

# Berlin—Only Loop Hole In The Iron Curtain

(Russian atrocities in Berlin are recalled by Courier-Journal staff writer Paul Contestable in this second installment of his five month tour of duty in the four-powered "troubled spot" of Germany in 1953.)

By PAUL CONTESTABLE

My first day in Berlin comprised the usual routine of checking in to a new station. By evening I returned to the home that was to be my quarters while in Berlin. Another officer, a first lieutenant, shared the home with me.

Aggie, our maid, was a German woman probably in her early forties. She was gray-haired and always smiling. Through her smile however, you could not help noticing years of suffering and hardships she had gone through.

She could not speak English and I could not speak German, but we immediately became friends. Somehow we managed to understand each other despite the language barrier.

Later, while I was out, Aggie unpacked all my luggage, ironed my clothes and put everything in its proper place.

When I returned, she motioned for me to follow her and led me into the living room. There on the wall, where still could be seen the faint outline of a Nazi swastika, she had hung the crucifix she found in my trunk.

As she pointed to the crucifix, I could see a gleam of joy in her eyes and in her smile. Aggie was not a Catholic.

That evening another officer and myself had just settled down for a quiet evening of talking about Berlin when the door bell rang.

Going to the door, we found a woman with tears in her eyes and her face filled with fear. Three small children clung to the ragged dress of the woman. Before any words were spoken, the woman collapsed.

A quick call was placed to a doctor and the acrobat while we tried to aid the woman.

The woman had regained consciousness by the time the ambulance had arrived and told of her family's flight from the Russian zone. Her husband never reached the Western sector.

The woman knew she would not recover, but asked that her children be cared for. She said something to her children in German and closed her eyes.

Tears rolled from the faces of the children but they did not utter a sound. Their mother was dead.



BERLIN is the loop hole in the Iron curtain. Refugees manage to escape Red control easier here than in heavily restricted areas.

I soon learned that this was far from being an isolated case. Thousands of refugees were fleeing Communist control each day and seeking safety in West Berlin. The refugees used hundreds of different methods of escape. Most were successful—some, like the woman who died at our doorstep, were not.

The pressure put on the Allies now to leave Berlin may have several purposes, but one is very evident. The Russians have thus far been unsuccessful in swaying West Berlin to their Communist philosophy. Father, the East Germans are growing further away from their Red masters.

Berlin is the gateway to freedom for East Germans. They have relatively easy access from East Germany to East Berlin, and East Berlin is easily accessible to West Berlin and freedom.

The Russians want to stop this.

Both curiosity and duty brought me into the Russian sector of Berlin shortly after my arrival in the four powered city. It was to be the officer in charge of a sight-seeing bus which included a small portion of the Russian sector in its tour.

Previous trips made by this bus had both humorous and troublesome incidents.

On one occasion the bus had a flat tire in the Russian controlled territory. Almost immediately a flood of photographers appeared from the almost deserted streets. The pictures obviously were used to publicize the "inferior" capitalist equipment.

Another time the bus returned from the Eastern sector riddled by bullets from Communist guns.

Fortunately no one was injured seriously. The Russians "apologized" for the "accident."

My first such trip fortunately had little incident. The bus travels a prearranged route which covers only the "better" area of the Russian sector.

This includes the Communist showplace along Stalin Allee and the Soviet War Memorial known as the "Garden of Remembrance." Here in beautifully landscaped grounds lie the bodies of 7,000 Russians who died in the battle for Berlin.

A granite statue of Mother Russia is located near the entranceway facing the burial grounds. The Garden of Remembrance was constructed entirely by forced labor.

At one end of the burial grounds stands a huge bronze statue of a Russian soldier holding a child in one hand, as he cuts a Nazi swastika with a sword. Two flag shaped monuments made of marble from Hitler's Chancellery are at the opposite end. Under the monuments are statues of Russian soldiers on one knee with their heads bowed.

Before leaving the Russian sector we also saw the remains of Hitler's bunker—now only a pile of rubble.

Off to the left of the famous bunker now stands another landmark—the burned and mutilated Russian buildings destroyed by the anti-Communist riots just a few weeks earlier. . . the battle where men, women and children with stones fought Russian tanks.

Leaving the Russian sector through the famous Brandenburg Gate, we stopped to view

another Russian monument. Though constructed in the British sector of Berlin, the Russians are allowed to have a guard at the monument at all times.

Only one Russian soldier stood guard at the monument when originally constructed. When one of the guards asked for asylum in the West, the guard was quickly increased to two.

Now one soldier guards the monument and the other guards the guard.

During the weeks I had been in Berlin I became good friends with a fellow officer, who for this article I will call Lt. Mason. Little did I realize that night in the Grunewald, a massive forest bordering the Russian zone of Germany, that I would never see him again.

