

EAST BERLIN- 1969

April

5 days

From April 19 through April 23

Train Trip : Left Wroclaw station at 10:32 p.m.- Friday April 18

Two Polish men spoke " objectively" about Socialism, Poland and America:

- Poland today is better off than it was since the war.
- Poland has made an enemy of Chekoslovakia by invading it with Hitler and now following the Russians into Prague because of the Warsaw pact- which other countries did not honor in this Russian move.
- Socialism in Poland today is more free from fear than most Americans imagine. We can criticize in Poland- indeed the party ask the citizen to help with positive criticism.
- America is in a mess in Viet Nam. It is too bad. They should try to get out of it. And they should try to heal the wound of racial strife.

Leaving Poland: The train stops at the border. Uniformed officials enter each car. One to check money, one to check baggage for anything you may be trying to smuggle out of the country. Imagine trying to smuggle out some of these poor goods? I told them I had nothing I was taking out of the country. They did not inspect my bags. However they checked my visa and passport, took my yellow card and gave me a receipt for 150 zloty they took which is to be returned to me upon my entry my re-entry into Poland. I also had to make a financial declaration of American money I was taking out of the country.

Entering Germany: Just a few minutes later another such inspection. This time only German speaking officials boarded the train. It was 2:00 a.m. Their uniforms looked so much fresher and sharper than the Polish ones. Luckily a lady in the next compartment ( the train was relatively empty by this time) spoke German. So she translated while I spoke to her in my broken Polish. She was a fat lady from the wsi-.She was going to visit her sister- had two suitcases- one which her sister left at her place during a visit- it was filled with eggs which she was taking to the sister. She told me they inspected everything- even made her take off her blouse. "They wouldnt do that to you because you are an American and they dare not do it"... The young man who checked my visa and passport was seemingly happy to speak with me. He of course asked me the question that I would be asked by all German officials " What are you doing in East Berlin!" Then when I explained the purpose of my visit, which was to see the Berliner Ensemble, he immediately became more friendly. He spoke about Brecht, Helen Weigel, Peter Weiss, and was impressed with the fact that a regissauer

From Chicago was visiting the Berliner Ensemble. He began talking about politics too and his face saddened when he said " We Germans have started two world wars. It is terrible. Yet you Americans in West Berlin are allowing the neo Nazi movement to exist and you fight in Viet Nam. Why?"....You answer that one! After he left to check others, he returned a couple of times saying nice things about Berlin and the Ensemble and told me how nice it was to have me visit Germany. I told him he was very kind and gracious. He stiffened. " It is my duty", he said. We arrived at the Ostbahnhof Station in East Berlin at 6:15 a.m. Snow, which would melt in an hour or two, was on the ground.

Arrival: Immediate impressions-

How clean it is in East Berlin- how clean the railroad station is compared to the Glowny Dworzec in Wroclaw.

An old man in an information cubical spoke very little English but told me how to get to the Hotel I was looking for and instructed me where to change money at the station.

Changed 10.00 getting one mark for each quarter. The prices in East Berlin are comparable to prices in the States. That seems so high to me, for Polish costs of living are low- so is the quality of the merchandise. Hotel where I stayed for one night was 28 marks or 7.00! I pay the equivalent of 10.00 in Wroclaw for my room with cooking privileges for a month!...When I registered with the police to extend my visa an agency there got me a room for the remainder of my stay for 14 marks per day or 3.50. But I had to give her 31 marks and 30 fennigs for daily sustenance. Everything over 14 marks per day was returned to me to be used for food, purchases etc...If you accumulated any of this money before you left, you would not be able to return it for American cash. You HAD to spend it or lose it! These people understand economics. It is the basic principle of Communism. There was no way to get out of paying these prices. Americans were stuck. I'm certain the mark to the East Berliner is worth more to him than it is to the American when he changes over. ALL the East Berliners dressed elegantly compared to the Poles. White shirts, cleanly pressed skirts and trousers, new coats, hats...It was like being in an American town! No, the Germans did not lose the war..if you compared the two nations, you would have to say ( from an economic standpoint) that the Germans WON.

