



THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

MAGAZINE



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VOL. 120, No. 6 DECEMBER, 1961

Life in Walled-off West Berlin

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National Geographic Senior Staff

WHAT IS IT LIKE to be in Berlin, the world's No. 1 trouble spot, at this point in history? You feel a sense of unreality, of utter incredulity. Here is a place without parallel, unless it be the Holy City of Jerusalem, still split between Israel and Jordan.

Picture, if you can, a great world capital sealed off down the middle by a high wall backed by armed guards with shoot-to-kill orders. Right through the heart of the city runs the *Schandmauer*—"wall of shame"—as the West Berliners call it, the concrete barrier erected by Communist East Germans to check the hemorrhage of human beings fleeing Red rule to West Berlin.

East Berliners Risk Lives to Escape

Where this line between two worlds runs down the center of a street, all the windows on the lower floors of the houses on the Communist side were bricked up tight. At the point of guns people were moved out of the first and second floors and shipped away—no one knows where. Lifelong neighbors and families were torn apart (pages 762-3).

One day we visited the Harzerstrasse, one of the streets being sealed from inside the houses. The people had been moved out and

most of the doors and windows of the first and second floors had already been bricked up. Communist guards watching the moving crews sometimes peered from windows.

Suddenly we saw a man step out onto a second-floor balcony. He looked down as if gauging the distance to the ground, then quietly removed a flowerbox from the ledge. With a shock we realized that he was planning to jump.

At a discreet distance we waited, in the hope of being helpful—and incidentally with Volkmar Wentzel's camera ready under his raincoat. The man did not reappear, and after waiting more than an hour we went on our way, thinking that he had probably been arrested or had changed his mind. Such a leap, we agreed, might well be suicide.

How right! From the policeman on the beat the next day, we learned that the man had jumped about half an hour after we left. With both legs broken and suffering from internal bleeding, he was in a critical condition in a hospital—but in West Berlin.

This was only a sample of the hundreds of tragedies happening here every day. Most of them do not appear in the newspapers, for this might betray the possible escape routes still available.

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**All Quiet at the Brandenburg Gate—
Just Before the Reds Sealed the Border**

Divided Berlin lies 104 miles inside Communist Germany, but the United States, Great Britain, and France guarantee the freedom of the Western

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HS EKTACHROME BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER THOMAS NEBBIA © N.G.S.

sectors. The great gate, built in 1788-91 under King Frederick William II of Prussia, stands just inside East Berlin. Russian and East German flags

flank the gate. "Attention! You are now leaving West Berlin," warns the sign in this picture, taken on the eve of the border closing.

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Life in Walled-off West Berlin

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But ask any member of the West Berlin police, one of the ablest police forces we have seen anywhere. He will tell you about the man he helped pull out of the river the night before, a man who had blackened his face and body with shoe polish, fastened rubber flippers to his feet, and swum across the Spree River through a glare of searchlights and past border guards in motorboats. In some places the Spree is 250 yards wide.

Or you learn of the chimney sweep who lowered himself five floors to freedom, or the woman who jumped three floors, suitcases in hand, to her death. We could go on for pages relating desperate and tragic attempts to escape from Communist rule.

When first we arrived in Berlin last summer, the concrete curtain had not yet fallen. The Russians and their East German puppets

were then just beginning to stir the Berlin pot to crisis heat.

In spite of its isolation, a hundred miles deep in Communist territory, West Berlin has been drawing five and a half million visitors yearly—a million and a half by air, the rest by automobile and rail (color map, next page).

By Helmstedt Corridor to Berlin

By all odds the busiest—and shortest—route is the Helmstedt corridor, which begins as you enter East Germany, just beyond the West German town of Helmstedt. Our car was halted before a barrier at a mammoth complex of low-lying buildings, where green-uniformed East German police called Vopos—short for Volkspolizei, “people’s police”—inspected the papers of all civilian traffic as Russian soldiers watched (page 742). It took

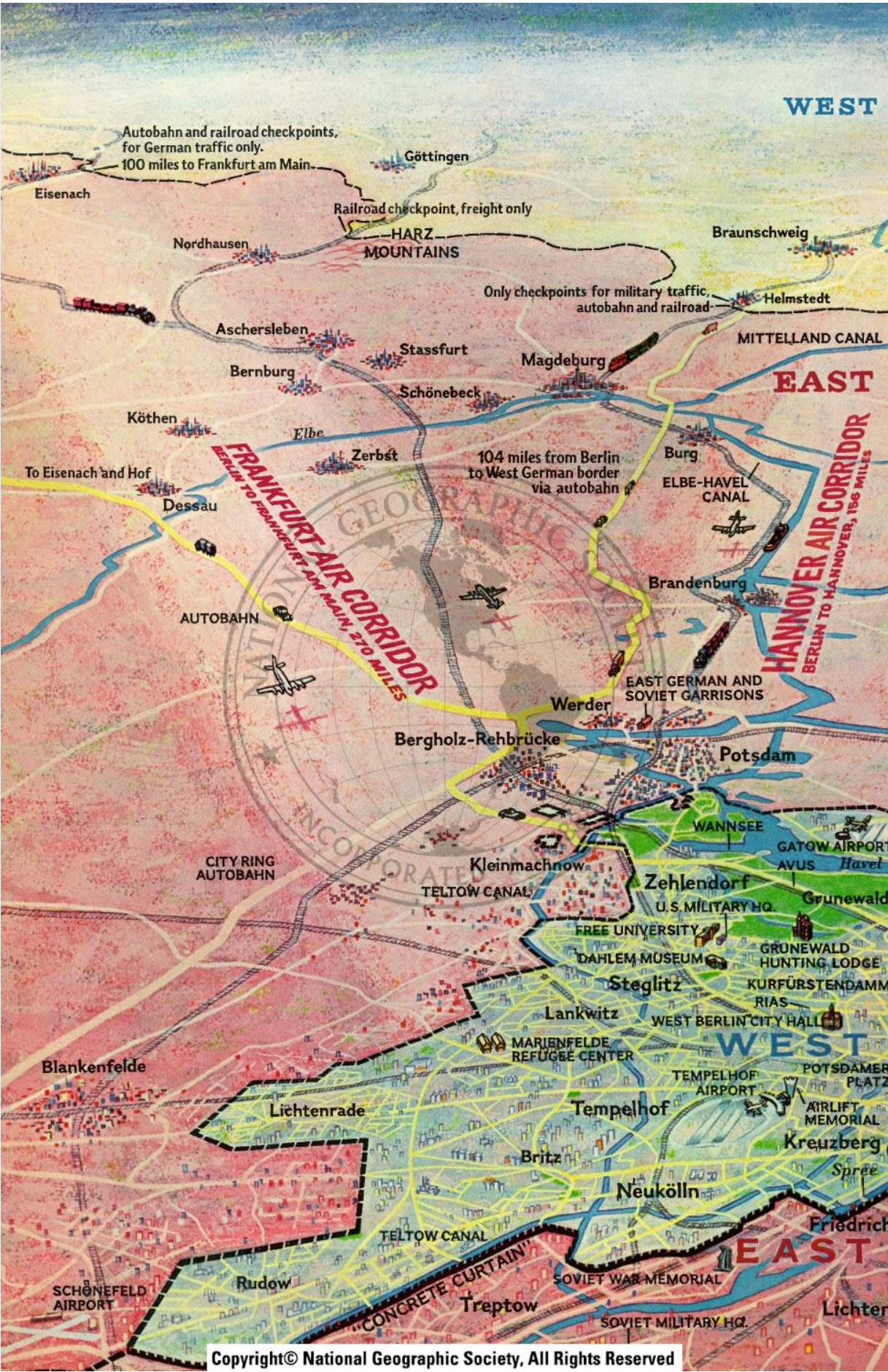
Barbed-wire barricade appeared before the Brandenburg Gate when the Communists overnight, on August 13, began walling off East Berlin to prevent refugees from escaping to freedom. Russian guns in 1945 shelled the gate and shattered its winged statue of Nike in her four-horse chariot. West Berliners recast the bronze quadriga from the original molds, and East Berliners restored the gate—a rare instance of East-West cooperation. British soldier with binoculars peers into the Communist sector.

East German soldiers joined police as guards when the barricades went up. Though only trusted troops patrolled the barrier, many vaulted over and fled to the West. Before the gate stand East German army men in garrison uniform and militia in field dress.

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half an hour to get a visa, pay the toll, and pass through customs.

The corridor itself is an autobahn, a four-lane concrete highway 104 miles long—a drive comparable to the New Jersey Turnpike. But we found the road bumpy in places, with unmown grass on either side and traffic in stretches limited to a single lane.

We saw neat fields and orchards, and grain coming to yellow ripeness under the sun. There was more pasture than we expected, perhaps betokening a lack of farm manpower.

