LETTER FROM BERLIN

JULY 26

I DON'T know who it was who, some fifty years ago, wrote a silly song about Berlin beginning "*Du bist verrückt, mein Kind. Du musst nach Berlin, wo die Verrückten sind*" ("You're crazy, my child. Go to Berlin, where the crazy are"), but whoever it was must have had the gift of prophecy. Arriving in Berlin from the relatively normal Western world is like entering a cheerful, bustling, extremely interesting insane asylum, where everything works fine, although—or possibly because—nothing makes sense. "Nobody here except the streetcar conductors knows where he's going," a Berliner said to me amiably and helpfully soon after I arrived, "but that doesn't keep us all from going there as fast as we can." Within the limits of Greater Berlin are a hundred and four miles of street boundaries between West Berlin, made up of the American, British, and French sectors, and East Berlin, the Soviet sector, officially called by the Russians the "democratic" sector. The word "democracy" is prominently displayed all over East Berlin; if, after becoming lost in the vast, bleak accumulation of rubble and ruins that constitutes the city, you see a poster that has the word on it, you can be pretty sure that you are somewhere in the Soviet sector. Americans are permitted to move freely in East Berlin—though few care to do so—but they are not permitted to go beyond, into the Soviet Zone of Germany. It's as difficult for an American citizen to get into Eastern Germany as into the "people's democracies" behind the Iron Curtain, except on special occasions, such as the Leipzig Fair or a sensational trial, when the East German government bundles a group of foreign correspondents together and takes them on a conducted and extraordinarily well-guarded tour into its bailiwick.

Of the city's total estimated population, 2,500,000 live in West Berlin and 1,000,000 in the Eastern area. Many of these people cross the boundary between the two areas ten or twelve times a day, for business or other reasons, and they don't forget for a moment that economically and politically the distance is as great from one side of a boundary street to the other as it is from Moscow to, say, Chicago. Each area has its own administration, police force, political philosophy, economy, and, most important of all, its own currency. Yet physically the city is still one city, in which streets, car tracks, subway lines, sewers, and gas pipes all ignore the border. Within the past six weeks, East and West Berlin have set up separate electric-power and water systems, and West Berlin no longer has to rely upon the whims of somebody in East Berlin who used to turn the power on and off as he pleased. The East and West police forces don't coöperate, except in big murder cases, when their *Mordkommissionen* get together to hunt down the murderer. It isn't surprising that after two years of this abnormal state of affairs, a sort of border psychosis has grown up among the people, perhaps the greatest mass schizophrenia of all time.

ONE day, in the course of familiarizing myself with Berlin, I hired a cab on Leipzigerstrasse, in East Berlin, and told the driver to go to the Städtische Oper, west of the boundary. I tried to engage the man in conversation but noticed at once the furtive look, the lowered voice, and the generally uncomfortable attitude I have found to be standard behavior in Communist-dominated countries. All this changed as soon as we passed a sign on Potsdamer Platz reading, "End of Berlin's Democratic Sector," and entered the American sector. The driver turned to me and explained apologetically that nowadays it isn't wise to be seen talking to strangers "back there," and he proceeded to talk a lot and with evident pleasure. He said he lived in Karlshorst, a suburb fourteen kilometres out of town, where the Soviet Military Administration of Germany has had its headquarters. "The S.M.A. is moving to Potsdam," he continued. "The East Berlin city administration has had to supply three thousand workers for the transfer. The S.M.A. is taking along everything, just like the Russians always do—telephone poles, wooden fences, a whole hospital, two movie theatres, barracks, and garages. Maybe I'll get my apartment back when the Russian officer who has it now moves out. Then I'd have a decent place to live, at least. What else have I got in the world? I'm broke. We East Berlin cabdrivers are all broke. We get paid in cheap East marks, but we have to buy parts for our cabs in West Berlin and pay West marks for them. The shops in East Berlin are empty. Last week, I paid sixty West marks for a new axle. That's three hundred and sixty East marks. It'll take me more than four weeks' work to pay for that axle."

