

Opinion/Commentary/Letters

W. Germany's nuclear problems

By GUNTER HAAF HAMBURG, WEST GERMANY —One day in December 1975, two men claiming to represent an oil company persuaded a farmer's widow in Lower Saxony, in the eastern part of the country, to let them explore for petroleum under her land. The deal turned out to be a serious setback for the West German nuclear industry.

Four neighbors, investigating the credentials of the men, discovered that their objective was not oil. They intended to probe a thick underground salt layer ideal for the disposal of radioactive waste. If found suitable, the site was destined to become one of the world's biggest nuclear waste dumps.

Residents of the area, hostile to the project, protested to the state government of Lower Saxony. The project has consequently been shelved, at least for the moment.

As a result, the courts have banned the construction of new nuclear power plants until the problem of burying dangerous atomic leftovers can be resolved. So the West German nuclear energy program has effectively been halted.

The project for Lower Saxony, as originally conceived, would have dealt with the sensitive issue of nuclear reprocessing and waste disposal. It called for the construction of a huge reprocessing plant on top of an atomic waste burial site. In this way, radioactive residue would pass directly into a nuclear cemetery secure against terrorists, technical failure and human error.

Experts have been experimenting with the question of nuclear waste for years. Pilot installations were built at Karlsruhe and over an old salt mine south of Brunswick. But the Lower Saxony facility, scheduled to cost \$4 billion, would have dwarfed these experimental efforts.

Its proposed reprocessing plant would have been able to handle 1,400 tons of highly radioactive material annually. The nuclear dump in the subterranean saline formation was expected to absorb 3,500 cubic feet of the most dangerous nuclear waste by 1990.

The enterprise was complicated from the start by the issue of financing. Under West German law, the government is obligated to assure that nuclear waste is safely treated, but private industry is supposed to pay for actual disposal projects. This led to tough negotiations between

the government and nuclear energy firms over money.

At the same time, the plan became entangled in political conflicts between the central government run by the Social Democrats and the state government of Lower Saxony under the control of the opposition Christian Democratic party.

Added to all this was the discovery by the farmers of Lower Saxony that their region would be the location for a stupendous nuclear operation. Their protest has not only delayed that project, but it has triggered opposition to other nuclear developments, and the nationwide debate on the subject has now become polarized.

The brunt of this opposition, which emerged last year, hit West German proponents of nuclear energy at an inopportune moment. The industry, which had just signed a \$5 billion contract to provide Brazil with eight reactors and other atomic facilities, was coming under pressure as a consequence of official American attempts to halt the proliferation of nuclear technology to potential producers of bombs.

During his recent trip here, Vice President Walter Mondale stressed in talks with West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt that the Carter administration is especially hostile to the spread of nuclear technology.

This pressure from the United States has been critical, since West Germany's nuclear industry had ex-

panded its capacity to manufacture reactors not only in hopes of supplying rapidly growing domestic needs but also in order to export nuclear plants. Now the prospect of diminished foreign sales aggravated a declining internal market.

Some years ago, when nuclear energy programs were still in the blueprint stage, it was expected that they would furnish West Germany with 25 per cent of its electricity by 1980. Present estimates are that 13 to 15 per cent of the country's power will be nuclear by that year.

The slump is due in large measure to the activities of citizen groups that have succeeded in focusing the attention of the public on the safety and environmental hazards involved in nuclear energy production.

Last November, for example, police clashed with demonstrators protesting against the construction of a nuclear power plant at Brokdorf, in the state of Schleswig-Holstein not far from here.

The press sympathized with the demonstrators, and a state court ruled a few weeks ago that the plant could not be built without guarantees that its nuclear waste could be buried in the Lower Saxony project, which has also been postponed because of protests in that region.

Similar demonstrations have taken place in the city of Hannover to protest against plans for a nuclear waste project in the Ems Valley. This opposition has held up the con-

struction of other reactors in other parts of the country.

Chancellor Schmidt is committed to the development of nuclear energy. But because building permits are granted for nuclear installations by state governments on a step-by-step basis, the over-all plan can be stopped by one obstacle along the line—as, indeed, it has been.

Until recently, there seemed to be a light at the end of the tunnel for West German advocates of nuclear power. But now, it appears, the light is red.

Haaf writes on scientific and technological issues in West Germany.

New play not really 'obscene'

Editor: I would like to point out an inaccuracy in the article in Wednesday's Battalion entitled "New Playwright is Born." I am that "playwright." The inaccuracy was not, I think, a malicious misrepresentation, but was nonetheless misleading.

