

1982
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Return to
Zorc

outlook

BERLIN:

CITY OF STORIES

John:
This picture was taken
by my son (B. DAVID)
read his article
on Page 6



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**divine word seminary
duxbury, massachusetts**

All the pictures
in this article were
taken by my son Reynold (R. David)
while in Berlin with our
oldest son Joe.

This is his
story & his views
on Berlin.

Zore



(R. David)

Reynold Zore

BERLIN:

R. David
Zore

The Soviet monument glared in the July sun. Two Communist soldiers, seemingly oblivious to the heat and jeering children, paced the length of the structure. This memorial to the Russian victory over the city stands, by way of special treaty, but a hundred yards from the Eastern Sector within the free zone. I gazed at it with a certain awe; for the gleaming concrete, the array of flowers, the cannons and the metal soldier gave no inkling of what they stood for; rather, the two cold "honor guards," each with a submachine gun, told the story in full.

There were other stories too.

Behind me, too, were soldiers--from the free world--not guarding a statue, but the portals to democracy. They told the silent story of the war that suggested past suppression and continued suffering. To my right two signs barked their warning: the nearer, "Achtung, nach 40 meter verlassen Sie West Berlin!" ("Attention, you will leave West Berlin in 40 meters!"), and the farther one, "Achtung, Sie verlassen jetzt West Berlin!" ("Attention, you are now leaving West Berlin!"). They meant little at that time of free intercourse within the schizophrenic city--but today they punctuate the grim story of a city-turned-prison.

My brother and I moved on for those forty meters. The famous Brandenburg Gate, now partially reconstructed, towered above us. We stopped to gaze at it. It, too, told a story: the newer mortar spoke of the old which had been blasted out of place; small holes here and there hinted at bullets that missed their living targets; the pictures on the side cried out that there would never be a Brandenburg Gate equal to the one of the past.

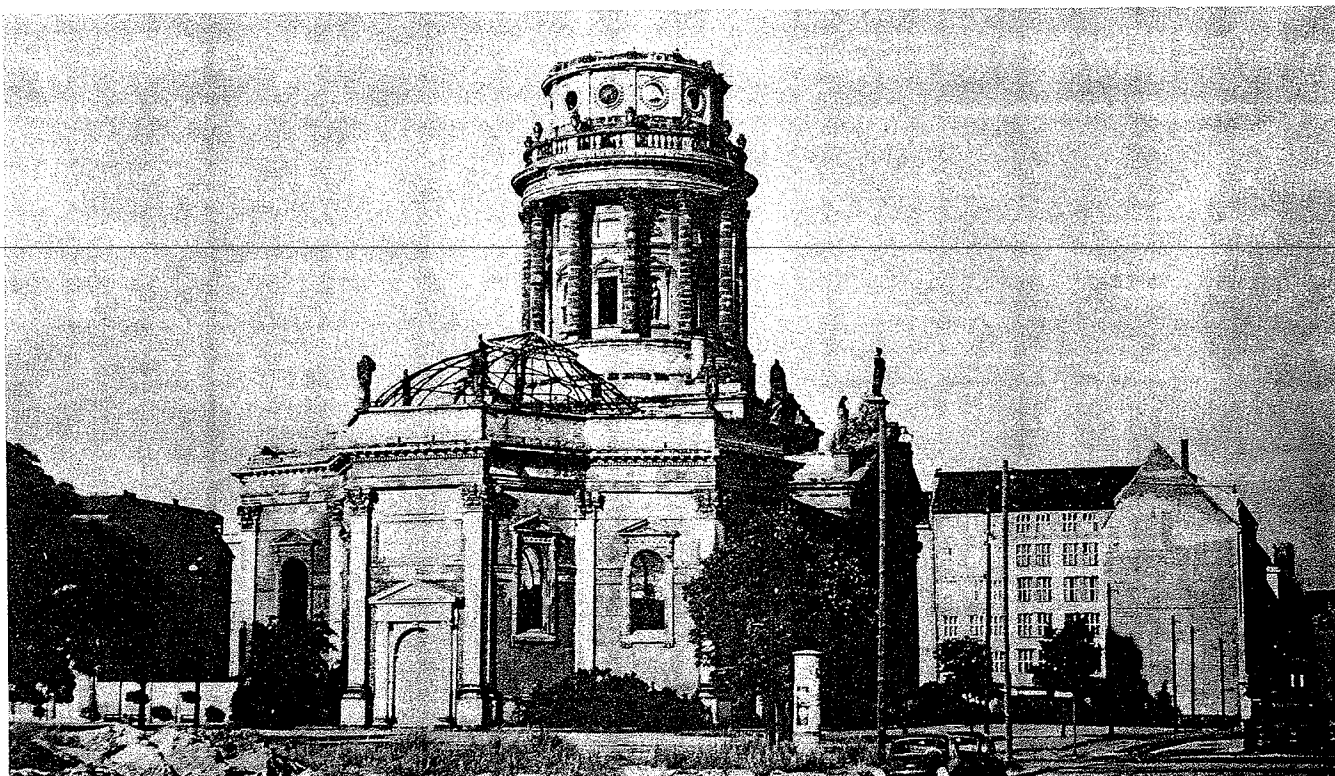
We walked farther. The guards in the East German Sector gave us a quick glance and the O.K. to pass. We were now in the Socialist world, and it wasn't hard to see a distinction.