When we arrived at the Städtische Oper, I discovered that in addition to my fare, I was expected to pay the estimated fare back to the East-sector boundary. My driver told me that the inexpensive East Berlin cabbies are not permitted to pick up passengers in West Berlin, since this would give them an unfair advantage over West Berlin drivers. West

Berlin cabbies, on the other hand, don't like to drive into East Berlin, where they will almost certainly be paid off in East marks. My driver took the money and said goodbye, and even as he drove off, I saw the open, friendly look vanish from his face and the old worried one replace it.

THE so-called currency reform of June 24, 1948, has affected life in Berlin more deeply than any post-war conflict of ideologies. Within a single year, the people of Berlin were confronted with five different currencies—the old Reichsbank notes; the bills put out by the Allied Military Government; the "coupon" marks of the Soviets; the German marks of the Deutsche Notenbank, in the Soviet sector, or DM-Ost; and the German marks of the Deutscherländerbank, in the Western sectors, or DM-West. Now the only valid currency in Eastern Germany and East Berlin is DM-Ost. In the West, it is DM-West. Officially, the East mark and the West mark have the same value. A factory job that is worth sixty West marks in West Berlin is worth sixty East marks in East Berlin. That would be all right if prices, too, were identical, but they aren't. On the black market, which sets the exchange rate, a West mark is now worth 6.2 East marks. At one time it was worth as much as nine.

The resulting confusion is worse than anything that the currency-confused people of Central Europe have ever before gone through, including the astronomical inflation after the First World War. A passenger takes a streetcar from West Berlin to East Berlin and pays twenty West pfennigs, and then returns on the same streetcar and pays twenty East pfennigs, which is only three and a quarter West pfennigs. (At the border stop on the eastbound trip, the West conductor gets off, taking his money with him, and an East conductor comes on, and on the westbound trip the process is reversed.) A haircut on the West side of a boundary street is six times as costly as a haircut on the East side. Naturally, many West Berliners cross over to the East side to have their hair cut, their clothes washed, their stomachs X-rayed, and their suits made and shoes soled (but they take good cloth and leather with them from the West), and to make phone calls and mail food packages to relatives in Germany's Eastern Zone. Other East Berlin bargains are hats from the city of Guben, vegetables, fruit, beer, and schnapps, and girls and other amusements. On weekends, the beerhouses and cabarets along Friedrichstrasse, in East Berlin, are crowded with West Berliners. It isn't considered patriotic for them to go there, and it doesn't exactly help the serious unemployment problem in West Berlin, but, as a West Berliner said to me, "Six glasses of schnapps are better than one, and where has patriotism got us in the past?"

"The front office got suspicious when a year went by and I didn't ask for a raise."

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This summer, when many Berliners are taking their first vacation since 1939, quite a few people from West Berlin have been going to the Baltic Sea resorts in the Eastern Zone, where they get a room and board for 7.8 East marks a day. That's thirty cents, and certainly reasonable enough, if they don't mind too much having the Russians and the German Volkspolizei, uncomfortably reminiscent of Himmler's S.S. guards, around. But, inexpensive though it seems to West Berliners, it's far from that for people whose wages are paid in East marks. A worker in West Berlin can live fairly well on his weekly sixty West marks (fourteen dollars and twenty-eight cents), but the worker in the Soviet sector who also makes sixty marks—but East marks (two dollars and thirty cents)—is facing slow starvation. For East Berliners who have the money, the food situation has improved considerably in the last year, although many items are still rationed and every day unhappy East Berliners, carrying battered valises, trudge over into West Berlin to supplement the supplies in their larders. They have to be careful about the change they accept; while the East mark circulates freely in the Western sectors, possession of the West mark in East Berlin is a crime.