We were inspecting the Grunewald for a suitable location to hold a field problem for our companies. When our search was completed, we separated and headed for our own companies.

Lieutenant Mason never reached his destination.

Weeks passed as the Russians continually denied that he was being held by them. Months later, long after I had left Berlin, I finally received word that he had been released by the Reds.

The story of the months that Lt. Mason had been missing reached me indirectly, so I cannot be sure of its accuracy. How-

ever, this is the story as it was told to me:

After we had separated in the Grunewald, Lt. Mason was suddenly seized by Russian soldiers and told he was in Russian territory. Lt. Mason, certain of his location, denied the charges. His plea was ignored as he was bound and gagged, thrown into a truck and taken away.

Weeks of questioning, beatings and little food followed. He was held in a room five feet wide and six feet long and never allowed to talk to anyone except the interrogator.

Every four or five weeks he would be blindfolded and taken by truck to another location and the same routine started all over again. On one occasion Lt. Mason struck the Russian questioning him and was bound and gagged for 24 hours in a dark, damp cell.

One day, he was again loaded into a truck for what he thought was a routine change of location. Suddenly the truck stopped and the Russians walked off toward a stream.

Lt. Mason looked around him. The land looked familiar to him. He started thinking. Why did the truck stop here, why wasn't he blindfolded this time, why didn't they tie his feet, why did they leave him unguarded?

Did the Russians suddenly become careless or did they want him to escape? There was no time to waste and Lt. Mason jumped from the truck and started running toward the familiar looking landmarks.

Shots rang out behind him but



Berlin's "Garden of Remembrance" has the monument shown above with a Russian soldier holding a child while cutting a Nazi swastika with a sword.

Lt. Mason kept running. Ten minutes later he was found by American soldiers who were spending Sunday afternoon in the Grunewald.

Eight months after he started out, Lt. Mason had reached his destination.

NEXT WEEK—Duty at Spandau prison.

# Pictures Of Christ 'Poisonous Theology'

Milwaukee — (NC) — Paintings depicting a "malformed" feminine Christ are "poisonous visual theology" which do "enormous" damage to the religious conceptions of children, a priest-art professor said here.

FATHER E. M. CATCH told delegates to the National Catholic Educational Press Congress that many pictures of Christ found in churches, schools and homes depict Him "gawped, bearded and wearing long, marcelled tresses."

"These . . . Christs are strangers to our age, if not to all ages," Father Catch declared. He is professor of art at St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa.

He continued: "We must fashion a Christ who will be no stranger to our culture and who will appear to be living and sharing our lives."

"Should we be ashamed of our clothing and people," he asked. "Is it wrong to see Christ in each other? Is our art intended for Christians 1900 years dead, or is it to be a devotional aid for people now living? Ought we to show Christ and the apostles in long bathrobes and curtain drapes?"

Father Catch said he had been told by teachers of young

children that they do not want to be like the Child Jesus shown in paintings who "with His blue dress, dainty features and flaxen curls definitely was a sissey."

"Seemingly," he added, "we are not content to leave bad enough alone we must make it worse by carrying the feminizing process of Christ the man to Christ the child and infant."

"The damage to young impressionable minds fed on such poisonous visual theology must be enormous. . . . We must repair some of the damage made by these deplorable images by re-orientating our young artists and youthful audiences to the correct representation of sacred subjects."



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# Paris Missioner Aids Indo-China War Victims

Phnom-Penh — (NC) — A young French missionary priest is waging a successful struggle to provide a decent living for 4,000 Catholics left China and the attacks of communist guerrillas.

Father Rene Madeoc of the Paris Foreign Mission Society was assigned more than two years ago to be parish priest of the Meak-Krassas district on the shores of Lake Tonle Sap in northwestern Cambodia.

When he arrived there he found that the five villages in which his flock of 4,000 were living had been attacked simultaneously by the Reds. Ten of the villagers had been killed.

# What 'Couldn't Happen Here' Did

Mentor, Ohio — (NC) — The menace of obscenity was brought home with a jolt to this northeast Ohio town of 3,800 by the seizure of the largest haul of obscene material in Lake County history.

Two automobile trunks were filled with material taken from the home of a local man. He was arrested and charged with possession of obscene material and two counts of felonious assault against minors.

Police were alerted when a worried parent telephoned a Lake County Juvenile Court probation officer that a "movie party" was to be held during which obscene films were to be shown.

Mentor Police Chief Frank Hathy said area people were "very much aroused" by the incident. "We thought it couldn't happen here," he added.

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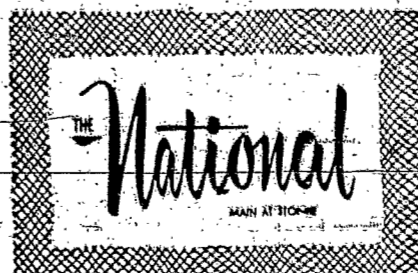
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