A REPORTER IN GERMANY

THE SEVENTEENTH OF JUNE

AT half past six on the morning of last June 17th, Friedrich Schorn, a gaunt man of thirty-nine with a bony face and deep-set eyes, left his three-room apartment in Merseburg, a city of forty-five thousand, ten miles west of Leipzig, in the Soviet Zone of Germany, and boarded a streetcar that would take him to his job in the suburb of Leuna. Schorn, a married man and the father of two children, was employed as an accountant at the Leunawerke Walter Ulbricht, which is Soviet Germany's largest chemical concern. The evening before, he had heard rumors that the workers on East Berlin's much publicized housing development on the Stalin-Allee had gone out on strike, and he couldn't help wondering what that might mean. It was well known in the Soviet Zone that the men working on the Stalin-Allee project were *Aktivisten*, hand-picked by the German Communists for their industry and efficiency. Schorn's first thought had been that things must really be bad when even the men on the Stalin-Allee weren't satisfied. But it certainly hadn't occurred to him that evening that for more than seven hours the following day he would be leading a substantial part of the first big known popular uprising against Communist domination, an uprising that Mayor Ernst Reuter of West Berlin has since said ranks in historical significance with the storming of the Bastille.

The Leuna Works, once a segment of the I. G. Farben empire, were taken over in 1945 by the Soviets, as were several important steel and mining operations in the Zone, and made an S.A.G., which officially stands for "Staatliche Aktien Gesellschaft [State Stock Company]" but is more generally and more cynically known as "Sowjet Aktien Gesellschaft," because the Soviet takes a more direct interest in the vital S. A. G. industries than it does in most of the state-owned enterprises. A vast industrial establishment covering five square miles and employing over twenty-eight thousand workers, the Leuna plant produces synthetic gasoline, fertilizers, and many other valuable chemical products, which are widely exported, making it an important earner of hard currency and one of the prizes of the Soviet regime in East Germany. It is the largest plant in the vicinity of Merseburg. The general manager and his principal aides are Russians; the second-echelon men are Germans. The S.E.D. (the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or Socialist Unity Party, as the Communist Party of East Germany calls itself) is tightly organized inside the plant, and the workers are under constant surveillance by spies, informers, and the *Werkschutz*, a heavily armed industrial militia. The Leuna plant is not the sort of place in which one would expect an outbreak of strikes and open rebellion. Still, it is an S.A.G. operation, so the authorities take a more sophisticated view of things there than in the ordinary state-owned factories. The Russians are more concerned about quantity and quality of output than about loyalty to ideologies. Though the chemists and technicians at the Leuna Works may not be politically reliable, they are highly appreciated—far more so, in fact, than the hundred-per-cent Communist Party men who have no outstanding skills. Specialists at Leuna who earn more than ten thousand Ostmark (six hundred dollars) a year are given contracts and are never harangued about joining the Party or obliged to attend political-indoctrination meetings. As long as they deliver the goods, they are left pretty much alone.

DURING the streetcar ride out to the plant that morning, Schorn became aware that something was up. Even more than most people living under the pressures of Soviet Germany, he had developed the technique of listening without turning his head or showing any other indication of interest. Schorn learned to control his facial expressions during four years and two months, from 1946 to 1950, that he spent in the Soviet concentration camp at Buchenwald, an experience that may also account for his emaciated body, on which his clothes hang loosely, and the lines in his thin, ascetic face. So Schorn sat there on the streetcar deadpan while a stranger next to him told everybody within earshot that he'd kept his radio tuned in on RIAS, the American broadcasting station in West Berlin, all night long. "I heard an appeal by the leader of the West Berlin trade unions," the man was saying. "It was a fine speech. He called on workers everywhere to join the strike of the Stalin-Allee workers. Transportation and railway workers in East Berlin have already joined, he said. The more the better was his idea."

A few people on the streetcar said, "He's right," or nodded approval. Two *Vopos* (members of the *Volkspolizei*, or People's Police) were standing on the rear platform and presumably heard what the man was saying, but they did nothing. That seemed strange to Schorn. In East Germany, listening to RIAS is not forbidden, but repeating what one has heard over it is regarded as a crime against the state. Schorn never listened to RIAS. He was afraid to. His father-in-law is an old-time Communist, who joined the Party back in 1919 and always finds explanations and apologies for the Party's difficulties in East Germany, or simply dismisses them as "children's diseases that every new regime goes through." Schorn's wife, Lieselotte, who has been thoroughly indoctrinated by her father, is a leader in the S.E.D. in Merseburg. Schorn himself, who is the son of a minor official in East Prussia, was a member of the Nazi Party from 1933 to 1935; he then admired Hitler for "doing a lot for the simple workingmen." During the war, Schorn was a flier in the Waffen S.S., the élite troops of the Nazi overlords, and after the fall of Germany he was sent to a British prisoner-of-war camp. He escaped and made his way back to Merseburg, where he found that his wife had excellent connections with the new Communist regime.