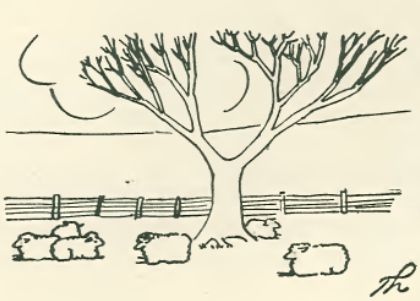
All along the hundred-and-four-mile boundary, one encounters scenes that should be a delight to Western propagandists. On the West side of a street, small, patchwork shops and market stands, put up almost overnight by free-enterprise merchants, sell choice products of what the Russians refer to contemptuously as the "Marshall Plan slave economy"—Danish butter, Italian cheese, American canned goods, Dutch cocoa, Swiss chocolate, bacon, poultry, fresh meat. (Actually, such goods usually reach Berlin not through the operation of the Marshall Plan but by way of dollar-grasping Soviet-aided black-marketeers, whose automobiles—costing

fifteen hundred dollars and up—with Swiss, Dutch, or Belgian license plates can be seen all over the Russian sector.) On the East side of boundary streets are desolate, state-owned Konsum shops offering rationed foods and things like iron sieves and Persil laundry powder, shoe stores that have shoes in their display windows but only empty shelves inside, and schnapps shops. And just in case one should absent-mindedly forget which side of the street is which, on the East side there are the blue-shirted, black-uniformed men and women of the Volkspolizei. All the Volkspolizei, including the women, are armed.

Although it is just as safe to walk on one side of a boundary street as on the other, most people seem to prefer the West side, even when there are no shops there. I asked several passersby about this phenomenon, and they looked surprised; they hadn't been conscious of it. "The West side is just *freundlicher* [more cheerful], I guess," one East Berlin woman said. West Berliners are, on the whole, shabbily dressed, but the majority of the people crossing over from the East side are conspicuously more shabby. They anxiously scan the prices in the windows of the shops, to be confronted by such temptations as half a pound of butter for the West-mark equivalent of twenty-nine cents, which at the H.O. (Handels Organization) stores, in East Berlin, would have cost them the East-mark equivalent of thirty-eight cents. But they are also confronted by the fact that no bargain is a bargain if one can't afford it.

Trade in East Berlin is all but monopolized by the Russian-owned H.O. stores, which require no ration cards and charge higher prices than the Konsums and are the German equivalent of Moscow's Mostorg shops and of the "commercial," unrationed stores in the "people's democracies." Among the wares I have seen on H.O. counters were fine Meissen china and beautiful glassware. I have also seen textiles and shirts and other clothes of poor quality, all very expensive. One of the strange accomplishments of the Soviet occupation authorities in Germany—attained by setting work norms and production quotas—is the lowering of the once high standard of the German worker's output to the mean standards of the rest of the Soviet sphere of influence; a great many East Berlin Communists buy their shoes, shirts, furniture, and other manufactured goods in West Berlin, because the quality is so much better there. Another peculiar aspect of the Russian occupation, and one that no amount of Marxist dialectics can refute, is that here in Berlin, where East and West meet, labor is much cheaper in the workers'-society area than in the capitalistic-society one.

Tension is continuous in the streets that mark the boundary between East and West Berlin. In certain ones that run through tough districts, where everybody loves a good fight and nobody stops to consider that the smallest scuffle may develop into an international incident, free-for-alls are common. Most of those started by West Berliners occur in the French sector, where the people pay less attention to their military police (French) than the residents of the American and British sectors pay to theirs. Some of the incidents are undoubtedly initiated by *agents provocateurs;* others are a result of the West Berliners' emotional urge to get in a lick at the hated regime on the other side of the street. I was a witness to one such melee on Bernauerstrasse, which is part of the boundary, not far from a big sign on the East side of the street reading, "PEOPLE OF WEST BERLIN! HERE BEGINS THE SECTOR WHERE EVERY CITIZEN CAN SET DOWN, FREELY AND UNOPPOSED, HIS SIGNATURE FOR THE OUTLAWING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB." The rumpus started, for no apparent reason, about six one evening, while both sides of the street were crowded with peaceful strollers. Suddenly, hostile groups formed, there were angry shouts, and then stones were thrown. Near me, a ten-year-old boy picked up a stone that must have weighed ten pounds. An elderly man told him sharply to drop it, and the boy obeyed reluctantly. The man said to me, "We're always the ones who throw the first stones." He looked at the Volkspolizei across the street and added, "But they're the ones who fire the first bullets. Most of the people you see here have gone through two wars in their lifetime, but they will never grow up politically."



