

Reporter and Wife Tour East Berlin: View Life Behind Wall

Editor's Note—Many Americans who have read about the Communist-built wall that divides East and West Berlin will be seeing it for themselves this summer—and East Berlin, too. All the tourist needs to pass through "The Wall" is a proper passport. All he needs to do to get back out again is behave himself. In this dispatch a young American newspaperman describes a visit with his wife to East Berlin.

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United Press International
Berlin—UPI—A brief passport check in a cheerful waiting room, a smile from a Communist policeman and we were on our own in East Berlin, on the wrong side of "The Wall."

Driving the 110 miles through Communist East Germany into West Berlin had been no problem—other than the tedious checks of documents and the warnings against taking pictures. But how much freedom would a pair of American tourists have on an unchaperoned drive through East Berlin? My wife and I wondered.

It was 10 a.m. when we drove up to the Friedrichstrasse crossing—the famous "Checkpoint Charlie," the only crossing point open to non-Berliners. Our camera was loaded with film. The car's glove compartment was filled with cookies and candy bars—for two reasons. We had been warned of a dysentery epidemic in East Berlin and our West Berlin marks were useless to buy food—or anything else—in East Germany unless we changed them to Eastmarks in a lengthy and complicated procedure.

Regulations
On the western side of "Checkpoint Charlie," a U.S. military policeman took our names and noted the time we expected to return. He explained there are no telephone connections between east and west and if we got into any trouble or were arrested, we couldn't phone West Berlin for help.

The M.P. also gave us a list of instructions on how to behave, the ground rules for keeping clear of the "spy" suspicion on which several Americans have been arrested in East Berlin. These included:
— Drive anywhere you want—under the four-power agreements, all Americans have this right—but don't stray from the city into East Germany itself.
— Photography is permitted, but don't take pictures of the

wall, the Vopos ("Volkspolizei"—East German policemen) or of possible military objectives, such as bridges or railway stations.

Above all, don't try to smuggle any East German refugees back to west.
Then the M.P. stepped back and we crossed the white painted line marking the actual border. A Vopo raised the peppermint-striped gate. We drove through a narrow gap in the gray stone wall, zig-zagged slowly around obstacles set up to stop motorized flight to the west and pulled up to a white ranch-style building.

This was the East German customs post, a most unexpected first impression. It's brand new, built since the wall went up Aug. 13 and it must be one of the world's most pleasant customs posts, outwardly. While our passports and money were quickly and efficiently checked, we lounged on comfortable sofas in a gray-and-yellow room and listened to mood music from a Vopo's transistor radio. From time to time young soldiers walked past, their new leather boots squeaking loudly. There was nothing the least menacing about them. The Communists were busy building an impression that all is well and peaceful and pleasant.

Then a policeman gave us a smiling nod and we were on our way. We strolled out past the ubiquitous pans of disinfectant—a precaution against dysentery—got a cheerful "Auf Wiedersehen" from another policeman outside, and drove off.

Outlying Areas Have Methodist Strength

Nashville, Tenn.—UPI—The hard core of Methodist strength in this country lies outside the big metropolitan areas.
The Rev. Dr. Rockwell C. Smith, professor of rural church administration and sociology at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., told a national Methodist meeting here that 84 per cent of all Methodist congregations are in town and country areas of under 10,000 population.

WIDELY USED
New York—UPI—A stripe 70 feet wide could be painted around the circumference of the earth with the asphalt and tarred roofing products used last year, according to building specialists at Allied Chemical's Barrett division.

Friedrichstrasse. Then stopped and looked back. For the first time, we saw the wall from "inside." It is frightening—the thick, ugly gray stones, backed by barbed wire, have a sheer physical look of cold cruelty. We realized fully for the first time that we were aliens on unfriendly soil, in a prison we could leave only if the Communists willed it.

We drove up Friedrichstrasse to the Unter den Linden which once, we knew, had been one of Europe's finest boulevards. It is now a Communist "show street." At one end stood the Brandenburg gate, girdled by the wall. At the other end was an open square or parade ground. The white stone opera embassy, next to the gate, was the finest building on the street.

We found a parking place (no problem in East Berlin) and got out to walk. What remnants of the good life exist in East Berlin are to be found here—a handful of shops, the library, the Humboldt university.

As I locked the car, my wife went window shopping. Instead of the gay spring clothes of West Berlin, she saw stout, low-heeled shoes, heavy carry-all purses, black and gray fabrics. All very serviceable looking and sensible but no style or bright colors.

No Visiting
At the university the guard who checks all passes as students enter called a English-speaking professor to chat with us. No, he said, foreigners couldn't sit in on a class. The dysentery, he explained.

In the streets behind the Unter den Linden, the facade of fine buildings gave way to still-shattered war ruins. As we walked, we saw boarded-up churches, a apartment houses carrying the scars of the battle of Berlin, and empty lots. It looked very shabby and dreary.

A boy of about 14 stopped me to ask for a cigarette, but I had none. (Along the Autobahn from West Germany to West Berlin, coveys of East German boys line the road, begging for smokes with the sign of two fingers to the lips. We saw no one stop to give them any.)
We strolled back to Brandenburg gate, the symbol of this divided city. As we returned to our car, we saw East Berliners staring at it. It was a Volkswagen, made in West Germany. They are not sold in East Germany.

bus tourist with his guide explaining and identifying places, the motorist or pedestrian with his freedom to wander.

We drove up the Unter den Linden to the busiest intersection, and enjoyed the absence of traffic. The Soviet sector abounds in traffic lights, but almost none are in use. Cars are few and the broad streets are seldom crowded.

Moscow Modern
From Alexanderplatz and its huge state-owned department store, we veered off down Lenin Allee, lined with new apartment buildings, all

blue and yellow monoliths in the familiar "Moscow modern" style. West Berlin friends told us that these apartments, like the Unter den Linden shops, are available only to the party elite.

Then down Frankfurter Allee (formerly Stalin Allee), another show street, with post-war buildings and shops already beginning to show their age.

We drove from the avenue into neighborhoods a block or two off the main streets. The grimness and drabness of the war-damaged buildings struck us. The tenants seemed to be living in extreme poverty.

Finally, we drove far from the city center to Bernauerstrasse, in the northern part of East Berlin. Bernauerstrasse is visited mostly from the west. It is the famous "Ghost Street" split by the east-west border where the windows of East Berlin houses were bricked up to keep refugees from jumping into West Berlin.

Again, our western clothes and western car were objects of curiosity—no more—to the housewives lined up for a half-block outside a tiny grocery to buy huge red cabbages, the only vegetable we could see

Behind them loomed the wall, and West Berlin.

We got out to walk through the neighborhood—a chilling experience. It was an obvious slum. The people looked hungry and threadbare. As we walked, we looked into dark, barren basement flats and could feel the cold damp air rushing out from open doors or broken windows.

By then we had had enough. There was more we could have seen, but East Berlin is grim stuff—hardly a tourist's paradise.

We knew this was a city of more than a million persons—but where were they? There

is little traffic, fewer pedestrians than in a small American county seat, no sign of the bustle and life of West Berlin.

Most of all we noticed the quiet. Despite the people, despite occasional workmen in the streets, the city has an eerie silence, completely unnatural.

Back at checkpoint Charlie, the Vopos checked our passports and money—to make sure we hadn't spent any—and searched our car. Then they waved us on our way, the peppermint barrier swung up and we were back in the west.

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