

YOUNGSTERS FROM THE GERMAN HIGHWAYS

A picture survey on constructive  
aid for Refugee youth.

Summer 1952.

Rev. Bengt Hoffman

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Rev. Bengt Hoffman,  
Secretary for Germany & Austria,  
World Council of Churches,  
Department of Inter-Church Aid  
and Service to Refugees,  
Geneva, Switzerland.



When travelling by car through Germany you see them waiting at the gas stations, young boys and girls in rather tattered clothes. They want a lift of course, but you are never sure whether you should take them up. Sometimes you read in the West German papers about lift robberies. These young people belong to the host of youngsters in West Germany between 15 and 25 years of age who have no jobs and can't get any. They roam the highways and country-roads in search for jobs. I have heard more than one of them say: "It is completely useless. I have wandered from the northern tip down to the south and all I get is a day or two of wood-chopping or gardening and then off again."

There is no saying how many such young vagabonds West Germany houses, for many of them have come illegally across the zonal border between East Germany and West Germany. At some transit camp they have simply been advised to return from where they came and then preferred to "live black". Others came in the large refugee treks towards the end of the war or immediately after the war and their parents had disappeared some way or other. Some people in West Germany estimate this group of wild youth at about 50,000. It is perhaps not difficult to imagine the uprootedness and moral bewilderment of such youngsters, not to speak of their religious life which is next to non-existent.

But this category is only part of a larger youth problem in West Germany. The West German Republic has 500,000 unemployed young people. 200,000 of the 15-year-old who graduate from primary schools every year do not find a job although they had been more fortunate than the category I mentioned at the outset, in having at least some adults take care of them. But all they have to go back to after graduation is often only a dismal refugee camp or the extremely crowded quarters of their refugee relatives in a West German village or town.

Why doesn't the State do something about all this ? It actually does a great deal, has a large fund for the purpose of youth rehabilitation. But the State is also grappling with tremendous problems. Time and time again the question arises in one's mind: Is not this West German Refugee problem also and in a fundamental sense an international problem ?

West German industrial expansion shows up very nicely on statistical charts. The shops and stores are well stocked, often with luxury goods, but millions of refugees including of course the youngsters, are wholly unable to acquire any of these nice-looking things.

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Here are two of the problems of the State:  
First, the question of equalization of the refugee burden between the various provinces. This has not as yet been effected to the extent it should have been. Some provinces carry a much heavier burden than others. For instance, a large number of refugee youngsters live in refugee-crowded Schleswig-Holstein where employment possibilities are extremely scanty.

Secondly, there is the problem of rearmament. The big question is: how much money should the Government allocate for rearmament purposes with the problem of destitution and bitterness and social want among the refugees on its neck ?

The Church cares for these uprooted youngsters and she has shown this in practice. Not that the Church can ever hope to solve the total problem. She does not have sufficient resources, furthermore the total problem has something to do with international action and indigenous State legislation. And if the last few years have taught us anything it is the sad fact that the Churches, anywhere, are not as strong an influence in civic affairs as we loved to think some decades ago.

But the Church cares and she is performing practical duties for and among refugees all over West Germany.

There are church-sponsored social teams with special responsibility for the uprooted youngsters.

Strings of apprentice homes have been established, mainly in areas where employment facilities are greater.

Social centres under church sponsorship have been created, vocational counselling centres have been set up.

Even if this service in Christian love may only embrace numbers with four digits whereas the Church would like to help refugees in numbers with five digits it is quite clear that the Evangelical Church of West Germany is doing a real pioneering, frontline work among destitute, orphaned, homeless youngsters.

Would you permit me to add, as a Secretary for Inter-Church Aid in Germany and Austria, that increased loyalty and concern on the part of more fortunate Churches for this frontline work of the Church in Germany would also strengthen and increase the depth and the scope of the faithful and often imaginative work carried out by hundreds of anonymous church workers among the youth of West Germany. I can truthfully say that I have seldom found so much straightforward, apostolic devotion as among the many lay people in charge of this work. When I read in the press about statements made by this, that or other top leader of the church and about dissensions within the church, so widely broadcast, I cannot help but say to myself: those solemn statements and heated disagreements are not in any essential

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way an expression of the inner life of the German Church. The really important things happen at the frontlines, for instance among rootless youngsters. But such deeds of love and reconciliation do not really catch our attention because those doing the silent deeds are not at all anxious to advertise their opinions or their achievements.

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I should like to take you to some of the centres for constructive social Christian work among youngsters. They are located in Württemberg in southern Germany. Christians in Württemberg have set up a number of apprentice homes and youth hostels in areas with considerable employment possibilities. 30-50 boys and girls spend a half year or more in such a home. The home leader is constantly on the look-out for permanent jobs and no one has to leave the home unless work has been found for him. One Christian association for apprentice training under Christian leadership has in this way succeeded in providing training and work for 2,000 youngsters during the past two years.

The church-sponsored apprentice home is a good substitute for a home. The young people are being trained by artisans, in work shops, in repair shops, in factories, on farms, but in the evening they return to their hostel. A great deal consequently depends on the spirit of the leaders. And, as I said, the Church has been fortunate in finding many lay leaders of the right calibre.

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I. Arrival.

Church workers pick up youngsters in transit hostels, on the roads, youngsters without any anchorage whatsoever in life. Here you see some of them arrive in a church-sponsored apprentice home in southern Germany. They have behind them a fairly long period of ambulating existence, some of them have been sleeping in cellars under the ruins of a bombed-out German city, others say they have spent winter nights in the warm barns of a brick factory where the bricks are stacked to be dried. Their only clothes are those they wear. They are rather suspicious, not least of everything that has to do with religion. One of them said: "The Christians talk nice but we can't live on words."





II. Off to work.

They don't make much money. But the very fact that there is some work keeps them going.

