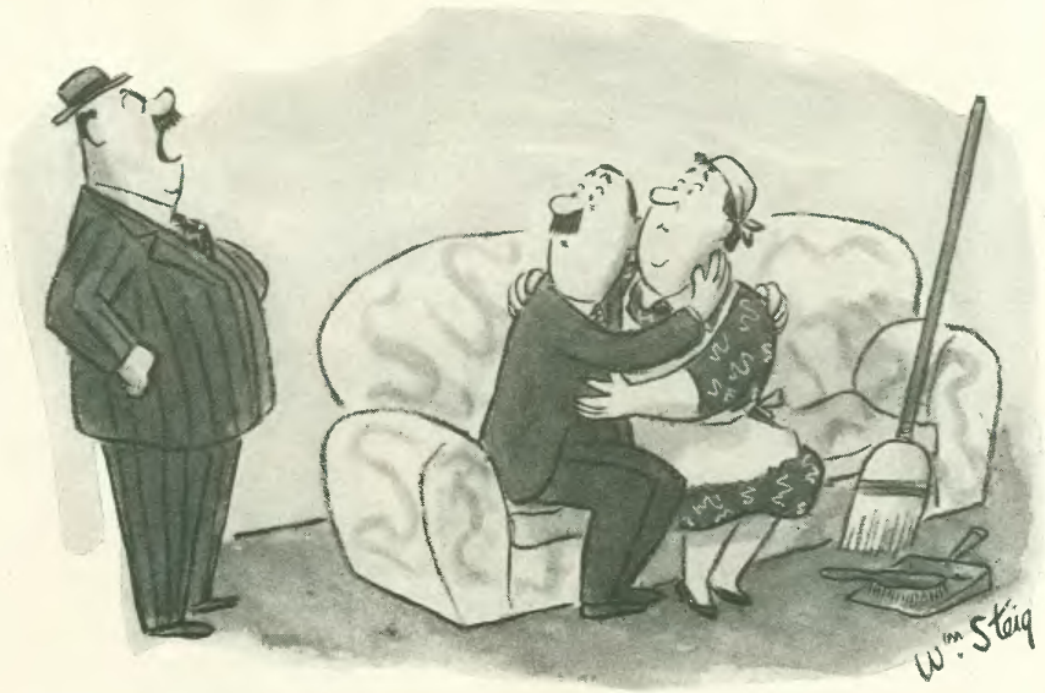
A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS OF UNTER DEN EICHEN

WHEN I first met the Asendorf girls, in Berlin, toward the end of 1950, Charlotte was eleven years old and Irene was nine. They were pretty, bright-eyed children, curious about and stimulated by the strange sounds and sights of the big city they had been in only a short while. They looked and talked and behaved like the other American children in Berlin, most of whose fathers were stationed there temporarily, either as members of the armed forces, the State Department, or some other government agency. I remember the girls in their blue jeans and red sweaters, which their mother had brought along from Portland, Oregon. There was an air of happiness and exuberance about the youngsters that set them apart from the German children in Berlin, whose faces still reflected the war years, malnutrition, and the aftermath of defeat.

The children of American military and civilian personnel in Berlin had, as they still have, a large choice of recreations, many of them organized by the United States Army. There were ice-cream parlors, bowling alleys, snack bars, outings on the Wannsee and picnics in the woods, tennis and basketball tournaments, dances and parties and musical afternoons, community celebrations at Thanksgiving and on the Fourth of July, and five theatres showing American movies. Charlotte and Irene were not allowed to attend any of these, for although they had American passports, they did not have the identification cards issued by the Defense Department to the dependents of all Americans in government service in Berlin. They were also denied the opportunity to attend the American Dependents School, and neither they nor their parents had any way of getting scrip dollars, which are the only medium of exchange in the Army-operated commissaries, theatres, clubs, and post exchanges. For that matter, the girls had no PX cards and were not permitted to enter the post exchanges. True, on Sunday mornings, they could go to the American Sunday School and afterward worship at the American Church of Berlin, but even there they rarely talked to other American children, all of whom were attending the Dependents School and formed a rather close group. Late in the afternoon, Charlotte and Irene might visit some American snack bar to listen to the juke box and breathe in the sweet, homely smell of French fries and popcorn, and once in a while an American friend of their parents would bring them something from the post exchange—a jar of mayonnaise or a box of Aunt Jemima pancake flour or a bottle of Log Cabin syrup. Back in Oregon, the girls hadn't particularly cared for Log Cabin syrup, but in Berlin they loved it, because it reminded them of home and of Meier & Frank, a department store in Portland where their mother had done much of her shopping. In Berlin, Mrs. Asendorf had to do her shopping in German stores, and when she and the girls went downtown they were not entitled to ride on the buses the Army operates for authorized Americans but had to travel on the municipal buses and on the U-Bahn (subway) and the S-Bahn (elevated). Life, as a matter of fact, was an endless series of frustrations for Charlotte and Irene, for their mother, Signe, an American citizen born in Portland, and for their father, Werner Asendorf, a German citizen who was once a *Bannführer*, or regional leader, in the Hitler Jugend (the Nazi youth organization) and an employee of Dr. Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry.

MY initial encounter with Asendorf had occurred two years earlier, in the summer of 1948, when I was in Berlin looking for a qualified person to do some research for an article I was writing. A member of the American Press Club there mentioned him as a possible candidate. He had done odd jobs of that sort for several American correspondents, spoke good English, and was said to be an able, hard-working newspaperman with good contacts and a thorough knowledge of the city. Checking further, I found that everybody agreed about his professional ability, but there seemed to be some question as to his political past. Two American correspondents told me that they didn't trust him; they thought he was one of those clever Nazis one hears about who are just lying low, biding their time. Then I met a high-ranking American Intelligence officer who was familiar with Asendorf's denazification case and



"The agreement, as I remember it, Mr. Plitz, was for room and board and telephone privileges."

had seen his files. He said he was quite sure that Asendorf was all right. I decided to talk to Asendorf and decide for myself whether he would do for the job I had in mind.

I got in touch with Asendorf and he agreed to meet me at the Press Club, but when he got there he asked if we could go somewhere else. "There are people here who dislike me as a former Nazi," he said bluntly. I suggested a nearby *Bierstube*, but he said he'd much prefer a certain American snack bar. He was a tall, sloppily dressed blond man with a tendency toward baldness and overweight. His face was ruddy, round, and clean-shaven. He wore thick glasses, and I later learned that he was helpless without them. After we had reached the snack bar and had seated ourselves as far as possible from the maddening noise of the juke box, he kept taking his glasses off and rubbing his eyes gently with a thumb and forefinger. His facial expression during our talk that day was mostly one of embarrassment. He talked in long-drawn-out, introspective, Teutonic sentences that conveyed a brooding sense of hopelessness as he inextricably wove his immediate personal problems into the generally confused pattern of the world around him.

After a second cup of coffee, Asendorf showed me some pictures of his wife and their two little girls, who were then living in Portland. He said he hadn't seen his family since 1946 and was terribly lonesome for them. "I wish I could go to America," he went on. "But the American consul turned me down. I told him I was fed up with the destructive hatred of Europe and would be happy only in the States. After all, I've lived there. Signe and I got married in Portland in 1939. I spent the happiest months of my life there. And I made my biggest mistake when I didn't have the guts to break with Germany and stay in the States, shortly before the beginning of the war. Instead, I came back here, dragging my poor wife with me."

I decided to give Asendorf a try, and during the weeks that followed, he did a conscientious, workmanlike job of gathering the material I wanted. He would spend hours in libraries or travelling all over town to clear up some minor detail, and he appeared to know lots of people in all walks of life who were in a position to help him get whatever information he was after. He seemed to be oppressed by a tremendous sense of guilt and glad to unburden himself. He said he felt uncomfortable in Berlin; on the

one hand, the Americans were suspicious of him because he had once been a Nazi, and, on the other, his former German friends looked down on him because he was too *Amerika-freundlich*.

From various conversations I had with Asendorf, I got the feeling that he perhaps liked to dramatize things a bit. I recall one time in particular, not long after our first meeting, when he stopped by to report on the progress he was making and, being in an even more self-searching mood than usual, lingered on to tell me about his life and the events that had led him to what he repeatedly called his "dilemma." He had been born on May 26, 1914, a couple of months before the beginning of the First World War, in Luckenwalde, a small town thirty miles southwest of Berlin that is now an important Red Army garrison in the Soviet Zone of Germany. His father was a well-to-do blanket manufacturer. Asendorf and his two sisters lived a sheltered, upper-middle-class life until 1927, when their father's business failed. Among the people of the narrow-minded, provincial town, bankruptcy was considered a crime on a par with embezzlement. The local minister, who had been a close friend of Asendorf's father, soon forbade his children to associate with the children of a "criminal." From the time he entered school, Asendorf's extreme nearsightedness had handicapped his attempts to play like other children; now his classmates would have nothing at all to do with him. His teachers liked him even less, and he showed that he reciprocated their feelings by refusing to stand at attention when they addressed him or to click his heels when he was dismissed.