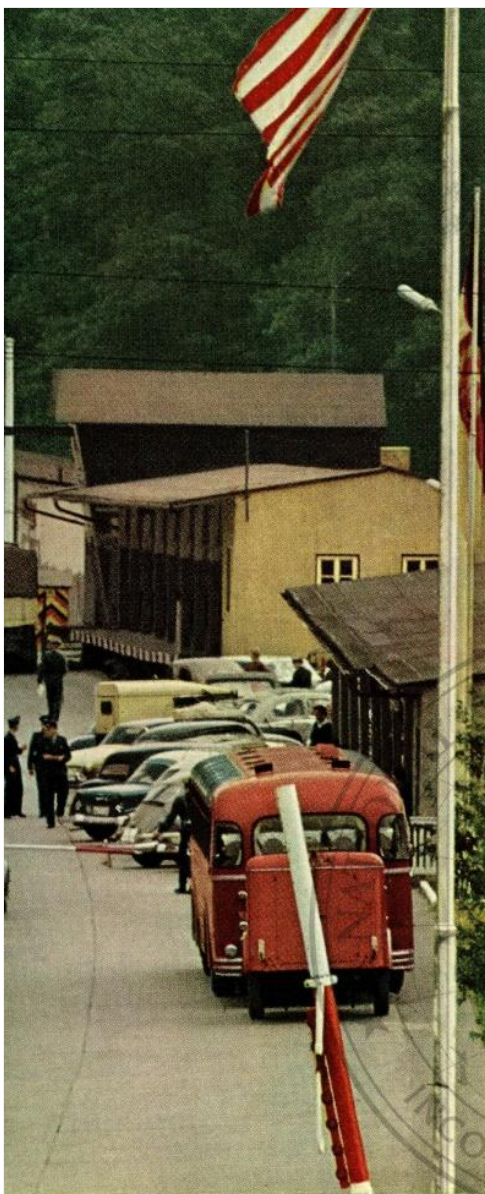
Blocked Roads of 1948 Recalled

Smoke billowed from the tall factory chimneys of Magdeburg, largest city along the way. There we crossed the Elbe bridge that the Russians “closed for repairs” for 11 months

in 1948-49, when the Red blockade forced the Western powers to supply West Berlin by air. It gave us a queasy feeling to think that the Communists might try closing it again.

The road stretches through the plain of Brandenburg, a peaceful-seeming landscape of farmlands and forest mingling dark pines and white birches. Here and there a solitary East German farmer plowed a field behind a horse or on a tractor. The silence of the countryside was shattered by the incessant roar of heavy trucks, outbound from West Berlin with cargoes of TV sets, generators, machinery, clothing, and other manufactured goods to be sold all over Western Europe.

East Germans picnicking beside the road looked impassive or sad, but not hostile; this was the true *Weltschmerz*, the world-sad-



KODACHROMES BY VOLKMAR WENTZEL, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF © N.G.S.



East German officers and a World War II Soviet tank on a pedestal overlook autobahn traffic outside Berlin.

Here at the Helmstedt Checkpoint Begins the Main Lifeline to West Berlin

Shortest and busiest route to the island of freedom in a Communist sea is the 104-mile-long Helmstedt Corridor (map, page 740). All traffic must stop to be cleared for passage through Russian-dominated East Germany. At upper right waves the American flag, at left the Russian, British, French, West German, and East German flags are out of sight.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC writer-photographer Wentzel clambered up a high crane on the West German side to take this picture.

Flowers from grateful Berliners greet combat-ready troops of the 1st Battle Group, 18th U. S. Infantry Regiment, who entered the beleaguered city August 20.

ness of the oppressed German. On the last leg the cause loomed before us: a squat Russian World War II tank on a concrete pedestal (upper right).

After the tank came a happier symbol, the droll little mascot bear of West Berlin, done in bronze by the German sculptor Renée Sintenis. The last Vopo looked at our passports, and then the first West Berlin policeman did the same. It had been an easy drive. We wondered how long it would be that way.

Soon busy traffic swallowed us and we were in the heart of West Berlin. Neatly dressed people hurried about their business. More than the street signs, these things told us that we were among our own again.



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The first impression of the city was overwhelming. West Berlin's recovery has been fantastic.*

At the end of World War II, Allied bombs had all but eradicated Berlin, leaving vast windowless honeycombs of ruins and acres upon acres of rubble. Of the 149,960 buildings in the Western part of the city, 32,227 were demolished and another 100,000 heavily damaged.

On the Kurfürstendamm, West Berlin's Fifth Avenue, 200 of the 250 buildings were destroyed or severely damaged. Now the "Ku'damm" was a glittering showcase of the Western World. The smart shops, international clientele, new buildings, bright lights, and bustling traffic were equal to those of any modern Western capital.

Mountains Built of War's Fragments

West Berlin has risen from the ruins. Some 200,000 new residences have been provided—enough to house more than half a million people. The total street surface rebuilt or repaired amounts to a 35-foot-wide highway that would stretch all the way from West Berlin to North Africa.

Every scrap of rubble that could be salvaged—230,000 tons of metal and some nine million cubic yards of bricks—was used in rebuilding. The rest has been piled in huge hills and planted with flowers and grass, re-

molding the map of the city and adding hilly park scenery.

Of Berlin's 341 square miles on the flat Prussian plain, West Berlin occupies a little more than half. There are 2,200,000 West Berliners. Another 1,100,000 Berliners live "Over There"—in East Berlin.

Early we sought a vantage point from which to see it all at a glance. Near our hotel in the Grunewald rises one of the rubble mountains. Still unfinished, it one day will be 400 feet high, the highest hill in Berlin. In the evening we drove to the top and watched the lights go up. Near the Tiergarten, we saw the neon signs of cinemas and night clubs wriggle on and watched the floodlights dance on the fountains in Ernst-Reuter Platz, named for the late mayor of the early rebuilding days.

At dark we left, for we were not yet used to standing atop a dead city, and in imagination the things that crunched beneath our feet were the porcelain heads and limbs of dolls. We went to the Funkturm, the radio tower that is Berlin's counterpart of the Eiffel Tower. From here we saw the city just as well—and felt better.

Tall street lamps picked out the broad

*See in the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: "Berlin, Island in a Soviet Sea," by Frederick G. Vosburgh, with photographs by Volkmar Wentzel, November, 1951, and "Modern Miracle, Made in Germany," by Robert Leslie Conly, June, 1959.

Shoppers from East and West mingle in this view of Tauentzienstrasse, photographed before the border closing. Defying Red policy, East Berliners made many purchases in West Berlin. Utility poles advertise KaDeWe—Department Store of the West. A telephoto lens compresses four blocks in this street scene.

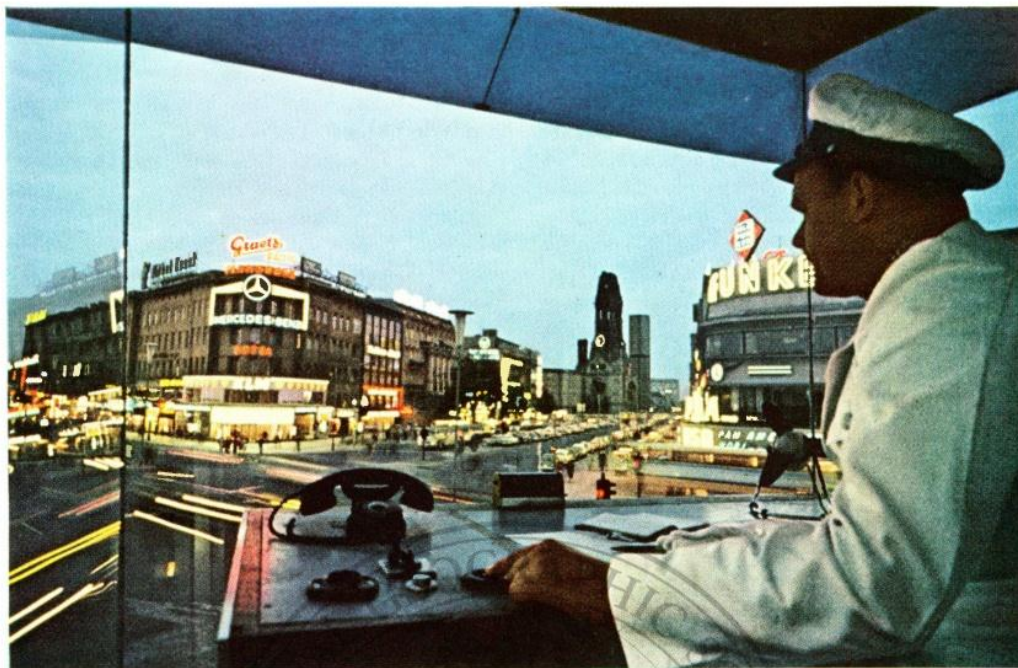
Blonde bargain hunter tries on a kerchief before a mirror in KaDeWe. West Berlin, a fashion center, has been producing more clothing than any other European city except Paris.