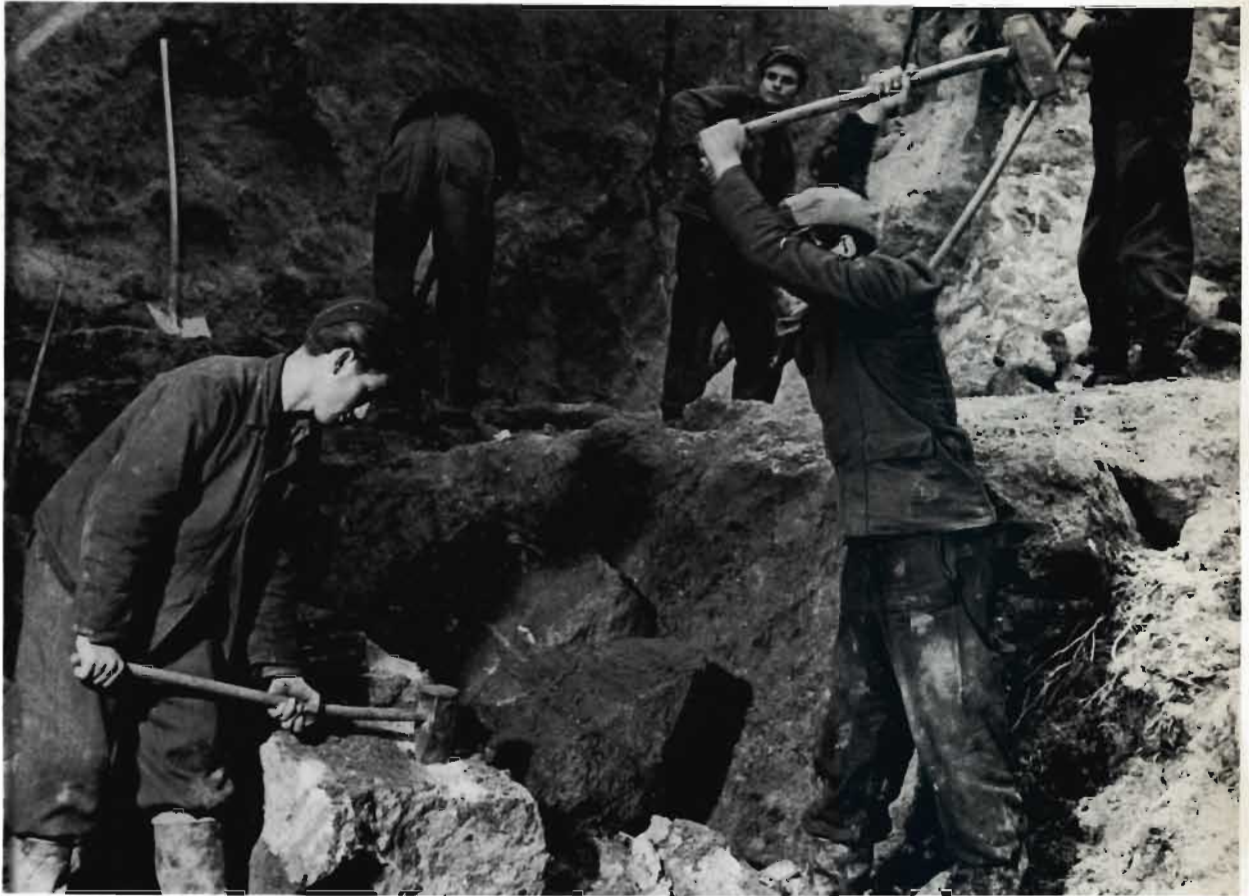




III. Factory apprentice.

Some apprentices work in factories and here is a homeless girl who has found refuge in a girls' apprentice home in southern Germany.





#### IV. On the job.

This picture was taken at a home for agricultural workers in Württemberg. The Church rents a large estate - rather dilapidated when it was taken over - where 50 young boys are trained as farm hands. On the estate there are naturally many other activities beside looking after the cattle or ploughing the soil. Ditches have to be dug through marsh land. In the winter time many of the boys are busy making wicker baskets and brooms. They get the necessary material from the forest belonging to the estate. There is also a stone quarry and that is the locale of this picture. Both the wicker baskets, the brooms and the stone produce money. That income means a corresponding letting-up on the contributions each home member has to make to the "treasury" of the home. The youth centres of the Church are selfsupporting. The cooperative nature of the homes is a good training in democratic responsibility.





V. A meal in an apprentice home.

The ages of the boys range from 16 to 25. The food is of course simple, there is not much meat and fish but on the whole the nourishment is adequate. I should like to point out once more that the boys themselves finance the administration and the food at these homes. They contribute part of their wages to the general administration budget.

One of the boys in this picture tells the following story about himself: "I was born in the East in 1929. One of my brothers got lost in Stalingrad in 1942 and we have never heard from him. Another of my brothers was killed in the war. In 1944 my parents were killed in a bomb-raid. At that time I was 15 years old. In 1945 they made me a soldier and soon afterwards I came into French captivity. I was in a prison camp till 1949. Then I began to work as a mining apprentice in France. But it was much too hard for me. So in 1949 I came to Germany. For a long time I have been a tramp without home walking from the south up to the north and from the north down to the south. No one would let me learn a trade. I am happy to be here. I hope you will be able to find a job for me."





VI. Cooperative kitchen.

In the church-sponsored apprentice homes the kitchen is sometimes in charge of the wife of one of the leaders, as a matter of fact nearly always. But the cook is invariably one of the homeless youngsters themselves. Here he is at work in one of the homes for uprooted youth being trained in farming.





VII, Deversion and democracy.

Each home has an assembly room which often also serves as dining hall. Here some of the home members are gathered in the evening for wood work. A popular off-work occupation seems to be the building of gliders.

The picture was taken after a meeting of the "home council". The boys (or girls, because there are also homes for girls) elect their own representatives to this "parliament" which deals with all home matters in a democratic way. The home leader is standing to the right in the back-row.





VIII. "The home leader is our dad."

There is time for social activities of various descriptions. Some boys study languages, others try to catch up on elementary school subjects in which they have lagged behind due to the instability of war and postwar years. Some of them even attend the religious discussion group or Bible group conducted by one of the home leaders. Many leaders have told me how extremely delicate the latter question is. The youngsters are very reluctant when it comes to religion and the leaders can presuppose little or no previous knowledge of Christianity. But it often happens that the tiny group convening for Bible study or worship slowly grows. Again, it is all a question of the spirit of the leaders. Leaders often say: No pressure of any kind should be exerted with the intention of getting the youngsters to worship or Bible study. The atmosphere and the personal concern itself must prompt them.

On the picture some boys have gathered around their leader who to many of them has become something like a father. We should remember that several of the boys in this group have no father.





IX. Social evening in an apprentice home.

One of the boys is Alfred, 18 years old, from the Eastern zone. After his father was called up as a soldier his mother was unable to take sufficient care of the 6 children. All the children were brought to public children's homes. Alfred later came to a correction home. Eventually he landed in a youth prison. After Alfred's father returned from captivity in 1945 Alfred lived with him. He worked as an unskilled labourer. During a trip in the countryside in order to find some food in addition to the meager ration he was caught by the police, managed to escape. This happened in 1948. He was sure that he would be brought to the uranium mines in the East zone and therefore made his way to West Germany. He worked in odd jobs beginning up at Hamburg in the north down to Baden-Baden in the south. It was mostly farmwork and unskilled labour in public undertakings like road building. He got caught in a police check and was brought to the camp of Balingen where the West Germans keep their illegal refugees. In that camp he was picked up by a representative of the church association for apprentice homes. One of the first things they found out about him in this home was that he could not write. So his first evening course was in ordinary hand writing.