THE propaganda battle for the minds of Berlin's inhabitants is waged with much enthusiasm by both sides, to the great amusement of the cynical Berliners, who believe neither one nor the other. Considering, however, that the Americans are relatively new at a game of which the former *Gauleiter* of Berlin, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, was the undisputed master, they are not doing badly. The American-edited Berlin edition of *Die Neue Zeitung* is certainly better and far more popular than its Soviet counterpart, the *Tägliche Rundschau*, which looks very much like Goebbels' old *Völkischer Beobachter*. Berliners say that they regard the *Tägliche Rundschau* as extremely useful for wrapping up ration-free fish. (Berlin, by the way, has been spared the small, vicious Nazi newspapers that are cropping up all through the American Zone of Germany, right under the eyes of the occupation authorities.) No one can ignore the considerable abilities of Professor Gerhart Eisler, Eastern Ger-

THE GHOST OF AN EDUCATION

Muzzy with drink, I let my humor recline
By the river border, watching satire dip,
First as a summer streamer, next a whip
Cracked at the surface, then a fishing line
Pulling the past reluctant from its bed
In vague and tangled shapes. Odd fish, half-dead
Bogies, and old disguises worn no longer
Dripped up, now honest scarecrows. Admiration
Saw last an ancient horrifying conger,
The long lie that was my education.

Assurance gone, satire began to quiver
Till it broke, and the thing hauled up fell back in the river,
Where it lives, with the price of my freedom on its head,
Scaring strangers, slowing the current, fouling the bed.

—JAMES MICHIE

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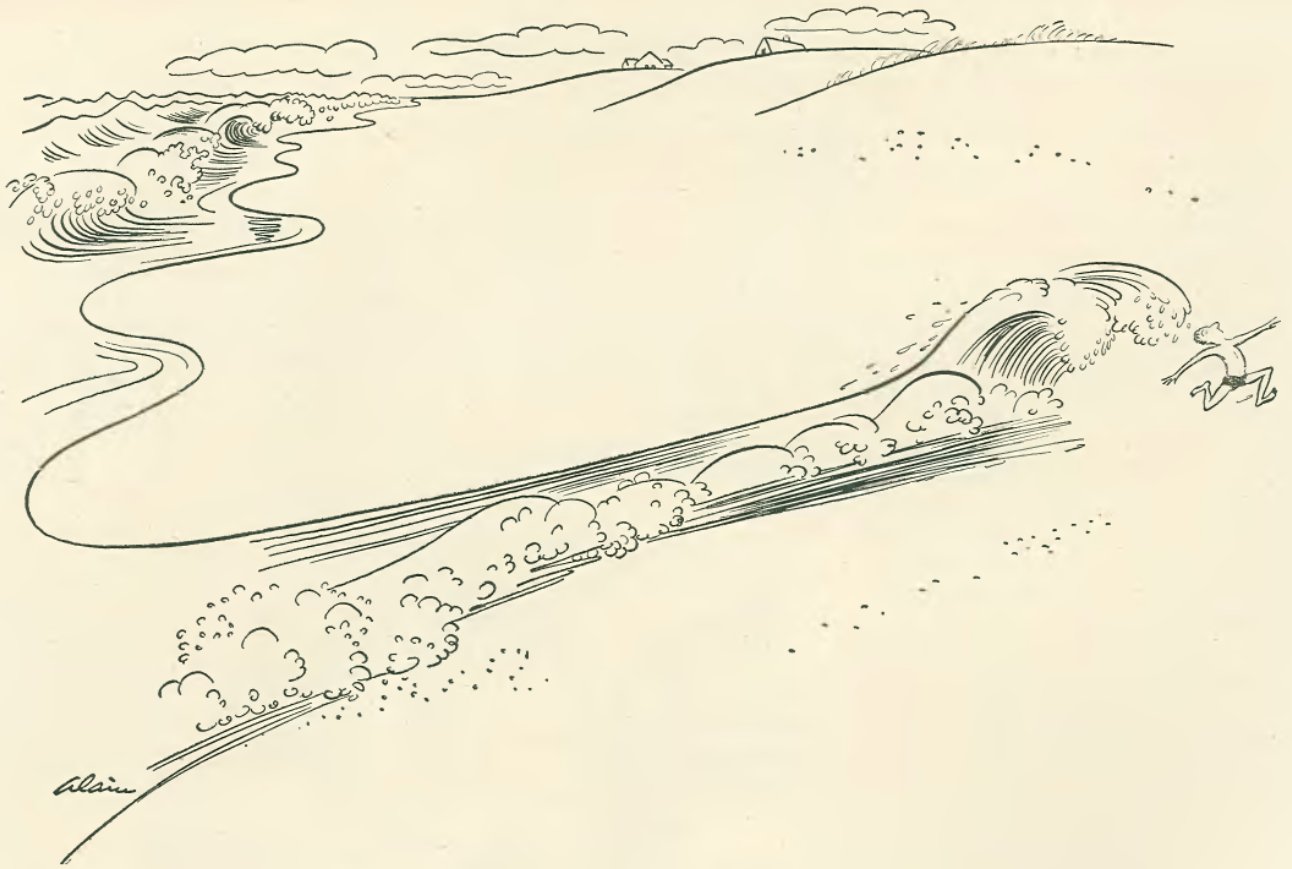