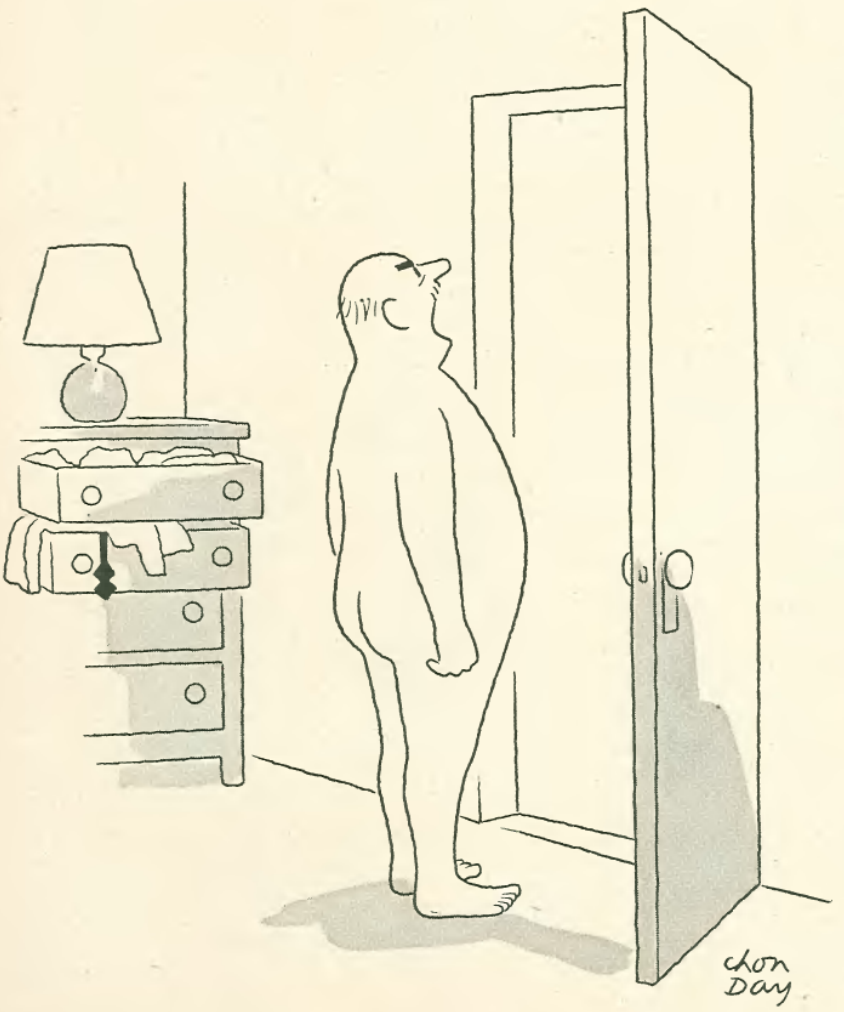
It didn't take Schorn long to reach the conclusion that the Communists were not for him. Within a couple of months he became embittered at the way they interfered with his life. Then, during an argument with his father-in-law, he announced that he didn't want to bring up his children "in a Soviet swamp," and a few days later he was arrested by the Soviet secret police and sent to Buchenwald. He doesn't like to talk much about the time he spent there. "But Buchenwald did one good thing for me," he told me not long ago, in West Berlin, to which he escaped after the June 17th uprising was forcibly put down. "It cured me of Nazism forever. Some of the well-known Nazis were prisoners there when I was—men I had once considered gods. I was shocked to see what a cheap, cowardly bunch they were close to."

Schorn and his wife have always been very much attached to each other, de-

spite their political differences, and after he was released from Buchenwald, early in 1950, she helped him get a job in the accounting department of the Leuna Works. He began to study the theory of Communism, though for reasons his wife didn't care much for. "It was clear to me by that time that the Communist system could be beaten only with its own weapons," he told me. "I decided to study dialectics so I could convince the Comrades that they were wrong. I joined the German-Soviet Friendship Society at Leuna and was even elected secretary of its branch at the plant. My wife didn't like that. 'The fact that you can be elected to office in the Society shows a weakness in our system,' she said."

Last May 28th, the German government of the Soviet Zone—the Politburo of the S.E.D.—decreed a ten-percent increase in everybody's production norm. The contents of Schorn's pay envelope the following week shrank almost fifteen per cent, owing to the loss of a bonus he had been receiving for exceeding his old norm. A few days later, on June 11th, the Communist papers and radio made public an admission by the same Politburo that it had committed "serious mistakes" in failing to provide adequately for the people's standard of living. On June 14th, the S.E.D. paper *Neues Deutschland* printed a severe attack on those in charge of the building industry, accusing them of using "sledge-hammer methods" in their dealings with the workers and warning them against trying to attain the new norms "by threats or force." The Red Army paper, *Tägliche Rundschau*, announced that the East German government "recognized previous errors and failures." One government leader after another publicly confessed that he had been guilty of mistakes. A fundamental revision of economic policies was promised. Farmers were told that the land would be considered theirs and that there would be no more attempts at collectivization. Workers were promised higher wages and better food. Refugees to West Germany were asked to come back, and assured that everything would be forgiven. The *Volkspolizei* became polite.

"It was obvious that something mysterious and possibly very significant was going on," Schorn said to me. "For eight awful years we'd lived in almost constant terror—told what to think, what to eat, what to read. There was no happiness in the Zone, and no hope, only *Galgenhumor* [gallows humor]. Our pastors had been arrested. We'd seen relatives and friends carted away by the Soviet secret police—or been carted away ourselves. Ninety per cent of the inhabitants of Soviet Germany had no use for the so-called German Democratic Republic. For years, the government had been promising that living conditions would get better. Instead, they got worse. My wife had a job, and together we earned eight hundred marks a month, which is far better than the average family, but sometimes after the fifteenth of the month we had no money left to buy food. We hadn't seen butter, margarine, or any other fats for months. Potatoes, as you know, mean to a German what spaghetti means to an Italian. Well, potatoes were first rationed and then disappeared entirely. In recent months, there had been less food than ever. Whole villages had been abandoned. The farmers were afraid of collectivization, and ran off to West Germany, leaving their fields to go to seed. The authorities sent Free German Youth boys out to work the fields, but what could those kids do? Our bread became dark and very expensive. Bakers were forbidden to tell their customers what they put into the bread. The price of everything was going up all the time. The distribution system had broken down. Last Christmas, the H.O. [state-owned stores] were selling bathing suits, and when spring came they were selling ski boots. There was a widespread feeling that life simply could not go on like that much longer. But the government was apparently plunged in confusion and didn't seem to know what to do about it. S.E.D. officials went around with a worried look on their faces. The entire Zone was a powder keg, waiting for a spark to touch it off. The strike of the Stalin-Allee workers was the spark."