Random Thoughts While Walking Around East Berlin

- So many more ads are seen on the billboards. And each store seems to have an individual character. They don't have numbers but names.. This is indeed a higher degree of socialism. Poland is so far behind. Both it and Germany were destroyed during the war but the Poles had little technological training before the war while the Germans developed in this direction. Hence the almost immediate rise to this level of socialism. But what a waste war is. They are still clearing ruins in East Berlin, as they are all over Europe 25 years after the end of that great tragedy. War prevents man from going forward.
- Heard Armed Forces Radio from West Berlin! A baseball game. Cubs vs Montreal. I felt so close to being home, and yet the WALL separates me from real freedom. The Armed Forces Radio really does some good service overseas. Aside from the inane chatter of disc jockeys, and the playing of popular music throughout the day, the radio does some good things: news on the hour, weather forecasts, replay of academy awards, classical music, Carl Hass program from WJR in Detroit "Adventures in music"...I loved it. Could never get it on my small Sony in Wroclaw.
- Young people carry portable radios all over the city. But they are not small like the young Poles carry in Wroclaw. The German youths carry large portable radios some with fur lined handles.
- It hard to believe anyone would want to leave East Berlin. And certainly not at the risk of trying to get past an armed guard near the wall!
- These NIEMCY look so clean cut. So happy. Are they the people who caused such horror 25 years ago? Are they capable of doing it again?
- When they did cross and work in West Berlin, the communist government put an end to it by erecting the WALL. Their reasoning as I understand it was that they (the Communists) were providing free education for their people- as indeed it does provide- and the people went to work and use their skills in West Berlin.
- Ah- the taste of COLD German beer!
- The girls and boys seem more affectionate- openly affectionate than they do in Wroclaw. And they truly seem happier.
- Billboard have anti- American signs on them. The American flag is shown ripped--and anti American slogans are plastered all around. The hell with prestige! We are being thought of as war monger. Dropping napalm on poor Orientals. In almost every store is a plastic (clear plastic) box with a slit on top asking for donations for the victims of American aggression. Most of the plastic boxes were half full! Our country is HATED --as it never was before.
- Stop and Go lights have silhouette in them of person standing still during STOP and then in movement for
- The metro is great- cost 20 fennigs or about 5 cents. I did not ride the subway. Hitler flooded it during the last days of the war killing thousands of his own people!

FOOD Excellent at the Wein Restaurant near the Ensemble. My first visit was difficult for the menu was printed in German only. But I heard a kindly looking older woman speaking in English at the next table. She helped me order. She was from the University of Chicago area. This was her 3rd trip here. In 1958 she found East Berlin impossible to live in. In 1965 it was tolerable and now in 1969 it is fine!...The food was delicious but expensive. I had to drink wine since they do not serve beer in this restaurant. The waiter spoke English and served in a very fashionable manner. There was a big variety listed on the menu. The Poles have NOTHING compared to this. Soup with yellow of egg in it. But the bread was moldy- reminiscent of Klaus restaurant when Pat and I ate there. Waiter apologized. Average meal cost about 3.00... I bought some liver sausage in a store- excellent taste and so well displayed. The Poles don't know how to merchandise (that is to put their products in appetizing packages)...but when you have a little, merchandising doesn't interest you.

STREETS: Freidrichstrausse is the main street that runs through East and West Berlin. Under Den Linden is beautiful and wide, with trees on either side on the curbs. It runs to and through the now off limits Brandenburg Gate. Many stores are on Unter Den Linden including the beautiful Ender Den Linden Hotel. Alexanderplatz is being built and will be the center of the city, with a fairly large hotel in its center. The large TV Antenna is there also and is the landmark of the city. It can be seen from many and almost all places in East Berlin. It will have a rotating restaurant 3/4 of the way up made of stainless steel. It is not going to be completed until November for the 20th anniversary celebration of the Socialistic German State. Mark- Engels Platz (both were German) is also large and going to be beautiful when completed. They were setting up grandstands for the big coming May 1st workers holy day. The G.D.R. means German Democratic Republic.

BRECHT IN THE STORES: One can purchase records (Helen Weigel on Brecht, Brecht on Brecht etc.) of a large variety on Brecht in most bookstores. And there are plenty of bookstores in East Berlin! Even BRECHT BOOKS FOR CHILDREN- with some of his poems and stories are sold....The Berliner Ensemble also records some of its plays. VIET DISKURS was available already.