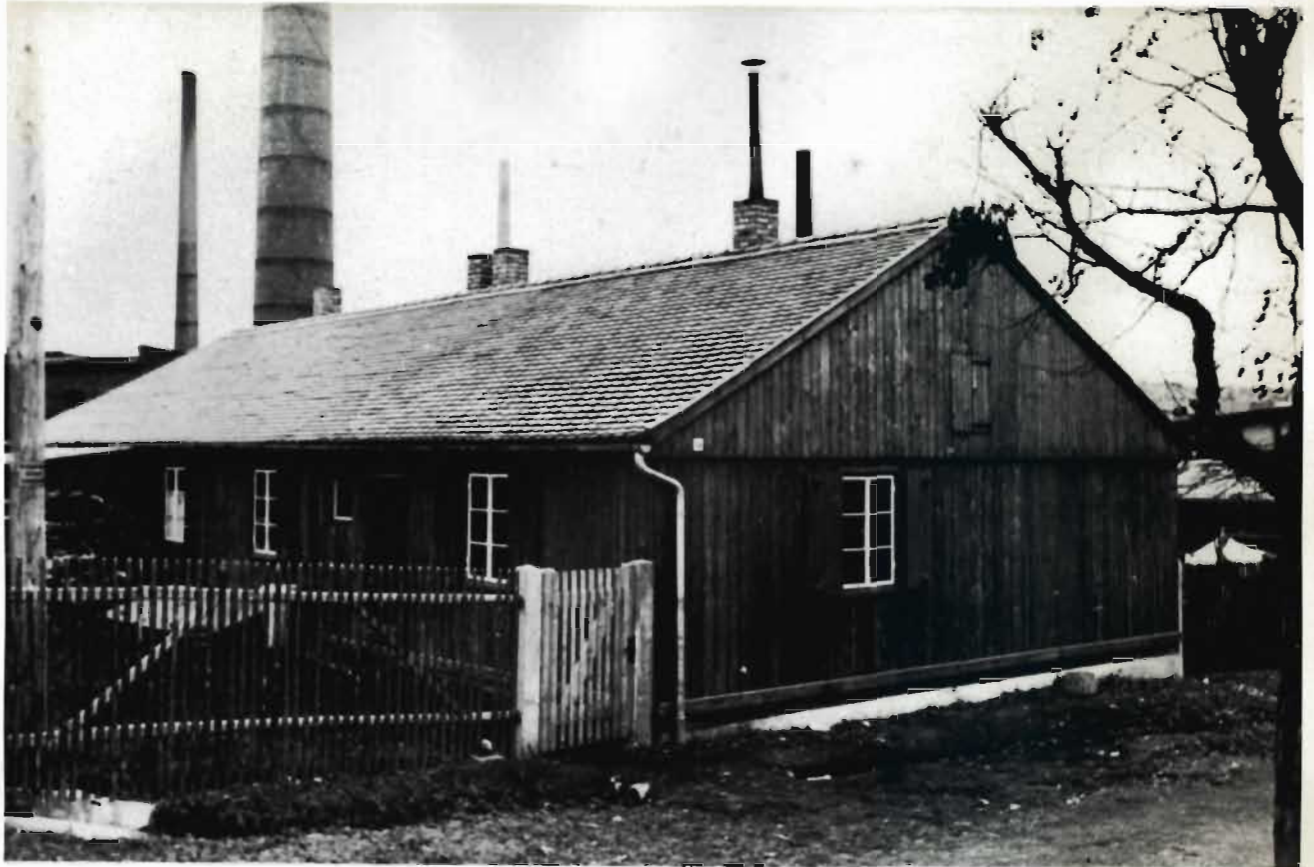




X. "Nearly a room of my own."

Two boys share one little room. This picture was taken recently in a Württemberg home after the day's work. One of the boys has borrowed a book from the library (one would only wish that there would be more money to purchase a few more books for the tiny libraries in these homes). There is an old second-hand radio purchased from private savings. A good many of these boys when coming to the homes have never learned the discipline of saving money. After all, they very seldom had any money but when they had, it vanished very rapidly. In the case of the boys coming directly from the East zone there is the difficulty of determining the difference in value between the East Mark and the West Mark. The East zone boys tend to throw out a West Mark just as light-heartedly as they spent their East Marks. One of the tasks of the home leaders is to try to foster the spirit of responsibility towards money and the results have been remarkable. The house cat on the cot seems to approve of the present state of affairs.





XI. Simple, yet a home.

And here you have the exterior of one of the apprentice homes of which I have been talking. As you see it is a simple structure. The money for the erection of such barracks can naturally not be paid by the youth. Most of it comes from the West German State fund for youth work. But when the Church and other voluntary societies wish to establish an apprentice home they must themselves produce between 10 and 30 % of the costs. Those 10-30 % of the total expenditure consequently releases governmental money. It is important to remember that the Church must have that proportion in cash before the apprentice home can be built. Some Churches in the U.S.A., the Church Relief Committees in Switzerland and Sweden, among others, have contributed money towards such barracks.





XII. Integrated with the life of a community.

This is the way an apprentice home is sometimes integrated with the picture of a small German country town. The barracks in the foreground were built with money from the Swedish Church. It houses 40 youngsters employed as apprentices all over the town or on farms outside the town.

May I conclude this cavalcade through an important sector of social Christian work in Germany by saying: Whatever you can do in addition to what you have already done in this field of youth needs will come to good and fruitful use.



B U G E N H A G E N

Boarding School for Refugee children  
at Timmendorfer Strand, Schleswig-Holstein.  
Run by the Evangelical Hilfswerk of  
Schleswig-Holstein.

August 1952.

Rev. Bengt Hoffman,  
Secretary for Germany & Austria,  
World Council of Churches,  
Department of Inter-Church Aid  
and Service to Refugees,  
Geneva, Switzerland.



Nature of school: High school.

Boarding capacity:

110 boys

90 girls.

To which categories they belong:

12 are orphans,

80 have lost either father or mother,

60 % of the fathers still living have lost their original occupation, do not make enough money to contribute to the child's schooling. A great many in this group are still unemployed.

90 % of the students belong to Refugee families.

10 % of the students are neo-refugees cut off from personal contact with their parents who are living in East Germany.



A place where the Church builds for the future.



This is the exterior of the Bugenhagen boarding school in Schleswig-Holstein, northern Germany, where the Church provides accommodation and high school training for 200 gifted youngsters, most of them from poor families, some of them orphans and some of them neo-refugees from the East Zone of Germany and consequently without possibility of seeing their parents.

The two buildings in the foreground were erected with financial aid from the Swiss Churches, the Norwegian Aid to Europe and Lutheran Churches in America.

The building in the background is used for classes and also contains crowded dormitories for girls. It stands in need of repair and expansion. The interior equipment is primitive. But there is no money. (For obvious reasons the monthly contributions of the parents vary greatly and actually only cover bare necessities but no improvements or expansions.)



A dormitory ready for use - but more applicants are waiting.



This picture was taken at the dedication ceremony of the new girls' dormitory at Bugenhagen.

The building is a result of the generosity of foreign churches and has met a crying need.

But scores of applications for gifted Refugee youth who cannot be absorbed by state-run high schools, continue to land on the headmaster's desk. Most of them he has to reject due to lack of space and money.



The key to a kingdom.



The leader of the Bugenhagen School for Refugee youngsters, Pastor Bahr, holds in his hand the key to the new dormitory for girls. That key opened the door to a kingdom of educational opportunity and Christian training for 40 Refugee children whose specific talents would otherwise have remained unused.

Pastor Bahr who runs his school without financial reserves for upkeep and with a woefully inadequate fund for grants to the many who cannot pay, told me on a recent visit I made to Bugenhagen: "Sure, the cupboards and the beds are primitive. Sure, we would need more class-rooms. But nothing is worse than having to tell a poor Refugee family: no more money in the scholarship fund and unless we can cover the fees your youngster will have to leave."



Not good enough for East-German school.



Eveline Hanne is 18 years old, was born in East Prussia and is the daughter of a leading pastor of the East Prussian Confessing Church. Her four sisters and brothers have had to leave the parental home in the East Zone. Two years ago Eveline, who at that time studied in a high school, was summoned to a political examination. It turned out to be a real cross-fire of questioning with the intention of squeezing out politically incriminating opinions from Eveline. She was supposed to confess that she loved Stalin and hated all Americans. She answered very bravely and her answers were founded on her Christian conviction. After the interrogation she was told that she would have to leave the school. Then her parents sent her via Berlin to the West. Says the leader of the Bugenhagen school: "We have accepted her here but the parents can of course not pay anything. The monthly costs for Eveline come to 100 DM (\$25)." She had already reached the third-last year in that school in the Russian Zone. As happens with many youngsters coming from the East, she had to step down one grade in Bugenhagen. Especially her linguistic knowledge was faulty. But she is very gifted. In the course of one year she has ground through the educational material ordinarily spread out over 2 years and is now in her second-last year. She is a very vivacious, cheerful person. "Because of her vivacity she stands in particular need of constant guidance. The Bugenhagen school can give her just that. The school is her second home."



"I became a Refugee because  
I didn't want to join."



Dietrich Wagner, born in the year of 1934 in Pomerania. His father was an estate-owner. He was killed during the war near Danzig. Dietrich's mother lives in a small town in the East Zone. She has two children living with her. But as to Dietrich she began to feel increasingly worried as the political pressure increased. He did not join any political organisations. He was never able to adapt his remarks and school essays to the new political vocabulary demanded. So Mrs. Wagner decided to send Dietrich to the West via Lübeck. He stayed for a while with relatives who are refugees, too. They heard about the Bugenhagen school and brought Dietrich Wagner there. The leader of the Bugenhagen school says: "Dietrich's character is nearly the opposite of that of Eveline Hanne's. He is quiet, reticent, not without humour, but he resembles Eveline as far as talents are concerned. He is extremely industrious and earns his own pocket money by giving extra lessons. Mother back in the East Zone can of course pay nothing. He and his mother are real Christian personalities. His mother who is a very charming person has reached a very genuine and real faith through her tribulations. She writes me and says that she regards it as God's guidance for her to remain in the East Zone, for she feels that she has been called to confess her Christian faith and conviction in her present circumstances."



