A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE LORD MAYOR OF WEST BERLIN

ERNST REUTER, the Socialist Oberbürgermeister, or Lord Mayor, of West Berlin, is regarded by many citizens of the community and most foreigners there as the man chiefly responsible for the defiant stand taken by his sector of the city during the Russian blockade. His numerous admirers call him the most remarkable man in present-day Germany; his numerous detractors, who are mostly Russians or German Communists, hate him more than any other German alive, largely because he was once a protégé of Lenin's and, as such, general secretary of Berlin's Communist Party. Reuter's popularity reached its peak during the Russian blockade and has since declined. The Right Wing circles of West Germany no longer think of him as a courageous man who helped formulate and carry out the policy of defending Berlin; they now see in him another old-time "revolutionary" Social Democrat. Thus, Reuter, whose integrity is recognized even by his enemies, finds himself in the traditional Socialist predicament of the middle-of-the-road man who is distrusted by both the extreme Left and the extreme Right.

When I was in Berlin late this past summer, I wanted to get an appointment with Mayor Reuter. This, it turned out, is not an easy thing to do these days. Whenever I called up the Schöneberg City Hall, where Reuter has had his office since the partitioning of Berlin into West Berlin and East Berlin, in 1948, and the establishment of a separate municipal administration by the Russians in their sector, I was told that the Lord Mayor was in conference, or addressing a rally, or in closed session with General Taylor, or driving to Bonn to see Chancellor Adenauer, or attending a meeting with the Allied High Commissioners, or on his way to Flensburg to make a speech, or busy doing something else. I finally went to see Dr. Hans Hirschfeld, the head of Reuter's press department, a baldish, nervous man who spent the war years in New York City, as a civilian employee of the Office of Strategic Services, and has a habit of interspersing his German or English sentences with an occasional bit of American slang.

"The Mayor would *like* to see every correspondent in Berlin," Dr. Hirschfeld told me, in English, as he signed a couple of letters, snapped a switch, and answered the telephone, practically all at once. "No, no, no," he said into the telephone. "I haven't time now. No, not tomorrow. There's the meeting of the City Assembly at eleven. Yes, next week, maybe." He put down the phone, signed another letter, opened a drawer, picked out some papers, and took a deep breath. I seized this moment to venture that I would like to watch the Mayor at work in his office. Dr. Hirschfeld looked perplexed. "I don't think that can be arranged," he said. "Don't forget that West Berlin's City Council is not just another city administration. West Berlin is a world in itself, a democratic island completely surrounded by the Red tidal wave." He seemed pleased with this description and paused to let it sink in. "Berlin's city administration functions almost like an independent national government, in which the Lord Mayor is the Prime Minister," he went on. "He deals directly with the Allies and with Bonn. One of our city councillors represents Berlin in the federal government at Bonn. He has no vote there, but they wouldn't make an important decision without ascertaining, through him, Reuter's opinion on the matter. When the question of joining the Council of Europe came up, the Mayor himself went to Bonn to discuss the problem."

Dr. Hirschfeld explained to me that West Berlin's City Assembly consists of a hundred and thirty assemblymen, who are chosen by the voters. The assemblymen elect a Lord Mayor, a first and second deputy—currently Frau Louise Schroeder and Dr. Ferdinand Friedensburg, respectively—and twelve city councillors, who act as the Mayor's cabinet and run the various municipal departments, with the exception of the police, the department of banking and insurance, and the comptroller's office, which the Mayor himself directs. After Berlin's first democratic postwar election, in 1946, before the East-West split, Reuter was elected Mayor of the whole city by unanimous vote of all the Assembly members except the Communists. The city was then under Four Power control, which was so constituted that the Russians were in a position to veto Reuter's election. This they did, and Frau Schroeder became Acting Mayor. On December 7, 1948, following the split, Reuter was unanimously elected Lord Mayor of West Berlin.

"No mayor of any other city ever had to face problems of such magnitude," Dr. Hirschfeld said. "In New York, they talk all the time about their terrific tempo. The people of New York should come here and see our tempo. Oh, brother! Five years ago, this city of three million people was almost ninety per cent damaged or destroyed—physically, economically, and spiritually. When the Red Army took over Berlin in the spring of 1945, they blocked all bank accounts and carried all the money away. Everybody was left with only what he happened to have in his pockets. The Russians also took away eighty per cent of our machinery and tools. There were no hospitals, no medical supplies, no transportation. Food was scarce. It was murder! By the spring of 1948, three years later, the city had slowly dug itself out of the worst of the rubble, transportation was beginning to function, power lines and water mains had been rebuilt, and a start had been made in business and industry. Then the Russians came up with the blockade. You've read about Berliners' living without electric light, with one hour of gas a day, with little coal and food, and how they defied the Russians with the help of the Allied airlift. Then, on top of everything, came the currency reform, which split Berlin as an economic unit. The implications of this split are seldom fully realized." Dr. Hirschfeld stood up and walked over to a big map of Berlin hanging on the wall. "Most of Berlin's coal came from what is now Poland," he said, pointing on the map. "All the laundries were in Treptow and Köpenick, here, which are in the Soviet part of the city. The greater part of the textile industry has emigrated way out to Düsseldorf, taking along all its patents and blueprints. They are now short of skilled labor there, and meanwhile the textile workers of Berlin are idle. Let me give you a random fact," he went on, returning to his desk. "Before the split, the city administration of Berlin had two thousand typewriters and three hundred and sixty adding machines. Afterward, it had only nine hundred and ninety typewriters and a hundred and four adding