BUILDING: East Berliners answer to why it took them so long to rebuild East Berlin while the West Berliners did it so quickly, is that their city is better planned than the haphazard way the West Berliners re-built their town.

CHICAGO LADY IN RESTAURANT: Told me had she been home during the proposed peace march, she and her husband would have marched in the parade. "I hate war- although some, like the one against Hitler is necessary. But the Viet Nam one is now."

CHURCH ? NO- ASSEMBLY HALL : Early Sunday morning I saw hundreds of people going to a circular domed building I took to be a church. I wanted to attend the service but was stopped and told this was the Youth Assembly building. They assemble to talk Communistic Politics instead of praying to God on Sunday morning. Saw ST. Hedwigs Cathedral in Berlin. It is circular too....

VISITED MUSEUM on the Spree-- Archeological. Babylon. Why oh why didn't that interest me more when I was younger. It is so intriguing NOW.

RUSSIAN SOLDIERS: Russian soldiers at the museum. One taking a picture of the other two. Infront of a large statue of a horse being attacked by a lion. The rider on the horse has her spear poised ready to kill the attacking beast. The Russian soldiers smiled so they would look nice on the picture for their people back home. The hammer and ~~es~~ sicle on their caps glistened in the sun. Will they be our enemies tomorrow.

GORKI THEATRE : Right off Under Den Linden or Mark-Engles platx- I cant remember which. A faifly large yellow building- closed for remont.

ARMED FORCES RADIO- so desperately fill the need of those who " seek a touch of home."

CHANGED HOTELS : Hosbiz acroos the street.  $\frac{1}{2}$  as expensive twice as clean and modern! Ate my entire chicken Mrs. Joniak prepared in one day. Used the hot rod to make tea. Toilet seat named PATRICIA! Imagine.

INCIDENT AT CHEEK- POINT CHARLIE : Standing on the East side of checkpoint Charlie, I saw a tourist bus on the West side and the people staring at me, probably thinking I was a Communist. The bus leaft and the American Flag was flying on a pole just about 500 feet away from ME!..I wanted to get a shot of it so I focused my camera ( getting the flag and the German and Red Communist flag in the same picture) when suddenly a harsh loud voice shouted : "Nein, nein- ist verboten!"..I said "I'm sorry."..He smirked in return: "I'm sorry."....I thought he was going to confiscate my camera. In June I plan to take a picture from the West side of checkpoint Charlie. I'll aim my camera directl at him snap it and then give him the raspberries!

SUGAR FOR KEN AND PETER: Had tea anda tort at the Metropol cafe. Saved the East Berlin paper wrapped sugar cubes for the great Slowik brothers.

5 WORKING DAYS PER WEEK : Poles have only Sunday as a holiday. The Germans work only 5 days a week.

SCHWEITZER IN THE WINDOW : We Repair Glasses and Cameras-- This shop keeper had a small snapshot of Schweitzer in the window. The Communist say they are dedicated to peace! Maybe they are.....But their flag is bloody red.

BERLIN THEATRE : There are ten theatres in East Berlin. In the season, during the month of April the following plays and musicals could be viewed: Berliner Ensemble: MAAN IST MANN, SCHWEIK IN 2ND WORLD WAR, CORIOLAN, PURPLE DUST, THE RISE AND FALL OF ARTURO UI, THE DAYS OF THE COMMUNE, THE CASE OF J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER, VIET DISCOURSE and at other theatres: THE DRAGON, CAN CAN, MY FAIR LADY, FAUST, OEDIPUS REX, DON JUAN, THE MILLIONAIRES, THE STARS TURN RED (O'Cas NORA ( Ibsens THE DOLLS HOUSE), CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA...The famous Comic Opera was not playing for the Cuban Dancers were touring and playing there.

A SLOWIK IN THE SHOPS: A record jacket displayed in a record shop eas entitled ; Bogane Sokorska- Soprano  
The SLOWIK of Warsaw!

THEATRE TICKETS : Payed 34 marks for 5 plays- about \$1.75 for each seat.