"We had to part from them."



It was not easy for Mr.Kuczkowski to say good-bye to Eckhard and Karin and the two other children they sent to the West. Mr.Kuczkowski was once a tenant-farmer, now has a small transportation agency with horse and wagon. The Kuczkowski's only have one child left with them. The Bugenhagen school does of course not receive any contributions from the parents for the fees.

Eckhard had to step down two grades on arrival (the same old story of deficient elementary training in the East Zone schools where politics ranges higher than ordinary knowledge), but worked hard and will probably soon be able to skip a grade or two. "Eckhard is a rather inaccessible young man, however, slowly thawing up. It is quite obvious that he preferred to retire within himself over there in the East Zone like a snail into its snail house. He has armed himself with a certain air of distrust and a little bit of impertinence. In the beginning he always kept to himself. It took a year before he developed more trust in us and began to grow into the boarding school community."

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Eckhard is already 18, Karin is only 12. She is gifted, gets very good marks, but she learned all too early over there in the East Zone to practice dissimulation and employ dishonest methods. The Bugenhagen leader says: "We could really study with this child what the educational training over there can achieve negatively. We have often been on the verge of giving up about Karin. Everything harmless and childish seemed to have left her. We were sometimes tempted to ask ourselves whether the child still had a conscience. But then came a period when she would weep from regret and repentance and we discovered that deep within she also has a real childish streak." The parents have brought Karin home during holiday periods. She then travels on a truck through Berlin. But they don't dare ask Eckhard to come. He must remain in Bugenhagen.



"Young Pioneer".



When the political youth organisation made Peter Frohriep a "Pioneer leader" in his own grade, Peter did not like it very much. He had never said or understood much about politics but it so happened that he was the best scholastically in his grade and it was probably regarded as advantageous to get the brightest boy as a leader of the political group.

Peter is now 12. His father was killed in Russia. His mother, like so many other mothers with Christian background in the East Zone, could not stand the threat of complete political indoctrination that hovers over every school child in the East Zone. One day she told Peter that he was to go to Berlin to see an acquaintance from Lübeck. Peter came to Berlin, alone, by train. He met the friend of the family and was suddenly told that he could not go back to his mother. A hard cross-roads for a 12 year old boy. Peter has proved himself a most decent sort of fellow, full of comradely loyalty and very talented.



Waiting for admittance.



"Heiner Hammer from Thuringia in the East Zone is waiting for admittance into our school", wrote the leader of the Bugenhagen school last spring. "Heimer Hammer was in the second-last grade at high school when he had to escape for political reasons. He is now in a transit camp in West Germany. His father is a pastor. The pastor wrote us not long ago and said that Heiner will come but, poor us, we do not know if we shall be able to accept him. There is no money in the scholarship fund for additional cases. Whatever happens, like most youth from the East, he will have to catch up with the others especially in languages and that will cost extra money. Who on earth is going to pay for the monthly accommodation and education fee of DM 100 ? Two pastors have vouched for Heiner." Later on the following message was added to the first one: "Heiner Hammer arrived yesterday evening. It is urgent, we must take him. Was persecuted, fled in great hurry, makes a very good impression."



"Our home in place of a home".



The new dormitory of the Bugenhagen School looks on the Baltic Sea. It is a nice home, doubly so to these young high school girls who have no real home.

It is a pity in a way that I have no pictures from the dormitories in the main, rambling building of the Bugenhagen School. They are much less appealing, as a matter of fact rather dismal, with bad equipment.



New experience of democratic living  
and community responsibility.



Most of them carry with them a legacy of negative experiences of their fellow-men. Most of them once learned the techniques of individualistic selfishness. What else could you expect from youngsters uprooted from the security of a real home, hounded by political persecutors in the East Zone, pressed down by the atmosphere of a large transit camp for Refugees ?

In their new "home" they are slowly opening up again to their fellow-beings. Through an oftentimes harsh inner struggle they are learning to do team work. They slowly develop an interest in the welfare of the Boarding School community. A new sense of hope and confidence is born within them.

A Christian concern for and interest in the individual pervades all activities at the Boarding School. Out of this concern flows the acceptance of and the responsibility for the community.



Looking towards the future.



Yes, there is introspection and there are bitter experiences reflected on some of these young faces from the Bürgenhagen Boarding School at Timmendorfer Strand in Schleswig-Holstein, West Germany. Perhaps you would say that the faces are old albeit young.

But life in this large "family" has begun a process within them which is transforming their grief, bitterness and disappointments into constructive attitudes. They have been given an opportunity to develop their talents. They are learning the difficult art of "live and let live". They are looking towards the future with hope. A hope born out of a Christian concern for them.

As for us, we know how difficult it will be to find scholarship grants for all when the school opens up in the autumn again. We also see with our inner eyes, in the invisible background of this picture, all those deserving young Refugees for whom there is no room in the Christian boarding schools.



BOARDING SCHOOLS  
FOR  
REFUGEE CHILDREN .

Summer 1952.

Rev. Bengt Hoffman,  
Secretary for Germany & Austria,  
World Council of Churches,  
Department of Inter-Church Aid  
and Service to Refugees,  
Geneva, Switzerland.



West Germany is increasingly faced with the question: "What do we do with talented youth among the Refugees?" Many of these youngsters never get an opportunity to continue their studies. Much talent and intelligence is in this way lost to the future generation.

The Protestant Churches of West Germany, among others, are trying to meet this very real need by accepting Refugee youngsters of highschool age into boarding schools all over West Germany.

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But why precisely boarding schools ?  
Is that not a rather expensive way of solving the problem ?

The answer is simple: Most of the boarding school youth come from very poor families. The state schools have no boarding facilities and give no grants to defray boarding costs. So there you are: If the talented Refugee youth from camps and crowded attics are to study in high school at all, someone has to get them in into a boarding home. This is exactly what the Church is doing by combining high school with boarding facilities.

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This is a very important service in the Refugee field. The following pictures may give an idea both of the plight of refugee youngsters, the difficulties for the boarding schools but also the opportunities for real constructive service.

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I. Many come from camps.

A great many of the youngsters in the boarding schools come from camps of this kind. The stay in a boarding school however primitive it may be and however crowded, is still a wonderful break for the youngsters that have the good fortune of being accepted.





## II. New friends and new comradeship.

Many of the students in the boarding schools are orphans. Many of them have only either father or mother. And nearly all of them have memories of shattering war experiences or memories of postwar political persecution and a nerve-racking escape across borders.

The boarding school places them in a new setting of confidence. The shyness and fears often dissolve in the atmosphere of open comradeship and Christian concern in these boarding schools.





### III. Often primitive.

In most of the boarding schools interior equipment is primitive and accommodation crowded. Yet the rooms are always kept clean. But one wish which always comes up in conversations with boarding school leaders is this: "Since we have taken as many applicants as we can possibly take and know that we should take more we are anxious to get support towards expansion of our accommodation possibilities." Then they usually add: "And we are of course also anxious to get some replenishment of our primitive and worn-out interior equipment."





IV. Dormitory scene.

Some girls in a Christian boarding school in West Germany have lined up for a picture in front of their double-deck bunks.





V. What do orphans do when the holidays come ?

They take a job if there is one to be had.

Or they are invited to spend a few summer weeks at a Church-run recreation home - like these two boys at the Hilfswerk home Stettenfels, near Heilbronn.

The cans come from Churches in the U.S.A. as a contribution towards the household.



VI. They come from the dark.

They are gifted youngsters who would not have a chance to study had not this boarding school (at Passau) existed. They keep their clothes in old, fairly rickety army cupboards. The table has no cloth. A little more comfort certainly would not hurt.

But they are happy to have a "home", happy to be able to study.

To some of them it has all been like coming from the dark into the light.

It is our duty and privilege to help them take root in friendlier soil.



W I C H E R N - H A U S

Youth home in Lübeck.

Run by the Hilfswerk and Inner Mission  
of Lübeck.

August 1952.