"Martha, I can't find a damned thing!"

SOME of the people on the streetcar began to curse Walter Ulbricht, the Moscow-trained Deputy Prime Minister of Soviet Germany, whose name adorns the Leuna Works; as head of the S.E.D., Ulbricht is the most powerful man in the Zone. The two *Vopos* on the rear platform still acted as if they had heard nothing. Upon getting off the

streetcar, Schorn made his way to the administration building of the Leuna Works and walked upstairs to the accounting offices, where he at once became convinced that the explosion of the powder keg was imminent. The time was seven-fifteen, the beginning of the day shift. No one was doing any work in the offices; everyone was talking about the Berlin uprising. About eighty per cent of the employees at Leuna, whether factory hands or white-collar workers, are not members of the Communist Party. Of the twenty per cent who are, three-quarters are "nominal members." People in the Zone make a fine distinction between nominal members—those who have joined only to keep their jobs and whose sole Party activity is to hand over six marks in dues each month—and *Antreiber*, or agitators. Not even all the *Vopos* in the Zone are thoroughgoing Communists; many of them joined the service primarily because the pay is good and food is always plentiful. The lowest-rank *Vopo* gets four hundred marks a month, which is more than a university professor gets. An *Unterleutnant* in the *Volkspolizei* makes up to twelve hundred marks a month, or more than the manager of a factory, and some of these lieutenants are only nineteen years old.

One of the nominal Party members whispered to Schorn, "Now's the time I'd like to see the regime blown sky-high. We can't go on like this forever—saying one thing and meaning another." Then two confirmed Party men came up, and the nominal member turned to them and said he thought that everything at the plant was under control and that the government should be tough in its attitude toward malcontents. At a nearby desk, a worker said to one who was passing by, "Hans, if I may give you some friendly advice, take your Party emblem off." The other man walked away as if he hadn't heard, but a while later he reappeared minus his Party emblem. Schorn was told by a friend that the members of the plant's S.E.D. district committee had been summoned to an emergency meeting.

Schorn left his office and walked through the plant's workshops. Everywhere the air was charged with tension. He found that some locksmiths in ME 15, the main workshop, were talking of going on strike. ME 15 had been in a rebellious state for the past two weeks, following the arrest by police of the State Security Service of fourteen workmen there who, it was said, were now locked up in prison in Halle, about nine miles away. Several men came up to Schorn and told him they thought the plant should support the Stalin-Allee workers. Schorn cautiously approached a few people in each workshop and asked them what they intended to do. He talked only to those whose Party loyalties he believed to be no more than lukewarm. Without exception, they said they were ready to go out on strike. Schorn walked slowly back to his office, pondering the situation. It was now twenty minutes past nine. Over the *Werkfunk*, the plant's loudspeaker system, came the voice of the S.E.D. district-committee chairman. He asked the men to settle down to work. "You will get more to eat, but you must not stop working," he said. "We must all exceed our norms. Get to work. You need the money." In Schorn's office, people began cursing the S.E.D. man. There were shouts of "Shut up, you *Lump!*" and "Pack your bags, Comrades, and go back to Moscow!" and "We want to be governed by German Germans, not by Russian Germans!" This last was an allusion to Ulbricht and Wilhelm Pieck, the President of East Germany, both of whom lived for years in Moscow and reportedly became Soviet citizens. The voice of the district-committee chairman was soon drowned out by the shouts and boos.

"Then I happened to look out the window at a large courtyard in front of our building," Schorn recalls. "The big clock there said twenty-eight minutes past nine. Suddenly groups of men came running out of ME 15. They were shouting and waving their arms. I don't remember exactly what happened next, but I found myself running out of the office and down the stairs. Everybody must have had the same thought, for there were people all around me, and when I got to the courtyard, men and women were running toward it from all sides, shouting incoherently. Later that day, I asked some people what had made them run out there, and they all had the same answer—they said they felt they *had* to. They knew that this was the moment they'd been praying for all these years—the great, wonderful moment when they would again do what they wanted to do."

A flight of perhaps a dozen steps led from the courtyard up to an entrance to the headquarters building, where the Russian general manager and the other Russian executives had their offices. The crowd converged on the steps, with Schorn in the vanguard. Some of the

men were clutching hammers or other tools that they had neglected to drop when they ran out of the factory, and now they raised them threateningly in the direction of the general manager's office. There were shouts of "The S.E.D. must get out of Leuna!" and "Strike! Let's strike!" and "Down with the higher norms!" Evidently, the men were mostly concerned with better working conditions inside Leuna and had not yet grasped the larger implications of a strike.

At the foot of the steps, Schorn spoke to the men nearest to him. "This isn't a matter of just Leuna," he said. "It's a matter of every German in the Soviet Zone. Everything is at stake. But violence isn't the answer. If we overrun the plant and wreck the machinery, we'll only have to rebuild it later. Let's keep order!" Some of the men nodded in agreement, and two pushed Schorn ahead of them up the steps. Then someone began to sing "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles," and the crowd joined in. No one has been allowed to sing the "Deutschlandlied" in East Germany since 1945. "Standing there and singing the 'Deutschlandlied' meant the same thing to all of us," Schorn said to me. "It meant that we Germans wanted to be together again—East and West, from the Rhine to the Oder. Men and women put their arms around one another. Women were crying. There were thousands in the courtyard by the time we finished singing the anthem."