HS EKTACHROME (ABOVE) AND KODACHROME BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER THOMAS NEBBIA © N.G.S.

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Policeman in a glassed-in observatory pushes buttons to regulate traffic at West Berlin's busiest intersection. Here Kurfürstendamm—Ku'damm to Berliners—begins at the ruined Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church (opposite) and crosses Joachimstalerstrasse. The Ku'damm, lined with fashionable stores, has become the liveliest shopping artery.

Bombed spire of Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the "broken tooth" as some Berliners call it, stands as a grim reminder of war's desolation. Honeycomb chapel and campanile, both new, flank the gutted tower.

boulevards in white ribbons of light. Berlin always had wide streets, a legacy from German rulers who liked parades of soldiers. Chicago, Illinois, had something to do with keeping them wide in the new city.

"We were making our master plan for streets," said Senator Rolf Schwedler, head of West Berlin's Department of Building and Housing. "I went to Chicago. Such density of traffic! But I knew I was seeing only the normal traffic of a modern city, such as our Berlin would be.

"So I borrowed many ideas from Chicago. You can see the result. I think you will find Berlin traffic still quite open."

And that was true. It moves swiftly and efficiently, directed by competent white-jacketed policemen. Even parking rarely presents problems, and the only bad jams are at the numerous detours resulting from the constant construction.

Senator Schwedler assigned genial Otto Streu of his staff to show us the city. We went first to the Brandenburg Gate, pierced by

five portals and surmounted by a bronze four-horse chariot (page 736). Through the great gate on the East-West boundary line passed most of the traffic between the two parts of the divided city.

We saw the gaunt remains of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church at the head of Ku'damm, deliberately left in ruins so that war's futility will not be forgotten.

Home Gardens a Luxury

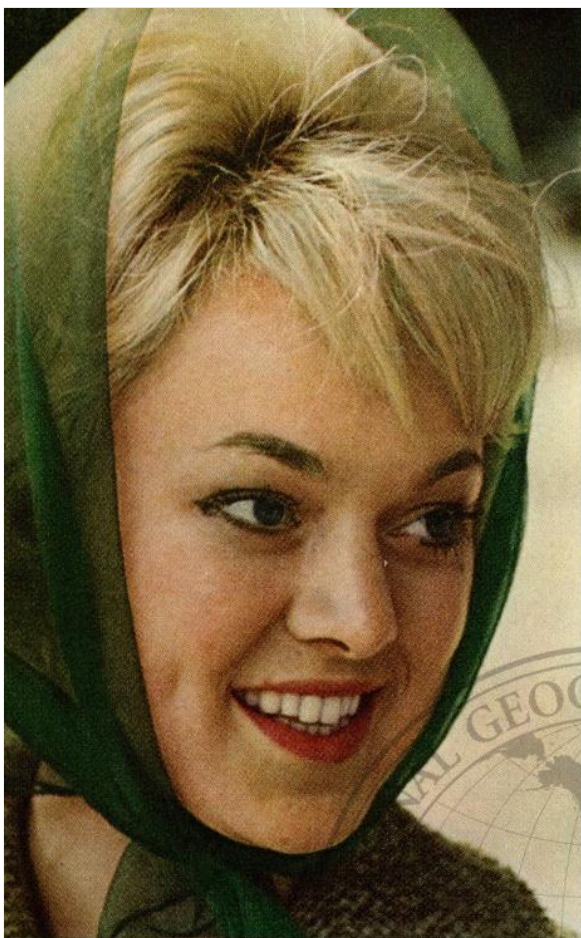
Another landmark is the largest apartment building in Berlin, the 530-unit Corbusierhaus, named for its Paris architect, Le Corbusier. It overlooks the stadium where the 1936 Olympic Games were held.

After the sightseeing tour, Herr Streu took us home for coffee. He has a pleasant garden in his back yard, and in this he is luckier than most Berliners, all of whom seem to love growing things. Apartment dwellers have to be satisfied with garden allotments some distance from their flats.

Sometimes the allotments are so far away



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Young Fräulein's smile seen on the Ku'damm contrasts to older faces wearied by war.

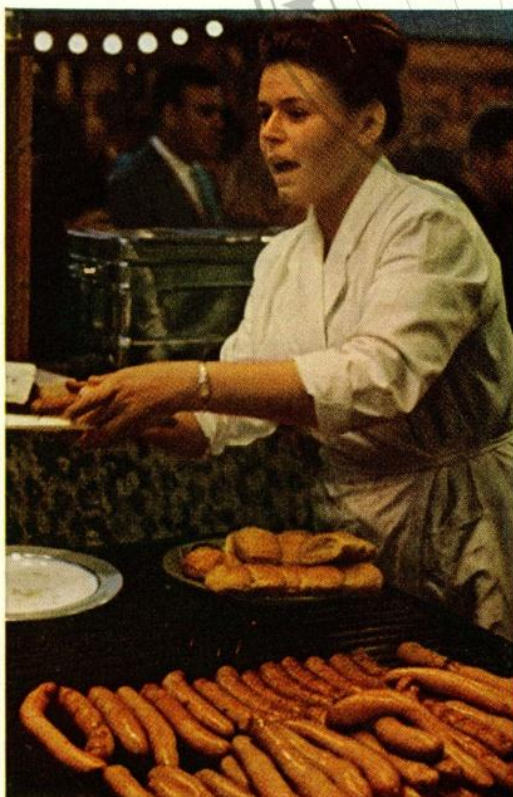
that the owners build cottages on the precious ground and pass weekends there, isolated behind hedges and grapevines. Often the gardeners build tiny model farmyards, complete with hand-mirror ponds and toy geese that bob their heads with every breeze.

Trees, parks, grass—they are Berlin's most conspicuous features, and they are not luxuries, but necessities, to people squeezed together in a city surrounded.

Since the war more than 5,400 acres of parks and green spaces have been restored and another 1,600 acres added. Trees have been planted by the hundreds of thousands, and West Berlin is rapidly regaining its title as the "Green Belt" city.

Beach Where Only Dogs May Bathe

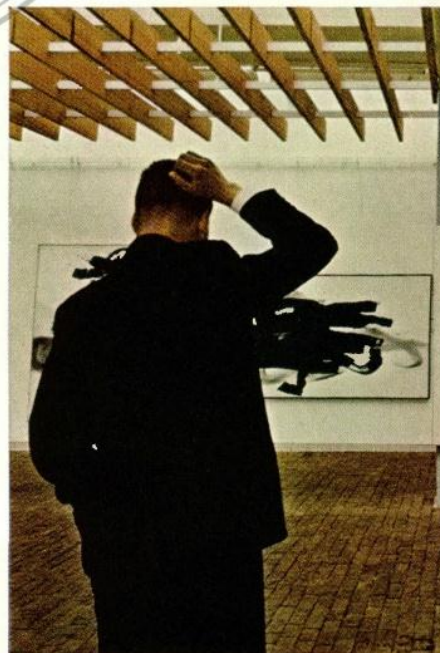
Next to parks and trees, the Berliners love dogs. The Hundebadestelle on the Grunewaldsee, one of Berlin's lovely lakes, is a bathing beach for dogs only, as the name implies. It is a sight to see on a hot Sunday afternoon: all the dogs swimming, lolling on the sand, eating picnic bones, greeting friends—and the inevitable timid soul who ventures into the water only to the knees.



HS EKTACHROME BY VOLKMAR WENTZFI © N. G. S.

Sizzling sausages tempt passers-by at a *Schnell Imbiss*—literally, "quick bite"—a type of snack bar popular with Berliners.

Modern Japanese painting puzzles



KODACHROME (ABOVE) A

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The Berliner's love of animals also expresses itself in the well-stocked and popular zoo adjoining the Tiergarten. There a children's festival was in full swing, to the strains of a German band (pages 756 and 757).

Blue vies with green in the city's color scheme, for the lakes of West Berlin form a sparkling chain swelling from the Havel River. On their cool, shady shores stand open-air restaurants. Of the lakes for humans, the biggest and best is Wannsee, almost a square mile in area (page 752).

It was Sunday, and the thermometer stood at 90° F. Even the Ku'damm was empty of people and cars. Our guide for the day was Fräulein Ingried Fischer-Bobsien, a flaxen-haired wisp of a girl student from a graphic arts and public relations academy. She told us her friends called her "Bobsi," and so did we.

Since all Berlin had gone to Wannsee, we decided to go there too.

Bobsi accepted this hardship with equanimity. "I know where we can hire a sailboat," she said, and we took the Avus for Wannsee.

The Avus is a superhighway that cuts through the Grunewald. Though a city street, it has no speed limit, and we went like the

wind the half-dozen miles to Wannsee. There the traffic choked us to a crawl, and only with difficulty did we find room to park at the place where they rented sailboats.