Rev. Bengt Hoffman,  
Secretary for Germany & Austria,  
World Council of Churches,  
Department of Inter-Church Aid  
and Service to Refugees,  
Geneva, Switzerland.

Nature of school: Apprentice home.

Boarding capacity: 70 boys.

Message from the leader:

Yesterday I experienced again the frightful physical limitations of our situation. A young man from the East Zone had to leave our house after a 20 days' stay with us because it was not possible for financial reasons to maintain him here up to the point where his official papers would be ready.

At Easter two agricultural students, both of them from the East Zone, had to discontinue their studies for the simple reason that we couldn't find any money towards their fees. I should add that one of the youngsters in question is a person of rare integrity and moral strength, a person whom one would be particularly interested in supporting. He returned late from Russia, handed in his application for educational support two weeks after the deadline. Now he is left to his own ingenuity. From our side we have tried to help him by writing directly to Bonn, but on the basis of previous experience I must say that we have lost hope for success in such matters. We shall have to ask also this young man to leave our house and we shall do so with heavy hearts, for, in the last analysis, can you really carry the responsibility for such a decision ?

Another case, Botho, was at one time a Free German Youth leader and lived in East Berlin. He is sick in bed at present. We have tried in vain through official channels to find a doctor for him. We have tried, also in vain, to solicit other kinds of support for Botho. Of course, we help as much as we can. A kind-hearted private physician has agreed to look after Botho from time to time. But, alas, we do not have the possibility of giving the boy some little pocket money.

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Yes, the question of support for the youngsters from the East Zone is particularly burning. They had to escape from the East Zone and want very much to stay here in Lübeck because of excellent training possibilities.

A couple of days ago I visited the students at a State-run home for refugee youngsters. It was really a pity, Mr. Hoffman, that we were not in the position to show you that kind of accommodation during your visit here. The young men live on the top floor of a building right underneath the outer roof. They eat in families where they receive their food free of charge and fill in the gaps in that programme with what kind people may give them. There is no doubt in our mind here that these newcomers from the East Zone cannot take care of themselves financially. If we are not able to help them through free accommodation or accommodation at reduced prices in our home, many courageous plans for the future will founder.

The ideal thing would of course be a grant in the form of aid towards the reduction of accommodation costs. We count with 100 DM a month for board and lodging, that is minimum. It would be a great help if the youngsters could receive 50 % of that from a fund but we don't have the fund.

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The Wichern-Haus in Lübeck.  
An old patrician building acquired  
by the Church two years ago.





Evening entertainment in the Wichern-Haus.  
Many of the boys are orphans and most of them  
belong to refugee families.



There is a nice reading room where the apprentices  
can spend their evenings.



The kitchen personnel of the Wichern-Haus also belongs to the refugee category.



The food belongs to the items to which the apprentices themselves contribute through weekly payments into the general "pot". But there are some young men who make too little in the trade shop where they work to be able to contribute anything towards the household. This is the point where the leaders of the home find the greatest difficulties. Grants are needed. But where do you take them ?





In this room there are three boys. To them it is quite a luxury for they come from dismal camps, a crowded attic where their family is housed or an atmosphere of pressure and dejection in the East Zone of Germany.

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B I R K L E H O F

Boarding School in Freiburg, Black Forest, Baden.

August 1952.

Rev. Bengt Hoffman,  
Secretary for Germany & Austria,  
World Council of Churches,  
Department of Inter-Church Aid  
and Service to Refugees,  
Geneva, Switzerland.



Stories from Birklehof.

Rudolf Dietz:

Rudolf is 16. His father was killed in the war. His mother is now a refugee in West Germany and has two children. She is a charwoman in a hotel in the Black Forest and since she only has a very small room there the boy cannot live with her. It is an urgent case and Rudolf deserves every help. He is a boy of excellent character, honest and kind, a good worker, a good sport and eager to do his best.

Dorothea Josephy:

Dorothea was born in 1935. Her father was killed during an air-raid. It happened one day when he was trying to find a shelter during an air attack but being of Jewish descent, albeit of Protestant confession, he was not allowed to use air-raid shelters and bunkers and so he was hit on the street. Dorothea is now living in Germany under very poor circumstances. During the Nazi régime Dorothea was not permitted to attend school. Her intellectual gifts are extremely good. She is now one among the best in her grade. Her energy is most praiseworthy and her gift of adaptation considerable. The leader of the boarding school Birklehof in Freiburg (Black Forest) says: "We consider this case a very special obligation".

...

Michael Wegner:

Michael is now 17. Both parents were killed a few years ago in a car accident. His relations are helping him and his brothers and sisters as well as they can. Michael is a boy of exceptional gifts but the shock he received in connection with the death of his parents has left its marks and he needs much love and care. He now has found a real home in the boarding school "Birklehof" in Freiburg. He has a great talent for music. His teachers say that firm but kind personal guidance are necessary to help this very intelligent, sensitive and temperamental boy.

Gerbert Hübner:

His father was an engineer in the German air force during the war and now works as a mechanic. The family has no private holdings of any kind. There are three children. For the past few years a friend of the family has supported the boys' schooling but it is uncertain whether she will be able to continue. Gerbert is an intelligent boy with a keen sense of humor, great imaginative power, very popular in the school, good humored, but unruly. The headmaster says about him: "We expect him to become one of our best pupils as he grows up."

...



Ann-Margret Kley and her  
brother Walter Kley:

The children's father, a medical doctor, was a prisoner of war in Russia and recently came back with broken health. During his long absence his wife had settled in West Germany together with the children's grandparents. The family is absolutely destitute. West Germany abounds with unemployed doctors. After her husband's return Mrs. Kley lost the right to a very small but regular grant from a relief fund for families of prisoners still in captivity. Ann-Margret is a very lovable person, is very charming in her own way. Her health is delicate. She works with great energy in school and assists her mother with moving helpfulness at home. Walter is a dear boy who deserves help very much. "It is obvious to us that the bitter want of his parents burdens his mind and subconsciously bars him from being happy and carefree like other boys."

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THE REFUGEE HOUSING PROBLEM

AND THE CHURCHES.

Picture review on the German and Austrian  
situation.

Summer 1952.

Rev. Bengt Hoffman,  
Secretary for Germany & Austria,  
World Council of Churches  
Department of Inter-Church Aid  
and Service to Refugees,  
Geneva, Switzerland.



Seven years after the war millions of West Germans, most of them Refugees, still live in camps or other crowded, unsatisfactory emergency quarters.

These are the people who might be termed "the people behind the façade".

That is to say, the financial and industrial recovery reflected on the main streets of large West German cities with their well-stocked shops and well-dressed people is not the whole truth about the situation. In 1500 camps and in crammed attics, cellars and bunkers in cities, towns and villages you find people who can never afford to turn up on the main streets, let alone buy any of the nice goods displayed there.

Unemployed family heads and youngsters over 18 - the unemployment figure approaches one million, the widows and the disabled included - draw a small monthly grant from the Bonn Government providing they have been legally recognized by the authorities. The maximum grant is \$25 a month.

But 80 % of the new Refugees coming from the East Zone never get such legal recognition, consequently draw no Government grants.

Those of us who have recently visited places where "the people behind the façade" are living, are disturbed both by the utter inadequacy of present accommodation for hundreds of thousands of Refugees and by the destructive spiritual influences in that surrounding.

It seems to us that the initiatives taken by our German counterpart agencies in the field of housing must be encouraged and supported. There will be little inroad for moral and spiritual recovery in West Germany until an increasing number of disillusioned Refugee families are given a proper home.

But a home without work is of little use. The organizations that are helping Refugees to get a new home, including our church agencies in Germany, make a special point of combining housing projects with already existing employment possibilities or the creation of new trades and industries.

...

An amount of DM 3000 as a loan from the Evangelical Housing Association in Germany releases a state loan of DM 10,000 and provides a Refugee family with a 3-room apartment in one of the housing settlements.

