



BERLIN—

A Divided City

APART from natural feelings of rivalry and patriotism metropolitan people seem to have more in common with each other than with their own countrymen in the provinces. The peculiar quality of life in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of great cities makes the Londoner and the Berliner more alike in many ways than the Londoner and the provincial Englishman or the Berliner and the provincial German. So I must stress that my observations apply only to Berlin and not necessarily to any other part of Germany.

Twenty years ago I left Berlin and became an expatriate in New Zealand. The Nazis held power and under Hitler it became impossible for me to remain in my native city. Twenty years later I revisited Berlin, the city I had once loved and love once more.

When I first left, democracy had been shattered, justice had gone into hiding, numbers of my friends had been tortured to death and the masses had given in, hypnotised by the big lie "the end justifies the means." When I returned, it was to find Hitler gone but, as a memorial of his madness, the litter and debris of great destruction. Marble, concrete, glass and wood had been sculpted by war into patterns of horror, and even more devastating was the scarring of human minds by physical pain and loss, and psychological guilt. I have heard that so teutonic word, *angst* used over and over again. The Berliner says: "We have *Angst*," and by that he means fear, anxiety and loss all wrapped in one word. The Germans think fate is stalking them mercilessly. A knock on the door brings memories of the Gestapo, memories of Allied Intelligence — and not only memories, because today, every day, every hour, human beings open doors expecting the inevitable long leather coats, the straddling jack boots, the pad with chloroform—someone else has disappeared, shanghaied across an unknown border. And there is the great *Angst*—the fear of another war—perhaps the inevitable war?

Just imagine you are coming back, after 20 years absence, to New Zealand—to know that the North Island is called Soviet New Zealand and the South

The first of two talks, broadcast recently from National stations of the NZBS, in which ODO STREWE describes life in Berlin today

Island the Federal Republic of New Zealand, that your capital is in the Soviet Zone and is divided in half.

I travelled through Genoa, Milan, Munich, nearer and nearer to Berlin. Every plane was booked out days in advance, but at last there was a seat for me on one of the aeroplanes leaving for Frankfurt and so, in this roundabout way I managed to get another aeroplane from Frankfurt to Berlin where every European country seems to have its airlines represented. I listened to the announcer telling us in five languages to take our seats on an American Air Force plane, one of the 100 that take great care to fly in a narrow air corridor allocated by the Russians to fly into Berlin . . . As we flew towards Berlin I closed my eyes, listening to the motors of the giant plane, and mused as I flew home . . . I must not get nervous now . . . my mother will be there at the airport . . . maybe there will be somebody else . . . What will they think of me . . . what do they look like . . .

I have never seen my brother's children; he had refused to come to New Zealand. He tried but he was too attached to that city, Berlin. He wrote that he would rather face the unknown in a place he was used to. I glanced at a booklet that I had put in my pocket, and in it I read that Berlin was first mentioned in the 13th century. With its unteutonic village names surrounding it, in a setting of forests, lakes and waterways, it was originally settled by Wends, a slavonic tribe, and taken over by German colonists. I put the booklet aside and my thoughts went back to 1937—I had just been released from the Gestapo Headquarters in the Prinz Albrecht Strasse and I stumbled into the Museum of Anthropology in the same street. I knocked on the door of a friend of mine, a professor in charge of the Polynesian section. We looked at a globe. "Which is the furthest place away from Hitler Germany?"

"The other side," he said. And that was how I came to New Zealand. My thoughts flickered between Auckland

and Berlin until they were suddenly interrupted.

"Fasten your seat belts," flashed the sign, and the watchful eye of the air hostess bid me not only to do this but to keep in my seat. We landed, I was in Berlin breathing Berlin air, crisp, exhilarating — extra dry, like a draught of champagne from the côte de Blanc . . . on the tarmac a boy was whistling a popular Berliner tune which I rediscovered — ". . . Das ist die Berliner Luft, Luft, Luft . . ."

How vast, how spacious Tempelhof airport is! The plane even runs in underneath a roof circling what looks like half the airfield. It looked like a celestial terminal.

Much later my family told me, "We saw you coming—you passed the barrier for visitors and then we heard you talking German in a strange heavily accented voice—you sounded just like a foreigner."