We made sail and careened into the water traffic, artfully dodging the hundreds of canoes, rowboats, racing shells, and outboard speedboats. There was even a large cruising yawl, a craft that could easily cross an ocean.

Jet Vapor Trails Mar Peaceful Sky

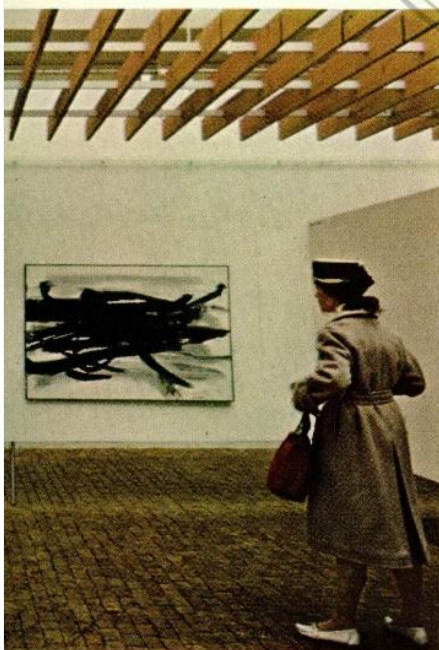
In late afternoon we dropped sail and poled the boat into quiet shallows where we ate buttered pumpernickel and drank Coca-Cola. We lay on our backs on the deck, watching the sky, thinking how peaceful it was, and almost forgetting we were on an island in a sea of Communism.

Then we saw the vapor trails of planes high above, crisscrossing the sky in parallel lines. They were Russians up there; our side was not flying jet fighters speck-high above Berlin. It was as if a cloud had suddenly crossed the sun.

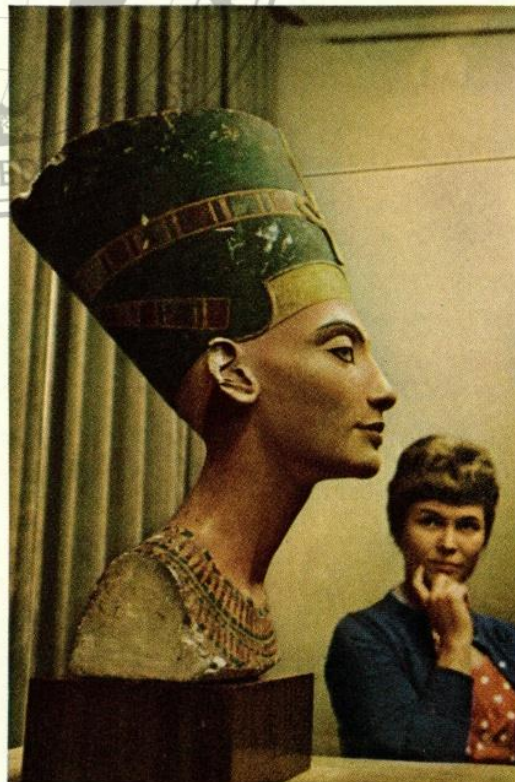
On weekdays as on Sundays, we lived the life of West Berlin. We learned how to drive where we wanted to go and discovered al-

Bust of Nefertiti in the Dahlem Museum survived the war. Archeologists in Egypt unearthed the 3,300-year-old image in 1912.

visitors to the Academy of Arts



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most immediately what happens when you challenge a Berliner's right of way. The offended driver fiercely taps his skull with his forefinger, and you see his mouth form the words "*bei Dir piept's wohl?*," which figuratively means "You have something chirping up there, eh?"

The streets of West Berlin, like those of other German cities, have batteries of vending machines where, after the stores have closed, you can buy anything from a clean handkerchief to fresh fruit. But not all of these are mere voiceless automatons. You put in the money, pick up your purchase, and then, from the depths of the machine, comes a lady's tape-recorded voice.

"*Vielen Dank*," she says—"many thanks"—and then comes a spiel advertising a lottery.

Emergency Stores Jam Warehouses

The variety and freshness of foods obtainable in West Berlin were amazing. Some—but only a small percentage—came from farms in the city itself. Everything else originated in free territory many miles away and had to run the Communist gantlet.

West Berliners ate like kings. The abun-

dance was mostly due to the trucks that rolled day and night over the autobahns, carrying the best foods from all free Europe.

But suppose they were to stop rolling? What if the corridors were cut off again?

Under orders of West Berlin's governing body, the Senate, the city had accumulated vast stockpiles for emergency use. We learned that supplies on hand at the time exceeded the total brought in by airlift during the 11-month blockade of 1948-49.*

Hundreds of tons of coal briquettes and mountains of coke for industrial use were piled up in fields and vacant lots. Enough raw materials and semifinished products had been stored to keep industry going at normal levels for a year, we were informed.

Warehouses, scattered around the city in secret locations, were crammed with potatoes, sugar, flour, and other vital foodstuffs—sufficient to last nine to twelve months with some rationing. Much of the food was fresh and under refrigeration. As they filled a warehouse at one end, Berliners used the food at the other so that it would not go stale.

*See "Airlift to Berlin," a picture story, in the May, 1949, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.

New Berlin Rises From War's Ashes: a View From the 453-foot Radio Tower

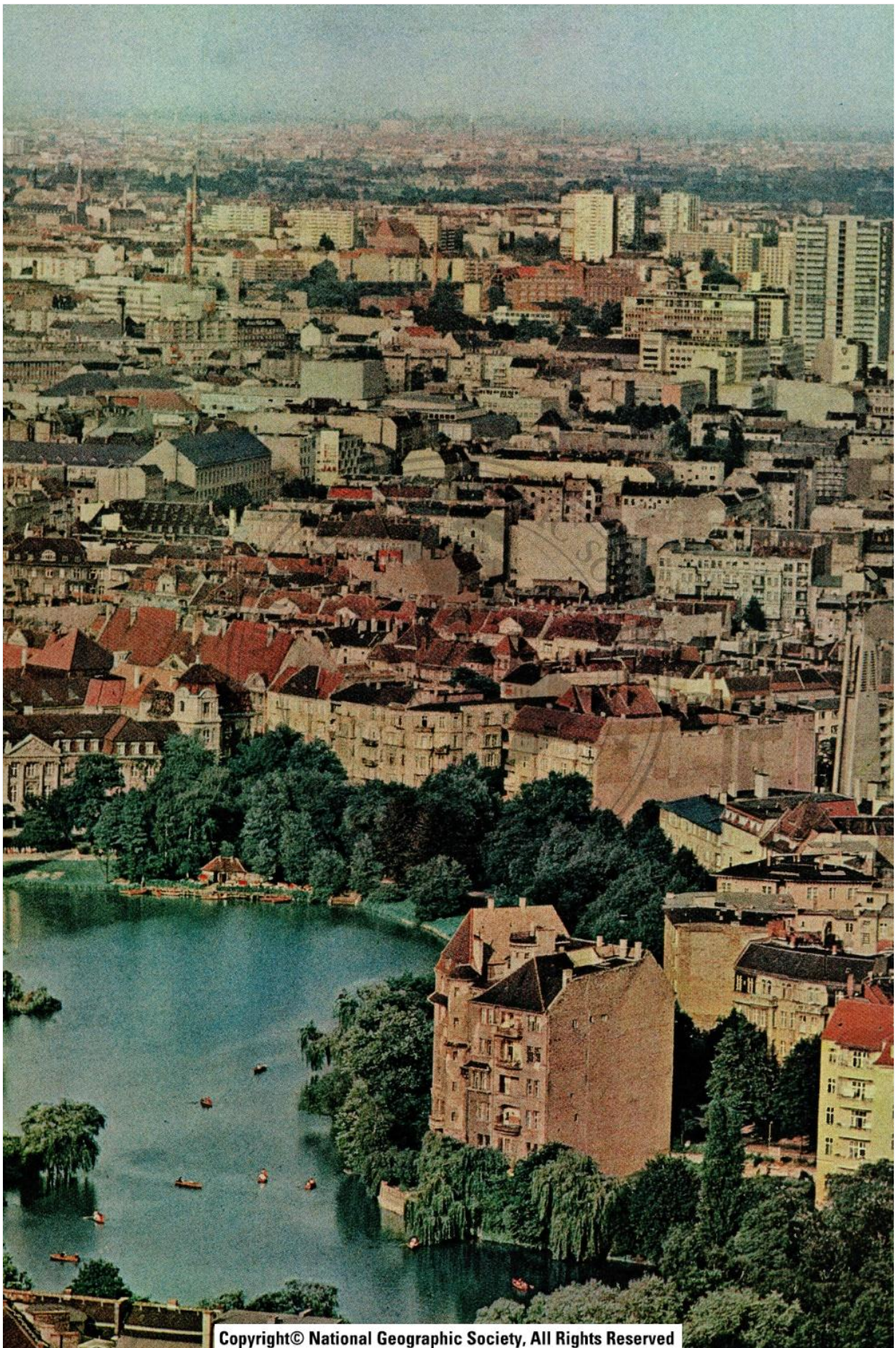
Ruins choked the city when peace returned in 1945. Rubble in West Berlin alone would have made 20 Great Pyramids. Undaunted, citizens cleared the debris, housed the homeless, and rebuilt their city. But even now the total population of 3,300,000 falls a million short of the prewar figure.