"I was always getting into jams," Asendorf said. "And when I'd get into one, I wouldn't worry so much about the jam itself but about finding a good excuse for having got into it in the first place. I was really mixed up. I hated the Jews intellectually and believed my teachers when they called the Jews the root of all evil, but I couldn't help liking the few Jewish boys in Luckenwalde I happened to know personally. I felt scorn for the rotten bourgeois world and I wanted to rebel against the capitalistic system that had degraded my family."

In this confused frame of mind, Asendorf joined the Wandervögel, an organization in some ways similar to the Boy Scouts, whose leaders were uninhibited National Socialists. They took long hikes through the woods and held even longer political indoctrination

meetings, at which their leaders advocated overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with a peculiar blend of ultra-nationalism and socialism. This sounded fine to Asendorf. The boys were told that their job was to win over the workers, who were needed to build Hitler's thousand-year Reich. In a breast-beating confession that Asendorf wrote for the American Army's Criminal Investigation Corps at the end of the war, and that I have since read, he said of this time in his life, "National unity seemed to me necessary as a means of overcoming economic difficulties, and I did not resent the idea of an all-powerful state. I was sixteen years old, I hated contact with brute reality but admired the ideas of national purity, socialist prosperity, and freedom from the 'chains of Versailles.' Mass rallies meant high adventure and escape from the sordid life at home."

Before long, Asendorf came under the spell of Dr. Goebbels. "I'd always wanted to become a priest," he told me. "But Goebbels' inspiring oratory made me decide to switch to writing. I was overwhelmed by the little *Doktor*. It seemed to me that Hitler appealed to the base emotions of the masses, while Goebbels addressed himself to the aristocracy of the mind. The first time I heard him speak, I went home and wrote him an ardent fan letter. Imagine my excitement when he published it in his newspaper, *Der Angriff!* After that, I never missed a single Sportpalast meeting at which Goebbels spoke. I would leave my home early in the morning and take a train to Berlin, and then stand in line for hours outside the Sportpalast, waiting for the doors to open, so that I could be in the front row. I didn't tell my father where I was going. He was a right-of-center man whose sympathies were with the industrialists of the Rhine and the Ruhr. I read *Der Angriff* every morning like a bible, and I began to memorize Goebbels' daily editorials. My father finally found out about my passion and became very angry. We had quite a scene. He shouted that I was a traitor and I shouted back, 'If Dr. Goebbels ordered me to shoot you, Father, I'd do it!' Far from being hurt, my father was deeply impressed. Blind submission to a leader never fails to touch the soul of a real German. He assumed that there must be something to a man who could so completely excite a boy's imagination. On my next trip to the Sportpalast, my father went with me. He didn't like Goebbels, but he fell for Hitler, whom he'd always called an upstart and dema-

gogue. He became convinced that Hitler was Germany's destiny. We moved to Potsdam the following year and my father joined the Nazi Party there. He was kicked out in 1933 because he was a Freemason."

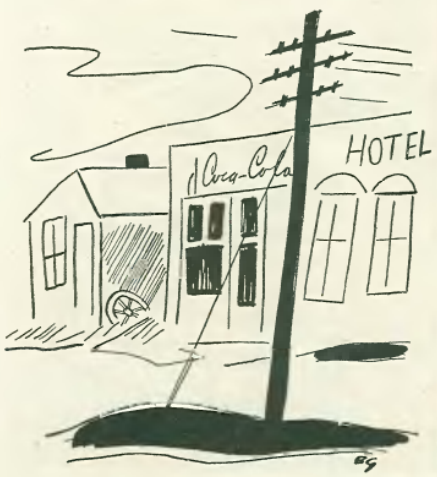
In Potsdam, young Asendorf studied at the *Gymnasium*. He used to make political speeches in class, imitating his idol, Goebbels, and when the history teacher organized a mock parliament, modelled after the Reichstag, Asendorf chose to represent the Nazi Party. After his graduation, in 1931, he went to Munich, the center of the Nazi movement. He felt right at home there, writing fiery articles against those "decadent old men" Brüning and Hindenburg, and sending them to Nazi publications. The editor of one of these thought so favorably of them that he gave him a job in a publishing house run by the Hitler Jugend. There Asendorf was introduced to Baldur von Schirach, the dandified leader of the young Nazis. An impressionable youngster, Asendorf quickly switched his veneration from Goebbels to von Schirach, who before long appointed him managing editor of a bi-weekly newspaper called *Junger Sturmtrupp*. Asendorf joined the Jugend and received a golden Hitler Jugend lapel pin, as did all youths who signed up before 1933. He had been a member only a few weeks when von Schirach made him a *Bannführer zur besonderen Verwendung*, or regional leader for special duty, a title—commonly shortened to *Bannführer z.b.V.*—that gave him authority and entitled him to wear the brown uniform of the Jugend, with dagger and insignia, which made the girls look twice and was helpful when he felt like stopping a car and telling the driver to take him to an appointment. However, he told me—and the records appear to bear him out—that he never held permanent rank in the Jugend; his name was never registered at the Jugend's central headquarters and he never paid any dues. And he never became a member of the Nazi Party.

Von Schirach talked a great deal about the "holy mission" of the Jugend. He wanted to "rejuvenate" the Nazi Party by making the Jugend strong enough to take it over when it showed signs of decay and corruption. Asendorf was wildly enthusiastic, but not for long. "A few months after the burning of the Reichstag, in February, 1933, I had a nasty shock," he told me. "A rich businessman in Hamburg had given von Schirach a hundred thousand marks to publish a Hitler Jugend daily

paper, which was to inspire the youth of Germany to rise above the cynicism of the older party politicians. Then von Schirach announced that there would be no paper. I found that he'd used the money to buy himself a house, the former Russian Embassy, on Kronprinzenufer. Soon after that, one of my close friends, Gotthard Auerlahn, who held a Nazi Party membership card numbered below 100,000 and had been awarded the golden Party badge, was given an important job in the Hitler Jugend organization. He got himself a large office and two automobiles, and assumed an arrogant manner. It became impossible to see him. He had no time for his old friends. I got so mad that I wrote an article called '*Lasst die Idee nicht Beschmutzen!*' ['Don't Let the Idea Be Smudged!'], which was critical of men who violated our ideals. As a result, I was fired from my editorial job."

Asendorf went to Berlin and studied history at the University. Like a great many Germans, he'd always secretly admired England, and now he began to read up on British history. It made him wonder whether law and order didn't mean a little more than guns and slogans. Then, on June 30, 1934, came the execution, without trial, of Ernst Roehm and some of his followers. That was enough for Asendorf, and he resigned from the Jugend, though he was still a fervent German patriot. He once walked out of a meeting held by Julius Streicher, the notorious publisher of *Der Stürmer*, because he couldn't stand the brutal tactics he advocated against Jews, but a few days later he helped a group of Streicher boys raise the swastika over a synagogue, "because I felt that the German symbol must fly everywhere."

Asendorf and Auerlahn became friendly again and engaged in many



heated discussions of political theory. Auerlahn believed in a "Eurasian block from Vladivostok to Cologne;" Asendorf contended that Germany must remain part of the Western World and Christian civilization. They finally decided that what they needed was a trip around the world to find out what people elsewhere were thinking about Germany. Asendorf's father had recouped his losses and was making out well as the owner of a building-and-loan association, and, after some prodding, he consented to put up 3,600 marks, or $1,500, for his son's share of the journey; Auerlahn had money of his own. In August, 1935, the two young men set out for Canada. They were astonished at the vastness of the North American continent. It became clear to them that, no matter what they'd been told back home, Germany was not the world.

In Winnipeg, Asendorf received bad news. A letter from his father informed him that he could expect no further funds. The Nazis had expropriated the building-and-loan association without compensation, and his father was broke again. Since his ticket had been paid for, Asendorf thought he might as well keep going, and set out with Auerlahn for China, where the two separated. Auerlahn returned home and Asendorf went on to Tsingtao, a Chinese city with a large German colony, where he spent a few weeks as an adviser in a German youth camp. The Nazi spirit was thriving there. Sitting around a campfire, singing patriotic songs and listening to impassioned speeches, Asendorf grew homesick for the Fatherland and began to feel like a traitor. Here he was junketing about the world, enjoying himself, while back in Germany, he felt sure, his country needed him. He returned home by way of Manila and the United States, stopping over in St. Paul, Chicago, and New York. He had little money left, but everywhere hospitable people—German-Americans and German-speaking Jews—invited him to stay at their houses.