Next day my brother took me for a drive, to show me where I once lived. Of the big five-storey block of flats nothing was left. I soon realised the three stages of destruction. The burned out shells, the dynamited rubble heaps and the miles of cleared sections ready for building to start again. But anyone walking round Berlin now on an ordinary day will scarcely be aware of the fact that he is stepping on a nuclear point of contemporary history, strolling in a city with a special mission, with a special viewpoint, with special problems.

The architectural aspect of the new West Berlin fascinated me. Berlin has undergone great changes; has developed revolutionary features. The skyscraper style, the pavilion style, the modern bungalow style, all those building styles which seek to combine the functional with the beautiful, have gained ground.

The strangest thing for a New Zealander is the absence of quarter-acre sections with box-like houses and corrugated or tile roofs. But West Berlin with a population bigger than the whole of New Zealand still remains a green city, in fact it is a true garden city. Another thing—it's not widely known that Berlin has about eight times as many bridges as Venice. The streets are so wide that with parking on both sides and double parking in the middle there is still six-lane traffic in some streets.

What else? Berlin has 17 theatres, half a dozen concert chambers, three opera houses and many art galleries. Don't think you can buy your ticket five minutes before the curtain rises. Berliners are voracious theatre-goers and they like a varied diet. I had the pleasure of seeing a stage version of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* done in German.

The contemporary ecclesiastical architecture is startling and the Berliner nickname of one of the modern churches is "God's Power Station."

Other impressions stand out. Exhibitions of German textiles with charming German models who do not look like the popular idea of Gretchens at all and whom you can see so often, while you

drink your coffee or sip your cognac, on roof gardens, or on private shows.

Miles of factories of the electrical industries such as Siemens and AEG . . . It is interesting to note that all these firms have modern worker flats and when the Russians came they asked "Where are the Capitalists that live in these flats?"

The 110 acres of Botanical Gardens. Incidentally, Berlin has a park called the "Garden of Eden"—not called after Adam and Eve but the ex-Prime Minister of England, Sir Anthony Eden. Who can now say that the Germans have no sense of humour?

The International Railway Station opposite the zoo—a place of vice, gamblers, black-marketeers and the meeting place of the spies the Russians want to send to the West and the Americans to the East. The shops where you can buy everything you want 24 hours a day; and despite the fact that you may buy beer and schnapps in any dairy I saw no drunks. The 300-foot wide belts of trees that wind through the city. A railway station where once 58 international trains arrived daily—today, a skeleton of steel with weeds growing on the platforms.

My brother and I drove along a street with an entirely new name to me, "The Street of the 17th June" which commemorates the revolt in East Berlin. It identifies the preaching of mutual hatreds. It is part of a propaganda by which West Berliners are taught to see such tragic minor figures as Herr Pieck and Herr Ulbricht as monsters dwarfing Hitler; any man associated with the Socialist Unity Party, however fine his qualities and his record, is treated as fit to be lynched. The climate is being created for a White Terror, if not for a Brown. Conversely, East Berlin has no chance to learn of the anti-militarist temper among West Germans or to grasp the many sane developments there and the still strong liberal feelings. Dr Adenauer is presented, at best, as another von Papen and only the symptoms discreditable to his regime are mentioned in the controlled Eastern Press.

To walk through the old West End is like treading over a dead past. Here I found a bleak expanse, where only the ruins of the Krollgarten and the deserted old Reichstag loom into the sky. Bushes and weeds mercifully covered the scattered stones and bricks and the shattered pillars of once elegant villas where diplomats resided.

The Brandenburger Tor stood like a fence shutting off another world. A huge red flag fluttered from the top. Posters warned "YOU ARE leaving the WESTERN SECTOR." Beyond it lay the famous Unter den Linden, the avenue where the Emperor had his palace, now inert and lifeless. Here the Eastern Sector began. My brother slowed the car down. Uniforms in green and blue and grey could be seen. They were policemen armed with revolvers.

"Well," said my brother to me, "if you want to go further, you can go—without me!" Western Police and Customs guards now barred our road. How I crossed the border into so-called Iron Curtain Berlin and what I saw on the other side will be part of my next talk.

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