

Essex Chronicle
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Economic success

GERMAN CIRCLE.
— Members welcomed a new guest speaker to the January meeting, Dr Sigrid Fretlöh-Thomas, who presented the topic *Das deutsche Wirtschaftswunder-seine Geschichte und Konsequenzen*. Dr Fretlöh-Thomas traced the course of West Germany's economic progress in the 50's and 60's, describing the rebuilding of the industrial state after the war with help from the Allies, the Marshall Plan and foreign investors. She emphasised that the exceptional growth of the economy was not a miracle but the result of many factors which came together at the right time. The success led to problems — expectations were raised to such a height that, when growth inevitably slowed down, they could not be sustained and there was disillusion as the country looked back to its "golden years".

However, Germany remains an influential power, despite many difficulties and challenges which have occurred since the 60's, and the Deutschmark has remained strong throughout. Dr Fretlöh-Thomas gave an entertaining note to a serious subject by showing political cartoons of the time, which gave a snapshot view of the prevailing stereotypes and attitudes towards Germany. The discussion which followed the break proved that members had found the evening to be challenging and relevant, and that they appreciated the excellent presentation by the speaker. The Circle will be visiting Backnang at Easter for an exchange with the Volkshochschule, the town's adult education centre. There are still places available on the trip, which will be travelling by air from Stansted. The hosts will be keen to practice their English, so there will be no language problems, and the trip is open to all who are interested. For more information about the visit, or about the Circle's activities, please contact John Wilson on 01245 354079.