\*

In Austria where the housing problem of the Refugees is more precarious because of the poverty of the State, the Protestant Churches have started some significant housing projects which have in a very real sense become pilot projects. In 1951, 155 families were settled in new apartment houses thanks to the work of the Settlement Society of the Protestant Churches.

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The pictures that follow have not been dug up from archives of 1945-46. They were taken in the year of our Lord 1952.

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- 3a -

BARRACKS - BUNKERS -  
CELLARS - THE LIFE OF  
REFUGEES .



1. Seven years in barracks.

A view of barracks in Camp Harber, near Soltan, Germany, in which 300 Volksdeutsche Refugees are living.





2. Bunkers-accommodation of a kind.

This is Oker Bunker, a former air-raid shelter in Braunschweig, Germany, half-buried under the ground, in which 260 Refugee families are living. Bunkers are without windows or proper ventilation, and 1/4 of the people living inside have active tuberculosis. Conditions like these are among the worst Refugee situations in Germany.



3. "A cellar is my home".

The postman brings no mail to No.19 Herzog Heinrich Strasse in downtown Munich, but three Refugees are living there today, in a damp, windowless, electricity-less cellar without benefit of plumbing. Uncounted thousands of isolated Refugees are living under similar circumstances throughout Germany.





4. "We had a nice home once."

A Volksdeutsche Refugee woman looks out the door of her shed-like "home" attached to a barracks too-full to hold her. This is in camp Harber, just outside Soltau, Germany, where 300 Refugees are living today.



5. Their world is a damp, old mill.

This Refugee family lives in an old mill just outside Cham, a few miles from the Czech border. The family formerly lived in Hungary but was expelled in 1945. There are two small rooms in the mill. Water from the mill-stream dampens their bedroom floor all through the winter forcing them to sleep in the kitchen.

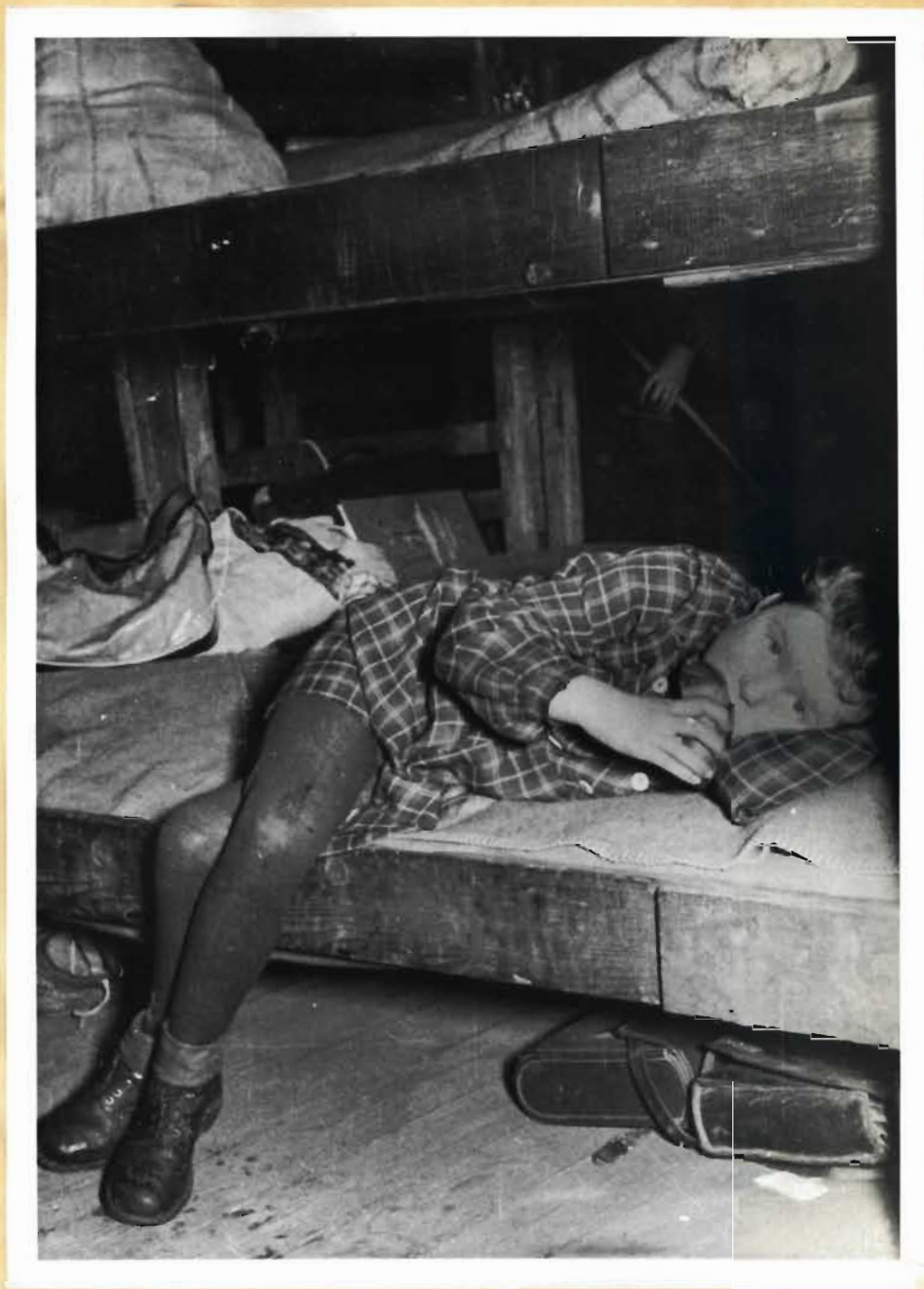
It does not happen every day that they receive nice gifts as the ones you see on the picture. On this particular day a German relief worker (left) paid a visit to them as guide for some foreign guests. All the children know, is a damp, drafty old mill.





6. Barrack privacy.

For 5 years twenty Refugees have lived in this space, 9 ft. by 9 ft. in each unit.



7. Just home from school.

"Home-life" for this little Refugee girl upon returning from school each day means sitting on a cramped double-decker bunk, trying to study her lessons in dim light amid the noise of two dozen other families living under the same roof. Shown here munching on a crust of bread, this little girl lacks little ambition to "get ahead" in school. For what purpose, when life will only be a continuation of the sardine-can existence she has ever known ?





8. Waiting.

Refugees who have crossed the border illegally into West Germany sit hopefully in Germany's largest camp for illegal Refugees at Uelzen. More than 2,000,000 illegal fugitives seeking freedom have gone through this sprawling Refugee camp since the end of the war. Only 20 % receive "permission" to stay in the West. The remainder usually stay on, fending as best they can to exist, without benefit of official protection.