When Asendorf arrived in Potsdam, in February, 1937, he was shocked to find that his father had been thrown into jail for demanding compensation for the business the Nazis had taken away from him. Asendorf's mother was in bed with a nervous breakdown. "As a patriot, I still loved my country, yet I began to hate it, too, for the injustice done to my father and for the corruption everywhere," Asendorf told me. He borrowed some money and, taking

advantage of the corruption everywhere, bribed the necessary officials to get his father out of jail. Then he sold some articles on China to a German newspaper and wangled a scholarship as an exchange student in America. He was interested in Russia, where he'd never been, and, thinking he would have a look at that country before proceeding to America, bought a ticket across Siberia at the Soviet Intourist travel bureau. On the morning he was to leave, however, a Gestapo agent appeared at his home and took away his passport. Hitler Jugend headquarters in Berlin had decided that Asendorf was no longer "trustworthy" and had behaved "*undeutsch*" in the United States by accepting the hospitality of Jewish people. He was forbidden to leave Germany.

"I managed to get a letter to Baldur von Schirach," Asendorf told me. "My passport was returned to me, but I was not permitted to go by way of Russia. I quickly set out for Canada, before the Nazis could change their minds again. Then came the happiest year of my life. I went to the Pacific Northwest and studied journalism at the University of Oregon, in Eugene. I had a wonderful time on the campus. They made me a member of Beta Theta Pi. I lived in the fraternity house and experienced a sense of personal freedom such as I had never known before. I met my future wife in a news-editing class. She was a coed named Signe Rasmussen. Her parents had migrated from Denmark to America only thirty years before, but Signe was American *durch und durch*. I was still a German patriot, so naturally we fought and argued a lot. The second time I saw her, I made up my mind to marry her. I gave her my fraternity pin. On the campus, I was considered a sort of expert on Europe. I began to grow uncomfortable at the thought of Nazism, but I still defended Germany whenever other people criticized her. I made speeches in class praising America for its freedom and democratic ideas, but I defended Germany's authoritarian form of government, on the ground that there was a national emergency. I would wind up my speeches with the promise that I would condemn Germany if I ever became convinced that the country was being run by a ruthless dictator. Gives you an idea how mixed up I still was in 1938.

"I needed money, so I went back to China and wrote articles on the situation there for some newspapers in Germany, but the papers rejected my stuff, saying

that it was too pro-Chinese. I wrote a series called '*Amerikanische Freiheit*' ['American Freedom'] for the *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, but they stopped running it after the third installment, when the editors, and the political line, changed. At the time of the Munich agreement, I was in Manchuria. I'd always hated war, and when Chamberlain spoke of peace in our time, I believed him and rejoiced."

Asendorf had promised Signe to be back in Portland by the end of the year, and he returned there on the thirtieth of December. They decided to get married as soon as he could find a job. He got in touch with DNB, a German news agency, in New York and was told there was a place for him. Thus assured, he and Signe were married in Portland on March 25, 1939. As a German citizen, he should have reported his marriage to the German Consulate, but he didn't bother to. He bought a jalopy for thirty dollars—a third of all the money he had—and the newlyweds took off on a honeymoon trip, heading East. Upon arriving in New York, Asendorf was informed by DNB that the job had been given to a "more deserving" man; he turned out to be a member of the Nazi Party. The German consul general, whom Asendorf went to ask for help in finding work, was outraged at his failure to report his marriage. Asendorf had become much too Americanized, said the consul; he needed an overhauling in the Fatherland and must return home on the next boat. The consul went on to warn him that he would be deported to Germany as soon as his temporary residential permit in America expired, that he would be arrested upon arrival in Germany, and that his parents would be held responsible for his misconduct abroad.

When Asendorf came to this point in his story, he looked at me unhappily. "Signe asked me to make a clean break, but I didn't have the guts to do it," he said. "Of course, I could have applied to the American immigration authorities for permission to remain permanently in the States, and there is every reason to believe that, as I was the husband of an American citizen, my request would have been granted. But I was too weak. I had a thousand excuses: Loss of German citizenship. My old parents. No job in America. No money. I argued and argued until Signe gave in and said all right, but she was coming with me. I told her we would stay just a short time in Germany and then come right back to

America. So the German Consulate put up the money, and we arrived in Potsdam in May, 1939."

Asendorf's family was not very pleased about his marriage. His father had always counselled his children, "Never marry a foreigner; it won't work out," and here was his only son bringing home an American, a potential enemy of the Reich. After a brief stay in Potsdam, Asendorf and his wife moved to Berlin, where he set about looking for work. Mrs. Asendorf didn't like it there. The standard of living was considerably lower than in Portland, and she noticed a lot of things that Asendorf had more or less come to take for granted. She was shocked, for example, by a sign she saw on the door of a restaurant on Friedrichstrasse, which read, "JUDEN VERBOTEN." It was one thing to read in a Portland newspaper about this ugly business and another to see it with one's own eyes. Asendorf's German friends made it rather obvious that they regarded his marriage as a mistake. Signe felt lost and lonely.

For a while, Asendorf was employed by the United Press bureau in Berlin. He wasn't much disturbed by the outbreak of war that September. He more or less resigned himself to the idea that a lot of bombs would be dropped on the city and a lot of people would be killed. A few weeks later, he joined Dr. Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry as an expert on the United States. When he was asked to join the Nazi Party, he said, "Why, I am already a *Bannführer z.b.V.*" He was told that that was sufficient, and the rank of *Bannführer* was entered in his dossier. He was never again asked to join the Party. He was assigned to the American Section of the Foreign Press Department and became a liaison officer between the Ministry and the American correspondents in Berlin. Quite a few of them said after the war that he had been cooperative and as pro-American as he could in his position. Signe worked for a few months in the Prisoner-of-War Section of the American Embassy but had to quit when Asendorf's superiors expressed the fear that she might pass along secret information to American diplomats and told Asendorf it was either her job or his. After the blitzkrieg in Poland, Asendorf was ordered to take a group of foreign correspondents on a junket to Warsaw and other Polish cities. Signe went along for the ride.

"Warsaw looked awful—a dead city—but I wasn't particularly shocked by the destruction," Asendorf said to

me. "I told myself war is war and you've got to expect this sort of thing. I was amazed, though, at Signe's reaction. She was horribly shocked. When we went to the ghetto, she was so horror-stricken that she was unable to speak. I shook hands with two old leaders of the Jewish community, and those men were trembling with fear. That rather puzzled me, and I said to Signe, 'Did you see how afraid they were of me? It's funny, because I certainly don't look frightening, like those S.S. men. It's the first time anybody's ever been afraid of me.' Signe burst into tears and ran off to the hotel. Then I found I was in trouble with two German officials in our group. They gave me hell for shaking hands with the old men. After we got back to Berlin, Signe looked miserable. She said there was no doubt in her mind that Germany was going to lose the war. I said that that was nonsense. Hadn't she seen how quickly we'd won the campaign in Poland? Never mind, she said, Hitler was going to be finished sooner or later. She refused to talk to the few Germans she knew, even to my relatives. What's more, she was about to become a mother, and that increased her moodiness. Our Charlotte was born in Berlin on December 16, 1939. The only people we saw in those days were the American correspondents—Fred Oechsner, Joe Grigg, Dana Smith, and Jack Fleischer, of the United Press; Joe Harsch, of the *Christian Science Monitor;* Brooks Peters, of the New York *Times;* Steve Laird, of *Time;* W. B. Courtney, of *Collier's;* Dave Nichol, of the Chicago *Daily News;* and Sigrid Schultz, of the Chicago *Tribune*. Pete Huss, of the International News Service, told me that Germany was going to lose the war and that he would see to it that I got a good job after it was all over. Signe and I had nice evenings playing poker with the Americans. I liked our way of life, but the Gestapo didn't."

At the Propaganda Ministry, Asendorf was cautioned to stick to his desk and "avoid unnecessary contacts with American citizens." In a letter, a copy of which he managed to get hold of after the war, the National Security Office informed the Propaganda Ministry, on May 3, 1940: "Asendorf is acquainted with the United Press correspondent Frederick Oechsner. There is definite suspicion that he conveyed information to American correspondents that was not designed for foreign consumption."

When Paris fell, on June 14, 1940,

Asendorf was elated. He called up Signe at home to give her what seemed to him great news; now the war would be over soon. But Signe thought the news was terrible. "And the war isn't over yet," she said. "It's going to last a long, long while." As the summer wore on, she became more depressed, for she was expecting her second baby and the prospect of having it in the middle of another bleak, dreary Berlin winter seemed intolerable. Her doctor eased the situation by recommending a change of scene. Asendorf succeeded in packing her off to Florence, where, for a few weeks at least, she could see the sun and no German faces. Irene was born there on December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor. When word came that the United States had entered the war, Asendorf called his wife from Berlin. He was crying. He couldn't say much, because he knew that all long-distance wires were tapped, but he told her that from now on there would be no difference of opinion between them. Signe understood. When he went to Florence in March to bring her and the baby back to Berlin, he told her he agreed with her that Hitler was doomed.