"Where in the world have you been till this hour, sober?"

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machines." The phone rang, and Dr. Hirschfeld talked rapidly into it—first in English, then in German—explaining that the Mayor was in Bonn and wouldn't be back until late in the evening.

Hanging up, Dr. Hirschfeld jotted down some notes on first one pad and then another. "I hope he *does* come back," he said, looking worried. "Most men in his position would take the plane to cross the Soviet Zone, but not Reuter. No, sir! He rides through it in his car, with no one but his chauffeur. He goes right up to the check point where the Communist East German Police and Russian soldiers are, so to speak, waiting for him. They know the number of his car—001—and keep him under constant observation while he's crossing their zone, you bet. They would be glad to get rid of him and he knows it. Then why does he take the chance?" Dr. Hirschfeld anxiously rubbed his forehead, and continued, "I will tell you why. By a decision of the Allied Control Council in 1945, the Berlin-Helmstedt Autobahn has been designated an international-travel corridor through the Soviet Zone. Reuter maintains that the right to use it is a right that must be exercised. Otherwise, he feels, those unpredictable Russians might jump to the conclusion that we were giving it up. 'If *I* were afraid to cross the Soviet Zone,' Reuter says, 'how could we expect our truck drivers to cross it and bring in vital supplies?' So off he goes, and we sit here and worry. I'd be scared to death if I were in his shoes."

"But isn't he really afraid?" I asked.

Dr. Hirschfeld stood up again and, ignoring the telephone, which had resumed its ringing, paced back and forth, still rubbing his forehead. "That's something I've been thinking about ever since I came back here last year," he said. "I remember a speech Reuter made in June, 1948, after the blockade had started. 'There is no difference between the methods of 1933 and 1948,' he told a mass meeting in Berlin, under the very muzzles of Russian tommy guns. Well, in 1933 the Nazis put Reuter in a concentration camp. So he knows what he has to expect if . . ." Dr. Hirschfeld left the sentence unfinished and took a new tack. "He lives with his wife in a small house in Zehlendorf. There are no guards and no guns around. His name is on his door, for anybody to read." Just then a secretary put her head into the office and pointed distractedly to the telephone. Dr. Hirschfeld waved his arms wildly at her and she withdrew in alarm. "Courage is a strange thing," he said. "I don't believe Reuter's courage is simply a denial of fear. Nor is he just closing his eyes to danger. That would be a fool's courage. Reuter's courage is greater than most people's because he *knows* the dangers and *does* experience the normal reaction of fear, like all of us, but in spite of this he won't let anything interfere with his convictions, no matter how unpleasant the consequences may be. When he was a student in Marburg, shortly before the First World War, he grew passionately interested in the social problems of the working class and became an itinerant teacher for the Socialist Party's education committee— But maybe you're not interested in all this."

I assured him that I was.

"Reuter knew he would be ostracized by his family," Dr. Hirschfeld said. "His father had been a captain in the German merchant marine, and at the time was a teacher at a navigators' school in Leer, Ostfriesland—a typical *kaisertreuer* official. Reuter himself was born in Apenrade, Schleswig-Holstein. That was in 1889. His mother came from a family of Protestant theologians. Imagine what a shock it must have been for his parents to have a Socialist in the family! Well, a year after he joined the Social Democratic Party, the First World War broke out and the Socialists voted for the Kaiser's war. Reuter thought this was a betrayal of international Socialism and walked out on the Party he had made such a personal sacrifice to join. He became cofounder of a new, frankly subversive, pacifist society that attacked the Kaiser's war government. Sure enough, the Kaiser's police got him, and put him forcibly into the Army. As *Feldjäger*, he was sent to the Argonne and later to Galicia, in eastern Poland, where he was severely wounded by a bullet in the thigh and taken prisoner. He says the Russian Red Cross and, above all, the goodness of the simple Russian peasants saved his life. He still limps. As a prisoner of war, he was put to work in the coal mines. He learned Russian and acted as an unofficial interpreter for his German fellow-prisoners and the Russian popula-

tion living near the camp. In 1918, after the Revolution, Lenin heard about an outspoken young German Socialist in the coal mines and had him brought to Moscow. It was Reuter. His first career had begun."