9. Pushed aside.

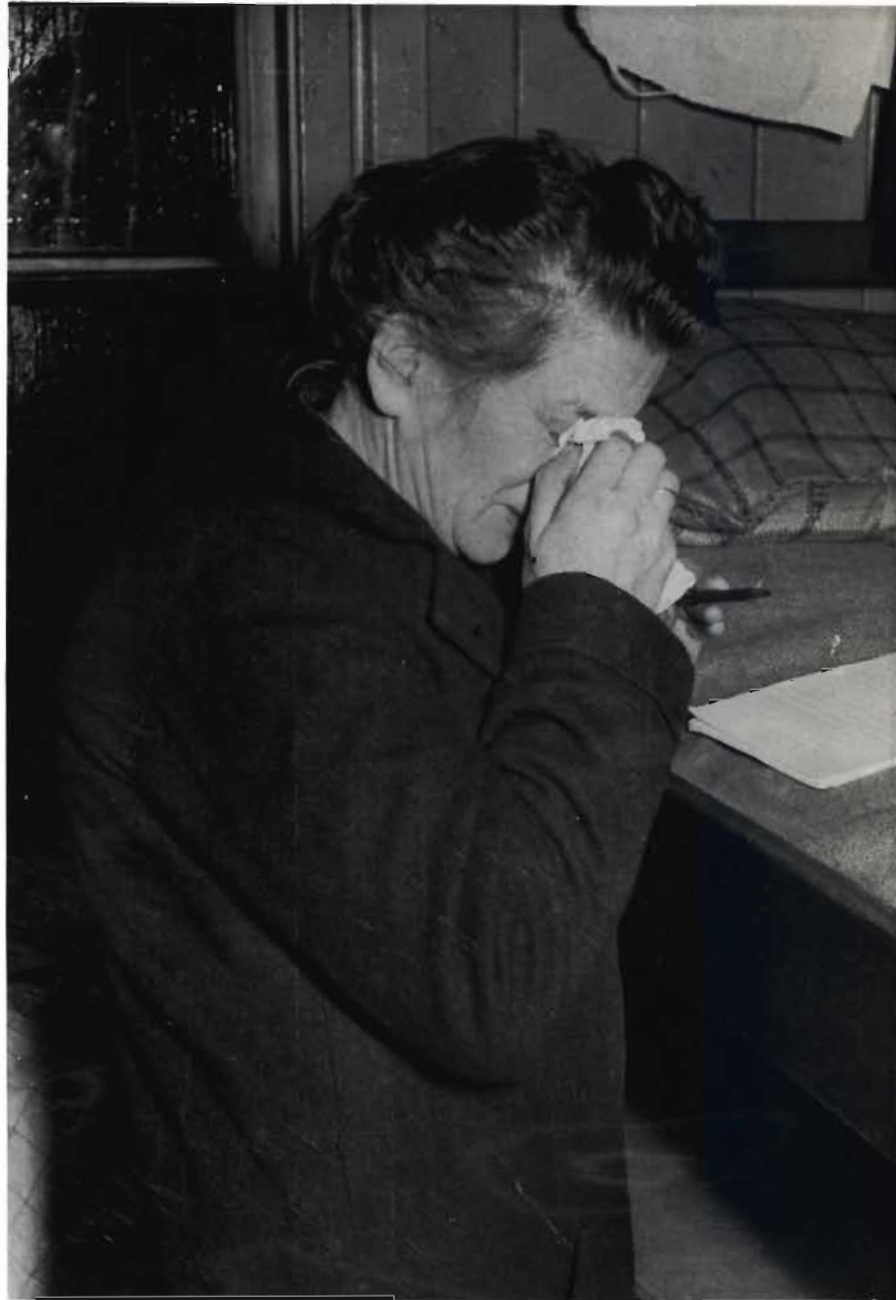
Herr Hartmann, 48, a Refugee from Danzig, ponders the hopeless future of his family in their one-room "home" in Lübeck. With five children, he and his wife live on \$8 weekly relief support from the city. Herr Hartmann has tuberculosis and has not been able to work for 3½ years. Before the war, he had operated a trucking company in Danzig. The family, expelled in 1945, has been in Lübeck ever since. Before contracting TB, Herr Hartmann earned a little cleaning the city's streets.





10. "A widow doesn't amount to much".

This is Frau Zimmer, a Refugee, who with her daughter-in-law and son and three grandchildren are living in a room in the cellar of a farmhouse a few miles from the East Zone border. The family lives in one room measuring nine feet by nine feet with a low ceiling forcing anyone over 5½ feet tall to duck his head upon entering the room. Her son had been an orthopedic shoemaker like her husband. In 1945, the family fled from Posen, when grandfather died, and though the son knows the shoemaking trade, he had to leave his tools behind in the East. Now, he earns a few marks a week cutting firewood for nearby farmers.



11. "For us - slow death".

Crying bitterly from disappointment, this Refugee woman said just before this picture was made: "There is no 'life' for us Refugees, there is only slow, living death!"



- 15 -

NEW HOPE -  
REFUGEE HOUSING  
SETTLEMENTS .



12. From ammunition depot to housing settlement.

In many former ammunition depots of the Nazi era new settlements for refugees have been started and, simultaneously, new small industries created.

The earliest of these settlements is Espelkamp, north of Bielefeld in the British Zone where the Churches have played a very commendable and active rôle in the creation of community life, providing loans for settlers, setting up a Kindergarten and club houses for youth.

The picture shows some of the new buildings each housing four families.





### 13. Self-help.

Poor Refugee families may get a loan of DM 3000 from the Evangelical Settlement Association of the German Churches. That sum then releases loans from public funds up to DM 10,000. For DM 13,000 a Refugee family gets an apartment in a settlement house.

More often than not the Refugees themselves contribute to the necessary initial sum of DM 3000 (and thus reducing the size of the loan from the Churches) by putting in long hours of work on the construction of the houses.

Here is a picture showing Refugees doing their share towards the erection of a settlement house.

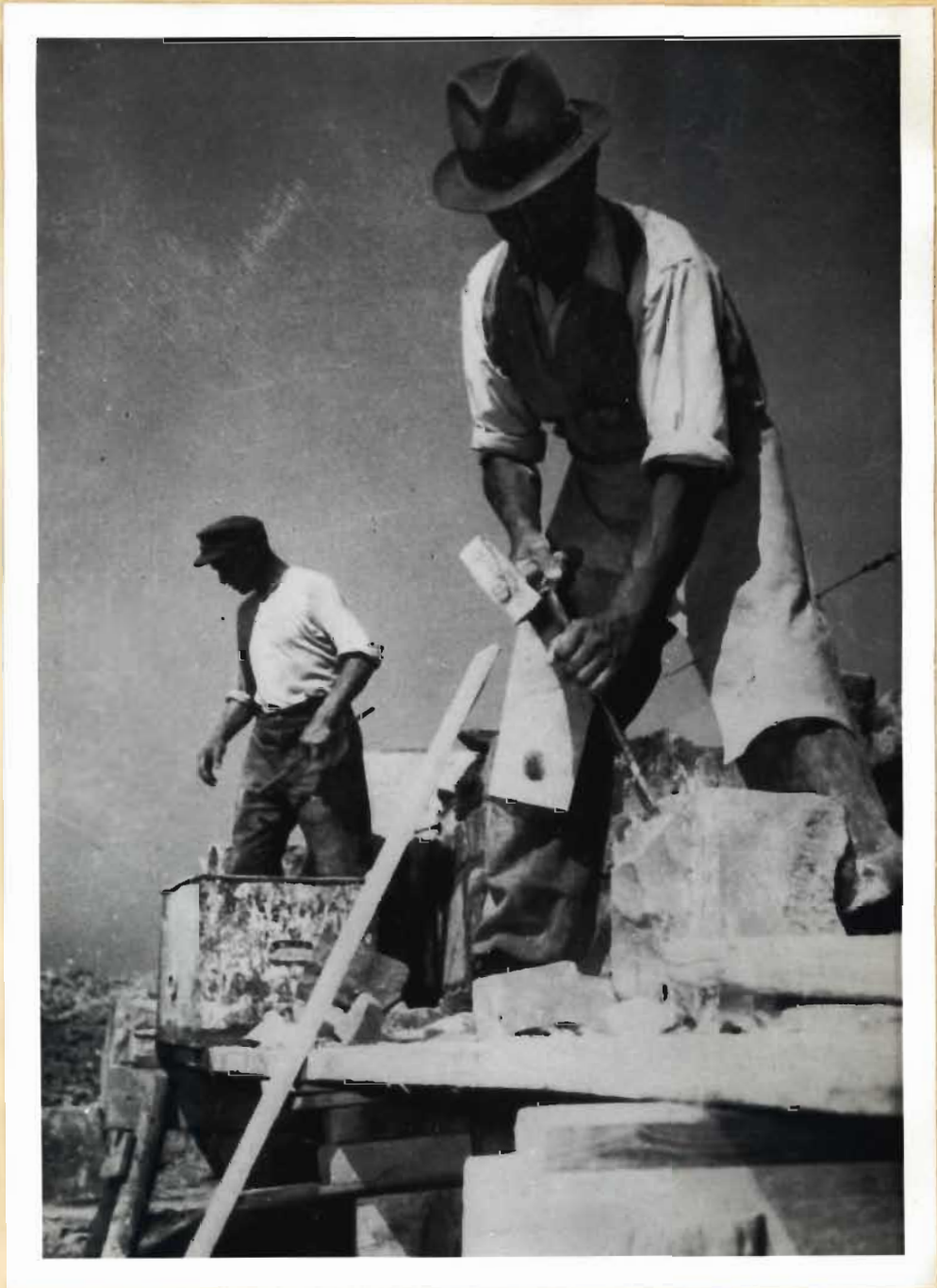




14. Team spirit.

Here again are Refugees working as a collective team on settlement houses in the church-sponsored Refugee village at Vilbel, Heilsberg, near Frankfurt.



