

Two little postwar German Hitlers

New outbreak of fascism gains recruits



Muenchow and followers. His guitar plays a Nazi tune.

High on one of the hills of the German town of Flensburg on the Danish border sits the city hospital. Down the corridors of the fourth floor, several nights a week, a group of uniformed "youths" tramp to a room in the rear. On the door, crudely inked on a sliver of cardboard, is the name: "Herbert Muenchow."

In the room, stuffy with ether fumes, 20 men and a girl met last week as they have for the past six months. They wore "Luftwaffe-blue" chambray shirts bedecked with strange insignia, black neckties and black trousers.

Muenchow, their leader, is a cocky gray-haired little man of 43 with a gaunt, leathery face. Over the left breast pocket of his uniform shirt is the newly designed badge—spread wings woven of silver thread against a gold background—of the self-appointed *Reichsjugendführer* (Reich youth leader).

Post-War Hitlers

A onetime Hitler storm trooper and bully-boy, he has collected a crew of about two dozen "youngsters"—aged 10 to 51—who march, hold "maneuvers" and drill in Nazi fashion. To this Muenchow adds a sympathetic "civilian" following of close to 175 more.

Muenchow's group is tied in with the openly pro-Nazi German Reich Party (DRP), headed by 51-year-old Wolfgang Hedler. He is a rabble-rousing anti-Semite whose bleating as closely parallels the noises made by Hitler as pronunciation of his name matches *Der Führer's*.

Hedler and Muenchow draw their followers from the victims of an almost insoluble economic plight. Approximately 60% of Muenchow's group are "expellees" from territories once German, now Polish. Others came from Soviet Berlin.

German Breadline. More than 1.2 million refugees and expellees, almost half of Schleswig-Holstein's population, are the blight of this northernmost of the West German republic's 11 Länder (states), in which Flensburg is located. Some 57% of the population is unemployed. From a meager state budget a dole of \$2.60 a week goes to single men; a drop-in-the-bucket \$3.60 to \$4.80 to married men, some with children.

Inefficient farming provides insufficient food; the state's feeble pre-war industrial potential was shattered during the war. In Kiel only one of four large shipyards is operating. One was destroyed by bombing. Two were dismantled by the British.

Muenchow claims to be Schleswig-Holstein leader of the DRP; Hedler claims he's not. But any observer with an ear for discords can tell both groups play the same Hitler tunes.