Dr. Hirschfeld stopped pacing and looked at me sternly. "Today a lot of people in the West would make a point of forgetting such an episode in their past," he said. "But not Reuter. No, sir! Even now, he often talks of Lenin with admiration. Lenin made him the first People's Commissar of the Volga German District. Reuter's immediate superior was a guy named Dzhugashvili, who had changed his pseudonym from Koba to Stalin. Reuter and Stalin didn't get along. It seems that Reuter was downright insubordinate." Dr. Hirschfeld chuckled.

I asked what had become of the Volga Germans. "Stalin liquidated most of them at the beginning of the Russian-German War," Dr. Hirschfeld said. "But that, of course, was still years away at the time we're talking about. Well, after Reuter had organized the Volga Germans, he was sent to Berlin. He brought with him a letter from Lenin to Klara Zetkin, the German Communist leader here. Reuter still enjoys quoting from that letter, especially the part where Lenin wrote, 'Young Reuter has a brilliant and lucid mind but is a little too independent.' Back in Germany, Reuter took the pseudonym Friesland and began to organize the miners of Upper Silesia. In 1919, he was arrested, and served three months in prison. The following year, he became general secretary of the Communist Party for Berlin and Brandenburg. But did he play ball with the Russian Communists? Nope. He got right into trouble again. Those damn convictions of his! It took him only a few months to realize that the German Communists would be obliged to dance to Moscow's tune. Reuter couldn't stand the idea of placing the workers of Germany under a foreign dictatorship, so he stood up and denounced the Communist Party. He stated publicly and in so many words that the reason for his break was his disapproval of the fundamental amoralism of the Comintern. Still, you see, the same stubborn, uncompromising attitude that had already got him into hot water more than once. He rejoined the Social Democratic Party, and became editor of its paper, *Vorwärts*. I guess his former boss, Stalin, has never forgiven him for what he did in those days. People like Reuter know too much and are too honest for Stalin's comfort. The Russians have placed formerly important Nazis in high positions in the Soviet Zone, but not one Socialist. Incidentally, Reuter's successor as general secretary of the Communist Party here was Wilhelm Pieck, who is now President of the East German puppet government." The phone rang again. "Reuter has had his troubles with the Nazis, too," said Dr. Hirschfeld. "But you'll have to excuse me now. I'll try to talk to the Mayor tonight if he comes back, and I'll give you a ring if I do."

DR. HIRSCHFELD called me late that night and said Reuter had come back all right, and could I be at the Lord Mayor's office the next morning at nine o'clock sharp? I said I'd be there, and the next day I arrived at Schöneberg City Hall a little early, having allowed plenty of time to find my way through the jumble of municipal offices that have been crammed into insufficient quarters since the partitioning of Berlin, at which time the West Berlin government moved out of the City Council Building, which happens to be in East Berlin, and set up shop in the Schöneberg district. In an anteroom outside Reuter's office, two girls were typing letters, answering telephones, and telling visitors that the Mayor couldn't possibly see them, because he had several appointments and there was a meeting of the City Assembly at eleven that morning. One of the girls took my name inside, and after a while Dr. Hirschfeld came out and showed me in. Reuter was standing near the door, and we shook hands. He is a big, heavy-built man. The features of his longish face have the roughness of a medieval woodcut; it's not a slick

face and not very good at concealing emotions. His eyes generally have a friendly twinkle, suggesting the sense of humor that is an indispensable requirement for the mayor of a city in which everybody spends a lot of time cracking jokes about things that are really far from funny. Reuter usually appears in public wearing a tidy beret (because "it's less bother than a hat"), but now his gray hair fell unkempt over his forehead. He was wearing a crumpled blue suit that didn't fit, and he plainly didn't give a hoot what anybody thought about how he looked. His office was big and cheerful, with panelled walls and a large rug. There were flowers on an oak table by the door, on his desk, and on the window sills. The windows were open and sunlight flooded in. Outside were the roofs and trees of Schöneberg. It was one of the few rooms I saw in Berlin that didn't present a view of ruins.

Reuter glanced briefly at his desk, which was covered with a depressingly large stack of papers, then smiled with good-natured resignation and asked Dr. Hirschfeld and me to sit down with him at the table by the door. "I'm always glad to have an excuse to get away from my desk for a while," he said, in English. "Well, what can I do for you?"

I said I would like to watch the Lord Mayor of Berlin at work in his office. Dr. Hirschfeld rubbed his palms together, as if washing his hands of my request and of me. Reuter laughed. "You must be a student of bureaucracy," he said to me. "I don't wonder. It's a fascinating subject. I've seen four bureaucracies at work in my sixty-one years—Russian, German, American, and Turkish."