The ranking German in the plant—Dr. Eckard—and several of his assistants came out of the headquarters building and stood on a small platform at the top of the steps. These men were skilled engineers, assistant managers, and department heads who, whether motivated by conviction or by opportunism, were on the side of the Russian management; Schorn calls them the *Intelligenz*. Behind the *Intelligenz* stood a couple of members of the *Werkschutz*, holding their guns ready. A microphone, linked to the plant's loudspeaker system, was brought out onto the platform and Dr. Eckard raised his hands and began to speak. He urged the crowd to go back to work and assured them that their demands would be given "immediate consideration." The crowd's answer was a loud and protracted howl. No one moved. Dr. Eckard tried a more conciliatory line, expressing his understanding for "the legitimate demands you people have made," as Schorn recalls his words, but by this time the crowd had become unruly. Again the men were gesticulating with their hammers.

"I was standing not far below Dr. Eckard," Schorn told me. "The crowd had pushed me up there. One of the workers behind me, a fellow I knew, said, 'Take over, Schorn, or something will go wrong.' I stepped up toward Dr. Eckard, who was now talking about the necessity of fulfilling our norms, and said, 'Pardon me, *Herr Doktor*, but I disagree with you.' Then I stopped short. My voice had boomed all over the courtyard. In my excitement, I hadn't realized that I was now standing in front of the microphone. The crowd down below began to yell and applaud. A man just behind me shouted, 'You tell them what we want, Schorn!,' and then Dr. Eckard was somehow pushed away and I found myself standing in his place. I wasn't very representative of the factory workers, of course, but I was well known among them because I'd been in Buchenwald. People in the Zone don't trust one another, but they know that a man who has spent four years in a Soviet concentration camp can be no friend of the system. I was what they call an *eiserner Hasser* [an iron-hearted hater] of Communism.

"Well, Dr. Eckard and the *Intelligenz* moved back into the doorway, or perhaps they were pushed back by our men, who by this time were swarming around me. I can still see the surprised look on Dr. Eckard's face. Some of his men appeared to be quite afraid. That encouraged me. I faced the courtyard and said, 'I am taking over the microphone!' An enormous roar went up from the crowd. There must have been twenty thousand people down there. Then I introduced myself and told them that, as they probably knew, there was a strike on in East Berlin and that we workers at Leuna should declare our solidarity with the strikers. There was terrific applause. I said it was no longer a question of going back to work under the old norms, or any norms, and then I brought up the demands that people had told me RIAS was proposing—the immediate resignation of the government, free and secret elections, the unification of Germany, an opportunity for all political parties to operate freely, a higher standard of living for everybody, the immediate release of all political prisoners, the disarming of the *Volkspolizei* and the *Werkschutz*, and the immediate reëstablishment of the old norms. That all added up to quite a speech, and after each demand there was much cheering. Sometimes I had to repeat a sentence two or three times before I could make myself heard. While I was talking, somebody hung a big sheet of paper out of a window of the administration building with the

words 'WIR FORDERN FREIE WAHLEN [We Demand Free Elections]' and 'SEID EINIG, EINIG, EINIG [Unite, Unite, Unite]' scrawled on it. People down in the courtyard began to shout, 'Let's get out of here! Let's march into town!' I raised my hand, and finally they quieted down a little. I told them that the maintenance crews must stay on the job in the plant. After all, you can't just walk out of a large chemical plant like Leuna and leave it alone for hours. It would blow up and vanish. 'We must be orderly!' I said. 'Let's not do anything illegal. We have a constitutionally guaranteed right to strike, but we must not weaken our cause by crimes against life and property. Our position must remain strong, and it can remain strong only as long as we maintain law and order. Above all, let's not forget that this is a strictly German affair. If we don't offend the Russians, the Russians ought not to interfere.' "

Again the crowd roared enthusiastically. Dr. Eckard and his *Intelligenz* had disappeared. Schorn proposed that three volunteers from each workshop step forward to form a strike committee. The crowd shouted approvingly, and there was considerable shuffling and milling around until this had been accomplished. Then the names of the committee members were announced, and there was another ovation, after which Schorn was elected chairman by general acclamation. He made a short acceptance speech. "Friends," he said. "I'm going to call you friends because we want no more of the *Kollegen* and *Kameraden* we've been hearing around here for the past eight years. Friends, our great Leuna Works will no longer be disgraced by bearing the name of Walter Ulbricht." There was a jubilant outcry, and, with perfect timing, a giant picture of Ulbricht on the façade of the administration building was pulled down. Men and women shouted and embraced in a paroxysm of happiness.

Meanwhile, the members of the *Werkschutz* had surrendered their weapons to some of the ringleaders of the crowd. (In some factories, the *Werkschutz* was disarmed by order of the management. Perhaps the only matter on which the Russians, the government, and the strikers were agreed in East Germany on June 17th was that bloodshed must be avoided.) Schorn issued orders that no one was to carry the weapons surrendered by the *Werkschutz*, and they were shut up in a storeroom. Next, he told the crowd that a group of volunteers was going to Halle immediately to free their fourteen fellow-workers in ME 15 from the

prison there. Then the strike committee decided to send a courier to the Buna plant, at Halle, where more than twenty thousand workers were employed producing synthetic rubber. "We're going to ask Buna to join our movement," Schorn said over the loudspeaker. Just then, the main gate leading into the courtyard swung open and a man on a motorcycle drove through. He was from Buna. He was triumphantly taken before the microphone, where he announced that Buna had gone out on a sympathy strike with Berlin. Buna was asking Leuna to join.

