hard at first, but, thanks to the initiative, zeal, and energy of the men we brought from France, railway service was gradually restored.

When we consider the difficulties that these new employees met at every hand — put in charge of strange loco-

motives, running over unfamiliar lines with a different system of signals, meeting with frequent sabotage, encountering the sullen hatred of the people — we can feel nothing but admiration for the way they performed their duties, although they numbered only a third of the former German force.

Unfortunately, the Germans did not appreciate what we were doing, because they swallowed all the lies that their own newspapers told them. The slightest accident on the line was heralded as a fearful disaster with several dead. When a train jumped the track because some 'patriot' had placed an obstruction on the rails, it was attributed to the incompetence of the French train crew. German Nationalist organizations had spies at every station who took the names of any native who dared to travel, no matter how urgent his trip. These names were published in 'disgrace lists' by the newspapers in the unoccupied territory.

But instead of trying tactfully to minimize this opposition, we only accentuated it. Our railway companies, in their hurried response to the demand for men to operate the lines, naturally did not send their snappiest employees to the Rhineland. The good fellows who came with their wives and children were as a rule pretty shabby-looking chaps, and this counted against us. Then we committed the big error of dressing them up at first in military uniforms. This blunder was made still worse by the fact that the uniforms did not fit. I shall not attempt to describe the impression produced upon the Germans when they saw our railway hands togged up like soldiers — but like Mardi gras soldiers. Many of them, having long since passed the age of active service, were dressed in little tunics that failed by a couple of feet or more to meet across their ample waist-expansion, and that did look like irre-

sistibly funny monkey-jackets. Others wore overcoats that hardly came to their knees, or else just brushed the ground, as the luck of their allotment happened to be. Most of them wore wrinkled kepis, and had long, unkempt hair; and their uniforms combined all the colors of the rainbow.

In spite of the orders of their superiors, these impromptu soldiers seldom saluted anyone. Many a time when I passed a fellow in uniform on the street I had to turn with blushing cheeks and stare into a show-window to avoid the sarcastic smiles of the Germans watching us. We were ordered to be very indulgent with these men, for at the slightest reproof they threatened to go home to France. You may say these were trifles. Alas, such trifles became *kolossal* in Germany!

At the end of a few months our authorities, realizing what an absurdity they had committed, decided to put their railway employees back in civilian costumes. That made another circus: All the world knows how scrupulous the German workingman is about being attired properly. He never leaves his locomotive or his workshop without washing up and putting on his street clothes. I need hardly say that our good railway-boys refused to 'make any such fuss.' You met them on the principal business streets and residential avenues in oil-spotted overalls, ragged shirts wide open at the front, and faces black with soot and dust.

Surely they did nothing to improve the reputation of France in the eyes of the natives. But that is only a prelude to the story.

At the same time that we brought over our railway employees we also imported from home a staff of forest experts, timber-workers, and customs officials. We proposed to exploit the public forests and to collect the customs just as we proposed to run the

railways. In order to find lodgings for all these people we had to evict the German functionaries who refused to obey our orders. These rough-and-ready evictions, with the requisition of the household furniture in the tenements, made us seem to the Germans to be lawless barbarians. And this was not so much due to the measure itself as to the way in which it was done.

Eviction List Number Ten, containing between one and two hundred names, was sent to me for execution. The functionaries named on the list were gathered together at a stated hour at police headquarters, put on a railway train under guard, and shipped across the Rhine, where Nationalist organizations received them with a great patriotic demonstration intended to impress the local population. Their families were to follow in four days. Their household furniture, left where it was by our orders, passed into the possession of our French employees.

Many a time would a weeping woman come to my office asking to have her eviction postponed a few days because one of her children was very ill or for some other equally imperative reason. Now, I had no discretion to grant such a permission. That could be done only by my superior at Landau. Needless to

say, I sometimes exceeded my authority, and any little proof of human sympathy I exhibited had a wonderful effect upon the people of Kaiserslautern. The evictions I was called upon to make in the territory under my command numbered several thousand. You can well imagine what the total was in the entire occupied territory.

We did not stop with expulsion alone. We arrested and jailed anyone who refused to obey or who made difficulties, particularly notorious Nationalists. Having violated such or such an ordinance of the Interallied High Commission, a man would be haled, according to the seriousness of his offense, either before the police court at Kaiserslautern, which was presided over by a captain, or before a court-martial at Landau, presided over by a colonel. In waiting for his trial, sometimes several months, he was incarcerated in the city jail, which in ordinary times was reserved for common criminals, and which we requisitioned for this purpose, directing the Germans to take the ordinary occupants anywhere that suited them. A detachment of Scouts, under a sergeant appointed provisional warden, guarded the jail. It would have been good policy to treat these emergency prisoners well, but I was under strict orders not to do so.

THE POOR OF PEKING¹

SCENES AT A SALVATION ARMY KITCHEN

BY ADJUTANT JEAN GRAHAM

I INVITE you to come with me while we go sight-seeing in Peking. I shall not introduce you to beautiful places, but to interesting, if pathetic, people. I promise to keep altogether within the realm of fact.

Let us walk in a northerly direction from our little quarters. You are soon attracted by the number of queerly dressed men and women we pass on our way to the Lama Temple. They are Mongolians, who have come hither to worship the Living Buddha, who is at present the honored guest of the Peking Government. Though so odd, and dirty in appearance, they are really better off than the majority of busy people we see around; in fact, the greasier their silk and leather clothing, the greater their wealth.

But our business does not lie with these Mongolians. We will pass only through the grounds of their Lama Temple, that being the nearest way to our destination.

Leaving the Lama Temple, we emerge at the back into a small *hut'ung*. Turning the corner, we come upon a different class of people — the really poor. They are congregated outside the gate of another temple — the Temple of the White Tree. The halt, the blind, the lame, the old, the feeble, the diseased, and even the demented, are among this crowd of human wretch-

edness. Mothers are clasping little babies under thin clothing, and holding on to wee toddlers. A little child leads a blind beggar. An old woman of eighty hobbles along with the aid of a stick. Every kind of physical disablement seems to be portrayed here, and where, in other lands, the background would be a hospital and gentle care, here it is cold poverty and the merciless crushing of a hungry crowd. All are waiting for the porridge kitchen to open its doors.

We are allowed to enter in advance, and find ourselves in a spacious courtyard. The top has been covered with straw matting, and it is thus transformed into a comfortable shed. In one corner, styled the kitchen, two huge iron pots are built in. These generous vessels are capable of cooking sufficient yellow millet porridge to feed twelve hundred people. With the aid of rails and posts the shed is divided into four enclosures.

You think it strange that the Salvation Army should be thus occupying one of the courtyards of a Buddhist temple? But we need ample space for a food kitchen, and this is not always easy to secure. Temples usually possess many large unused courtyards; we begged the use of this one from the head priest here. He received us in his beautifully furnished private apartments at the rear of the Temple grounds. When, after much ceremony

¹ From the *North China Herald* (Shanghai British weekly), February 17