

To be critical only of things and people in the easiest way to be mentally lazy. True, there is much in life to be constructively critical about. Also there is much to praise and be proud of. But that requires thinking!

The Birmingham Eccentric

PART 4

Thursday, June 22, 1950

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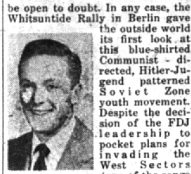
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Invited to Communist Rally Typical Member of Free German Youth in Berlin, Youth Plays Hookey, Goes Sightseeing

By ROBERT BALL
Special Correspondent for The Eccentric

(Note: This article should not be interpreted as indicating any sympathy of the writer for the organization mentioned. It is presented because the writer feels that it is useful to understand, as far as possible, the persons and organizations friendly to us.)

BERLIN, Germany. Whitsuntide weekend added a new set of initials to American vocabularies—FDJ—Freie Deutsche Jugend, in English, Free German Youth. The amount of freedom enjoyed by these youthful Germans may



be open to doubt. In any case, the Whitsuntide Rally in Berlin gave the outside world its first look at this blue-shirted Communist-directed, Hitler-Jugend patterned Soviet Zone youth movement. Despite the decision of the FDJ leadership to pocket plans for invading the West Sector, the tone of the songs had to be changed at the last minute from "FDJ Storms Berlin" to "FDJ Greets Berlin", there was enough of banners and hoots in the demonstration to make American wonder.

WHAT KIND of youngsters were those marchers, anyway? Nineteen-year-old Friedrich Nasz from the tiny farm village of Ritan in Saxony is perhaps a good example of the rank and file FDJ-er. At one o'clock when I met Nasz heading back to his billet the parade, which had begun at 9:30, was still going strong. Nasz, however, had had enough. Explanations: Hungry and sore feet. Unlike some of the FDJ group leaders who were already making Berlin plans a year ago, Nasz learned about the rally only a few weeks ahead of time, when the word, along with a free shipment of blue shirts, was passed down via the FDJ county committee to Nasz's village group of 20 members.

WERE THEY pressured to attend the rally? Nasz claimed not. "They just said that all who wanted to could come," he explained. Nasz and three others signed up. How did it happen that only four out of 20 wanted a free trip to Berlin? Nasz didn't know. Whatever had kept the 16 away, it was clear that Nasz was enjoying his first trip to the Big City. "Since we got here Thursday, I've spent all my time sight-seeing," he said happily. "I skipped all the programs and activities except the parade."

Nasz's quarters in Berlin were conveniently placed for sight-seeing. He was bunking in the heart of the city in the Unter den Linden headquarters of the East German Trade Union Federation. Other, less fortunate FDJ-ers were billeted in schools, temporary barracks, factory canteens, private homes and tent camps. He was pleased with the accommodations.

"BOY, THE FOOD we get," he exclaimed, in what appeared to be honest enthusiasm. "So far ideologically impeccable, he tripped over the Party Line in his next remark. "It's a lot better than we get at home."

I asked how things were in Saxony. "Well, not exactly good," he allowed, "but a lot better than in 1946, at any rate." At the question of what his FDJ group did in Ritan, Nasz had to ponder. "We had to hold meetings," he said finally, with disarming naivete. "How often?" "Oh, maybe once a week, maybe once every two weeks." The meetings are held in the village tavern. It would appear



FRIEDRICH NASZ ENJOYS HIS BERLIN VISIT
Burned out Reichstag building is in background

that the FDJ has not yet succeeded in digesting its membership. "Nasz's GROUP has no regular leader and is dependent for all news on occasional contact with the county committee. This despite the fact that the group is five years old. Nasz became a member a year after the group was founded. Why did he join?" "Well, it looked interesting." Are they trying to gain new members?

"No, because all the young people belong already, and the younger ones join automatically when they leave school. From what Nasz could offer as group activities, it may well be fortunate that the meetings are held in the tavern. There can't be much business to transact.

WORK PROJECTS? No. Discussions? No. Assignments or looks to read? No (scarcely). What did they do then? Nasz cast about. "We made the stars for the rally and we learned the songs." And the marching slogans? Yes. I quoted one against the Marshall Plan and asked Nasz if he knew what the Marshall Plan was. He shook his head. "Hey Nasz," shouted some younger Blue Shirts from the Saxon delegation, coming on the

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NOTICE

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN of a special meeting to be held at the Bloomfield Township Hall at 4200 Telegraph Road, on Thursday, June 29, 1950 at 8:00 P.M., of the property owners, for the purpose of hearing objections to the spreading of a special roll by the Supervisor for the building of a new fire hall on Lot 1012 Judson Bradway's Bloomfield Village No. 4. This roll will cover the following described property: Judson Bradway's Bloomfield Village; Judson Bradway's Bloomfield Village No. 1; Judson Bradway's Bloomfield Village No. 2; Judson Bradway's Bloomfield Village No. 3; Judson Bradway's Bloomfield Village No. 4; and Vern Lane.

Signed: Ann M. Birrell,
Deputy Township Clerk.

Dated: June 16, 1950

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