ALL American citizens in Berlin had been urged to return home on the repatriation ship Gripsholm, which sailed for the States on May 28, 1942, but Signe decided to stick by her husband. There was a good chance that Asendorf would be sent to Lisbon to represent Europapress, a German news agency, and that they might all contrive to get from there to the States. But he didn't get the job, and in May, 1942, he was drafted into the Wehrmacht. He had been called up several times before and had always been turned down because of his eyes; now the physical standards had been lowered. He was sent to an infantry camp for basic training. There, between rifle practice and close-order drill, he kept writing to the Europapress people, asking to be sent to Lisbon. The letters were intercepted, and—because of them, he is convinced—he was ordered to Rostov, on the Eastern front. He was saved, though, by another physical examination, in which the doctor detected a heart murmur and classified him as fit only for garrison duty. To his delighted astonishment, he found himself assigned to Hitler's military headquarters in East Prussia. Presently, he was summoned to Berlin, where a colonel told him he had been selected to write fake news stories for the foreign press. Asendorf

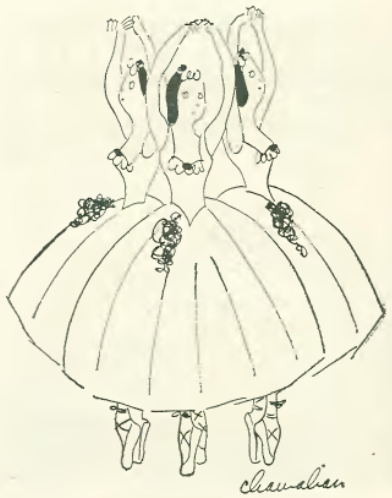
replied that that was hardly his line and that he thought he'd be more useful writing straight news stories for Europapress in Lisbon. The colonel denounced him as a traitor, and shortly thereafter Asendorf was examined by the Gestapo. He has a photostatic copy of a letter from the Gestapo to the *Reichspressechef*, which reads, in part, "Asendorf is married to an American citizen who has good connections with American diplomats in Lisbon . . . and exercises a hardly praiseworthy influence upon her husband. [In a later letter, Asendorf was referred to as *charakterlich etwas labil*—a somewhat unstable character.] His wife has tried to prevent his being drafted into the service. Asendorf himself has repeatedly made defeatist statements about the probable outcome of the war. . . . Asendorf will not be permitted to go to Lisbon."

Working through friends, Asendorf nimbly got assigned to the Foreign Press Section of the Army High Command in Berlin, where he remained until the end of the war. His job there was to help compile a daily digest of the progress of the war for members of the High Command and divisional field commanders, based on British, American, and Russian broadcasts. He wore civilian clothes, went home every night, and felt more in touch with the outside world than he had for some time. Most of the men in his office were anti-Nazis. When Asendorf started work on the news digest, it was sent out to four hundred and eight officers. As the war went from bad to worse, politically "unreliable" officers were taken off the distribution list in such numbers that after Stalingrad only sixteen were still receiving the digest.

The difficulties of daily life in Berlin—of getting milk for her two little girls and of putting up with the constant snooping of the Gestapo—finally became more than Signe could take. Asendorf, again pulling wires, succeeded in obtaining faked German passports for her and the children and arranged for them to go to Denmark, where the Nazis were then in control and where Mrs. Asendorf had relatives. In a diary she kept at the time, Mrs. Asendorf wrote, "It was on September 25, 1943, that Werner stood on the German side of the fence in Warnemünde, playing with Charlotte (3½ years) and Irene (1½ years), while I worked my way through the customs with 2 overnight bags, Werner's typewriter, and a huge shopping bag filled with everything from German rye-bread sandwiches to diapers and a pot to discourage diaper

wetting. . . . I went back for the cranky, overwrought babies with whom Werner and I had set out in the 4 o'clock darkness that morning. Werner kissed us all. 'Goodbye,' he said. 'And just take it easy with the kids. You'll get along all right.' 'Goodbye,' I said, a little vaguely, my mind already concentrated on the obstacles ahead of me."

A FEW months later, the big Allied bombings of Berlin began. Asendorf found them exhilarating. "It gave me a feeling of satisfaction to see the burning houses and the miserable, homeless people and to watch the breakdown of the famous Prussian discipline," he said to me. "I was exuberant when I saw Hitler's Reichschancellery in flames. I was happy to see these people being punished for what they had done to others." After Berlin fell, on May 3, 1945, he spent a month or so in a Soviet prison camp and was then released. He returned to Berlin, where the first American he met was Huss, of the International News Service, who, in accordance with his five-year-old promise, helped him get a job as assistant editor of a daily newspaper published by the British Military Government. Signe, after two years in Denmark with her children, felt hopelessly cut off from the world—a feeling that was only accentuated by a couple of brief and furtive visits that her husband had been able to pay her. Asendorf tried to get permission to bring his family back to Berlin but was brusquely turned down, for the city was starving and threatened with epidemics. The only way he could keep in touch with his wife was by giving letters to a British officer, who mailed them in London; there was no mail service between Germany and Denmark. After several months of this, Signe, despairing of ever being able to rejoin her husband, went



to the American Legation in Copenhagen for advice and was told she had better return to America. She sent word to Asendorf that she was about to go home, at which he borrowed a British Army uniform and boarded a British military train for Denmark. His disguise proved unavailing at the border, where he was arrested and thrown into jail, but he was permitted to communicate with Signe, who hurried there to see him. In the course of an emotional three-hour reunion, he conceded that it would be best for her to return to Portland with the children. After all, he told her, he would be able to join her before long. It was just a matter of waiting a few more months. They said goodbye. Signe and the girls—they were now seven and five—sailed a week later.

Asendorf was taken back to Berlin under British military-police escort, but when he explained the circumstances of his masquerade, the British decided not to press charges against him. He went to the American Consulate and filed an application for an immigration visa. As the husband of an American citizen, he was entitled to preference in the German quota, but when the consul learned that he had been a member of the Wehrmacht, he rejected his application.

In October, 1946, all German nationals who contemplated working for the Allies or for projects supervised by the Allies had to fill out a questionnaire, much of it dealing with their political pasts. In answer to one question, Asendorf wrote, "As a young man I was an enthusiastic Nazi. Travelling abroad, being married to a proud American girl, and seeing the horrors of war, I became educated. Today I see hope only in the democratic way of life." He did not mention that back in 1933 he had been a *Bannführer z.b.V.* in the Hitler Jugend. He was cleared, and became managing editor of *Der Abend*, an American-licensed, German-owned newspaper.

A few weeks later, American Intelligence officers came across Asendorf's personnel file in the cellars of the Propaganda Ministry. In it they discovered the questionnaire that he had filled out in 1940 before going to work for the Ministry, in which his rank of *Bannführer z.b.V.* in the Jugend was recorded. He was charged with misrepresenting himself in the Allied questionnaire and brought to trial before the United States Military Government Summary Court. Asked by the judge why he had not mentioned his Jugend activities, Asendorf said, "I didn't want to go

to an internment camp. I had two reasons. First, I felt I just couldn't live next to people who had been, and in many cases still were, ardent Nazis. Also, I had to keep working to support my family in the United States." Early in the summer of 1947, he was sentenced to six months in prison. After serving three months in various jails in Berlin, he was granted clemency for good behavior and released. The judge who sentenced him wrote the American consul that Asendorf had committed "an act of omission rather than of commission." After an investigation, the State Department concluded that his offense "did not involve moral turpitude." He was called before the American consul and informed that his case had been reviewed and that his visa might be forthcoming soon. Asendorf sent a jubilant cable to his wife. But the visa was not granted. When he told me all this, in the summer of 1948, he was beginning to think it never would be.

AFTER a couple of years' absence, I returned to Berlin late in 1950. I checked in at the Press Club, and within a few hours Asendorf telephoned to invite me to come and have dinner with him at his house. He'd seen my name on the Press Club's daily list of arrivals. "I'm no longer alone," he said, and his voice sounded elated. "Signe and the kids have been here for several weeks. Everything's wonderful!"

We made a date for the next evening. Asendorf said he would stop by the club for me at seven. He showed up looking sprightly and vigorous, and wearing a new suit. His shoes were shined and his hair had just been cut. "I'm a family man now," he said, as we got into my car. "My wife tells me what tie to wear and when I need a haircut. It's wonderful! I'm a free-lance journalist, and making out fairly well at it—for a German. I finally gave up hoping for a visa and wrote to Signe, asking her to come to Berlin and bring the children. They arrived here in September. I was sick with worry that I might seem a stranger to the girls. After all, I hadn't seen them in four years. I had seen Irene a total of less than two years since she was born, and now she's nine. But we hit it off right away. It was as though they'd only left four weeks ago. The girls look great. They don't look like German children. They"—he took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes while he groped for the right expression—"they have that won-

derful American exuberance when they are happy. You could single them out right away in a crowd of Berlin children. German kids have such a prematurely aged, sometimes cynical expression in their eyes. Maybe it's the long suffering they've gone through. My kids never had to suffer, thank God! And, of course, they're better dressed than German children. They wear their American clothes, and the colors are new and bright. They're curious about Berlin, the way tourists are, but their hearts belong to America. They write letters to their girl friends in Portland and tell me about the parties they went to there and about Norma, their plump girl friend in the States, and about the little Airedale they used to have there. Maybe we'll buy one for them here."