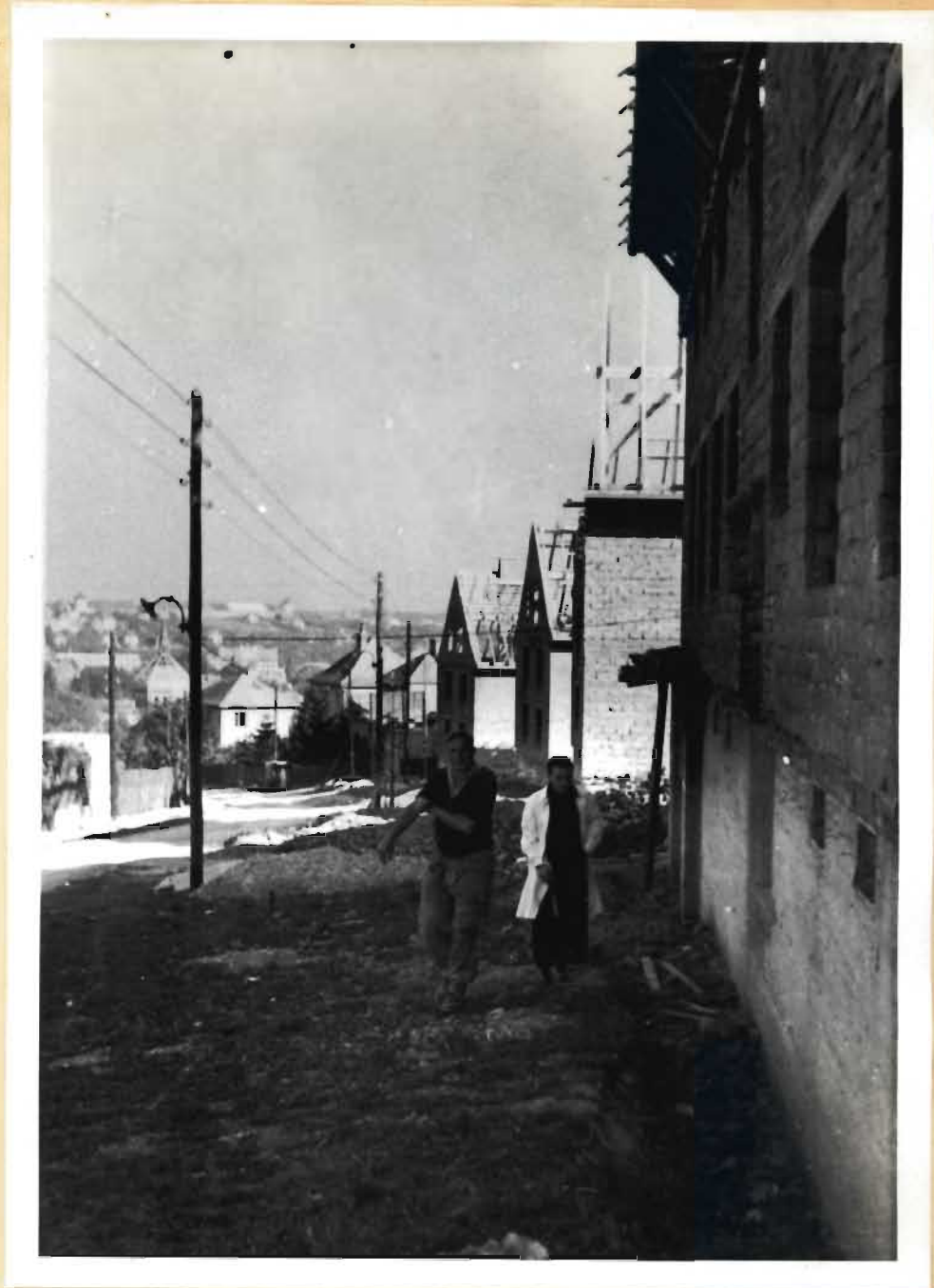


15. The Church buckling down to practical tasks.

The picture is from the church-initiated and church-sponsored Refugee village at Vilbel near Frankfurt.

The man closest to the camera is congregation pastor Krüger, like all the others putting in his day's work on one of the new houses for Refugees.

The picture of the pastor chipping stone is illustrative of the willingness and endeavour of the German Churches to help solve the serious Refugee problem.



16. Refugees settling on the outskirts of Vienna.

The Settlement Society of the Evangelical Churches in Austria has helped hundreds of Refugees to a new home and employment. In Salzburg, Linz, Vienna, Morzg such settlements now exist, are being planned for several other parts of Austria. The latter plans would already have been realized had it not been for lack of funds.

Here the new Vienna settlement is taking shape. Vienna in the background.





17. Vienna settlement soon ready for the Refugees.

Each house has 11 apartments and each apartment two or three small rooms and a kitchen.

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

NEUGNADENFELD

( " NEW GRACEFIELD " ).

Land reclamation venture in West Germany.

Summer 1952.

Rev. Bengt Hoffman,  
Secretary for Germany & Austria,  
World Council of Churches,  
Department of Inter-Church Aid  
and Service to Refugees,  
Geneva, Switzerland.





1. Slave camp that became Refugee settlement.

These barracks on the moors in Western Germany once constituted a slave workers' camp, and later, Russian prisoners of war were housed here.

Now the majority of the new Refugee settlers, who are German Moravians from Poland, live here.

The peat bog around the camp has been turned into soil. The 900 settlers have worked as a team to bring this about. However, the present possibilities of land reclamation have been exhausted and there are 40 young men and women for whom no work can be found in Neugnadenfeld.

It is hoped that money can be found to start up some small industries, in order to keep these young people within the community.



2. From peat bog to soil.

It took real enterprise and energy to tackle the task of converting peat into fertile soil.

An especially constructed plough dug through over a yard of peat and several inches of sand. Sand and peat were mixed, fertilizer added, and two years ago the settlers had their first harvest.

Ten farms are now spread over the new acres of land. In addition, fifty small one-family houses have been built, for families where the husband is employed in the vicinity of the camp. Some of these cottages - surrounded by a garden, and containing extra space for a cow and some pigs - are seen in the background.





### 3. New pastures.

For hundreds of years the peat moors at Neugnadenfeld, north of Bentheim, near the Dutch border, lay deserted and unused, except for occasional peat digging.

To-day, cattle graze on real pastures. The soil is good enough for growing rye and oats, potatoes, strawberries and peas, but, however, not, quite good enough for wheat.

"But", say the Moravian settlers, "wheat or no wheat, we are happy to have a home again and we are getting along rather nicely."



4. Can they stay with them ?

Some of the young settlers have been labouring in the co-operative working teams to create soil and new homes on the old peat moors.

The present possibilities of reclamation exhausted, they face unemployment, like 30-40 other youngsters in Neugnadenfeld.

The question put to us is this: Can we help the courageous and encouragingly active refugee settlement of Neugnadenfeld in West Germany to create some small industries to give employment to these young people and to keep them within the community?





From camps



through  
self-help



to a real  
home and  
employment  
- - -

That is the story of many thousands of Refugees, helped by the Churches to help themselves. But many more are still waiting for the last picture to come true for them.