many's propaganda chief, who is credited here with the authorship of the Great Potato Bug Mystery, which has made Colorado the most talked-about state in the Union, but even Eisler has not succeeded in persuading East Berliners to read their own papers, even though Western papers are strictly *verboten* in East Berlin. The East Berliners cross the boundary and read the American sector's nonpartisan *Tagesspiegel* or the British sector's Socialist *Telegraf*, which has taken over the plant, though not quite the mass circulation, of the defunct *Morgenpost*, which at one time exceeded eight hundred thousand. (The *Telegraf's* circulation is more than three hundred thousand, however, or one copy for every eight West Berliners.) Everybody in East Berlin listens to the excellent programs of RIAS, West Berlin's American radio station. The American-sponsored monthly literary magazine, *Der Monat*, ably edited by Melvin J. Lasky, of New York, has within two years come near realizing its ambitious program—"to be a forum of open-minded discussion, based on free exchange of opinions from the most divergent groups of thought in Germany and all parts of the world." The Congress for Cultural Freedom has demonstrated to Berliners the value of open-minded discussion, and the Free University, in the suburb of Dahlem, a part of the American sector, is another step toward achieving it.

The Free University was established, with American assistance, on December 4, 1948, after it became evident that the once great University of Berlin, on Unter den Linden, in the Soviet sector, would soon have no more freedom than it had under Hitler. From an initial enrollment of twenty-one hundred and forty, the student body of the Free University has grown to more than five thousand, and it would be much larger if it were not restricted by lack of space—it is temporarily carrying on in what were several small private residences—and by lack of money. The university has departments of medicine, law, philosophy, political economy, and social science. Thirty-six per cent of its students were born in what is now the Soviet Zone of Germany, and another five per cent in the Russian sector of Berlin. Twelve hundred students and twenty-six professors have shifted to the Free University from the University of Berlin, and hundreds of other students have come from the formerly renowned universities of Jena, Leipzig, Halle, Greifswald, and Rostock, all now under Russian domination. The purpose of the Free University was clearly outlined last year in a speech made by Professor Theodor Heuss, the President of the West German Federal Republic, when he received an honorary degree from the institution. "The universities must not be drilling grounds for one-sided convictions, as they were at one time," he said. "Do we want this to happen again? The Free [meaning "independent"] University was created in order to display a contrast to such tendencies. This is its real significance." Whether this noble purpose will be fulfilled remains to be seen. The Free University has its share of professors with a doubtful political past. Several students have pointed out to me that one professor, whose presence on the faculty has been explained by various functionaries as being "practical" and "necessary," was well known only a few years ago for such utterances as "National Socialism is no science but a matter of character and of the heart." This professor is not thought highly of by most of the students, which is probably a healthy sign.

