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Preface

Presented here by Ulrich (Uli) Pfingstler, is a brief overview of the history of Germany, that includes both his experiences and personal accounts of his life as a child growing into manhood, in a very difficult time. We are grateful for his candor and honesty.

Uli, who at the time lived in Brackenheim, is a friend several of us knew while stationed at Charlie Battery on the Heuchelberg in the late 50's and early 60's time frame.

We are pleased and grateful for all of Uli's efforts, his contribution to the Charlie Battery historical record, which continues to ever expand, and the renewal of old friendships.

!... Vielen Dank Uli ...!



The Sixteen States of the Bundesrepublik of Deutschland

Capital and largest city: *

Berlin - 52°31'N 13°23'E

Official languages:

German

Ethnic groups:

81% Germans
7% other Europeans
4% Turks
2% Asian
6% others

Government:

Federal parliamentary constitutional republic

Legislature:

Upper house: Bundesrat
Lower house: Bundestag

Population

2010 estimate: 81,799,600[6] (16th)
Density: 229/km² (57th)
593/sq mi

Area:

Total: 357,021 km² (63rd)
137,847 sq mi
Water: (%) 2.416

Formation:

Holy Roman Empire: 2 February 962
Unification: 18 January 1871
Federal Republic: 23 May 1949
Reunification: 3 October 1990



* Source: Wikipedia - 2013

GERMANY

Language - Land - General History
by
Ulrich (Uli) Pfingstler

Language

Different designations for the word German/Germany all over Europe.

Example

German = Deutsch, Germany = Deutschland

Austria Österreich - Deutsch = officially, spoken: dialects, partly very different - depending on the region - for us: also partly hard to understand,

Skandinavia ... except Finland

Norway,

Sweden,

Denmark Deutsch = tysk, Deutschland = Tyskland

Finland Saksia - Lansa saksa

Holland Duits - Duitsland

Belgium Allemand, Allemagne (=French part)

..... Duits - Duitsland (= Flamish part) / Depending on the region

England German - Germany

France Allemand - Allemagne

Italy Tedesce - Germania

Spain Aleman - Alemania

Russia etc Germanski - Germania

(Slavonics)

Switzerland Schweiz - Deutsch - French - Italian - Old - Latin - Depending on the region. Very curious - Deutsch: The Swiss written and officially spoken language is Deutsch (depending on the region), in conversation they speak the so called "Swytzerdütsch" - an Allemanian dialect - even for us "South Germans" it is very hard to understand when they talk fast.

Ethnic Influences

Over the centuries different ethnological (later political) influences came over the present region of Germany which did also touch the language.

The basis for the language is due to Germanic. There were two main languages - the so called Niederdeutsch (nieder = low, spoken and also written in the lower situated territories of North - Germany) and the Hochdeutsch (high = hoch in the higher situated territories - South - Germany). Both languages existed beside each other in many dialect - variations. Netherlands (Nether = nieder = low - low situated / Holland - Dutch = came out of the Niederdeutsch).



Martin Luther painted by
Lukas Cranach in 1529

With the bible-translation by Martin Luther happened a religious and also (completely unintended) linguistic revolution. Luther (1522) translated the bible in the common "Kirchenhochdeutsch" of that time.

At about the same time Gutenberg created the "art of typography". So suddenly there was written and spoken in preachings etc. in this Hochdeutsch. The bible was printed and distributed all over. So more and more the Hochdeutsch developed to the official language. Before illiterate people they were more and more interested in reading the bible and so they became more and more interested in learning writing and reading... as illiterates they were much less dangerous to their regents...

The Niederdeutsch lost very much of its importance. It is still spoken in some regions of North - Germany. But beside this in the Hochdeutsch - Region (South) the dialects still exist furthermore...

Meanwhile there happened many changes also in the language - but the basis stayed the "Hochdeutsch" and is still the official language for writing and speaking. The grammar is discussed and laid down by scientists in combination with Austrians and Switzerlanders (not by law - even not in the German constitution).

With Napoleon (end 1815) there came much french influence in the language - even many french expressions till 1945. Since the end of world war II started much English into the language - after some "periods of up and down" this increased during the last 20 years - also due to the computer-language.

