



The faces of these young East Berliners contrast with the generally drab appearance of life in the Soviet zone of Germany. The boys were trading jokes with a lottery ticket vendor in one of the main streets of East Berlin.

Sense of Safe Adventure

Berlin Wall Big Tourist Attraction

BY PETER DESBARATS
(Second of a Series)

The "Wall of Shame" which has divided Berlin for more than two years is one of the old German capital's most important tourist attractions.

On the Western side of the Brandenburg Gate, the authorities have erected a platform. Western tourists stand on it to peer daringly over the Wall at East German guards and what appear to be communist tourists. Then the Western tourists travel into East Berlin to line up on the other side of the Gate and peer at the Western tourists peering at them.

Safe Adventure

In this humdrum world, a drive along the Soviet barrier in the Berlin suburbs provides a North American with a not-unpleasant sense of safe adventure. The Cold War is in full evidence. Barbed wire, trenches, watch-towers, soldiers peering at travellers through binoculars — one almost expects shooting to break out. Here and there along the road, small shrines adorned with flowers indicate that it has. They mark unsuccessful escape attempts by East Germans.

The Wall may be a curiosity for many Western visitors, but its shadow lies across all of Germany.

Any discussion about West Germany has to involve the East. This is not a practical fact. In reality, the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic are economic and political entities. But this "separatism" does not penetrate deeply into the German soul.

German unification is a constant refrain in every political speech in West Germany. As far as outsiders can tell, every citizen of the Federal Republic pays it at least lip-service. It is dogma beyond question.

An essential part of this creed is the belief that East Germans are writhing painfully under the heel of Soviet oppression.

It is almost impossible for a visitor to West Germany to see beyond the Wall with any clarity.

Look of Drabness

The Federal Republic encourages even official guests to make a quick sightseeing tour of East Berlin, confident of the result. Compared with the chrome architecture and force-fed prosperity on the Western side, communist Berlin does look drab and unhappy. There is less traffic on the streets, more traces of war damage. Tiles have fallen away in jagged patches from the walls of massive Soviet-style apartment blocks thrown up after the war.

But what about the 17,000,000 who remained? If a plebiscite were held today, would all of them vote in favor of unification under a "Western" system?

One of the best conversations I had in Berlin was with a former journalist who has kept in constant touch with developments in the Soviet zone. When I talked with him, East Germany was approaching a general election. There was no mystery about the result, of course, but the election itself was significant. It would involve almost 1,000,000 voters who had been born during the war years. These young people had reached voting age without knowing any other system than the communist.

Educated on System

"We tend to forget that the Communists already have had much more time than Hitler had to influence the minds of these people," said the ex-journalist.

"These young men and women have been born and educated in the system. They think in Marxist terms. For them, the division of Germany has always existed. It is a fact. In the coming years,

this generation is going to play an increasingly important role in the Soviet zone."

He criticized many aspects of West Germany's propaganda approach to East Germany. The Federal Republic, in his opinion, has spent far too much time belittling the material achievements of East Germans.

The worker in East Germany is more insulted than disturbed by this line. After all, he has achieved a great deal since 1945, with a much smaller population than West Germany has, a smaller industrial base and much less foreign aid. Even

the statistics released by the West Germans prove this. They show that production of basic materials and production in the metal-processing industry in East Germany increased from a statistical level of 100 in 1950 to 256 in 1960. Production in the consumer goods industries, excluding food, more than doubled in the same decade.

Target Set

The German Democratic Republic is the eastern bloc's most important producer and exporter of machinery. The current Seven Year Plan, ending in 1965, aims at an 88-percent increase in indus-

trial production.

The ex-journalist claimed that there has been some liberalization in East Germany, although the atmosphere is still Stalinist in comparison with the climate in Poland or Hungary. Contrary to the expectations of some observers, the party did not clamp down on the population after The Wall was erected in 1961. It realized that police pressure alone would not reduce the discontent symbolized before the Wall by the constant flow of refugees to the West. More attention has been paid to "discussion" as a method of

dealing with critics.

This "discussion" takes place in a police-state context, of course, but even this type of controlled debate is a tricky thing in a dictatorial state. It tacitly recognizes the existence if not the legitimacy of another point of view and encourages people to think, perhaps to dream.

Kick Against Life

According to the ex-journalist, one of the main complaints in East Germany today has nothing to do with the standard of living, which is rising slowly, but with the

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Traffic-free streets and ruined buildings are still common in East Berlin. This is a former government building.

ing located near Humboldt University. New construction in the city is more "Western" in style.

Staff Photos by Peter Desbarats