"Turkish?" I asked with some surprise. Dr. Hirschfeld seemed about to fill in this gap in my knowledge, but Reuter didn't give him the chance to. "Yes," he said, "I've spent plenty of time in Turkey. But let me tell you, the Russian bureaucrats are the worst. For them, human beings are merely figures in a frightening game of statistics—just necessary adjuncts to production machines. It is as simple as that. Of course, I know the petty German bureaucrats, too, having had to deal with them for the better part of my life, and I think I understand the Turks, or at least I understand how the channels of their bureaucracy work. But the American bureaucracy has me baffled. I couldn't get the hang of it when I visited America last year and talked to Mayor O'Dwyer." He sat back and spoke slowly and deliberately, as if he were trying to think out a definition. "It seems to me that the primary object over there is to have a number of different agencies, on various governmental levels, all trying to do the same job at the same time while ignoring one another fiercely. Right, Hirschfeld?"

Dr. Hirschfeld said that that had been exactly his experience in Washington, where his wartime duties with the O.S.S. had often required him to go. "Everybody was always creating a lot of extra work for other people," he added.

"I wish we had time for extra work here," Reuter said. "As it is, we must try to get the job done as quickly as possible. I wish," he went on, turning back to me, "that I could take you into the meeting of the City Assembly this morning, but my esteemed city fathers would start a revolution. The trouble with this job is that even the most trivial bit of business is bound to have international repercussions. I couldn't move those flowers by ten inches without having a couple of generals on my neck."

Dr. Hirschfeld nervously cleared his throat, and Reuter laughed again. "That's all right, Hirschfeld," he said. "I behave much better now about generals. When Clay arrived here, my first reaction was that of a typical old-time Socialist—'Another damn general.' But by the time he left, I was sincerely sorry to see him go. We owe him a lot. Well, Hirschfeld, what's on your mind this morning?"

Dr. Hirschfeld consulted a memorandum and said two British correspondents were in town and could they

STELLAR ROLL

Night is a loose-leaf folder full of stars,
With a tickler file for comets. Under H
Is Halley's. If you want it much
Before its due date (1986) just let us know.
It faded some last time we had it out—
Were you a boy then?—and the edge
Crumbled to yellow. When? In 1910.
Everything's cross-indexed: Constellations
With neighbor constellations. Draco?
Draco
The Circumpolar is under U for Ursa
Major, Minor, B for Bear, and D for Dipper,
As well as Dragon; and under C
And W, besides, for those who hanker
To call for Charles's Wain. That
Box of 3 x 5 blank meteor file cards
(Leonid specials, flexible, unruled)
Upset and slithered earthward—can't say when.
Some of them still flutter in the slip stream;
Trillions fell like rain into Permanent File.
Galaxies are on deposit in our big
New branch in South Eternity. The
Milky Way's on punch cards now. We're adding
Finger-Tip Control, as you'd imagine.
The moons are in rotating files, and all
The Big Stars—Betelgeuse, Arcturus,
Sirius, Vega, and the like—
We've documented to the end of time.
The planets? Subdivided under Sun.
Here's Venus, for example. Saturn . . . Mars . . .
Earth? Sorry. Earth is out right now.
The Boss just ordered Earth to be revised.

—David McCord

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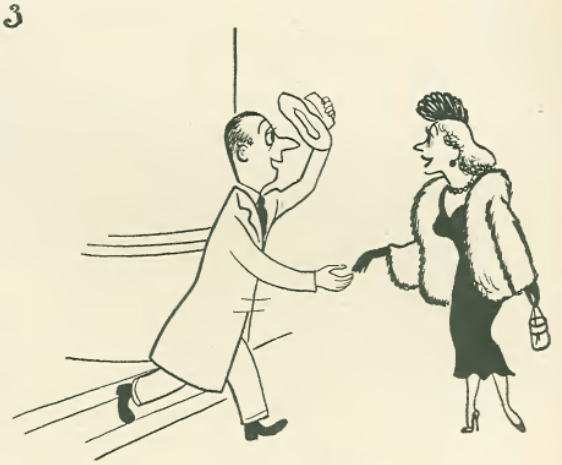

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see Reuter the next day? Reuter shook his head. "I just haven't got the time," he said. "Why," he continued, speaking to me, "this afternoon I'm supposed to be in three places at the same hour. I told von Bruch—he's one of my assistants—to straighten that out. Seems to me that most of my time these days is spent deciding where *not* to go and what *not* to do. Newspapermen can be an awful nuisance. I know. I used to be one." He leaned back. "I wrote articles for the Social Democratic papers in Germany, and I wrote articles for Russian papers, and then, in the forties, I wrote for newspapers in Turkey. It was easy to learn Russian at the age of twenty-six, but it was hell to learn Turkish at forty-six. Turkish has no relationship to any other language I know. The Turks are able people and they were kind to me, but I was an exile, just the same. The bread of exile is never sweet. Still, I was luckier than many others."