There is more positive criticism of ideologies in Berlin than in other German cities. The Berliners' enthusiasm for imperialism and militarism and, suc-

cessively, Junkerism and Hitlerism, as well as for democracy, has always been mingled with a good deal of skepticism. Close to a hundred thousand big-time Nazis are still hiding underground in Germany, but it is unlikely that many of them are in Berlin. Denazification was less of a comedy here than in other cities. A *Gauleiter* who had held one of the highest positions in the Nazi hierarchy was tried before a denazification court in Hamburg and placed in Category 4, meaning that he had been found not guilty. His wife had the bad luck to be denazified in Berlin; was consigned to Category 3, which meant that she had been adjudged a *Nutzniesser*, or beneficiary; and was sentenced to eight months in prison. The Berliners are an industrious, wide-awake, cynical folk, whose favorite saying is "*Det kof' ich nicht*" ("I won't buy that"). There are many things that the Berliner won't buy. He is inclined to believe only what he sees for himself. He is thoroughly unsentimental. "How can you afford to be sentimental when you've been here in the years before the war, during the war, and after the war, and know that the Russians are only three miles away?" a young musician asked me.

Unlike the people of Vienna, who have made a postwar career out of complaining and self-pity, the Berliners are not sorry for themselves. On the contrary, they like to laugh at their own shortcomings, which, they admit, are not few. Currently, they are laughing at themselves while watching a motion picture called "Herrliche Zeiten" ("Wonderful Times"), an ingenious montage of newsreel shots of the past fifty years, put together by the German director and composer Erich Neumann. Due credit is given to the cameramen all over the world "who have been working on this picture since 1900, although they didn't know it." All the familiar faces are there—the Kaiser and Caruso and Greta Garbo and Hitler and Charlie Chaplin and Josephine Baker and Mussolini—but the mood of the running commentary that accompanies the film is one of ridicule and sarcasm, not nostalgia. This is spoken by a wise-guy type named, for the occasion, August Schulze, who is supposedly speaking for Berlin at large. Schulze knows everything, and invariably turns out to be wrong. He knows that the newfangled automobile, radio, and sound film won't last; he knows that Germany will win the wars of 1914 and 1939; he believes the Kaiser and Hitler when they promise to lead the German nation toward Wonderful Times.

MILLIONS of words have been written about the courage and defiance of the Berliners in the days of the airlift, but, looking back now, quite a few of them frankly say that they stuck it out and declined to register for rations in the Russian sector *in spite of* the fact that they were fighting the battle of Western democracy. They stuck it out partly because they didn't want to give in to anybody, least of all to the feared Russians, and even more because they have a deep, unromanticized attachment for their city. Berlin has never been a beautiful city. Even at its undestroyed best, it could not compete with the gracefulness of Paris, the classic elegance of Rome, the nobility of London, or the magnificence of New York. Yet a Berlin girl who had just spent three weeks at her mother's house in an idyllic, undamaged town in the Rhineland told me that she had been impatient to get back to her cellar room in a bombed house. "I was afraid that something might happen while I was away and I would miss it," she said. "And I

"I'll be glad when Bill and I are married and I can stop pretending I don't know anything about baseball."

was bored there. Life is never boring here. Something is always happening."