Now especially in business language but also in common expressions so very many Anglicizes have entered that you may sometimes think you are in England or USA...

German History - A Brief Overview

When we talk about Germany - Territory of history we think at the present territory. The political state "Germany" exists only since 1871.



Imperial Germany (1871–1918), with dominant Kingdom of Prussia in blue - Click image for larger view.
Klicken sie hier für große bilder.

Before it was a conglomerate of many little counties, duchies, church possessions, small countries. The emperor of all this was chosen by some privileged aristocrats or on the throne by heritage. He was instituted by the Pope of Rome (but only till Napoleon - who ruled Europe and so also big parts of the today - Germany and other countries (1805 - 1815).

After wars against political "competitors" like Austria (1866) and France (1870 - 1871) happened the foundation of Germany - dominated by Prussia (also the wars) which was a very mighty land (kingdom) in Europe at this time. The new emperors came from there.

It developed a time of great prosperity - industrializing, also produc-

tion of ships (for trade and also battle), establishing railways and their stations, car development and so building of streets and also big armament investments...

Germany became a very strong and mighty country within Europe - and so no fun for the other countries who wanted to keep their dominating part - at that time especially England and France (worldwide colonial influences)... Also there came up a great feeling for nationalism with too much pride... mixed with a part of megalomania...

No wonder they helped and initiated to start World War I together with Austria, which they lost (1918)... at last also due to the engagement of the USA troops (1917)...

Then came the Contract of Versailles which was a bad humiliation especially from France over Germany. It took away all possibilities of economical or industrial developments as well as any military power. This so called "gag-contract" was not signed by the USA Senate... They seemed to be very wise...

The economical circumstances after the war became unbearable - bad complete inflation, new currency, unemployment, poverty all over... and no wonder - much hate between France and Germany... also the helplessness of the politicians in the new democracy...

So the coming of a "mighty and strong man" was "programmed" - and he came - from Austria... (1933).

Due to a bad mistake of the parliament he won such a lot of power in record time. He wiped away the Versailles - Contracts as well as all the other restrictions of World War I. Also he started big programs against unemployment - especially by re-armament... And also he started increasing of a bad anti democratic regime accompanied by actions against all political opponents as for instance democrats Jail, tortures, "cleanings" with all means...).

They started a war as never known before and the coming generations had to suffer under the circumstances. They wanted to win the whole world and now Germany is just half as big / large as it was before (eastern part after reunification included).

The unimaginable balance of this war - about: - all involved nations - 55 Million dead or missing, further 50 Million amputated, widows, war-orphans, displaced persons, evacuations, unbearable destinies - completely destroyed cities, occupations (from Americans more help than occupation !!...)... a terrible "after-war" situation...

After the war our country was completely ruined and we got so much help and support from USA in every respect - officially, from private or christian organisations, from relatives of which we had almost nothing known or ever heard, also from military organisations, etc. - We had hunger, often nothing or almost nothing to dress, often almost nothing to heat...

I came to school in 1946 and I still remember we stood in a long row of the school yard waiting for food we got from American or German helpers - all organised and paid from Americans for months and more... Also they had organised halls where people could warm up in strong winters... we got support in political and economical respect like the Marshal Plan, Berlin-Blockade in 1948/1949, not to talk about the situations during the Cold War...

Manfred Rommel - son of the famous General Erwin Rommel in WW II - about 25 years long (1970s - 1990s) 1. Bürgermeister in Stuttgart, a great and much appreciated personality once said in conferences (and also wrote in a book): The American "occupants" after the war gave us help, supports in any respect, money, credits etc. without taking any penny from us - in whole history since centuries or more did this ever happen to a defeated people... Show me "occupants" alike...

And they did all this (never mentioned from any American) to a people which had started two world-wars with a very dark and sad latest history of dictatorship etc... Other occupants used to draw out of a defeated country whatever they could find and what was useful... Well: Americans took "Scientists, missile constructors (like Werner v. Braun...) etc.- but they seemed to like very much having been "drawn out" (even with families)... none of them refused...

Further: I should add two experiences, one of the region, the other of my own.