Reuter paused, giving Dr. Hirschfeld the opportunity to explain to me that Reuter had gone to Turkey in 1935, after he had been in trouble with the Nazis for two years.

"*Ja, ja*, the Nazis," Reuter said, switching to German. "They never liked me. In 1933, while I was the Socialist Mayor of the city of Magdeburg, I became the Social Democrats' candidate for the Reichstag. I was elected by a majority of sixty thousand votes, which made the Nazis very angry. So I was taken to the Lichtenburg concentration camp." He spoke without emotion, staring out the window at the sunshine. "Fortunately, I had friends in the London County Council. They intervened for me, and I was released after six months. The camp commander said he was going to finish me off if I ever fell into his hands again. When I returned to my home in Magdeburg, everybody came to see me, and some people even brought presents. After two months of that sort of thing, the Gestapo took me back to the concentration camp. By good luck, there was another commander there by then. That time, I got out only because my good wife, Hanna, worked desperately for me and appealed to some Quaker friends of ours in England. The Nazis were trying to make a good impression in England, for political reasons. Himmler was against my release, but somehow I did get out. I was very sick, though. Hanna and I moved to Hanover. A few months later, I was warned that they were after me once more. This time, I was sure it would be the end. In January, 1935, Hanna and I crossed the Dutch border and headed for England. Two days after we'd left, the Gestapo went to our place in Hanover. We stayed in London for a while. Then the Turkish government offered me a job as adviser in the Ministry of National Economy and Commerce, in Ankara. So I borrowed the money for the trip and went there, and later Hanna joined me."

"You made a fine career for yourself in Turkey," said Dr. Hirschfeld.

Reuter got up heavily and walked to the window with a slight limp. He looked out for a while, and then came

back and sat down. "*Ja*," he said. "A nice career. Professor at the Civil Service Institute in Ankara, adviser to the Turkish State Shipping Administration, editor of Turkish textbooks on community administration, city planning, financing—things like that. And all the time I was watching the collapse of Germany and of all that had been dear to me, and it almost broke my heart. In 1945, I tried to get back into Germany. But I had to wait. The Allies were leery of exiles. They thought we exiles were filled with resentment toward them." He held up both hands, palms outward. "I didn't come to get revenge. I came to work, to help, to rebuild. I finally arrived late in 1946."

"And started your third career, as Lord Mayor of Berlin," Dr. Hirschfeld prompted him.

"*West* Berlin, Hirschfeld, not Berlin," Reuter said. "The two parts of Berlin have become separate worlds. We might as well be on different planets. Remember the currency the Soviets put out in their zone and no one here wanted to touch it? *Tapetenmark* [wallpaper marks], they called it. *Ja, ja*. I understand that nowadays the only actual contact between the Western Allies and the Soviets is the messenger boys in Allied High Command Headquarters. They, at least, still talk to each other. It's like that with our two city administrations. There are some dealings between the communications people, but there is no contact on higher levels. Anyway, the buses and streetcars are still running through both parts of the city."

"Yes, still," Dr. Hirschfeld echoed gloomily.

"I have only thirty per cent of the authority that the Lord Mayors of Berlin had before 1945," Reuter continued. "On one side are the Western Allies, looking over my shoulder—and, believe me, I'm glad they're here. On the other side, there is our federal government in Bonn. We are financially dependent on Bonn. It pays half our monthly expenses, which are now over a hundred million marks [twenty-five million dollars]. The result is, I devote half my time to trying to be my own Foreign Secretary, and the other half to trying to get money to keep the city going. We could balance our budget out of taxes if we didn't have to pay for the Occupation. The things we have to pay for! Somebody in Hesse builds a new airport, and Berlin is invited to contribute. And we have enormous social-welfare lists. There are more than two hundred and seventy thousand unemployed people in West Berlin who must be taken care of. We're spending over twenty million marks on them every month. But it's the young people I'm most concerned about. Several of my friends, of my own age, are skilled, hard-working craftsmen and artisans, but their sons don't want to be craftsmen. There is little hope for the crafts in Berlin, and the boys prefer to stay in school and then go on to the university. Ten years from now, the famous Berlin crafts will be only a dim memory."

"Well, let's see. The drawing room had a huge Aubusson rug, and the walls were covered with stretched silver brocade. There was a sixteenth-century Venetian mirror between the two windows, with pale-yellow satin curtains looped back in heavy folds. Then there was a beautiful baroque mantelpiece, and over it a portrait that I took to be of the lady of the house, in a pale-blue Empire ball gown . . ."