Looking across Lietzensee Park, this scene shows a skyline healed of scars. Modern spire surmounts St. Canisius Church at right; haze hides distant East Berlin. In the park (below) a willow-shaded pathway skirts the lake.



HS EKTACHROME (ABOVE) AND KODACHROME BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER THOMAS NEBBIA © N.G.S.

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Before the 1948 blockade, West Berlin depended upon Over There for electricity. The Communists pulled the switches during the blockade and left the West in the dark. The free city then built its own electric power plants, six of them, which now had at least a six-month supply of fuel.

Water? West Berlin's supply comes from deep wells, inexhaustible and out of reach of tampering.

West Berlin's stores were stocked to overflowing. With Bobsi we toured the huge KaDeWe, the store that sells everything (page 745). She would look at 20 sweaters and 20 pairs of slacks, then buy half a loaf of dark bread and a quarter-pound of butter for study-hour snacks.

KaDeWe's food department is on the top-most floor of its huge building on Tauentzienstrasse and would dwarf most American supermarkets. To give an idea of its variety, Bobsi asked a girl clerk to name the different kinds of bread at her counter.

The girl rolled her eyes to heaven but gamely began reciting. Bobsi kept count and finally announced:

"They carry 288 different kinds."

Ten Million Germans Flee

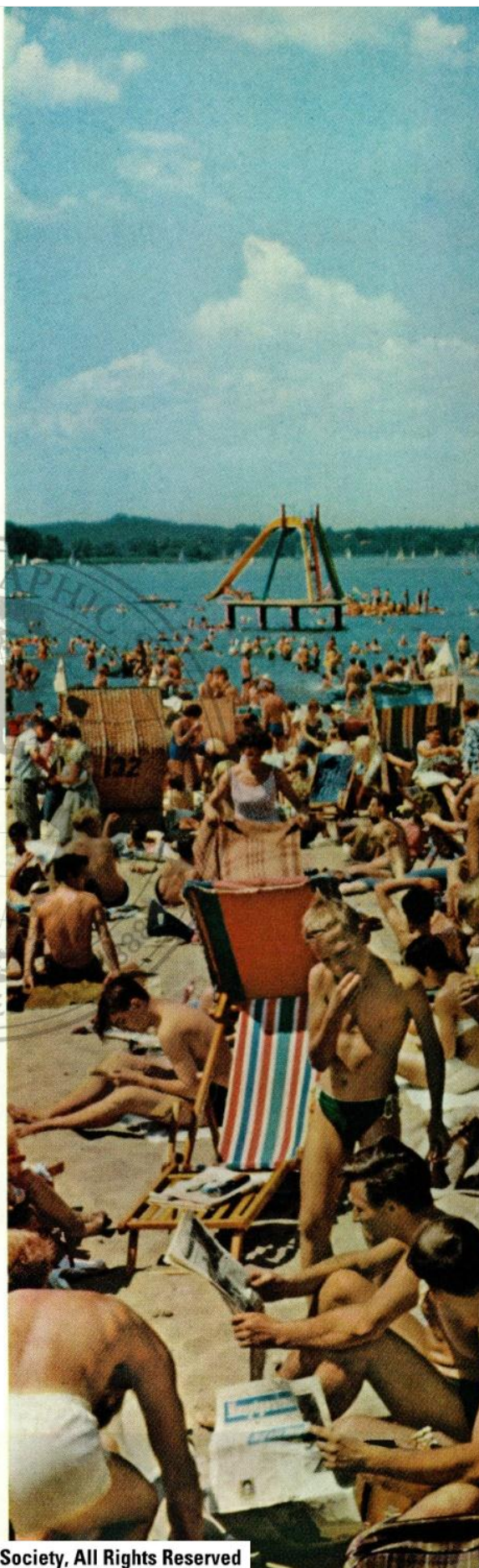
It was not so much the lure of this prosperity as a human need for basic freedoms that caused so many Germans to flee the regimented life in the East and become refugees. When we first arrived, the *Flüchtlinge* were arriving by hundreds each day—and, toward the end, by thousands.

A newspaperman friend phoned one day and said: "Go to the refugee center quickly. More than 2,000 crossed this weekend, which is 800 more than normal."

We went to the Marienfelde camp and talked to Heinz Ritter, the director. We stood amid milling crowds who had traded all but the clothes they wore for freedom.

Many refugees told of hope kept alive by the radio broadcasts of RIAS—Radio in American Sector. They called it "*Unsere Lebensader*"—"our lifeline."

Wannsee Beach draws as many as 40,000 bathers on a warm Sunday. Here, in the southwestern suburbs, the Havel River broadens into a chain of lakes that teem with boats. Steamers carry excursionists as far as the East German border. Other resort lakes that ring the city lie out of bounds to West Berliners.





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KODACHROME (ABOVE) AND HS EKTACHROME BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER THOMAS NEBBIA © N.G.S.

Inviting flat typifies those in the Corbusierhaus, named for the Paris architect who designed it, Le Corbusier. Berlin's largest apartment building, the 17-floor structure contains a shopping center and its own power station.

Balconied apartment building faces busy Rathenau Platz. More than 200,000 houses and apartments have risen since 1949; every fourth West Berliner lives in a new flat.

Though listening is forbidden in Communist territory under penalty of fine and prison, RIAS news and other programs from West Berlin are heard throughout East Germany and deep in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

"Since the war ended," Herr Ritter said, "almost 10,000,000 people have come from the East. They make up nearly a fifth of the West German population.

"East Germany is one of the few countries on earth, as a result, where the population declines despite more births than deaths.

"They flow through Berlin, the only safe way. They simply take the elevated or the subway—the father one day, the mother and baby the next. They leave everything except what little they can carry without arousing suspicion. The state then confiscates their homes, their furniture, their clothes.

"We receive them all here. We attend to their immediate needs. Your people screen them for planted spies and saboteurs."

We had seen this—a taciturn group of Americans, British, and French patiently questioning, checking papers, always patient and kind, but grimly efficient.

Something else we had seen—the look on the tired face of a young mother as she opened the CARE kit, something like an air-travel bag, that each refugee got upon arrival. There was nothing inside that a few dollars would not buy, but the few little things were just what she needed to feel like a woman again: such all-important nonessentials as lipstick, perfume, bobby pins for her hair.

We saw the children, clean and scrubbed, in the nurseries where they waited while the parents were cleared for forwarding by air to new lives in West Germany (pages 758-9).

The sight of these beautiful children, the loss of whom must be the most dreadful blow the East could suffer, almost did us in. We thought not of them, who now were free, but of the others who stayed behind.

A Visit to East Berlin

Soon after we arrived, we made a little tour of East Berlin. There was no problem at the time. You drove to the Brandenburg Gate and stopped while a green-clad Vopo looked you over and glanced at your license plates. Then he waved you through.

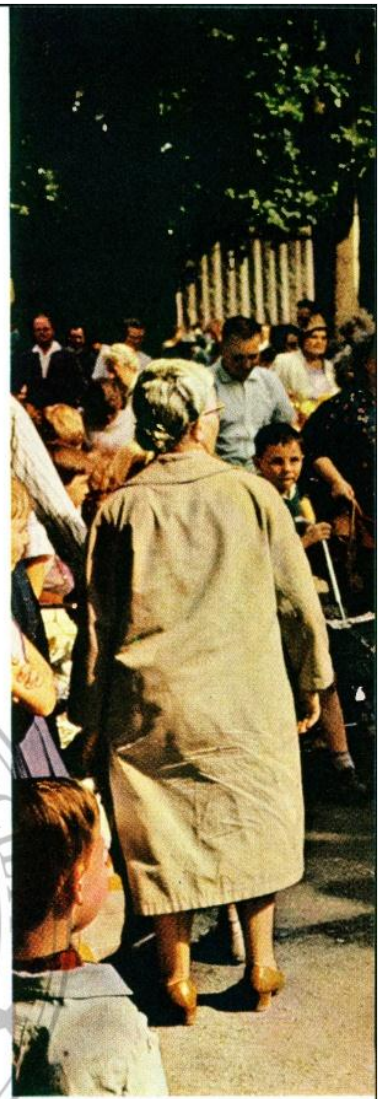


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Tuba-tooting Pied Piper Leads Children to a Playground in the Zoo Beside the Tiergarten

A public park for two centuries, the Tiergarten lost its trees in the bitter winter of 1945-46, when Berliners had to cut them for firewood and turn rose gardens into cabbage plots. Today a million new trees rooted in battle-scarred soil make the park once again the city's "green heart." A sign proclaims, "We go to the children's playground."

