

# German People Show Keen Interest in Race Problem

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--BERLIN, Germany, April 3.—Several days ago I was invited over to Dresden, Germany, to deliver a speech

on "The New Negro in the United States of America." The group which extended the invitation are the leaders of the German student movement. I had expected the affair would be very simple; that I would be greeted by a few interested and curious individuals; that I would have a quiet little setup from my work and return, but to my surprise a crowd of the city's dignitaries



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turned out—members of consulates, educational and business leaders—and at the end of my speech a member of the city of Dresden opera sang some southern songs. It happens that she is the only American who is a member of a German opera.

The interesting thing was not that a great number of people attended the meeting. It was rather some attending experiences. In the first place, the chairman of the meeting outlined in a letter the points which he wanted me to treat: The Negro's activities in literature, art and music; specific problems with which he has to contend, developments toward the solution of them; the most sensitive points in the present situation; the relation of the Negro in America to Negroes in other parts of the world.

I was convinced at the very start that the interest in the subject was much more than mere curiosity.

The following are among the incidental experiences:

A very enthusiastic man, who is in the early 30s, told me how glad he was to have heard Robeson, who sang in the city some time ago. He went on to say what he had said to Robeson, that it was so meaningful to have Negroes themselves to appear before European audiences in person and through their personal demonstration to prove the justice of their claims for justice and opportunity.

A former member of the ex-Russian emperor's government asked me which of the great governments were more friendly to the Negro than others. Shortly afterwards his son told me of the pride with which some of his relatives claim some strains of Negro blood; how the Russian Negro poet found favor in the highest circles and how that Russia has no record of color prejudice.

A member of the group had lived a few years in several sections of the United States. He had just recently received a letter from a Southern girl who is showing some signs of conversion on the matter of her regard for Negroes. Until the present time she could go no further than loving the "good old mammy." The news which he broke was of interest. I

wondered, though, if the distance had any effect upon the change in attitude.

Still another of the very interesting members of the group was actually disturbed about the practice of forced separation of the races in public places in so great a portion of the country. He could not understand it. His two questions were how can a civilized country allow and practice such, and how do the Negroes react to the practice.

The United States consul in Dresden is a Southerner. I do not know from which state. A friend of mine in Dresden tells me of the old Southern songs which he likes. He was present at the meeting, but he did not come to shake hands. Some one said that he did not like the speech. The same person remarked that he could not have been nearly so moderate in making such a presentation.

The people generally think that American Negroes are not actually Americans. They ask what language they speak, how they live and some even ask what sort of clothes they wear. A few days after returning to Berlin I received a letter from a man in Dresden asking if it were really true that Negroes in West Virginia have recently begun publishing a newspaper in the German language.