"And how is Mrs. Asendorf?" I asked.

"Well, frankly, Signe is more conscious of her environment than the children are," Asendorf replied. The elation had suddenly gone out of his voice. "As you know, she didn't like Berlin when she was here before and it must have been a real sacrifice for her to give up her pleasant life in America and come back here—she had a good job over there with a firm of patent lawyers. She still doesn't like Germans. She may accept this one or that one after she gets to know them, but her first reaction invariably is distrust. I find myself confused when I'm with her. While she was away I went to such extremes defending the American viewpoint that I became quite unpopular even among the more tolerant of my German acquaintances. But now I find I have to defend myself as a German against her American point of view. It hurts me, because basically I'm sure I agree with her. We argue over issues that are not real issues. Yet at the same time I argue with Germans who say things against the Americans, and I always find a thousand excuses for what the Americans are doing. A couple of weeks ago, while I was downtown, I happened to run into the wife of a German professor. They are both fine, educated Germans, who are highly sympathetic toward the Americans. We were chatting on Kurfürstendamm when we saw a drunken American soldier pushing Germans off the sidewalk and generally raising hell. The sight depressed my friend. She felt that such conduct hardly justified her faith in Americans. Well, I quickly reassured her. It was Army Day, I pointed out, and the poor fellow was thousands of miles away from home and had the blues, and so he had just

gone out and got drunk. Soldiers do that everywhere. She understood right away. But if my wife had been with me, I might have talked differently. I might have accused the soldier of all the crimes in the book. And there you are.

"Now, take the language problem. Signe doesn't want the kids to learn German. She thinks it would be all right for them to learn it if I were an American citizen. Then she might consider a new language part of their education. But under the circumstances, she says, it would only make them feel inferior. For a while our kids saw a lot of a ten-year-old girl named Oda, who lived in the apartment upstairs. She was smaller than our girls and had no bounce—malnutrition, I suppose. Irene and Charlotte would talk a little German to Oda, and Oda picked up a few English words from them. I thought it was a nice give-and-take, but my wife seemed relieved when Oda and her parents moved away. And yesterday my wife received a letter from the kids' grandmother in Portland, saying, 'I'm glad that your children are learning so much. It's good to learn a new language, it's almost like living a new life, and they ought to learn German while they're in Berlin.' Well, Signe read the letter to the children while we were having breakfast, and I noticed that she skipped the reference to German and just read that Granny was glad the girls were learning so much. I'm sure the kids would learn German pretty quickly, the way kids do, but they are afraid of hurting their mother by speaking it and they are also a little self-conscious in front of me, because it's hard for me not to correct them when they make mistakes. I don't know that my wife is right about all this, but I don't feel I should argue with her. After all, I was dead wrong once when I argued against her better judgment, and we didn't stay in New York but came here instead. I don't want to be wrong again. I've never attempted to Germanize Signe. I feel that she has gone through a lot, and I must try to see things her way."

The Asendorfs were living on the second floor of a large, run-down villa on Potsdamerstrasse that looked as if it had once been the house of some upper-middle-class family. It had been damaged by a bomb and was now split up into three apartments. There was a single doorbell with a sign under it indicating how many times it should be rung for the tenant desired. (Twice for the Asendorfs.) As we walked up-

stairs, Asendorf told me that one room of their apartment was locked up, because part of the outside wall was still missing and you could walk right out into thin air. This, of course, he added, was not unusual in Berlin, and they liked the place because it was quiet and had enough space for everybody—kitchen, dining room, living room, and two bedrooms. The living room was large and had an old-fashioned high ceiling that, in view of the cost of fuel in postwar Berlin, was impractical. The room was cold, and its coldness was intensified by the fact that there were no rugs on the floor. There was little furniture—only a few chairs, a table, and a bookshelf. There was also a small upright piano, a radio, and an oil copy of Titian's "Lavinia," which had been lent to them by a friend in East Berlin, who thought it would be safer in the Western part of the city.

Mrs. Asendorf came in, and her husband introduced me to her. She has shining blond hair, blue eyes, and a soft face with regular features; it was not difficult to imagine her as a pretty coed on the campus of the University of Oregon. Her easy, erect bearing would have marked her anywhere in Europe as an American, but there was a cautious, veiled expression in her eyes that struck me as almost European. Asendorf kissed her hair and looked at her admiringly. She said the girls would be in in a little while; they were finishing their schoolwork in their room. I asked her where the girls went to school.

"Right here," Mrs. Asendorf said in an even, velvety voice. "I teach them here at home."

"We tried to enter the kids in the American Dependents School," her husband said. "It's a good school and the companionship of other American children would have been wonderful for them. But the principal told Signe she wasn't sure our girls could be admitted. No child of mixed parentage ever has been so far. The case would have to be cleared by headquarters in Heidelberg. It didn't much matter, anyway, since we found that American children whose parents aren't employed by the government—businessmen, newspapermen, missionaries, and so on—have to pay a weekly tuition of seven dollars and a half, and then there's a dollar and a half a week for lunch. That would have been eighteen dollars a week for the two girls, which ruled out the school as far as we were concerned. Then we heard about a correspondence school in America that gives lessons by mail to the children

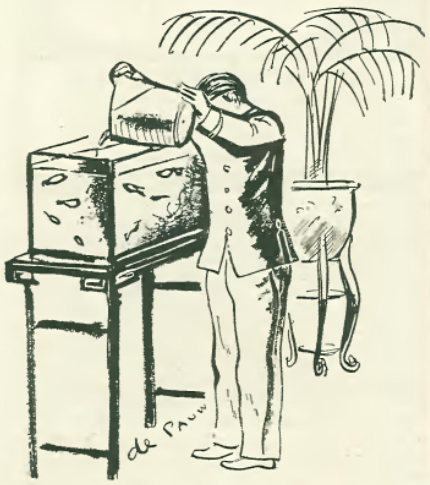
of trappers, diplomats, circus riders, and other people who find it impossible to send their kids to a real American school—the Calvert School, it's called, and it's in Baltimore. The course costs a hundred and five dollars a year. The written homework the kids do and the tests they are given every month are sent to Baltimore, where a teacher reads, grades, and criticizes the work and returns it. At the end of the year, pupils who pass the tests receive a certificate that is recognized by almost every school in the States."

"The girls like it," said Mrs. Asendorf. "I suppose it's easier for them than for me. I've never taught school and I have to prepare myself for every lesson, and the kids are in different grades. It's really a full-time job."

"And one that doesn't pay a nickel," Asendorf said. "And it doesn't solve the problem of companionship."

"Please excuse me a minute," Mrs. Asendorf said, walking to the door. "I must go and see how dinner is coming along."

Asendorf looked after her and sighed. "Signe tried hard to find a job here that would pay the children's tuition fees, assuming we could get them into the Dependents School," he said. "There are plenty of openings for American and German office personnel at H.I.C.O.G. [the Office of the High Commissioner for Germany, in Berlin], but Signe, being the wife of a German, can't get the security clearance that American secretaries need because they handle classified material. And she can't qualify for jobs German employees can hold, because she's an American citizen. She was offered a job with Pan American Airways downtown but found that to take it she would need a permit from the West Berlin Labor Office and she couldn't bring herself to apply for that. She is proud of



being an American and at the same time she's constantly being hurt because she *is* an American. She and the girls are not accepted by their own people here because she married a German—and not the right sort of German, at that. How are we to explain to the kids that they can't get anything from the PX when there are plenty of Germans around who have all the PX stuff they want? The other day, for instance, an American sergeant we know came by with his Veronika Dankeschön. That's what Berliners call those girl friends who get everything they want and are forever saying '*Danke schön.*' This one had a brand-new American handbag, very chic, that the sergeant had bought her at the PX. She had nylon stockings, was smoking American cigarettes, and chewing gum, and the sergeant had just bought her a big bottle of Guerlain. The children couldn't take their eyes off her and I could read the question in their faces 'How come that she's got all these things that we haven't?' " He sighed again. "You'd think the constant strain of being snubbed by her own people might have affected Signe's loyalty to her homeland, but it hasn't. On the contrary, I think she's more aware now of what America means to her than when I first met her. I can't help admiring her for that. I'm not so sure how I would feel if *I* had to take so much punishment."

The door opened and the girls came in, followed by their mother. Irene ran across the room and jumped onto her father's lap. Charlotte was quiet and shy, like her mother. Both children were blond and very pretty.

"Charlotte missed one question in her test," Irene announced. "She missed the name of one dominion of the British Empire."