"Then the crowd went really wild," Schorn said to me. "I'll never forget that moment. Suddenly everyone realized that all over East Germany at that very moment people were rising and cheering for freedom, just as we were. Obviously, it was not just a coincidence that we and Buna had done the same thing at the same time, though there had been no communication between the two plants. We sensed that ten, fifty, a hundred miles away the same thing was happening in other plants. Here in West Berlin, I've since talked to men from the electrochemical Kombinat in Bitterfeld, the Agfa S.A.G. and the Farbenfabrik in Wolfen, and the Leipzig ball-bearing works. It was the same story everywhere. Yet people say that there can't be a revolutionary mass movement without organized leadership. There was no organized leadership that day."

IT was unanimously decided to march into the city of Merseburg, a couple of miles away, and hold a demonstration on the Uhlandsplatz, a square in the center of the town. Schorn and the other members of the strike committee marched at the head of what was to become a very long parade. "News of the events at Leuna travelled faster than we did," Schorn told me, "and as we approached the city, workers from smaller factories came out of the side streets and fell into line. It turned out that there had been the same spontaneous uprising in every plant in Merseburg, and now the workers in them wanted to join Leuna, the largest plant of all. Housewives with shopping bags, men with briefcases, and carpenters and plumbers still carrying their tools joined us, too. Shopkeepers closed their stores and fell into step. The white-coated salesgirls of the H.O. stores deserted their counters and came with us. As we passed a grade school, we saw boys and girls throwing pictures of Stalin and Pieck out of the windows. Some painters from our plant had brought along buckets of paint and brushes, and when they

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saw a Communist poster, they would quickly paint it over with our slogans—'NIEDER MIT ULBRICHT [Down with Ulbricht]' or 'LEUNA STREIKT [Leuna on Strike].' They worked so fast that the people behind us in the parade wondered what had become of the Communist posters we'd all grown so accustomed to." Most of the members of the *Volkspolizei* had disappeared, but a few of them tried to stand in the way of the parade. The workers just laughed at them. "Out of the way!" they shouted. "Stand aside or join us!" In two or three instances, the *Vopos* took off their caps and blouses and fell into step with the workers.

When the Leuna column arrived at the Uhlandsplatz, workers from Buna and from the nearby Ammendorferwerke were already there, and so was what seemed to be the entire population of the city. Many people had also come in from the surrounding small towns and villages, and new groups were arriving all the time. Schorn estimates that eventually there were between seventy and eighty thousand men, women, and children there. He discussed the situation with the strike leader from the Buna Works, and they agreed on a course of action. A command post was set up in front of an inn; it consisted of a large truck flanked by two loudspeaker trucks. Schorn got up on an improvised speaker's platform on the big truck and through a microphone linked to the loudspeakers briefly summarized the purpose of the demonstration. "I was surprised by the response," he told me. "There was no doubt that the whole city was backing us up. Ordinarily, the Merseburgers are cool, restrained people, but now they were cheering and singing and applauding like a crowd in Italy or Spain. It was a real *fiesta*."

While members of strike committees representing various factories introduced themselves to the crowd, Schorn and some of the other leaders went around to the local prison. They encountered no resistance there, for the *Vopos* on duty swiftly disappeared and the guards handed over the keys to the cells. "We went into the prison office and checked through the list of prisoners, separating the political prisoners from ordinary criminals," Schorn said. "We liberated all the political prisoners, including the so-called economic criminals—people who had been sentenced to fifteen or twenty years for trumped-up income-tax evasions, so that their businesses could be taken over and nationalized. We did not free the common criminals."

The strike committee sent off two telegrams setting forth the workers' demands—one to the government, in East Berlin, and the other to the Soviet Military Administration, in Karlshorst. "We were very proud of our telegram to Karlshorst, which we thought would convince the Soviet High Command that we were planning no wrong," Schorn said. "In it we asked the High Command to respect the legitimate demands of the workers and to refrain from any measures that might stop our strike. Thus, we said, the Soviet Union would prove its sympathy with the working classes."

A special delegation was sent to the mayor of Merseburg, who, unlike most of the local government officials, had remained in his office. The delegation notified him that the strikers had taken over the city and that he would have to obey their orders. He agreed, and he was told, among other things, to see to it that there was no breakdown in the food-distribution system. While the delegation was issuing its orders, the mayor was called to the phone. When he returned, he said, "That was the Russians. They wanted to know how I am."

"What did you tell them?" one of the strikers asked.

"I told them that I was all right and about to negotiate with you," the mayor replied.

SHORTLY before two that afternoon, Schorn was conferring with other strike leaders at the command post when word reached him that some Russian soldiers had driven into the town. They had taken over the prison, and had then arrested a number of strikers and locked them up in it. Schorn reported to the crowd what had happened. A roar of protest went up, and Schorn said, "We will go to the prison with three truckloads of workers and take the prison back from the Russians." Everybody cheered.

By the time Schorn and his men drove up in front of the prison, the Russians, reinforced by several *Vopos*, had barricaded themselves inside it. The Russians turned fire hoses on the strikers through the windows. The strikers retaliated by throwing stones, one of which punctured a hose and put it out of commission. At this point, Schorn demanded to speak to the Russian commandant. After a while, a young lieutenant appeared, and Schorn said, "I warn you that unless you turn the prison back to the workers at once there will be bloodshed." The Russian lieutenant looked out at the street, which was by now chock-full of people. He

shrugged and told Schorn to wait. In a few minutes, the door was opened, and the Russian soldiers and the *Vopos* came out. Behind them were the strikers the Russians had arrested. Schorn got up on one of the trucks and admonished the crowd to let the Russian soldiers through. Then he and the workers drove back in triumph to the Uhlandsplatz, where he informed the waiting crowd that their mission had been successful.