First, in Lauffen occurred one of the worst accidents of Germany in 1959 - A bus collision with the train coming from Stuttgart: 43 persons killed, a few injured - under the very first helpers who came were the ambulances from the American caserne of Heilbronn...

And second, at the North-Sea coast of North Germany (part of the Atlantic) from Hamburg westward in February 1962 there happened the most disastrous flood of Germany in last century - destroying the protecting dikes around Hamburg about 300 dead -

I was inserted there as Navy-soldier during my service time - already the next day after the start of the disaster the American helpers came with their helicopters etc. and they did a good job... although this region was out of their military jurisdiction...



The time since 1945 till today marks a completely new period of history. Foundation of Federal Republic (= West Germany, Bundesrepublik = BRD) and till 1990 German Democratic Republic (= East - Germany, Deutsche Demokratische Republic = DDR) both 1949. Big parts of Germany were taken or assigned by the Allies to Russia and Poland just after war... (also some because of historical backgrounds...).

Many Influences Were Coming In

At first - for older Generations - after long time of isolations - those horrible American things like Chewing gum, Coca-Cola, Blue Jeans, Boogie - Woogie, Jazz music, Rock'n Roll, "brutal" Western films ... And what a horror for the oldsters: young people liked all this - how much they must have become demoralized by such bad influences!!...

And these GI's: undisciplined soldiers, left Brides and babies, great promises, horror of some mothers, debts, fighting, drinking, throwing around with their Dollars like drunken sailors ... especially during the first five days after payday - Oh poor older people - how did they suffer from these bad wild Americans (but in spite of this somehow liked...). We had to integrate Millions: People who escaped from Russian troops

(1945), later (1946 and following...) people from the east who had to leave their homelands where their ancestors had immigrated generations, centuries before because of many circumstances like poverty, hunger, religion (but had hold their German identities) - like from the Balkans, Chekoslovakia, Russia, Rumania, Poland, Hungary...). - Meanwhile their German had changed or was often still at the standard of immigration.

They all came with their different pronunciations, customs, completely poor (with nothing but that what they could carry on their backs, with little children at the hand...) catholics to protestant regions as well as contrary - directly after the war in a very poor country - overcrowded, destroyed cities - so few possibilities of living or only very primitive housing... and not so much welcomed because of own problems... Maybe between two and three million came from the DDR - over the fences, through Berlin before the Mauer (wall) was built... -

Then in the years of very high prosperity there came workers from the southern part of Europe since the middle/end of the 1950s. Plenty of them stayed here and became good citizens, also their children - most of them very well integrated.

When this "wave" of south-Europeans stopped Turkish people came to work here - Now we got about three million of turkish nationality or turkish origin. Some of them are already in higher positions...

The economy in the DDR was completely unable and very mean organised compared to western methods absolutely unable and insufficient - almost everything was in state's possession and so in their organisation - lack of everything... One should add they had enough to eat and drink...

So when the reunification came (1989/1990) many "firms" had to close or reduce their personnel. Also people were anxious for "western" articles and goods... This meant also a reduction of their productions... So there happened a high amount of unemployment. Very many people came to the "West" to get work over here. So they also had to be integrated... Today the total population of Germany is about 80 million... Since the end of World War II there were at least between 20 and 25 millions of people integrated... The shape of the EX-DDR was ruinous - almost the whole country had to be restored and renewed.

Now Germany consists of 16 States (= lands= Lander - before 10). - Our land is BadenWurttemberg.

The two Lander - Baden + Wurttemberg - are united by election since 1952. Together with Bayern (Bavaria) and Hessen belongs it due to economy, production, trade etc. to the most prosperous Lander of Germany. - Ba.-WGrtt. did never get support from other lands - it did always support (pay) the others (since foundation of the BRD)... Firms like AUDI (in Neckarsulm - very close to Heilbronn), Mercedes, Porsche, Bosch etc. are in Stuttgart or nearby as well as producers serving them... The region "Greater Stuttgart" belongs to the most prosperous regions all over Europe - as publications say... Let's hope it will stay that way.

Although the time of "Cold War" here is not so much mentioned this entry should GI's explain and help understanding some more about Germany also why and because of what circumstances they did their service even here...



1871-1918