Charlotte shrugged in an embarrassed way. "I thought I knew them all," she said. She had her mother's soft, melodious voice. "Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the United Kingdom, the Union of South Africa, and—er—er—"

"See?" said Irene. "There's one missing. May I tell her now, Mummy?"

Mrs. Asendorf nodded, half smiling.

"It's one that ends with 'land,' " Irene said.

"With 'land?' " Charlotte looked puzzled. "Not Ireland?"

"No, not Ireland," Irene said. "Well, try! It's got two words. First word is 'New.' "

Charlotte shook her head. Irene burst out laughing. "New—land," she said,

pausing between the two words and winking at us. "Why don't you try the alphabet? New A-land, New B-land, New C-land—"

"New Zealand!" Charlotte cried. "I should have known!"

Irene jumped down from her father's lap and started an Indian war dance, shouting, "New D-land, New E-land, New F-land, New G-land!" Suddenly she stopped and said, "Let's go to America, Daddy, like last week."

Asendorf said to me, "The other day I told them we'd go to America. They asked, 'When?' and I said, 'Right away!' and took them to the Botanical Garden on Unter den Eichen. It was a beautiful day, and we had a fine time looking at the trees. They have a section given over to plants and shrubs and trees that grow in certain regions of the United States."

"There's a rocky part called the Rocky Mountains," said Charlotte. "And the Eastern Seashore and the Great Plains."

"Yes, and the prairie," said Irene, climbing up on the arm of a chair. "We were playing hide-and-seek. We were the Indians, and Daddy was a trapper. And afterward we had a milk shake."

"At the American Army railroad station," Asendorf said.

Irene said, "It wasn't an American milk shake, though."

"Why not?" asked Asendorf.

"It was made by that fat German girl, Daddy," Irene said. "And it tasted like German ice cream. But I like German ice-cream sundaes, because they're made with real whipped cream. They make fine whipped cream here. Everything is fine in Berlin," she added, without much conviction.

Charlotte shook her head. "She doesn't really like everything in Berlin," she said. "I asked her when we came here what she liked best, and she said, 'I like the Americans best.' "

"Yes, and I like everything," Irene said stubbornly. "Especially now it's wintertime."

Asendorf gave his wife a puzzled glance. "Why wintertime?" he asked.

"Because it's much darker in wintertime," Irene said.

Asendorf's face fell. "What do you mean by that?"

"Well, Daddy, you don't see so much when it's dark," Irene said.

Charlotte had been watching her father. Now she said quickly, "Irene means you don't see so many naked little girls and boys by the Wannsee, and you don't see all the grownups getting un-

dressed in front of everybody and getting dressed again."

"No, no, no!" Irene shouted. "That's *not* what I mean! In wintertime it gets dark so early, and the lights go on and you walk through the streets and think you're in Portland."

"All right, children," said Mrs. Asendorf. "Go set the table. Wash your hands before dinner, Irene."

The girls went out. For a minute or two, we sat there in silence. Then Asendorf said, "We had quite an experience on Halloween, a few weeks ago. The Americans have made quite a day of it here. Our little party started out as great fun. The girls bought orange and black paper and cut out black cats and witches riding on brooms to decorate the dining room. Then they dressed up—Charlotte as a fat old lady and Irene as a devil with horns—and went 'trick or treat' to the other people in the building. We had sandwiches and cookies and homemade fudge, and then we played games, bobbing for apples and all that. The kids were happy, and afterward we went around to a *Bierstube* in the neighborhood, with Irene carrying a jack-o'-lantern that Signe had made out of a pumpkin. But when we got back home, Irene started to cry and said, 'I want to go home.' We explained to her that this"—he swept an arm about the room—"was now her home. But she kept sobbing into her pillow, and saying, 'I want to go home to America.' " Asendorf looked at his wife, who said nothing.

"The children often show me American magazines and ask me whether I like a pair of shoes or a dress advertised in them better than one that's made in Germany," Asendorf continued after a pause. "They were disappointed once because I said I liked a German bicycle better than an American one."

"They want you to share their preferences," said Mrs. Asendorf.

"Yes, their dream is of America," her husband said. "They read the *Stars and Stripes* every day, and follow the adventures of Dagwood and Blondie in the comic section. When they saw the ads of the new cars in the American magazines, they said, 'Just wait. Daddy's going to surprise us with one of those cars.' I tried to make them see things differently. After all, I said, they have many nice things here. They admitted I was right but insisted America was even better. I couldn't talk them out of it."

"You shouldn't have tried to," said Mrs. Asendorf.

Asendorf looked apologetic. "I didn't

really mean 'talk them out of it,' dear," he said. "I meant I just tried a different approach. I asked them whether it wasn't better to have a home in Germany, plenty to eat, and enough money than to live in America and have nothing and live in the slums."

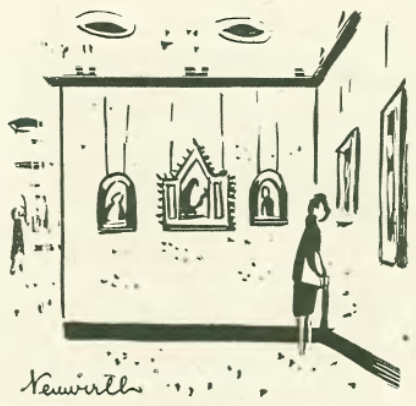
"What a thing to say!" exclaimed Mrs. Asendorf. "Thank the Lord, they don't even know what a slum is!"

"Well, I explained it to them," said Asendorf. "Charlotte admitted it might be better to live here in comfort than to be very poor in America. Irene said she was never going to be very poor anyway, and she was going to live in America, period."

"She's got more common sense than you have," Mrs. Asendorf said. Turning to me, she added, "Werner loves to carry on these hypothetical discussions. What's the use? The girls will never be quite happy here. Something's always upsetting them. Last week, Charlotte came home crying. She said she wasn't going out on the street any more in her blue jeans. Some of the German kids in the neighborhood had jeered at her. Our daughters feel lonely here. Back home they didn't have too much comfort—sometimes we had to live in rented rooms and the landlady would look after them while I was at work—but at least they had friends. We moved a few times and the girls went to different schools, but they were always popular with their classmates."

The girls had set the table and we had dinner—meat balls and spaghetti, and American ice cream that a friend of Asendorf's had got him at the post exchange. We all drank cocoa. Mrs. Asendorf said the German milk was skimmed and not very good, and they couldn't afford coffee every day. A pound of coffee cost three dollars in German markets.

"Everything's getting expensive," Asendorf said to his wife. "The butcher told me this morning that pork has



Dining in Connecticut

The fabulous Nutmeg State offers as wide a variety of fine eating places as can be found anywhere in the country. Here are quaint inns, replete with the lore of yesteryear . . . salty seafood houses on the shore and inland . . . and famous watering spots that feature dishes to satisfy the most discriminating gourmet. The inns and restaurants listed below offer the widest possible choice of foods, atmosphere and prices . . . all within easy driving distance of New York. Write or call the individual restaurants for further information.

MANERO'S
Steamboat Rd., Greenwich (8-0049) *Riverside Ave., Westport* (2-3675) *Steaks, Fillets.*

SILVERMINE TAVERN
Exit 38, *Merritt Pkwy., Norwalk* (6-2588) *Featuring steaks, chicken. Open Daily.*

STONEHENGE
Ridgefield (*Ridgefield* 6-6511) *Open every day. Victor Gilbert, Skinker.*

THE RED BARN
Merritt Pkwy., Exit 41 (*Westport* 2-6204) *Open Daily. New England Cooking.*

WAVERLY INN
Exit 61, *Merritt Pkwy., Rt.* 10 *to Cheshire* (344). *Closed Mon. Saratoga Chandelier.*

WESTLEIGH INN
Litchfield (*Jordan* 7-8744) *Open daily all year. Featuring French Cuisine.*

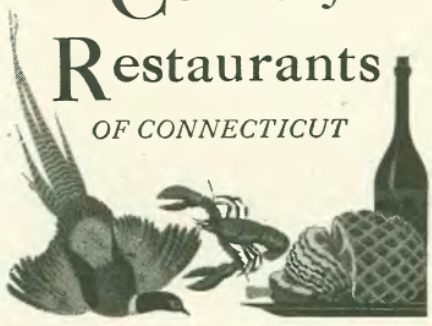
WHITE TURKEY INN
Danbury (*Danbury* 3-2726) *Open Daily. Yankee Cooking. Gobbler Bar.*

CHIMNEY CORNERS INN
Merritt Pkwy., Exit 34 (*Stamford* 2-1955) *Open Daily. Famed for New England Dishes.*

CLAM BOX
Cos Cob (*Greenwich* 8-3285), *Westport* (2-4266). *Famous popular priced seafood.*

HEARTHSTONE OUTPOST INN (*Ridgefield* 6-7613) *American, European Dishes. Open Daily. Guest Rooms.*

THE Country Restaurants OF CONNECTICUT



gone up forty pfennigs. He told me something nice, too. Said that you came in yesterday and you didn't look at all like a foreigner. 'Frau Asendorf looks like my good German customers,' he said."