Young competitors in a sack race forget the cold war. The Tiergarten lies within sight of the Communist barricades.



On the other side of the Brandenburg Gate a large, well-tended flower bed caught our eye. New linden trees, replacing aged ones removed by the Nazis before World War II, were now almost 30 feet tall.

But the rest of Unter den Linden seemed shabby, without heart or soul. One shop, crowded with women, was introducing Jacques Heim fashions from Paris; yet the small splash of chic only emphasized the drabness of this world. A Polish revolutionary art exhibit, though free, had no viewers.

Stalinallee, Over There's show street, is grandiose, but rather dowdy, and the streets paralleling it on either hand still look as if they had been bombed yesterday.

The bunker where Hitler died gets the treatment it deserves. The Russians blew up the entire subterranean structure and let nature take over. Nothing is there now but an unmarked and unkempt mound the size

of a football field. We walked around on top of it, and this time we did not care what crackled beneath our feet.

Wandering through what was once the heart of Berlin, we found most of the fine old Prussian-Berlin-style buildings still gutted and forlorn; famous churches lacked steeples.

A large sign advertised the Adlon Hotel as being in business once again. Before the war it ranked with the old Waldorf in New York and Claridge's in London as one of the world's most famous and sumptuous hotels.

A driveway now led through waist-high weeds to the drab courtyard of the former servants' quarters; war had wrecked the main entrance. The reception room resembled a run-down country inn. Behind the desk stood an unshaven porter in shirt sleeves. A few seedy-looking travelers sat on cheap suitcases, waiting.

When we drove back through the Branden-



KODACHROMES BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER THOMAS NEBBIA © N.G.S.

burg Gate, we felt as if we had been in another world.

There is one group of men who actually sail to the "island" of West Berlin. These are the barge captains who haul in coal and other raw materials over the canal systems from Hamburg and the Ruhr (page 760).

Most of the barges carry "Hamburg" on their sterns as home port. Many shuttle between Berlin and Duisburg, the largest inland port in the world.

Interview With a Brave Skipper

For the past two or three years, we were told, the passage through Communist East Germany had been simple and uneventful.

"Just fill out your papers fully and accurately," said the typical Herr Kapitän of a self-propelled diesel barge. "The Vopos look only for technical mistakes, like adding figures wrong.

"It has not always been this way. I started on the run in 1949, just after the big blockade lifted. At that time, in addition to the Vopos, there were Russians at the control points. They searched the entire boat, even the children's mattresses.

"I had never any trouble. I found you only had to look at the Russians with big round eyes, as though you admired them, and they puffed all up and helped you through.

"As for the Vopos, they were always out of soap. I had special little packages of soap made up for them, flat so they could put them under their shirts without bulging. I soaped my way through several little blockades that followed the big one."

We went on deck, out of the clean, cramped living quarters under the wheelhouse, to watch the shore cranes unloading the barge's cargo of heavy steel forms.

The captain's wife was cooking potatoes



HS EKTACHROMES BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER THOMAS NEBBIA © N.G.S.

in the tiny galley. Three children—a teenage girl and two small boys in *Lederhosen* from Bavaria—sat near us and listened.

"This boat is our summer home," said the captain. "We live a good healthy life aboard. In the winter the children must stay ashore for school."

"East zone or West?" one of us inquired. The captain was indignant.

"You think I would let my children learn Communist lies?" he asked. "I am a free man, and they will be free too."

He is also a brave man. We said we would conceal his identity in our article.

"Write my name and what I say," he said. "I have always spoken as I thought. The decent people Over There will respect me for this; I do not care what the others think."

Despite this, as the Berlin situation grew more tense, we decided to omit his name.

West Berlin, despite its isolation, was still one of West Germany's leading industrial cities. Electrical products, machines and machine tools, iron and aluminum hardware, optical goods, and precision instruments are its chief wares. The city has a huge garment

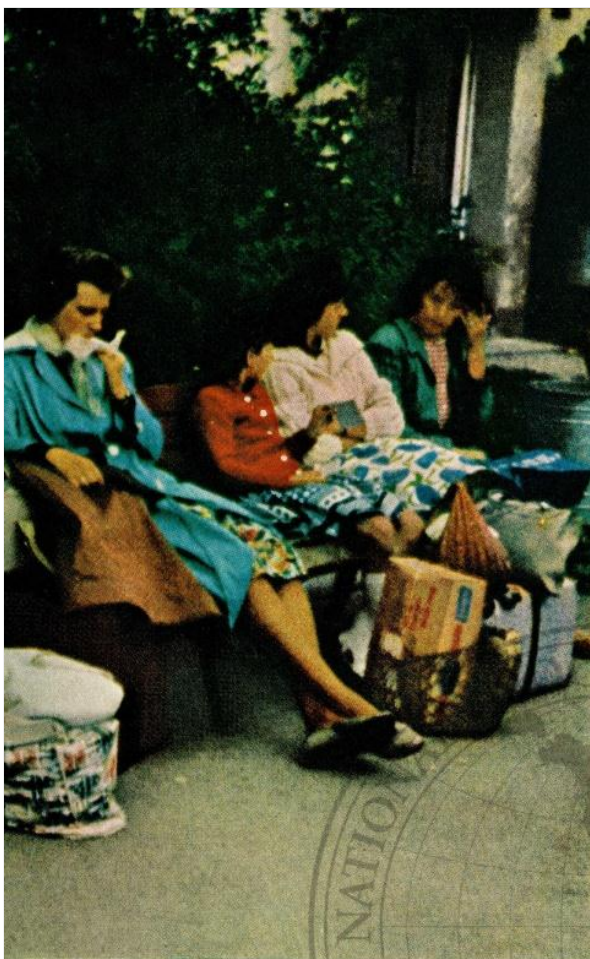
industry, normally supplying 35 percent of all West Germany's clothing for women; many workers are also employed by chemical, food-processing, and liquor industries.

Flattened in the war, the big Borsig works now were spitting fire and smoke, swarming with workers, and palpitating with the thumping of hydraulic presses and giant lathes (page 765). Borsig makes heavy machinery like steam and nuclear power plants, ships' engines, and huge refrigeration units.

Officials merely shrugged when we asked about the difficulties of running an industrial complex on an island.

"On a whim, Communists might attempt to cut off all our raw materials," one said. "But all of us in West Berlin make do somehow."

Even when things run smoothly, industry and trade are difficult because the city is almost entirely cut off from its natural trading area. Only 1.8 percent of West Berlin's exports went to East Germany last year. The Communists did not let East Germans—who would normally be Berlin's closest customers—take home luxuries like television sets, porcelain, or clothing made in West Berlin.



Inseparable companions, youngster and dog arrive at Marienfelde after escaping from East Germany. A quarter of all refugees were children of school age or younger. Many took their pets with them.

Child and toddler share a bowl of soup at Marienfelde. During last summer's influx, West Berlin volunteers helped cook meals for the tide of refugees.

Among the Last to Flee, Refugees Wonder What the Future Holds

Empty homes, closed shops, idle factory benches, and untilled farms are the legacy left to East German Communist rulers by those who fled. Since 1945, ten million have gone to the West, a modern-day Exodus. Most crossed over in Berlin, afoot or by taking a 5-cent elevated train ride, until the Reds slammed the escape hatch shut last August.

At West Berlin reception centers, interviews, meals, receipt of emergency supplies, and billeting fill the first hours after arrival. Excitement stirs at talk of good jobs waiting in bustling West Germany. But eventually there comes a moment of repose, when thoughts of faces and scenes left behind creep in.

In such a quiet time, these refugees at Marienfelde Reception Center, who reached West Berlin just before the border closed, await a bus to Tempelhof Airport and a flight to a new life.





In the days before the Communists dropped the concrete curtain last August, we saw svelte ladies go into KaDeWe and come out waddling like fat ducks. Delicate inquiry elicited the information that they were from the East and were wearing six complete sets of unmentionables. It was the only way they could smuggle their purchases to their homes Over There.

Because there is a long haul in for raw materials and a long haul out for finished products, things made in West Berlin cost a little more than they should. To offset this, the German Government gives Berlin a subsidy in the form of a tax advantage: There is a West German tax of 4 percent on every business transaction. A "turnover tax" it is called, and it is levied on every sale.

West Berlin industry is excused from this tax. It gives West Germans an incentive to buy West Berlin goods. In addition, the city gets a direct subsidy from West Germany; in 1961 it amounted to \$200,000,000.