"Again there was great jubilation, but it didn't last long," Schorn told me. "A few minutes later, a large number of Russians entered the square. I was standing in front of the microphone, talking to the crowd, when I saw them coming. There were motorized guns, and a long column of trucks filled with infantry soldiers. Most of the people in the crowd were facing the speaker's platform and had no idea they were there. I kept talking—I had to keep talking to give myself time to think. To tell the truth, I was terribly shocked. No one had known for sure what the Russians would do, but some of the optimists had thought that maybe they would help us get rid of the Ulbricht government. Others, like me, had just been hoping and praying that the Russians would not interfere. After all, there had been so much talk about the soft new course the Russians were taking. Surely they would not march against workers! Soviet Russia had always posed as the champion of the working class, and out there in the square the workers were simply demanding their rights."

As word got around that the Russians were there, it grew very quiet in the square. Some people smiled shakily at the newcomers and a few even greeted them, and the Soviet officers smiled back from their jeeps and waved their hands, while the enlisted men sat on their trucks, holding their guns on their knees, and stolidly looked straight ahead. The crowd slowly parted, and the column made its way through the square and came to a halt in front of the speaker's platform. Schorn thereupon asked the people to remain quiet and pointed out again that violence would get them nowhere.

"At first, the strikers did as they were told, but gradually their mood changed," Schorn said to me. "Some began to shout abuse at the Russians and a few spat on their trucks. I knew that things would get out of hand if we stayed there much longer. I stepped back to talk the matter over with the other strike leaders, and they agreed that we had better break it up, so I went to the microphone

and told the people that our demonstration had been a success and that the workers would now march back in orderly ranks to their factories. They were to await instructions from their strike committees, which would keep in touch with a central strike committee that was to be set up later that day. No one, I said, should go back to work until the central strike committee gave orders to that effect. The people reacted well. They formed columns and marched off in perfect discipline. The Soviet soldiers, their guns on their knees, still sat on the trucks and stared straight ahead of them."

BACK at the Leuna Works, Schorn found to his relief that things had been quiet there while the demonstration was going on in Merseburg. The maintenance crews had kept things going, and reported that nothing had been damaged. Schorn asked whether RIAS had broadcast any specific strike instructions to the committees in the Zone, and was disappointed to learn that it had not. He felt isolated, and the lack of contact with the outside world made him uncertain what to do next. "You can't move when you don't know what's happening on your flanks," he told me. "There were sporadic bits of news from nearby towns, but no one knew what was going on in Halle, or Magdeburg, or Jena, or Weimar, or Leipzig, or Dresden, or Brandenburg. I knew we had to do something, but the big question was what."

Schorn climbed to the platform at the top of the steps from which he had addressed the crowd earlier in the day. By now, most of the workers had returned from town and were standing or sitting in groups all over the courtyard, waiting for further instructions. The special detachment of strikers that had been sent to Halle returned and reported that the fourteen prisoners from ME 15 had been liberated, and once more cheers went up.

And then the Russians came. It was four-fifteen when the first column appeared outside the main gate. It was made up of truckloads of infantry soldiers armed with machine guns and anti-aircraft guns; there were no tanks. The trucks drove slowly through the gate and stopped. As in Merseburg, the soldiers didn't leave their trucks, or the officers their jeeps. For a while, neither side made a move. Then a few of the workers began to throw stones at the Russians, who continued to sit there quietly. Schorn at once seized the microphone and shouted to the crowd, "Keep calm! Stay where you are! We'll go in and talk to the management." With that, he and three other members of the strike committee went to the office of the Russian general manager. They went in without bothering to knock.

The Russian general manager was sitting behind his desk, surrounded by several of his assistants. He invited Schorn and the other men to sit down, but Schorn said they preferred to stand. Then he announced that the workers at Leuna were going out on a formal strike. The general manager coughed, cleared his throat, and replied that he was no longer in charge. The Soviet Army had taken over the Leuna Works, he said, and the troop commander was now the supreme authority. He sent one of his men to summon the commander. A few minutes later, a Russian colonel entered the room, along with several other officers. Throughout the conference that ensued the Russians—both officers and civilians—were extremely courteous. Schorn admits that the same couldn't be said of him. In the weeks that have passed since then, he has searched his memory for every last detail of what was said at that conference, and he thinks he has reconstructed a fairly complete and accurate version of it.

"*Herr Oberst*," Schorn began, "do your troops have permission to shoot?"

"No," the colonel replied.

"Why did you bring in your troops?" Schorn asked. "Did we give you any reason to intervene?"

"I have orders to protect Soviet citizens and Soviet property," said the colonel.

"Did we provoke you into coming here?"

"You didn't provoke me."

"We workers of East Germany want to live and work in peace, but we demand decent living and working conditions. This, *Herr Oberst*, is an internal German affair. You shouldn't interfere. This doesn't concern you at all."

At this, the colonel's face got a little red, but he said nothing. Schorn says he realized right then that neither the colonel nor the Russian general manager had received any instructions from higher up as to how to proceed, and were just stalling for time in the hope of getting some. The colonel's evident embarrassment made Schorn decide to keep on the offensive.

"*Herr Oberst*," Schorn said, "I demand that your troops leave immediately."

"I am unable to comply with your demand," the colonel replied.

Schorn turned to the general manager and said, "*Herr Generaldirektor*,

I appeal to you to prevent loss of life. And there will be loss of life if the troops stay here."

"But I am no longer in charge," the general manager protested. "I have handed over the executive power to the colonel."

"*Herr Oberst*," Schorn said, turning back to the colonel, "if trouble starts, your soldiers will shoot. They will kill many of our workers, but our men will strangle them with their bare hands. There are over twenty thousand workers out there and only four hundred soldiers. I appeal to you to prevent a tragedy."