Asendorf stopped. His wife's face was rigid. "So soon?" she murmured, as though she were talking to herself. Irene went on eating her ice cream, but Charlotte put her spoon down and watched her mother.

Asendorf looked embarrassed. "But he meant it to be a compliment, dear," he said.

"Sure, sure," his wife said.

A COUPLE of days later, I left Berlin, and during the next year and a half I heard from Asendorf only now and then. He and his family continued to live on Potsdamerstrasse. In one of his letters, he said that his wife had finally come to accept life as she found it there and that the children were making good progress in their lessons. I returned to Berlin last summer and called him up the day after I arrived. It was the Fourth of July, and I'd read in the *Daily Bulletin*, published by the Berlin American Military Post, that a party for the children of all American personnel and their guests would be given that afternoon at the Anchor Service Club, in Wannsee, with merry-go-rounds, boat rides, baby contests, darts, and other games. I thought it would be nice to take the Asendorf girls there.

Asendorf sounded pleased to hear from me and delighted when I asked him if he and his family would go to the party with me. He went to ask his wife about it, and came back and said they'd love to. I said how about four o'clock, and he said fine. When I drove up to his house, he was standing outside.

"Great happiness upstairs!" he shouted as I got out of the car. "The girls have been talking of nothing else since you called." He remembered that he hadn't greeted me and began to pump my hand. "How are you, how are you?" he said. "I want to thank you in advance. You don't know what it means to the kids to go there. Signe and I have been worrying about this holiday for the past two weeks."

Asendorf had gained weight, and he seemed to be full of good cheer and confidence. He told me that there was a new American consul in Berlin and that this man took a more hopeful view of the likelihood of his getting a visa. No matter what happened, though, he and his wife had decided that she and

the girls would return to Portland before the beginning of the next school year.

"Last week, Signe got a letter from her mother urging her to come home as soon as possible," Asendorf said. "Danger of war and all that. 'Better come now before it gets too late,' her mother wrote. 'Werner can always follow later.' The next day, Irene came to me and said, 'Daddy, isn't it exciting! Mummy says we're going to be in America before Halloween!' I don't blame Signe for wanting to go back. She deserves a better break than to be cooped up in a bombed house in an occupied city. Her brother and brother-in-law in America own their homes and have cars and some security. I'm thirty-eight and still struggling to get along. It means little to me that I'm doing better than millions of Germans. Then there's the matter of the girls' American citizenship. Since I'm not an American and they weren't born in the States, they'll lose it if they stay here much longer. Also, one can't exclude the possibility of war. They've got the idea that the Air Force would fly us all out together, just like any other American family. They don't realize that from the American officials' point of view, I'm still a kraut. The Americans would rather fly out Archie, the kids' Airedale puppy, than me. Well, let's not talk about it today. This is a holiday."

The girls were waiting impatiently in the living room. They were wearing red jackets and blue pedal pushers their grandmother had sent them from Portland. Mrs. Asendorf had wanted them to wear the new dresses she'd bought for them in Berlin, but the girls had insisted on wearing their American clothes because it was an American party.

When we drove up in front of the large, sprawling clubhouse, we found that the parking space was filled. I asked the Asendorfs to go on in while I found a place to park. Mrs. Asendorf and the girls got out, but Asendorf said he would come with me. As soon as we drove off, he asked anxiously, "Did you notice anything about the girls?"

I said they'd grown a lot and looked healthy and happy.

Asendorf seemed relieved. "Sometimes I feel they aren't as cheerful as they used to be," he said. "It can't be the food. They eat as well as they would in the States. Maybe it's their clothes. We have to buy them in German stores, and German dresses aren't as gay and stylish as American ones. And there's still that old trouble of companionship. We ran into a real stumbling block

along that line a while ago. One of the American girls they'd met at Sunday school was a nice kid named Velma. She invited our girls for lunch one Saturday. The girls came back all excited and told us all about Velma's house and how it was furnished and about Velma's father, who ate a lot and complained about gaining weight. 'Just as you do, Daddy,' Irene said, and laughed. The next week they invited Velma for lunch. Believe it or not, I had stagefright the day she came. I dressed more carefully than usual—I was anxious to make a good impression on Velma, so that my girls would be proud of me. Well, the party was a great success—or, at any rate, we thought it was—and the kids went back once more to Velma's place, but she didn't come to our house again, although we invited her twice. Once her mother said another girl was having a birthday party, and the next time Velma was going to some friends of her parents'. Our girls were disappointed, but I don't think they felt it as strongly as Signe did. Then Velma and her family went back to the States, and the girls have never been invited to an American home since. They go to Girl Scout meetings every Friday afternoon, and those aren't so bad, although even there the girls always feel a little left out, because the other girls are forever talking about things that have happened in school, which our girls know nothing about. They seem to be popular, though. Irene was named an assistant leader."

After driving around for a while, I finally found a spot for the car, and we walked back to the club. Mrs. Asendorf and the girls were waiting for us outside the entrance. People were swarming in and out, pushing past them. Mrs. Asendorf appeared to be ill at ease and the girls lost and helpless. I told her they should have gone inside, but she shook her head in a quiet, determined way and said no, they wouldn't go in by themselves. As I preceded them into the building, the girls kept close behind me, and Mrs. Asendorf glanced around apprehensively, as if she expected someone to order her out. Asendorf seemed unconcerned.

The party was well under way, and there was the uninhibited hubbub that is typical of all such events. Berlin is surrounded by the Soviet Zone of Germany, and the Anchor Service Club is only a few minutes' drive from the nearest Red Army tank outpost, but that did nothing to still the animated clamor of many American voices, which, for all its tunelessness, had the sweet, beguiling sound of a dearly familiar melody. Tele-

phones were jingling, there was the smell of coffee and doughnuts, and the game booths were crowded. People kept bumping into one another and nobody seemed to mind. Irene discovered the baby contest and led us over to it. Around a large table sat the jury—soldiers, Red Cross girls, and a couple of civilians—trying to make up their minds under the demanding stares of the contestants' parents. Standing on the table were the finalists—a doll-like girl of three dressed like a grownup; a year-old boy, cute and crying; and a shrimp-size edition of Hopalong Cassidy, shooting his guns off at the jury.

Three teen-age girls came by. They were about Charlotte's size. Their arms were interlocked and they were talking in excited, vastly important whispers. As they passed Charlotte, they casually said "Hi!" and then walked on, still whispering. Charlotte nodded almost automatically and murmured "Hi," but the girls were already gone, and she turned to gaze thoughtfully after them. I asked her who they were.

"I don't know their names," she said. "Their fathers work for the government. I say hello to them in Sunday school." She noticed that Mrs. Asendorf was looking at her and squeezed her mother's arm. "I hope they'll vote for the baby boy, Mummy," she said, pointing with exaggerated vivacity toward the jury.

Asendorf turned to me. 'Charlotte is beginning to act like a grownup," he said in a low voice. "She knows when Signe is hurt and tries to cheer her up. Yet the poor kid's hurt herself. She knows I look so different from the rest of this crowd that I stick out like a sore thumb."

The jury selected the year-old crybaby, and there were boos and applause. We all dropped in at the snack bar, and the girls ordered hamburgers and banana splits. Then we went outside, where a merry-go-round was going full blast. Irene and Charlotte ran over and got on. After that they went to the pie-throwing contest, and the dart games, and the shooting booths—everywhere. They got themselves balloons and had a grand time. All the Americans I knew in Berlin seemed to have brought their youngsters to the party, but I had no opportunity to introduce them to the Asendorfs, for Signe walked on ahead whenever I stopped to speak to someone, making it plain that she didn't want to meet anybody, and her husband chivalrously tagged along after her.

The three of us went back into the

clubhouse. There Asendorf saw an Army colonel he knew and went over to shake hands with him. The girls having wandered away, Mrs. Asendorf and I stood watching the crowd. Balloons exploded and the caps of soft-drink bottles tinkled on the floor. Somewhere a firecracker went off, and we heard a girl squeal in a high-pitched voice that Mrs. Asendorf identified as Irene's. A jazz band started to play in another room. We couldn't see the musicians, but it was a safe bet that they were Germans, trying their best to imitate American jazz. They made a poor showing, particularly the drummer, who belabored his instrument as though he were playing the "Hohenfriedberger Marsch" in a military brass band. The crowd loved it, however.

A slim American woman wearing a blue dress and hat came by. I had last seen her two years before in a Western European capital, where her husband had been attached to the American Embassy. I hadn't known she was in Berlin. We said hello and she told me that she and her husband had arrived only a fortnight ago, and that she was still dizzy from the struggle of packing and unpacking. Since we were all standing there, I had no alternative but to introduce Mrs. Asendorf, although I was fully aware that she didn't want me to. The woman asked her how long she'd been in Berlin.