A Gray-Haired, breathless little man came in without knocking, carrying a pad and pencil. "I've got to talk to you a moment," he said to Reuter, using the familiar "*du*." Reuter introduced him to me as Dr. Herz, and I gathered he was a trusted aide of some kind. After brusquely acknowledging the introduction, Dr. Herz said to Reuter, "You remember X, the

man who was proposed as a trustee for the Municipal Life Insurance Institute?"

Reuter rubbed his eyes, as if trying to remember. "*Ja, ja,*" he said at last. "A very bad man. Now that I come to think of it, one of the worst."

"Exactly," said Dr. Herz. "That's what I told them. And what do you think they said? They said they need X, because he's the best expert they can get!" He looked shocked.

Reuter shook his head emphatically. "No," he said. "We don't want experts like X around. I'd much rather work with honest dilettantes. Every time we make another concession, it's another step back toward the mess we got ourselves into before the Nazis came into power. Integrity is the only weapon we have left. Let's not give it away."

Dr. Herz nodded, as if this was just what he'd hoped for, and crossed off an item on his pad. "General Taylor will be here at noon to hand over a check for ninety-seven thousand marks," he continued. "I don't know what it's for. Will you be present?"

"I asked Schroeder to accept it," Reuter said. "I'll be in the meeting."

"Maybe you could come out just for a moment, as a gesture."

"I'll see, I'll see," Reuter said unhappily.

Dr. Herz crossed another item off his pad and turned to me. "You're talking to a really first-rate Lord Mayor," he said. "Without him, we would have no B.V.G." He nodded assertively and went out. Reuter grinned. I asked what "B.V.G." meant. "*Berliner Verkehrs Gesellschaft* [Berlin Transit Society]," Dr. Hirschfeld said. "When Herr Reuter was a city councillor, back in 1929, he finally brought about a merger of Berlin's subway, streetcar, and bus companies into a municipal transit organization and put an end to years of bickering and fighting over them. Even the Nazis didn't dare break it up. Herr Reuter went to America and established the credit that enabled Berlin to construct new subway lines, modernize squares and streets, and widen the Frankfurter Allee. Modern workers' homes were built, which the Nazis later showed off to foreigners as their own creations." Dr. Hirschfeld made a note on the inevitable pad. "I think I'll talk about B.V.G. at the press conference next Monday," he said. "They ought to know more about it."

"Who? What press conference?" Reuter asked, looking alarmed.

"The fifteen Benelux journalists. Have you forgotten? I told you about

it last week. We thought we might give them a little dinner afterward down at the Ratskeller."

"You certainly didn't tell me about the dinner," Reuter said, looking even more alarmed. "How much is it going to cost us?"

"Five marks [$1.20] a person. There'll be about twenty-five people."

Reuter shook his head sadly. "That's a lot of money for us, Hirschfeld," he said. "I suppose it can't be avoided?"

"It's important," said Hirschfeld, looking unhappy himself.

One of the girls I'd seen in the anteroom came in and said Herr von Bruch was waiting outside. "I'll call for him in a few minutes," Reuter told her, and she left. "So there you have it," he said to me, returning to the subject of the dinner. "A hundred marks has become a major financial problem for the capital of Germany. During the blockade, the Allies spent millions of dollars flying in coal and potatoes and raw materials for our factories and paper for our printing presses, and now we can't even get the credit we need to keep our industries going. We have outlived our political usefulness. Berlin is no longer considered an issue. No one gives a damn what happens to us from here on. Everybody is concerned about the situation in Asia, although we here know that Berlin is the focal point in the struggle between East and West." He was silent for a moment, then shrugged, and said with renewed emphasis, "The Berliners are no quitters. They may feel let down and at a loss for a while, but they'll spit on their hands and keep working. We *must* keep working if we are ever to have any sort of prosperity again. We can do it."

"At the time of the blockade, there would have been no resistance to the East without the Lord Mayor's leadership," said Dr. Hirschfeld. "It was Herr Reuter who first stirred up interest in the defense of West Berlin, long before it was adopted as a Berlin policy, to say nothing of a Western policy."

I asked Reuter how he'd done it.

"I made speeches," he said. "Bold, blunt, brutal speeches. There was no time for diplomatic niceties. I told the people that if we stood up for freedom before all the world, the West couldn't give up Berlin without giving up much more. It's not a very original idea, but it still holds. The same idea made President Truman send American soldiers into battle in Korea."

"You had a lot of opposition," said Dr. Hirschfeld.