The girl, I learned, could have got married and settled down in the Rhineland, but she prefers to stay in Berlin, even though she has little chance of finding a husband here. When Hitler came into power, Berlin had four hundred and thirty-two thousand marriageable men between the ages of twenty and fifty; today there are only a hundred thousand. As a result, three hundred thousand women in Berlin will not succeed in getting married, no matter how hard they try. And some are certainly trying hard. The newspapers are flooded with advertisements proposing rendezvous, and cafés and dance halls announce on billboards that their male clientele consists of "the more mature youths." Getting a husband, or even a man, is a serious business here.

An air of fatalism prevails among Berliners. "We may as well have as good a time as possible today," a youthful bachelor remarked to me. "You know what they say about tomorrow." The tomorrow-we-die spirit is very much in evidence on Berlin's Fifth Avenue, the Kurfürstendamm, in the British sector, where the window displays and the neon lights may remind the traveller of Zurich, that smug citadel of a solid economy. But the buildings on the Kurfürstendamm are much like those on a street in a Hollywood movie set—sumptuous façades with nothing behind them. For Berlin's economy is anything but solid. Of the eight hundred and fifty thousand potential workers in West Berlin, two hundred and eighty thousand, or one out of every three, are unemployed. Berlin's industries are all but standing still. The big blockade is over, but the Russians still have their hands on the doorknob, and every once in a while they close the Autobahn between Berlin and the West just long enough to make businessmen in the Allied zones outside Berlin leery of trading with the city. The Berliners feel bitter toward these compatriots, who they are convinced are letting them down by not buying the output of their factories. The answer of the West Germans is "We can't give orders to Berlin. They may not be able to deliver. Haven't you heard that the Russians are building sixteen Army control points around the city?"

There is a great need for houses in Berlin, but building materials are mostly sold in the black market. Hundreds of people are living in slum conditions in the Anhalter Bunker, a wartime air-raid shelter, while cafés and luxury restaurants are going up on the Kurfürstendamm because their owners can afford to pay scandalous prices for wood, glass, and concrete, and those in the rest of the city can't. Quite naturally the propagandists in East Berlin make the most of this situation. They also point out that everybody in the Soviet sector is employed. They don't, of course, bother to add that the pay there is in East marks, that a worker can't quit or change his job, or that once a person goes to work in the Soviet sector, he may find himself personally helping to supply Russia's seemingly insatiable manpower needs, created, in large measure, it is said, by the uranium mines Moscow is thought to be operating somewhere behind the Iron Curtain. In consequence of these drawbacks, many Germans who would like to work prefer to draw unemployment insurance in West Berlin rather than risk an uncertain and hazardous future in the East. A typical Berlin joke concerns a man whose two older sons are working in East Berlin, each making four hundred East marks (fifteen dollars and thirty-six cents) a month—one in the Soviet Military Administration and the other in the East German government—while a younger son is unemployed in West Berlin. "What's the matter?" a friend says to the old man. "Can't your older sons get the boy a job in the East?" "Are you crazy?" the old man answers. "The boy supports us all." Actually, an unemployed unmarried worker in West Berlin receives a relief payment of only about thirty West marks (seven dollars and fourteen cents) a month, and on that he can't very well support other people or shop along the Kurfürstendamm, where prices are not much lower than in the States.

YET, while Berlin is wondering whether it's going to die tomorrow, it certainly has a good time—a much better time, at any rate, than "victorious" London. On any evening, one has a choice of three fine opera houses—the Staatsoper and the Komische Oper, in the Soviet sector, and the Städtische Oper, in West Berlin. (The boundary cuts straight through the center of the city's cultural life.) The Städtische Oper's orchestra is slightly inferior to that of the Staatsoper but tickets for it cost four times as much, because they

