

He explained that his greatest wish was that I should graduate from college. He said that it had all been taken care of, and that whatever college I wished to attend was within my means. I knew that he had never been able to finish the sixth grade, and that he had created a world for us with his own hands. He had unlocked doors for me so that my life would be easier. I nodded that I would do as he wished.

As I turned to leave, I found that I could not. I turned and smiled at him for the last time. He smiled weakly and said, "Hang a sock up for me tonight. I don't think I'll be able to make it home." As I passed the door of the room, I started to run—down the hall and past the beaten Christmas tree. All I could think of were the seven hundred and fifty lilies which had turned into ivory bugles of death.

Berlin Is Worth A Trip

Angelica Homola

MAY I INVITE you on a trip through Berlin? "Why through Berlin?" Well, Berlin is a city with a unique atmosphere. Berlin is—but why don't you see it yourself?

Let's start out on a mild, sunny May morning downtown at the Gedächtniskirche on Kurfuerstendamm, Berlin's shopping street. Take a deep breath of this fresh morning breeze, and you'll feel immediately that there is something special about the air of Berlin. You'll remember the names of some of the songs and musicals which were written about this city, and you'll notice that in every single one of them the air of Berlin is mentioned. The Berlin air is never heavy—hot or oppressive. It is always cool and refreshing, even in mid-summer. And in winter when heavy, dark-grey clouds cover the sky above the roofs you can smell soon-to-come snow in the wind. There is really something about the air in Berlin. I am sure, you agree with me after having taken a deep breath on this May morning on Kurfuerstendamm.

I know that at first sight the Kurfuerstendamm looks much the same to you as the Champs Elysees in Paris, Fifth Avenue in New York, or the Via Veneto in Rome. You see exceptionally well-dressed passers-by, expensive luxury goods in the windows and showcases, and heavy traffic on the Damm. And yet there is something that makes even this street with its international look different. Perhaps it is the Gedächtniskirche that gives the street a different flavor. This church is a leftover from the black days of the last World War. Dark brown and menacing stands this high ruin at one end of the Kurfuerstendamm and looks down at the busy life beneath it. The Gedächtniskirche is a reminder of the disastrous consequences of a war.

Our May morning, however, is too young and fresh a day for

us to get caught in a sad and melancholic mood. Let's take the next U-Bahn—the Berlin subway—to Krumme Lanke, a station close to Wannsee—a picturesque lake surrounded by dense woods. The Berlin subway tracks go around the city in circles, but since August 13, 1961, the subway cars don't go around anymore. They have to stop at the Wall—a wall even underground. The U-Bahn goes very fast, and the cars sway a little from one side to the other.

A man who is sitting on the same bench as we are starts a conversation with us. Don't you like to listen to his Berlin accent? Nowhere else in Germany will you hear German spoken as the people in Berlin do it. Not only is the air special, but also the language; and as you have just learned, even the people are different. They are friendly and like to help you whenever they can, even when you are a stranger. And they are never at a loss for words. Our man is talking about the weather, about the fragrance of the lilac bushes in the gardens. Then he tells us about his children. I am sure you notice his excellent sense of humor. But he doesn't say anything about politics. He tells us only that he has many lilac bushes and roses around his week-end house. But he can't go there anymore since it is in East Berlin. There is no other comment about the Communist regime except that no one will be there to mow the grass around the little summer house, and no one will repair the roof that leaks on one side. A Berliner seldom talks about his political situation unless he is asked. He knows he can't change it right now. And so he tries to make the best of it with his healthy sense of humor. But a Berliner will never forget that beyond the Wall there are Berliners like him.

We get off the subway at Krumme Lanke. After we have climbed the stairs to the daylight, I see your surprised eyes. Yes, this is Berlin too. It looks quite different from what you have seen before. We are standing on a mall bordered by old, tall trees, wealthy gardens, and mansions built in the style of the early century. This mall isn't made for cars. It still has the old pavement—little triangular blocks of granite.

"I just miss the horses and buggies," you say. Well, you don't have to wait long. There comes a buggy around the corner. We'll take it to ride to the lake.

At the *Wannseeterrassen*, a fine restaurant at the lake, I want you to try *Fiakerkaffee* and *Baumkuchen*, a Berlin speciality. The *Fiakerkaffee* is a cup of coffee with cherry brandy. How do you like it? We take a seat in the open air, and we can smell the spring-green trees at the shore of the lake. Since it is a weekday, there aren't too many people. Over the week-end, however, the shore of Wannsee is crowded with thousands of people. You have to know that this picturesque landscape is the only place the people of West Berlin can go to spend a week-end outside of town. You look over the glittering lake. About in the middle of the water you notice a fence.

"Is that East Berlin?" you ask. Yet, that is East Berlin. On the shore across the lake are some watch towers hidden in the trees. But they are there.

Later in the day, we go back to the city. Again, we are surrounded by modern life. But I'll show you that even in the downtown area there are places you can only find in Berlin. Only a couple of blocks from the heart of the city you'll find *Eckkneipen*, taverns at the corners of a street. When you enter one of these taverns, you enter a new world. You are now set back sixty years. You remember our ride in the buggy some hours ago which reminded you of the good old days? Yes, this tavern at the corner belongs to that same time, too. We go to the counter—the same old counter as in grandfather's days—and we order a *Weisse mit Schuss*. You don't know what that is? Well, you'll soon find out. The tavern keeper takes a glass from the board behind him. This glass is formed like a round champagne glass, just bigger. He pours gold-brown beer into it. And then, he adds the *Schuss* to it—a large portion of raspberry juice. Believe me, it tastes delicious. We sit. In one of the attached rooms some men play *Kegel*, a kind of bowling that is typical of Berlin. The whole place is filled with the smoke of heavy cigars. Here you find the common people of Berlin—the little clerk, the taxi driver, the bus driver. They are noisy, but you simply have to like them because they are congenial.

There are so many things left I would like to show you. We could go to a good theater or opera. Berlin's stages are famous. Or we could go to the *Stachelschweine*, a "political cabaret"—something that is typical of Berlin too. I don't think you know what a political cabaret is, do you? This is the performance of a small group of actors who criticize the current world affairs in form of little musicals or plays. These political cabarets are excellent in their originality of ideas.

Yes, I know, I haven't shown you the Wall yet. I have done that purposely. But first, I want you to see the free part of Berlin. After you'll have learned to love West Berlin, I'll go with you to the *Mauer*—the Wall. Then, I am convinced, you'll wish as hard as any Berliner, any German does, that the day will come soon when East and West will be together again. Then you'll really understand what this concrete curtain, drawn to divide streets and even houses, means to this city. Then I'll go with you to a cemetery which is behind the Wall, where no one from West Berlin can visit the graves. The flowers intended for the dead are attached to the Wall. On the top of the Wall are pointed glass cuttings and barbed-wire so no one can possibly escape from the other side. We won't stay long in front of this Wall. We'll get sick at our stomachs because we know we can't change it.