Reuter smiled reminiscently. "It's al-

ways the people in high positions who want to buy insurance for the future," he said. "The smart people, who would like to be covered on both sides. The population at large was wonderful. The people didn't hesitate and worry about the future. Not that they have lost the capacity to be frightened—they *are* frightened—but after losing as much as the people here have lost, one begins to learn that there are more important things in life than furniture and bathrooms and electric lights. You can be happy with little things. Did you notice that the people living among the ruins plant more flowers than the other people do? We used to pay too much attention to our possessions. When my wife and I had to give up our Hanover apartment in 1935, we were heartbroken at having to get rid of our furniture and books. Eleven years later, when we were in Turkey, we again had to sell our things, because we had almost no savings and needed money to pay our fare home. We didn't care that time. You can always get another dining-room table, but once you've lost your freedom, it's hard to get it back. If the Russians should come now and kill me, at least I would die with the knowledge that what we have done in Berlin has affected the lives of hundreds of millions of people all over the world. We may not have saved the peace forever, but we certainly have helped to prolong it. We have given the world a breathing spell. That's something. And—"

The phone rang, and Reuter went to his desk and answered it. For four or five minutes, he tried to explain to an official in Chancellor Adenauer's office that there could be no discussion of a proposal to cut the German government's appropriation for Berlin. Dr. Hirschfeld sighed and rubbed his forehead. "Always the sordid subject of money," he said to me in a whisper. "Sometimes he has to take the car and drive to Bonn to get the monthly check to pay our municipal employees. In Bonn, they like to forget that West Germany's industrial production has now reached a hundred per cent of the 1936 level, while West Berlin's production is at a mere twenty-five per cent. When they expect us to be self-supporting, they overlook the fact that as long as we are surrounded by the Russians, there is no hope of an effective recovery."

AFTER Reuter finished his phone call, he asked to have von Bruch sent in. A moment later, a slim, stiff, well-dressed, unemotional-looking man

entered. He, too, carried a pad. He bowed toward us in the ultra-military way known the world over as Prussian, and sat down in front of the desk, facing Reuter. "Nothing very exciting, Herr Oberbürgermeister," he said. "Frau Schroeder will accept the check from General Taylor at noon. She wants it to be a simple, dignified ceremony, but I'm afraid the press will have to be present. At three o'clock, you'll be laying the foundation stone of the textile building in Neuköln. You have your speech ready?"

"I always have a speech ready," Reuter said. "They tell me I even made a speech once when I was under ether on an operating table."

Von Bruch didn't seem to appreciate this whimsey. "Dr. Krekeler, the consul general for New York, will call at four o'clock," he went on, consulting his pad.

"At four I have to hand over the new post-office building to the Bund," Reuter protested.

"That will have to wait until four-fifteen," von Bruch told him crisply. "On Thursday, you have to make speeches in Cologne and Bonn. And may I remind you that Friday, at six-thirty, there's the big party at Mr. McCloy's? Friday noon, you are supposed to address the mass meeting in Flensburg. I don't know whether you'll be back in time for the party."

"Of course I'll be back," Reuter said. "I can leave there at two. That gives me time enough."

"Good," said von Bruch, checking an item on his pad. "Tomorrow night is the concert of the Philharmonic Orchestra, under Furtwängler, at the Titania Palast. We have eight tickets."

"Excellent," said Reuter. "I'll be delighted—"

"I regret to point out," said von Bruch, "that there's also the dinner for Y." He named an Allied official.

"I'd much rather go to the concert," Reuter said plaintively, and added to me, "When I was a student, I would queue up all night in Munich to get a cheap ticket to the Opera."

Von Bruch frowned. "Unfortunately, this dinner is a must," he said. "Afterward, we could drop in at that affair in Wannsee for a few minutes." He named another Allied official.

"I have to be in bed by eleven," Reuter said firmly. "And I want to work on the budget some first. My wife thinks I'm getting worse than her father. He was a trade-union leader and he came home only to sleep."

"That is all," von Bruch said. He

got up, bowed to the three of us, and left. Dr. Herz returned, with his pad, and a secretary came in with *hers* and said the tailor was waiting with the new sports outfit. Reuter brightened. "Send him in, send him in," he told her. The tailor brought in a pair of slacks and a tweed jacket, and Reuter stood up and tried the jacket on while discussing with Dr. Herz some problems concerning West Berlin's new power station, in the British sector. Reuter said he was going to take the matter up with the British general in person. "I believe in talking to people," he said. "Letters get you nowhere." The tailor ripped off the lapels of the new jacket, although Reuter said they looked fine to him, and tacked them on again. This time, the tailor expressed himself as satisfied and left, followed by Dr. Herz.