have to be paid for in West marks. One can attend either a Western, capitalist version of "The Marriage of Figaro" or an Eastern one, in which the poor barber is shown as an underdog exploited by the wealthy classes. A dozen theatres offer a wide choice of drama, from "Endstation Sehnsucht" ("A Streetcar Named Desire") and "Tod des Handelsreisenden" ("Death of a Salesman") to André Gide's dramatization of Kafka's "The Trial." The current movies include the latest American products, as well as such Russian epics as "Meeting on the Elbe" and "The Battle of Berlin," in which the Americans are shown as far more villainous than any characters a B-picture writer in Hollywood could conceive of. There are cabarets with clever, satirical shows, and places where members of both sexes perform strip teases. The menus of the better restaurants list as many as eighty dishes, and the cafés serve enormous heaps of whipped cream, hereabouts called *Schlagsahne*, which is eaten on cake or put in coffee. A lot of people who can't afford *Schlagsahne* are ordering it these days. After watching a thin, poorly dressed woman in a West Berlin restaurant devour two portions—quite an achievement—I struck up a conversation with her. She was a refugee from the Eastern Zone and had come to Berlin the day before, with a few marks in her pocket and no luggage. (Every day, some three hundred people from Soviet Germany arrive in West Berlin, seeking the Western concept of freedom.) "For eight years, I've dreamed of *Schlagsahne*," the woman said. "I promised myself I'd eat two portions if I ever got here. There's no whipped cream in Eastern Germany. Have you heard the new version of '*Deutschland, Deutschland, Über Alles*' they're secretly singing there? It goes, '*Deutschland, Deutschland, ohne alles, Ohne Butter, ohne Speck. Und das bisschen Marmelade Frisst uns die Verwaltung weg.*'" ("Germany, Germany, without all, without butter, without bacon. Even our little marmalade is taken away by the government.") I asked the woman what she was going to do now that she was here. She gave a tired shrug. "I don't know," she said. "I'll look around tomorrow. All I care about today is that I'm in the West."

The most interesting eating places in Berlin are the restaurants in the two Intourist hotels in the Soviet sector, which the Russians set up to dine and wine their business friends from the West and their political friends from the

East. Until a few months ago, diners other than Germans and Russians had to pay in dollars or Swiss francs. Now all prices are in East marks, which makes these restaurants the cheapest in the world for fine, unsalted Malossol caviar. On the evenings I have frequented one or the other of them, the guests were a mixture of high-ranking German Communists; black-marketeers from Switzerland, Sweden, and Holland; Russians wearing civilian suits, in which they didn't seem to feel too comfortable; and West Berliners with a taste for genuine *shashlik* and *bœuf Stroganov*. The service was good, in a casual way; the waiters wore clean tuxedos; and there was a fine Liebfraumilch '29 and a Zeller Schwarze Katz, in case one didn't care for vodka. The weight of each dish was marked on the menu. Thus I knew that I was being served sixty grams (two ounces) of Malossol caviar for twelve East marks (forty-six cents) and a hundred-and-seventy-gram (six-ounce) filet mignon, with a fried egg, for thirteen and a half East marks (fifty-two cents). No one asked for my passport or demanded to know what I was doing there, and I was glad no one did, for how could I have explained to a Russian—any Russian—that I had come there not to spy but simply because I like caviar?

—Joseph Wechsberg

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The Story: "The Gay Lady"

Trottie True, daughter in a middle-class British family, prepares to join a vaudeville troupe when a balloon crashes in the garden of her home and she meets the pilot Sid Skinner. He flies his balloon around the country to see her on tour. Trottie is a big hit and moves upward into musical comedy, where she has to resist the propositionings of the show's backer and some assorted lords, among them the duke of Wellwater. Since Sid seems chiefly interested in his gas bag, she becomes a duchess. The duke gets innocently involved in an intrigue with a friend, Lord Maidenhead, and his actress girl friend, and Trottie makes a scene in public. She takes a balloon ride with Sid, who conveniently appears, but in the end there is a reconciliation.—*Movie synopsis in Boxoffice, trade magazine for film distributors.*

With everyone but those who paid to get in.

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SOCIAL NOTES FROM ALL OVER

[*From the Milford (Pa.) Dispatch*]

Mrs. D—— S—— spent several days last week in New York on a shop-lifting tour. Several interesting articles were obtained.