Berliners are unhappy about receiving

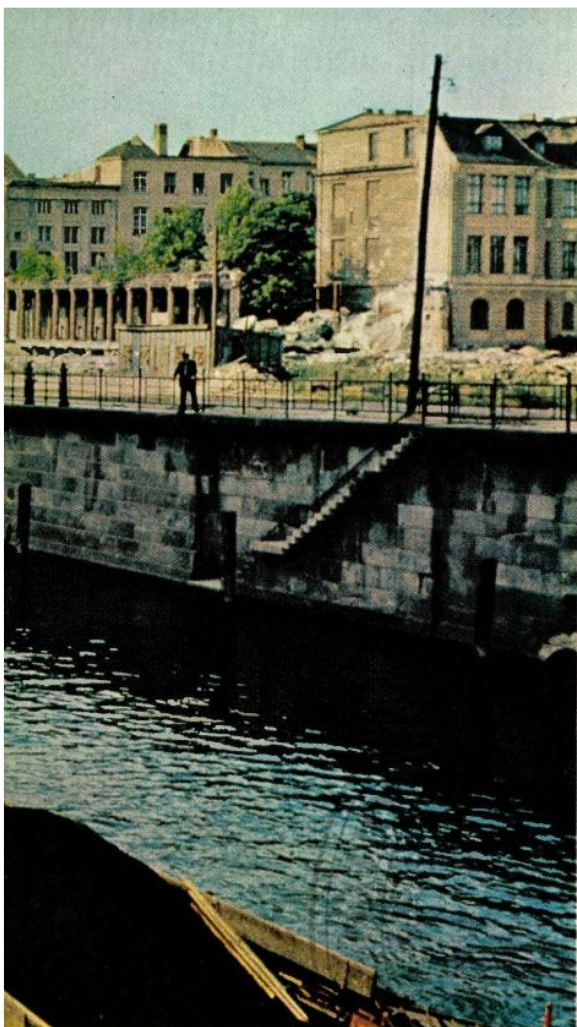
federal "charity," although as Mayor Willy Brandt points out, it is not unusual for a German state (Berlin is classed as a state of West Germany) to receive such aid. Other parts of Germany also are subsidized.

Furthermore, Berlin has been doing better each year, expanding its manufactures and paying more of its own way.

"In 1950," Mayor Brandt told us, "West Berlin lived only half by its own efforts. Now we pay 85 to 87 percent of our way. We get only 15 percent from outside."

Free University Has World Support

When Berlin was divided in 1948, the city's old liberal arts university, called Friedrich-Wilhelm University, fell into the Eastern sector. Renamed Humboldt University by the Communists, it continued to operate, but almost immediately a large group of its professors and students fled to West Berlin, refusing to live and work under Communist restrictions. They held classes wherever they could, meanwhile pleading for a permanent home.



The idea took fire. The city of West Berlin agreed to build a new university. The best professors offered their services. The Ford Foundation in the United States contributed generously. The result was the Free University, with 12,000 students from all over the world. It is an inspiring place; much of it is still under construction, but the completed buildings are strikingly modern. Its school of medicine will soon occupy a new hospital and medical research center.

Bill Wykoff, a Free University student from Pennsylvania, showed us his room and the shining kitchenette he shared with a dozen neighbors.

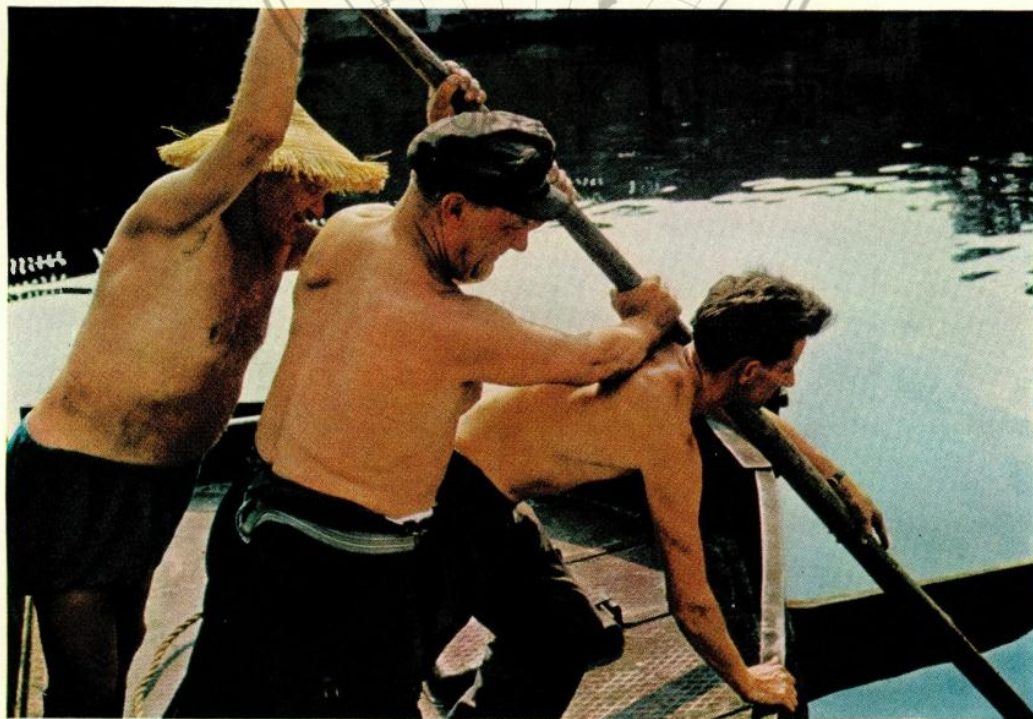
"Sometimes we go Over There and sit in

Barges Float Through East Berlin With Coal and Sand for the Free City

Two canals bring a third of West Berlin's supplies. Barges haul in bulky raw materials for factories and help the Western sectors stockpile almost a year's supply of coal and oil. In winter, when waterways freeze, trucks, trains, and planes provide West Berlin's lifelines to the West.

Under tow, these barges on the Spree River approach their destination, West Berlin.

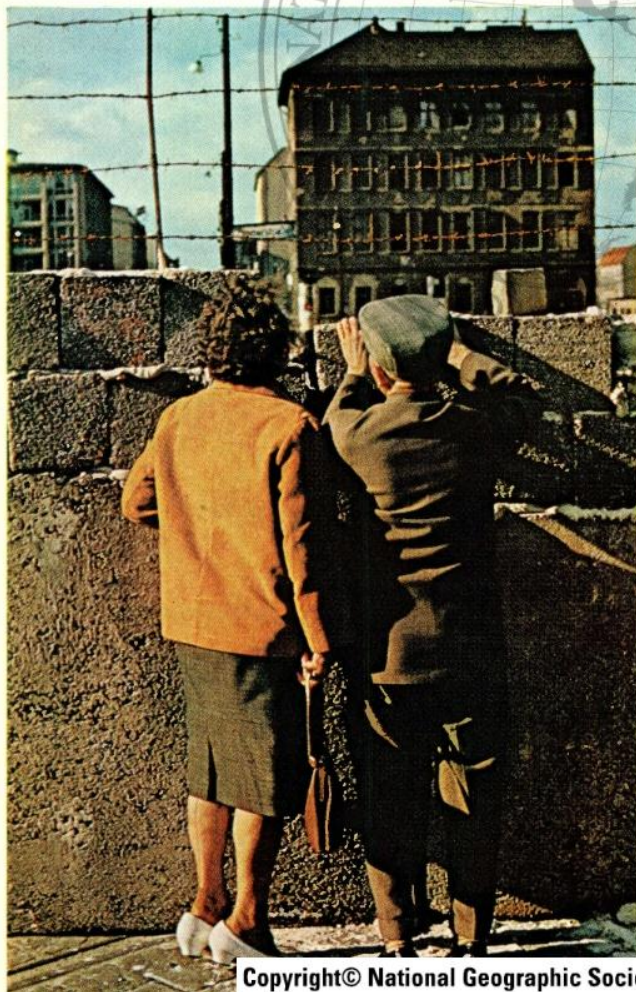
Straining canalmen maneuver their barge along a Spree River wharf in East Berlin.



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Under Guard by Vopos, Masons Wall Themselves In

Mistrusting East Berliners, the Communists imported bricklayers from Saxony to build the barrier that stretches for 30 miles across the city. The wall divides families and friends and keeps workers from their jobs. West Berliners sometimes refer to it as "Ulbricht's Chinese wall," after East German boss Walter Ulbricht.

Standing on tiptoe near Friedrichstrasse, West Berliners try to glimpse a relative beyond the wall. Processed rubble forms the blocks. Daring Germans have escaped by crashing through such barricades in trucks.

Sealed and silent, doors and windows of this building on the border no longer open into West Berlin. A family of four and eight relatives escaped from a second-floor apartment on this very street, Bernauerstrasse, by sliding down a rope. But a woman died when she tried to leap to freedom from a third-story window. To bar escapes, the Communists made the border a no man's land of empty buildings and cleared ground.

While taking pictures such as these, GEOGRAPHIC photographer Wentzel was arrested by Vopos (page 764).

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on Humboldt classes, or hold bull sessions with Commie students," Bill told us before the border was closed. "There's a little heat sometimes, but nothing rough."