Reuter put on his suit coat, called a secretary in, and began to answer his mail. He dictated quietly, never correcting himself. Many of the letters he had received were from organizations inviting him to address them. One was from the relatives of an eighty-seven-year-old woman, asking for permission to move her from the Soviet Zone to West Berlin. "Have the case investigated," Reuter instructed the secretary. "If she's really eighty-seven, I see no reason why she shouldn't come here." He added to me, "I would like to let everybody who wants to get out of the East Zone live here, if only we had room for them. Berlin has always been a hospitable, internationally minded city." The phone rang. Reuter answered it, listened, and, speaking sharply, told the person at the other end, "I'm getting sick and tired of these silly squabbles. The title is a mere matter of prestige. Tell them to get straightened out and report to me later." He hung up abruptly, picked up another letter, and dictated, "To Minister Bevan. . . . No, not Bevin. B-e-v-a-n. Aneurin. *Sehr geehrter Herr Minister. Ich*—"

A young woman came in with a paper covered with columns of figures and handed it to Reuter. He looked at the total at the bottom and sighed. "A four-thousand-mark deficit," he said. "Where are we going to get four thousand marks?" He handed the paper back. "Talk it over with Stadtrat Klingelhöfer." The young woman departed, and Reuter went on dictating. "I'm afraid I left a whole stack of letters at home," he said to me. "I was reading them in bed last night and making notes. Oh, well, I'll have to answer them tomorrow." He picked up another

letter and said to the secretary, "What's this about a man in the Pfalz?"

The girl looked at the letter. "He claims he received a letter from you about sponsoring a wine delivery to New York," she said. "Some of the money is to be donated to the youth program in Berlin."

Reuter scanned the Pfalz man's letter in surprise. "I'm sure I never wrote such a thing," he said. He read aloud, " 'The entire Pfalz looks toward you expectantly . . .' My God, am I in the wine business now? Look and see whether there is such a letter in the files. And tell the Pommersche Landmannschaft that I will do my best to come to their meeting next week if I can make it somehow."

A gray-haired, friendly-looking, energetic woman entered. Reuter shook hands with her warmly and introduced her to me as Frau Schroeder. She announced that she had just inspected two youth homes and opened a new school. "We'll have to do something about the salaries of those social workers," she said. "They have difficult and consequential jobs, and should get more money."

"I know," said Reuter. "But where can *we* get it? Did you find out about the adoptions?"

"The number of people who want to adopt babies has declined," Frau Schroeder said. "People with a sense of responsibility think twice now before taking on a new obligation. Of those who do want to adopt a child, many don't fulfill the minimum requirements of the Youth Office. I have reminded all our district offices and homes that only the Youth Office can give final approval. We've been quite successful, by the way, with the orphans who are taken into private homes just for weekends."

"Are those weekend parents also investigated by the Youth Office?" Reuter asked.

"Of course," Frau Schroeder replied. "We wouldn't let the children go if we didn't know about the families."

DR. HERZ reappeared, pad still in hand, and said it was time to go to the Assembly meeting. "How was it coming back from Bonn?" he asked Frau Schroeder. It turned out that she, too, had recently returned by car from the capital.

"Everything was all right at the Russian check point," Frau Schroeder said, "but when we came to the barrier at the border, we found forty cars waiting. Some had been waiting for hours. A

few People's Police were searching every car. They made the drivers open the rear compartments, take out the seats, open the hoods, and even unscrew those air things—"

"The air filters?" Reuter suggested.

"Yes," she said. "I don't know what they were looking for. I don't suppose they did, either."

Reuter grinned and asked, "What did you do?"

"I told my chauffeur to drive right up to the barrier," Frau Schroeder replied vigorously. "I called to the nearest policeman. 'Fritze,' I said to him, 'do whatever you want, but do it quickly, because I haven't got all evening.' And what do you think the poor fool did? Clicked his heels and saluted and lifted the barrier, and we drove through."

Reuter beamed. "That Schroeder!" he said to Dr. Herz and me. "She could take care of a whole Russian brigade. She knows how to talk to those people."

"It's getting very late," Dr. Herz said, looking pointedly at a clock above the door.

Reuter nodded and picked up a large stack of files from the table. He shook hands with me and walked out, followed by Dr. Herz and Frau Schroeder. Dr. Hirschfeld picked up his pad and pencil, and told me he had to go to the meeting, too. "I heard a funny story about Reuter the other day," he said. "You know that Soviet Marshal Rokossovsky, who was in Berlin during the blockade? Well, according to this story, Rokossovsky, who is a sort of Russian Rommel—a tough guy, a trouble shooter—had Reuter brought before him and tried to bully him. Reuter laughed at him. 'You can't frighten me, Marshal,' he told Rokossovsky. 'You see, I was twice in a Nazi concentration camp and I've worked in a Russian coal mine and I've been in jail, and if you want to send me to a Siberian labor camp, I guess I'll be able to find my way around.'" Dr. Hirschfeld glanced thoughtfully at Reuter's desk, still covered with papers. "The strange thing about this story is that it *could* be true," he said. "It's exactly what Reuter would tell a tough Soviet marshal."

—JOSEPH WECHSBERG

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INFATUATION WITH SOUND OF OWN GAG DEPARTMENT

[*From "Out of My Trunk," by Milton Berle*]

I love the theater. I've always had the theater in my veins—sometimes I wish I had blood. —*Page 18.*

I've got the theater in my veins. Sometimes I wish I had blood. —*Page 192.*