

Cuba. Developments in Grenada provide an excellent opportunity for policy-makers in Washington to begin a much-needed dialogue with Havana.

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EXCURSUS 2

Stephen Brockmann on A GERMAN HISTORY LESSON

For three years now, as antinuclear demonstrations, petitions, and civil disobedience have increased in number and mass in West Germany, Germany and the Germans have been more and more in the news. The American press, including such liberal magazines as the *New Republic* and the *Progressive*, has shown a general tendency to treat this movement as a new phase of German nationalism. Further, it is portrayed as naive, anti-American, and forgetful of history. Why?

Since 1983 marked not only the three hundredth anniversary of the first German migration of America but also the fiftieth anniversary of Adolf Hitler's electoral victory, comparisons with Germany's past have been particularly strong of late. Yet in making comparisons between Germany of the world wars and the Germany of today, journalists overlook the most obvious "lesson" of all: Ironically, they accuse the *Germans* of being disorderly, of resisting authority! When groups of German citizens call the very idea of nuclear weapons evil, why are Americans so upset? Isn't this the sort of thing we would like to have heard from Germans fifty years ago? The answer, of course, is that resistance to Hitler is one thing, resistance to the U.S. another.

There is further irony in the fact that both the U.S. administration and the government of Helmut Kohl are attempting to use the celebration of the 1683 German migration to America as a means of fostering amity between the two countries and, thus, as a way of boosting support for deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe. West German President Karl Carstens, during a recent tour of the United States, urged acceptance of the weapons in the name of German-American friendship, and Vice-President Bush in Germany last June did the same. But those immigrants whose tricentennial is being used in this manner were Mennonites—pacifists—and some were escaping the draft in their own country. As Theo Summer has remarked in *Die Zeit*, there can be no doubt about whose side they would be on today.

Most of the Germans who demonstrate, petition, and commit acts of civil disobedience and have voted the Green party to prominence feel that what is at stake is more than a weapon here and there; it is Europe itself. Motivated by fear of what Herman Göring called "total war"—a situation into which Germans marched numbly and passively fifty years ago—they have overcome the inclination to avoid what can be seen as disorderly and "un-German." They are attempting to fulfill the vow of the post-World War II years, "*Nie Wieder Krieg*"—never again war.

Who, then, is being historically naive?

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EXCURSUS 3

Thomas Land on CURING AN ANCIENT ILL

The first human trials of a new vaccine against leprosy are now being conducted in Norway and India, and further trials are scheduled to begin soon in Britain and North America. Another vaccine recently tested in Venezuela produced spectacular improvement in the condition of three hundred patients suffering from the most acute form of the disease.

The human trials, expected to be widened considerably, are supervised by the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva. Excitement is high as scientists explore the realistic new prospect of the complete eradication of the disease, but they also caution that it might well take several years to establish properly the efficiency of the vaccine.

The progress comes none too soon. A recent report released in Geneva warns that "leprosy-control methods developed over the past thirty years may be rendered completely ineffectual" because the bacteria are becoming resistant to dapsone, an inexpensive and widely used drug. Thus far some twenty-five countries have reported dapsone resistance. A resurgence of the disease could still be prevented by multidrug treatment, but such treatment is too expensive for the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where most of the fifteen million leprosy victims live.

The present trials in Norway and those about to begin in Britain and North America involve the exposure of healthy males to leprosy. The Northern Hemisphere has been chosen for the trials because it is virtually free of the disease, the presence of which might confuse the research results. Amazingly, there is no shortage of volunteers. These trials follow a series of brilliant research breakthroughs in India, Canada, and the United Kingdom, ending the inability of scientists to produce laboratory cultures of the disease organisms or to encourage them in animals used for vaccine development. The new vaccine contains whole leprosy bacilli, a medical first.

In India, the vaccine is based on disease organisms killed by gamma radiation obtained from the wounds of heavily infected patients. Developed at the Indian Cancer Research Institute in Bombay, the vaccine has already been submitted for clinical trials there. A group of seventy-five heavily infected patients have responded well to the Bombay vaccine, with reversal of symptoms in 90 per cent of them.

The British breakthrough resulted from the discovery that the leprosy organism flourishes in the body of the tiny, rare, nine-banded armadillo, a bizarre creature native to the Americas. It has taken several years to obtain sufficient quantities of the leprosy germ extracted from infected tissues and to purify the material for human experiments. The new vaccine has been developed at the National Institute of Medical Research in London in cooperation with the Microbiological Research Establishment at Porton Down, England.

Leprosy is most prevalent in economically depressed areas, where large populations have no access to any form of medical care and live in conditions of malnutrition and squalor. The new vaccine may well play an important part in widespread future public health plans to eradicate the disease—but, to be effective, its application will have to be backed by radical economic measures to improve the basic living conditions of millions of people.

Thomas Land writes from Europe on global affairs.