The article said that I "admitted" that there was "quite a bit of obscenity." I never said that, and it is simply not true. Here Comes th' Rain is not an obscene play. There is no nudity or perversion in it. It is a play about life and love and the pursuit of meaningful happiness.

What I did say was that there is quite a bit of strong language in the script. (There is less strong language than there was in One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest.) My dad, the Baptist Preacher, has an especially low tolerance for swearing, especially if you say "God."

Which, I think you'll agree, is a horse of a very different color from a

play so obscene that the playwright/director's father would walk out on it.

I do recommend parental discretion regarding the attendance of young children, but only concerning the use of language which is MUCH milder than you'll hear in a dorm or locker room.

Finally, I am grateful to The Battalion for their positive and cooperative attitudes. Thank you, you're good Ags.

—Beau Sharbrough, 76

Take advantage of art offerings

Editor: A student today most likely comes to college to prepare himself with training necessary to acquire a practical occupation, typically, an

eight-to-five job. But is that all it offers — meeting expenses, getting a second car and maybe a vacation home?

Thank Perfection, No! There are languages, histories, philosophies, and the abstract sciences. These liberal arts. Add music, visual forms, literature and dance, and you have fine arts.

Liberal arts seek to provide understanding of human culture while the fine arts try to make a supplement or counteract the wear of nature. Together, liberal and fine arts add color and meaning to a individual's otherwise routine work.

The arts are the soul of man because he portrays himself in life. Therefore, I believe any student who fails to insert some form of the arts into his educational curriculum excludes himself from the joy of discovering his place in human culture.

— Pamela Elmore

Science-fiction writer prolific

By JOHN TYNES

If you think you'd be able to spot Frederik Pohl on the street just because he's a science fiction writer, you're wrong. He looks and talks just as normal as anyone else.

But underneath the normal exterior is a personality that has established Pohl as a major figure in the science fiction world.

He is author or co-author of more than 50 books and is the only person ever to have won the Hugo, science fiction's top award as both an editor and as an author.

He has edited more than 30 anthologies, contributed to more than 200 periodicals, made more than 1,000 lecture appearances and more than 600 appearances on radio and TV. He is science fiction editor for Bantam Books.

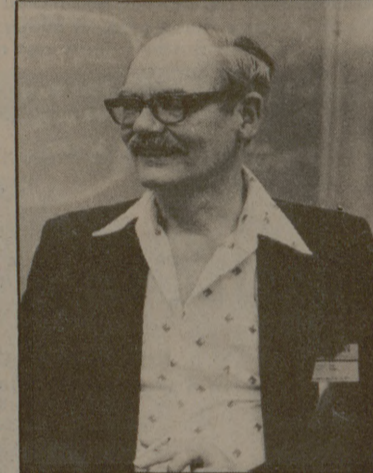
Pohl is the guest of honor at AggieCon VIII, the science fiction convention being held at Texas A&M this weekend. In an interview yesterday evening, he discussed some of his feelings and ideas about science fiction.

Science fiction is the only type of fiction that is growing "because it's more fun to read than other kinds of fiction," Pohl said. He also said that science fiction is one of the few types of fiction to deal directly with reality.

"It's a literature-change and the reality of the present is change. Things change very rapidly, at an accelerating rate."

The tall, soft-spoken Pohl said he thinks science fiction is achieving wider acceptance now than it used to.

"I think most people still think it's weird...with some justification," he said. "But I think a lot of people



Frederik Pohl

have come to consider it a lot more respectable than they used to.

"For my tastes, I think it's a little too respectable," he added with a smile. "It was more fun when it was vulgar."

Pohl said a lot of writers begin to worry about their image too much as they are taken a little more seriously.

"The more self-conscious you are about it, the harder it is." He has had a long history of involvement with science fiction.

"I started off reading science fiction when I was ten, started trying to write it when I was 12. I wrote a poem when I was 15, it was accepted when I was 16, published when I was 17 and paid for when I was 18. That was my first sale."

Another smile, "I didn't waste the time going to college. I've taught at some colleges but I never attended one."

Slouch by Jim Earle



"THIS IS JUST TH' CAUSE WE NEEDED — LESS SERIOUS THAN WAR, EASIER TO UNDERSTAND THAN INFLATION, SIMPLER THAN ELECTIONS, AND IT FILLS IN BETWEEN FOOTBALL AND BASEBALL SEASON, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!"

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