More than a sixth of the Free University's students used to come from Over There, partly because the East tended until recently to offer college education only to children of workers and farmers, not to those of intellectuals. For the latter there was only the West.

Here again the East suffered a grave wound: Rarely did a graduate of the Free University go back.

When you visit the Free University, you realize that Berlin is still an international cultural center despite its painful history and its present isolation. You realize it also when you go to the concerts of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

The night before one Philharmonic concert in the Academy of Music auditorium, the rich sounds of a solo violin halted us in Manfred-von-Richtofen Strasse. In an apartment high above the quiet street, someone was practicing

parts of the Robert Schumann C-Major Symphony.

We knew then we would hear the work next evening, for this was a fine violinist indeed and must belong to the Philharmonic.

Sure enough, the Schumann was on the program, but we could not pick out our violinist. This great, clear, precise orchestra had a single glorious voice.

"Day of Shame" Shocks Berliners

Such was the city's normal tenor of life until last August 13, known here as "the day of shame." Overnight, without warning, the Communist East Germans sealed off the border between East and West Berlin, first with webs of barbed wire and then with a solid wall of concrete blocks.

The news burst upon Berlin like a bomb, spreading swiftly by word of mouth, by big black headlines in West Berlin's four important daily papers, and by the broadcasts of RIAS. Berliners by the thousands flocked to the barrier, some merely angry or curious,

KODACHROMES AND HS EKTACHROME (OPPOSITE UPPER) BY VOLKMAR WENTZEL, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF © N.G.S.



Steel ingots glow in the Borsig plant, symbol of West Berlin's rebirth. War razed the foundry; employees rebuilt it. Plants such as this one lost key men when Communists walled off West Berlin.



Carrying a pneumatic drill, a workman at the AEG Turbine factory personifies his city's prime asset: its industrious people. When barricades went up, West Berlin lost more than 50,000 workers, including much highly skilled labor. Many small firms quit overnight. Restaurant and laundry service slowed, and half the housemaids disappeared.



but many anxious to regain touch with loved ones on the other side.

At first the Reds sealed off only the streets, but soon — working feverishly, day and night — they extended the barrier all across the city, over streetcar tracks and railway lines, through subways and cemeteries, cutting every material and human artery that carries the life stream of a great metropolis.

The refugee flow fell off to a trickle, and the desperate few who now escaped did so only at risk of their lives — crashing cars or trucks at high speed through the wall, leaping from upper-story windows, swimming river or canal under cover of night. Many were killed or wounded by Vopos and soldiers.

In the Hands of the Vopos

One of us had a brush with the Vopos at the Wollankstrasse crossing in the shadow of the elevated railway trestle. Here, in notes made immediately afterward, is Volkmar Wentzel's account of the incident:

"For a better view in the trestle's gloom, I walked right up to the line, as I had a perfect right to do. My camera was around my neck and underneath my raincoat.

"I was watching members of a family desperately trying to speak to each other over a roadblock when a Vopo walked up and demanded my identity papers. I told him I represented the press. He still insisted on seeing papers, whereupon I showed him my White House photographer's card and passport, but refused to give these to him. He then suddenly, in judo fashion, grabbed my wrist, rather roughly twisted my arm behind my back, and pulled me over the line.

"In no time two civilians, one in a black raincoat and the other in a heavy turtle-neck sweater, joined him, and the three of them led me off, bums'-rush style, to a small store well inside the East zone that had been converted into a police headquarters.

"Indeed this could well have been an office in Dachau or Auschwitz. I could easily im-



HS. EKTACHROME (ABOVE) AND KODACHROME BY VOLKMAR WENTZEL, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF © N.G.S.

agine Adolf Eichmann sitting behind the railing at one of the tables, along with the other big bullies, each more brutal-looking than the other. In front of them they shuffled identity cards, passports, rubber stamps, and forms to be filled out by the bewildered people. In the words of Willy Brandt, 'Here the spirit of Hitler lives on.'

"They addressed each other as *Genosse* this and *Genosse* that, *Genosse* being a German equivalent of 'Comrade.' I stayed under the 'care' of the two unsavory civilians, who acted as though they had caught an important, sinister international spy.

"Going through my passport, they were impressed by all the countries I had visited. I told them that indeed I had traveled all over the world and met all kinds of people, but that never in my 25 years of globe-trotting had anything like this happened to me. I said I was astonished at being treated in such a humiliating way.

"Surely the walls and the barbed wire

you are putting up are not military objectives or secrets of the state,' I said. 'I was simply looking them over.'

"One of them said, 'You are now in the free German Democratic Republic. Here photography of such things is forbidden.'

"This didn't make much sense, but I decided not to argue the point. I was at their mercy. No one had seen me nabbed, so far as I knew, and even if they had, I could not count on outside help. They asked me to sit down on a wooden bench and left me waiting.

"This gave me a good opportunity to observe this headquarters in action. The glass door of the former shop opened and slammed continually. The *Genossen* greeted each other with hollow joviality, and those coming in always had new victims in tow, usually older people. They whisked them past me to another door where some rough cross-questioning took place. One old lady, dressed in black and at least in her eighties, was crying bitterly. They had dumped the contents of



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Life in Walled-off West Berlin

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her bag on the counter and gone through everything. I saw many tears.

"After about half an hour my inquisitors returned. I could have my passport back and could leave if I gave them the roll of film exposed in my camera. I was sorry to lose this film, but I gave them the Kodachrome roll. I was glad to get out of there.

"Walking along the Wollankstrasse, I felt uneasy. A strange silence hung in the air; there were no smiles or laughter. People in twos and threes and often alone stood on corners looking westward. Only some children playing in a sandbox seemed unaware that they were being brought up in a giant concentration camp. I thought of the unbelievably shocking movies I had seen of the Warsaw ghetto during the war and now understood how this could be.

"In the window of a laundry I saw a *Bekanntmachung*, or notice. It announced that East Berliners henceforth were forbidden to work in West Berlin and went on to expound new labor regulations.

"A man in overalls with a bundle of laundry under his arm stepped up and said, 'That's all outdated. Since Sunday, not a lick of work has been done here. Morale and the production in our factories are zero.'

"He was excited and wanted to say more, but I had to stop him and change the subject abruptly because at a quick stride Black Raincoat and Turtleneck Sweater approached. The scoundrels were following me.

Wall Divides Families and Friends

"Back at the Wollankstrasse checkpoint, I saw a scene that has become commonplace—people waving to others a block away, some using field glasses to see their relatives, sweethearts, and friends."

Along the barrier, in the days that followed, we saw many poignant dramas:

A little car full of people and floral pieces pulled up at the West Berlin side of the line and the driver explained that they were bound for the funeral of the grandmother in East Berlin. Denied permission, they removed

the floral pieces, set them up at the curb as if at the bier, said a prayer, and drove away.

At one point the line passed through the flower garden of an elderly West Berlin couple. They awoke to find the foot of their garden barred to them by strands of barbed wire, beyond which a soldier with gun and police dog tramped back and forth amid the flowers.

The Church of Atonement in Bernauerstrasse stands just inside the Communist sector, facing West Berlin. The Reds sealed it off with a 13-foot wall of concrete blocks, topped by broken glass, but left the church bulletin board outside, perhaps as a cruel joke. Stunned parishioners stood before it. "Where," asked a woman, "can we send our children for confirmation now?"

"One Lives as One Must"

How does the average person react to living under such conditions?

"Consider," says the young Berliner, "that we of my generation have never known anything else. One lives as one must—and becomes, perhaps, a bit of an opportunist."

A commercial artist put it this way: "We still have the rucksack psychology of the post-war years. You see it among the refugees from the East, carrying everything they possess in rucksacks on their backs. We may be in the same boat ourselves tomorrow."

Others share the resolve expressed ten years ago by the late Ernst Reuter, West Berlin's great mayor.

"Can Berlin and Germany survive 'half slave and half free'?" he was asked by a GEOGRAPHIC writer.

"No, not indefinitely," came the answer. "How long depends on our moral strength. Eventually this question, the division of Germany, must be settled. . . . In the long run the Soviets know they cannot digest these Germans. Military strength is not everything. Moral, political, economic strength is of greatest importance."

His jaw went taut with determination.

"Our dynamic influence at the Brandenburg Gate is the strongest moral force."

Barbed Wire and Bayonets Block a Subway; East Berlin Looks Like a Jail

This view across a salient of the East zone shows a sign (foreground) where West Berlin ends and a distant wall where it starts again.

Staff member Wentzel gave his impression of a deserted subway entrance in Potsdamer Platz: "A lifeless hole, littered with papers and trash, the gate bolted tight. Two armed men paced below, the echo of their steps mingling with the distant rumble of the trains. No more refugees would pass through here."

KODACHROME BY VOLKMAR WENTZEL, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF © N.G.S.

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