"I have to await instructions from my headquarters," the colonel said.

"But the crowd will not wait long," Schorn said. "We will give you ten minutes to get your instructions. Within ten minutes, your troops must leave Leuna. Now I'm going outside and tell the workers that you have been so notified."

Schorn and the three men with him turned to go, but the colonel called them back. "I will order the troops to leave," he said.

"Will you guarantee that no reprisals will be taken against the members of our strike committee?" Schorn asked.

"I will," the colonel replied.

Schorn and his three colleagues went back to report to the strikers. "We were exhilarated," he told me. "We all shook hands and told each other we had won a great victory. I think I trusted the colonel at that moment."

WHEN Schorn and his companions stepped out on the platform overlooking the courtyard, they got a shock. Motorized Russian columns were approaching from two directions. Some of the troops were pouring into the courtyard, while others were encircling the whole plant. Schorn waited a few minutes, expecting a counter command to be given, but the troops did not turn back.

"Then I grew really angry," Schorn told me. "I grabbed the microphone and told the crowd, 'Friends, the Russian troop commander promised me that he would order his troops to leave. You see how he has kept his word. New troops are coming in.' The workers shouted their contempt."

The door behind Schorn opened, and the colonel and his officers came out. Schorn turned to the colonel. "*Herr Oberst*, look!" he said, pointing to the troops. "Do you call this the word of a Russian officer?"

"Don't get excited!" the colonel said tensely.

"I'm not excited," Schorn said. "I've

merely stated that you, a colonel of the Red Army, have broken your word. You promised that the troops would leave."

"I have received orders from Karlshorst," said the colonel. "The troops must stay."

"Do you still guarantee the safety of the members of the strike committee?" Schorn asked.

"There will be no reprisals," the colonel said.

Schorn swung around and faced the strikers, who had stood silent, listening to the argument that was taking place in front of the microphone. "You heard what the colonel said," he told them. "All right. It's nearly five o'clock. Go home now. But be back here tomorrow morning at seven. If the members of the strike committee aren't here, you'll know what has happened to them. And then—"

A Russian officer jumped forward and cut the wire to the microphone, and Schorn's voice became all but inaudible in the courtyard. Angrily, he wheeled on the colonel. "Why don't you let me talk to the men?" he asked.

"You've been talking, haven't you?" the colonel said.

"Maybe you didn't notice, *Herr Oberst*, that one of your officers cut this wire," Schorn said. "The workers at Leuna have always been told that the Soviet officers are their friends. They know better now."

Then Schorn turned toward the crowd and held up seven fingers. "Tomorrow at seven!" he shouted. "Everybody right here!"

The men and women moved off in small groups. The colonel and his officers quickly disappeared inside the building. The soldiers were still sitting on their trucks. When Schorn left the courtyard, several workers accompanied him through the main gate and insisted on staying with him until he boarded his streetcar for home. As he rode toward Merseburg, the stimulating influence of the large crowd passed off, and he began to feel tired and depressed. He had no illusions about his future. He suspected that reprisal was both inevitable and imminent; the Russian colonel wouldn't be likely to forget having been humiliated in front of that crowd.

As the streetcar jogged along, a stranger in blue overalls who was sitting next to Schorn leaned over and whispered to him, "My friend, I'm from Leuna. I listened to you today. I've just heard that the Russians have proclaimed martial law in Merseburg. Don't go home tonight. Do you hear me?"

Schorn nodded without turning his head, and the man went on, "If you want to sleep in our place, we've got an extra bed. You'll be safe with us." He whispered an address to Schorn. Then, without saying goodbye, he stood up, and got off at the next stop.

"I didn't know the man, but I trusted him," Schorn told me. "A few months before, my first thought at being addressed by a stranger on a streetcar would have been, Watch out—he may be a spy. But the sincerity of the demonstration earlier in the day had changed all that."

WHEN the stranger had gone, Schorn got to thinking. All day, he had been so elated by the vision of a new era and by the fervor of the crowd that he had forgotten about his wife and children. Now, in a dazed way, he began to realize the seriousness of what he had done. His wife, a trusted leader in the S.E.D., had turned out to be the wife of a strike leader! And God only knew what they might do to the children! Schorn was well aware that the Russians often make children pay for the offenses of their fathers. Here was a horrible prospect indeed. At first, Schorn thought he would go home, try to explain to his wife what had happened, and then say a regretful goodbye to her and the youngsters. But after his performance that day he might easily jeopardize the safety of his family simply by being with them. If the authorities learned that he had been home and that his wife had not at once done her best to turn him in, they might resort to some very harsh measures. Schorn's mind cleared rapidly, and he could see that there was only one thing for him to do. He got off the car, got on one going in the opposite direction, went to the address the stranger had given him, and spent the night there. In the morning, he went back to the Leuna Works with his host. He knew, of course, that he was taking a chance, but, on the other hand, there was the possibility that he had exaggerated the danger of his position and he felt he could not let the workers down. On the streetcar, he met a neighbor of his, who whispered to him, "Lucky you didn't go home last night. They've been to your house six times."

"Who?" Schorn asked mechanically.

"The *Vopos*," the neighbor replied. "They're looking for you everywhere."

"What about my wife and kids?" Schorn asked.

"They're all right," the neighbor said. "But, of course, your wife is awfully worried about what's happened to you."

Outside the main gate of the plant, Schorn stopped in bewilderment. He

thought he'd never seen so much armed strength concentrated in one place. There were Soviet T-34 tanks, anti-aircraft guns, mortars, machine guns, armored reconnaissance cars, and hundreds of infantry soldiers sitting on trucks with their engines running. Schorn learned that troops had been arriving all night long. Two S.E.D. men stood at the gate distributing leaflets asking the workers to return to their jobs and "to help with the arrest of the culprits of yesterday's provocations."