"Almost two years," said Mrs. Asendorf.

The woman exclaimed with pleasure. Two years! She'd been trying to find someone at the Embassy who could show her the ropes, but it so happened that *everybody* had been in Berlin only a brief time and knew *nothing* about the city. Mrs. Asendorf *must* come over to the house and tell her all about the people here and what these Germans were really like. I began to realize that the woman was one of those Americans who believe that the civilized parts of the rest of the world are populated mainly by State Department officials and their families. (She once told me in all earnestness that during an eighteen-month tour of duty with her husband in a certain country she had never met any of its citizens except the ones "you couldn't avoid meeting at cocktail parties and official receptions.") Now she was explaining that she had just moved into her ninth house since 1945 and she hoped to stay put for a while, but of course you *never* knew, and she gave Mrs. Asendorf a sympathetic smile, saying that she, too, must have gone through this ordeal many, many times,

and how about coming over to the house toward the end of the week?

At this point, Asendorf sauntered up. I introduced him to the woman, remarking that Mrs. Asendorf's husband was a German journalist and could tell her a lot about Berlin and its people. The woman said why, that sounded *most* interesting, and then she looked at her wristwatch and said she was expecting company at seven and must be on her way, and she hurriedly left without repeating her invitation.

"The kids want to know whether they can have a hot dog," Asendorf said to his wife.

"Let's all go get hot dogs," I said, and took her by the arm.

I had to leave the party around seven, but the girls wanted to stay for the fireworks. Mrs. Asendorf, after some hesitation, gave in and said all right, they'd stay on for a while. Asendorf called me the following morning. They'd had a marvellous time, he said; they hadn't gone home until after ten and the girls had been so excited by the fireworks that they hadn't been able to get to sleep until long after midnight. "Even Signe relaxed and began to enjoy herself," he said.

I HAVEN'T seen Mrs. Asendorf or the girls since. I met Asendorf briefly once more before I left Berlin, and after that I heard nothing from him until a few weeks ago. By then I'd been back in this country for some time. He wrote me that he was still living at the old address in Berlin, but that his wife and the children had returned to Portland shortly after the Fourth of July we'd all spent together. "There was never any doubt in my mind that they had to return," he wrote. "But it was quite a conflict for Signe. If we'd had plenty of money, we might have sent the kids to a boarding school in the States, and Signe might have waited in Berlin for me to get my visa. She thought I might be tempted by the liberties of my new, temporary bachelorhood. But the truth is that I don't like to be without her and the children. With my family next to me, I have mental and physical resources; alone, I am weak. I've been very happy with them, and it would have been perfect if we could have been together in America instead of Berlin. This was the third time that Signe stuck by me and I feel she's done enough for me. She must now think of herself and the children.

"Once we'd decided the time had come, everything went fast. A friend in Naval Intelligence got us a stateroom

on the America, leaving Bremerhaven on July 21st. Shopping, packing, a farewell party on Saturday night in a neighborhood *Bierstube* where Signe had sometimes gone with me. Everybody was sorry to see her leave. We danced. We tried hard to convince each other that this separation wouldn't be as long as the last one—which, with some brief interruptions, lasted seven years.

"Last Sunday. Last time together in church. A little party at home. An American Army colonel—the one I met at the club at Wannsee, remember? Dr. Siebens, the minister, who's been so nice to us. A few German and American friends. My relatives. I'm afraid I made a silly speech. Something about hoping to follow Signe soon and promising to become a good American. I wound up praising her, which embarrassed her no little. Gosh, I love that woman!

"On the platform of the railroad station, Charlotte hung to my neck and cried because I couldn't go along. 'Daddy, just wait, you'll see,' she said. 'I'm going to talk German in America. Here I was afraid to, but over there I'll be talking it better than anyone else.' The little perfectionist! And Irene promised to pray for me. That girl is full of mischief, but she has terrific faith in God. Signe was sad but relieved at the same time. She's since written me that she'd been afraid until the very last moment that something might happen and she would never get out of Berlin. She wrote she wasn't sorry that she'd spent those years here but she was glad they were over and she left Europe without tears. I called her the next day in Bremerhaven, and I could hear the grinding noise of the cranes and the America's foghorn. I went alone to the American Church the next Sunday and felt miserable. On the back of the printed program of the service, it said, Mrs. Werner Asendorf and daughters Charlotte and Irene, who left for America recently, will long be missed by us. No one has been more regular in attendance and no one has shown a more lovely spirit than Mr. and Mrs. Asendorf and their two rays of light, personified by their daughters.'

"They had a fine trip and were in Portland by the middle of August. Irene wrote, 'We rented a whole house and I'm sending a drawing of the rooms (which she promptly forgot to enclose). We worked hard cleaning it up and bought some second-hand furniture.' But a few weeks later, when I talked to Signe on the overseas phone, she said the house was only so-so. The kids are

right back where they started—a glorious reunion with their girl friend Norma, Sunday picnics and trips to the country, swimming in the beautiful Oregon lakes. And school. They were a little scared on opening day, after studying for two years at home. But then Irene wrote, 'I had no trouble getting into the sixth grade, and Charlotte got into the seventh. My teacher's name is Mrs. Anderson. I'm glad school started. Being taught by Mummy was fun but this is even better.'

"Signe went back to her old job with the patent lawyers. They had just advertised for a new secretary, and she got the job and more money than the last time. As a matter of fact, they don't need me, financially and perhaps otherwise, too. That is the worst part of our present separation: they don't need me. Signe makes enough money, they have their house, their friends, their homeland.

"Fortunately, they still love me. That is a constant challenge for me. I want to make a little money, so our savings account will be filled up again after the expensive trip. Sometimes I feel like a failure when I think of the self-sufficiency of my American family. Well, competition is the heart of America, and I'll give them some good competition when I get there. May even make as much money as Signe does. (What an American way of thinking!) My only way of measuring success now is money, though personally there are things I like better than making money—for instance, talking to people. In the meantime, I send Signe a treat once in a while, by way of Meier & Frank, in Portland. On her birthday, Signe got twelve red roses, delivered to her office during the luncheon hour, and a certificate for twenty-five dollars in merchandise.

"Enough now. My wife, always right in fundamentals, has collected the necessary affidavits and papers to make a new petition for my immigration permit. If all goes well, I will be with my family before long. I feel lonesome and don't enjoy the freedom of being alone.

"Oh, I forgot. Irene wrote that she's the best in her class. She says she thinks she is smart because she has a smart mother and a smart father. How do you like that? She must be very popular—got twenty-five valentines from boys in her class. 'There are a lot of cute boys in school,' she writes. That girl is starting to get the idea very early. They live in a neighborhood where many people understand German, and they've made

friends with the shopkeepers and talk German to them. The people want to know all about Berlin and our girls have become neighborhood celebrities. Charlotte wrote, 'I talk German now, Daddy. I'm no longer afraid of your criticism and Mummy doesn't mind any more. I love it.' "

—JOSEPH WECHSBERG

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WIND ON CAPITOL HILL DEPT.
(WALLS OF TROY DIVISION)

[*From the Congressional Record*]

MR. DOUGLAS. The Senator from Illinois would like to inquire about the meaning of the word "meandered." Is the word "meandered" used in the Homeric sense, "the river which wound about the battlements of Troy," or does it have a particular legal connotation?

MR. CORDON. The Senator from Oregon is not at the moment discussing the battlements of Troy or the waters, nonnavigable or navigable, therein or round about. The Senator from Oregon enjoys a little persiflage with his friend from Illinois and, therefore, is happy to answer that one question.

The word "meandered" has a meaning and a definite definition, and any dictionary will supply it to my friend from Illinois, although I am perfectly certain that he needs no dictionary for that purpose.

MR. HILL. Mr. President, will the Senator from Oregon yield for a question?

MR. CORDON. I am happy to yield to the Senator from Alabama.

MR. HILL. Does the word "meandered" as used here in connection with the "public survey of such lands under the laws of the United States" have any particular meaning under the laws or in connection with such surveys?

MR. CORDON. Mr. President, the laws of the States differ both as to their interpretation of the old common law of riparian rights, and as to their State statutes on the subject.

The word "meandered" as used in the joint resolution means the delineation of the banks of navigable waters. The United States, in following the sectional survey system, has habitually meandered those waters which were clearly and without any question navigable, and in extending its sectional survey system has stopped every line when it has reached the meander line around nonnavigable waters.

In some States we have decisions one way and in other States another way, not with respect to lands beneath meandered areas, but with respect to lands beneath waters where the lines have not been meandered.

MR. DOUGLAS. Mr. President, will the Senator from Oregon yield for a question?

MR. CORDON. I am happy to yield to the Senator from Illinois.

MR. DOUGLAS. Am I to understand the Senator from Oregon to say that the term "meandered" has the sense of to delineate, rather than to wind?

MR. CORDON. The Senator from Illinois is correct in that respect. Of course, we again exclude the walls of Troy.