

November 1953

Although space limitations do not permit us to report the many exciting AA regional conferences around the country, we are making an exception in the story of the very first AA conference on the European continent. The report is by an on-the-spot participant.

AAs Meet in First European Round-up

Wiesbaden, Germany—Avoiding any undue modesty, we wish to report that the First European AA Roundup was a howling success and we are darned proud of it! Perhaps, in terms of Stateside activities, the get-together here on September 19-20 might be regarded as "small potatoes." To the AA-hungry members scattered over the face of Europe, it was a tremendous event. Registration showed members from twelve different installations in Germany and three members and their families came from Verdun, France. The weather was terrible, of course, and some of them drove for many hours over those dangerous *autobahns* to get here. Others came quite a distance by train and the gang from Munich made it in a helicopter!

At the informal get-acquainted gathering on Saturday night, it was enthusiastically agreed that this should be an annual event. Overall problems were discussed and ideas exchanged on methods of combating the obstacles peculiar to the climate of Service life. Unless one has lived here, it is diffi-

cult to appreciate the problems with which the groups and members are confronted. The necessity for anonymity in the Armed Services, plus the reluctance of those in command to acknowledge that a rehabilitation program is either necessary or possible, combine to limit publicity to a minimum. The chaplains have proved to be our strongest allies in most instances and without them we would be truly stymied.

It might be interesting to note that the problem of difference in rank was deftly handled by having all the men remove their blouses along with their caps. Minus these identifying bits of apparel, you couldn't tell a Colonel from a Corporal and nobody gave it a thought.

Sunday noon brought the crowd back to 8 *Blumenstrasse* for a buffet lunch. This was followed by an open meeting, to which we invited the chaplains and a few other interested people, including a *Land Gerichtsrat* (German Judge) who is interested in AA for the German people. This

meeting was a truly thrilling experience for all of us. It was held in the huge dining hall of the old mansion, so perfect for AA activities and only incidentally the home of one of our members. As we sat and listened to the good old AA philosophy being given us by the speakers it was as if, for that brief hour, we were each transported back to our home groups in the U. S. Even those uncomfortable folding chairs lined up in rows were wonderfully nostalgic. For this was the first real meeting of this type any of us has experienced since leaving home, and the very first for some of our new members.

It must be appreciated that all our groups are very small and many of us are "loners." The listing in the International Directory looks very impressive, but with the constant shifting about in the Armed Services, it is often a case of "now you see it and now you don't." At the time of this writing, the only American groups we know of are those in Paris, Verdun, Metz, Munich and Wiesbaden. The largest is that in Verdun, boasting twelve at present. There are plans for groups to be started very soon in Frankfurt and Heidelberg and we are still making every effort to locate members here and there. Some grati-

fying results have been accomplished through the publicity we received on the Roundup.

Of course, Ann at General Service Headquarters in New York is doing a magnificent job of communication, but it is surprising how many people are unaware of that medium of contact. You Stateside members can be of great service in this respect. If you know of any AA who is in Europe, or who anticipates coming here, ask him/her to write to Ann, Box 459, Grand Central annex, New York 17, N. Y. She will pass the word along and someone here will follow up.

All in all, we feel that the Roundup was another AA milestone. While all AAs understand the inspiration and heart-warming derived from such a gathering, it is also felt that this event should stimulate and strengthen the movement of the program in this part of the world. It is our purpose and our resolve that, by our continued efforts in this direction, we may not only receive the personal benefits of sustained sobriety, but also serve to strengthen the roots of AA on the continent. We would like to feel that, in true tradition, this heritage shall be passed on and on in "apostolic succession."

E. H., Wiesbaden, Germany