Three workers Schorn knew came running up to him. "You'd better beat it," one of them told him. "Do you know what happened?"

"The Russians and the *Vopos* have arrested every member of the strike committee except you and three others who didn't sleep at home and so couldn't be found. You'd better get away fast. If they find you here, you'll be done for. Try to reach West Berlin. Maybe you can talk to us over RIAS. You can be more help to us alive in Berlin than dead here."

Schorn nodded, and left. He walked to the railroad station. The walls were plastered with posters showing his picture and pictures of the three other missing strike leaders. Underneath was printed an announcement of a reward of five thousand Ostmark for the capture of each of the wanted men, dead or alive. The text that followed accused them of having taken part in "gangster activities against the State and against the population" and of being "handymen of American imperialism." The announcement was signed by a local Russian commander, possibly the colonel Schorn had had dealings with. "It was the first time I had ever seen my own death warrant on a wall," Schorn said to me. "Instead of frightening me, it made me angry, since I had committed no crime. As a matter of fact, if I hadn't kept my head, many people might have been killed and wounded the day before. I was certainly not going to make it easy for them to get me. I turned around, went back a few blocks, and borrowed a bicycle from a man I know. Then I rode to a small town where the guards weren't very alert. There was a train going west, toward Berlin, but I thought I would attract less attention going east, so I bought a ticket to a place near the Polish border where I have a friend."

Schorn reached his friend's place without being recognized, and stayed there two days. A mood of depression hung over the whole community. People walked through the streets with their heads lowered. "If it had only

lasted another twenty-four hours," they would say. "Another twenty-four hours and Ulbricht and his crowd would have been wiped out."

After leaving his friend, Schorn made his way slowly to East Berlin; by riding at night on local trains he managed to avoid police patrols. He believes he was not picked up between trains because there is a notable lack of coöperation among the regional branches of the State Security Service, or possibly because the posters calling for his arrest were not properly circulated throughout the Zone. In East Berlin, he found the sector boundaries closed; no one without a *Passierschein*, or special permit, issued by the *Volkspolizei*, could cross over into West Berlin. He stayed for a while with people whom he naturally doesn't want to name. They told him of various spots on the border where escapes had been made to the West. When he investigated a couple of these, he found that others had evidently learned of them before he had, for guards were patrolling them with the utmost vigilance.

Schorn, of course, had no *Passierschein* and was in no position to ask for one, but on the afternoon of June 24th he was strolling by one of the official boundary crossing points, studying the setup, when a sudden thunderstorm broke. The downpour was so great that the *Vopos* on duty retired inside their sentry huts and just glanced out at the *Passierscheine* of the few people who walked by. Schorn saw his opportunity. He waited until two men approached the *Vopos*, holding out their *Passierscheine*, and then moved up close behind them, clutching the simple identity card that every citizen in East Germany is obliged to carry. As he had hoped, the sentries gave his damp identity card only the most cursory glance, and a moment later he'd left them behind. Within half an hour, he was standing in front of a West Berlin official, giving his name and asking for asylum.

SCHORN and several other *Barrikadenstürmer*, or barricade fighters, as the heroes of the seventeenth of June are affectionately called by the West Berliners, now live in a large house overlooking Wannsee. In the beginning, they were known to each other merely by the names of the towns they came from—"Halle," "Jena," "Leipzig," "Dresden," and so on—but now their confidence in one another has grown and they use their own names. Like other political émigrés, they have strong opinions about what should have been done during the crisis, and they

don't always agree about what should be done in the future, but they are all remarkable for their complete lack of defeatism. They have refused to be flown out to West Germany, where they would be safer. They want to stay in West Berlin to be close to their friends in the East Zone. "We're going to continue the fight from here," Schorn told me. "Over there in East Germany, the government has started a large-scale campaign of what it calls enlightenment. But the people won't be fooled. I've had news from Leuna. There have been sitdown strikes for weeks. The plant is heavily guarded, but the spirit of our men and women is unbroken. No matter what they are being told now, they won't forget the truth. They were right there listening when that Russian colonel went back on his word. You think they'll ever forget? Never!"

I asked Schorn if he had had any word of his wife and children. He looked away. "I haven't heard from them," he said. "I expect that my wife will ask for a divorce. What else can she do? She must try to protect herself and the children. I miss them terribly, but I've made my decision. I'm still the ironhearted hater. I'll keep fighting. Ulbricht and his crowd are trying to tell the people that the seventeenth of June was the end of the uprising. Don't you believe them. It was just the beginning." —JOSEPH WECHSBERG

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We are moving into our first home (brand new) shortly and the hardwood floors have just been varnished. The floors are lovely and I do want to keep them that way. Could some kind readers tell me what is the best way to start caring for such floors and how to keep them looking nice? I have heard much about waxes and polishes, dusting and washing, but I wonder what is a good, tried method. Does any one know about or has any one tried the plastic coating for floors that has newly come on the market? Thanks for any help!

Here's a hint: Don't pour out the leftover sirup from canned fruits.—*Washington Star.*

Next question.

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FULLER SOCIAL EXPLANATION DEPARTMENT

[*From the Denver Post*]

Mrs. Millikin also attended a small luncheon given by Mrs. George M. Humphrey, wife of the secretary of the treasury, in honor of Mme. Bidault. Other guests included Mrs. Dulles, Mrs. Homer Ferguson, Mrs. Leverett Saltonstall, Mrs. James Black (her nephew is married to Shirley Temple) and Mrs. Harry M. Moses.