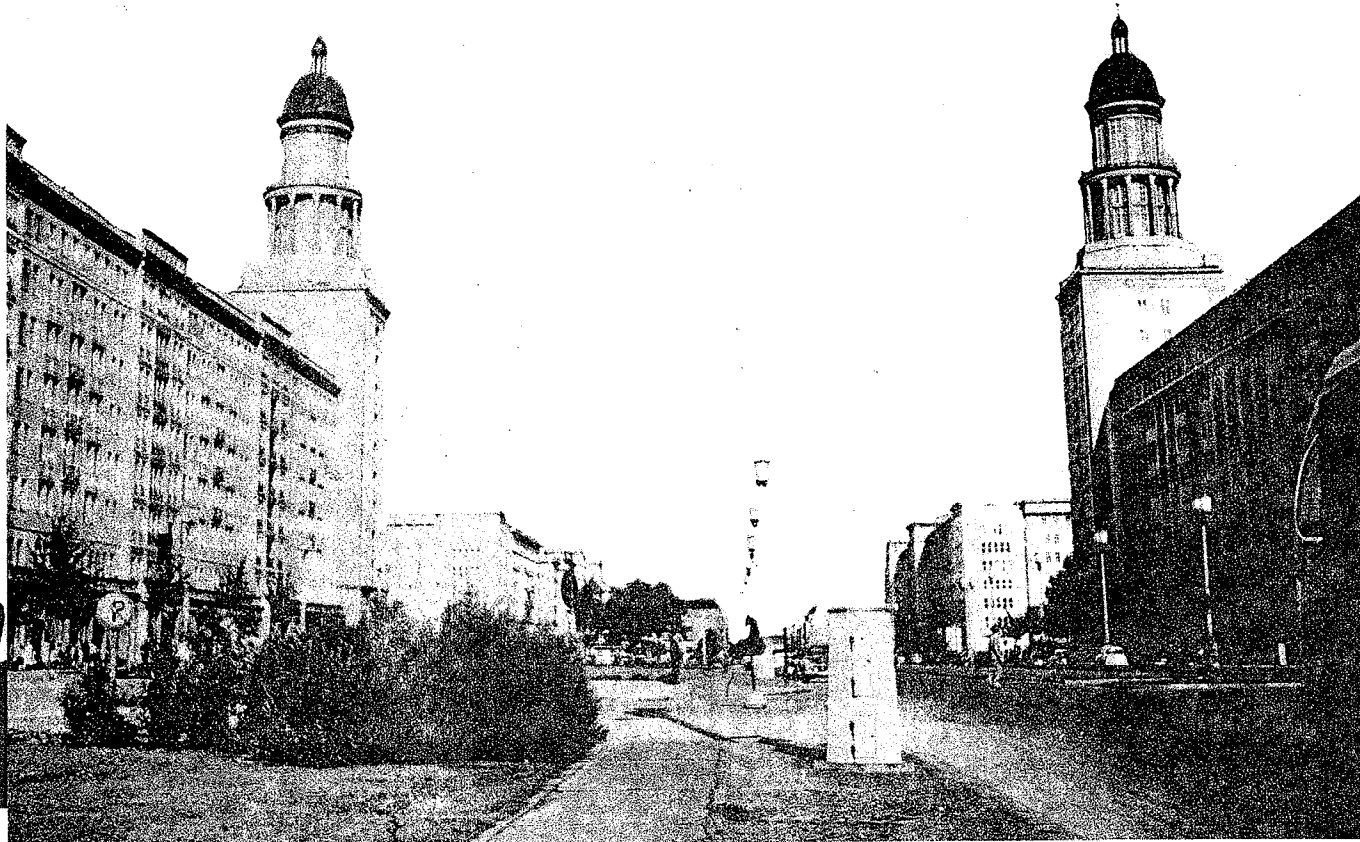
Imagine, if you will, a large green field, yet with clusters of tall buildings scattered at various intervals. Such a disproportionate arrangement is quite unnatural. In East Berlin it is so; and this is

the most interesting, yet somehow shocking fact about the city's appearance.

There is no longer any open rubble in either sector of Berlin. The West moved all debris to one area, covered it, and planted it over with shrubbery. This man-made mountain now serves as a grotesque memorial of war. Save a cathedral tower, purposely left blackened and torn as a reminder of the folly of war, the Western Sector has no damaged buildings unrepaired. The Eastern Sector, however, went about reconstruction differently. Anything left standing at war's end, stands to this day; everything flattened then was simply left on the spot and covered--and the place remains today as a vacant plot. It is not unusual to see tall buildings isolated from the rest of the city, nor to notice an ultramodern structure dwarfing the cinder of an old museum. The story such damaged buildings tell is hard to forget.

CITY OF STORIES





R.P.

Kurfurstendam and Stalinallee, the main streets of each sector, boast of different periods of architecture, yet both were reconstructed after the war. Kurfurstendam of West Berlin, with its modern department stores, hotels and restaurants (even the Berlin Hilton), and its theatres and night clubs, is ultra-modern in design. Stalinallee, the Soviet showplace, on the other hand, is--or so it appears--a remarkable undertaking of the prewar period; however, to repeat, it was constructed after the war. But its principal impact lies in this; its motif is avowedly and

overpoweringly Socialistic in nature. Each side of the street duplicates and reflects the other, like a gigantic mirrored image. Each building has the same number of windows, the same design--even the same number of bricks--as its mate across the street. If what I say seems fantastic, what I saw was even more incredible. But there is a reason for this which lies in the heart of Socialistic doctrine: he who lives on one side of the street has no right to a better view than his neighbor on the other. On Stalinallee the doctrine is complete to the last brick.

And with all this constructed grandeur something irks the viewer--but, strangely enough, it only comes to mind slowly. What I saw was like a picture, but there was something the artist left out. What? My mind wandered, and then it dawned on me.

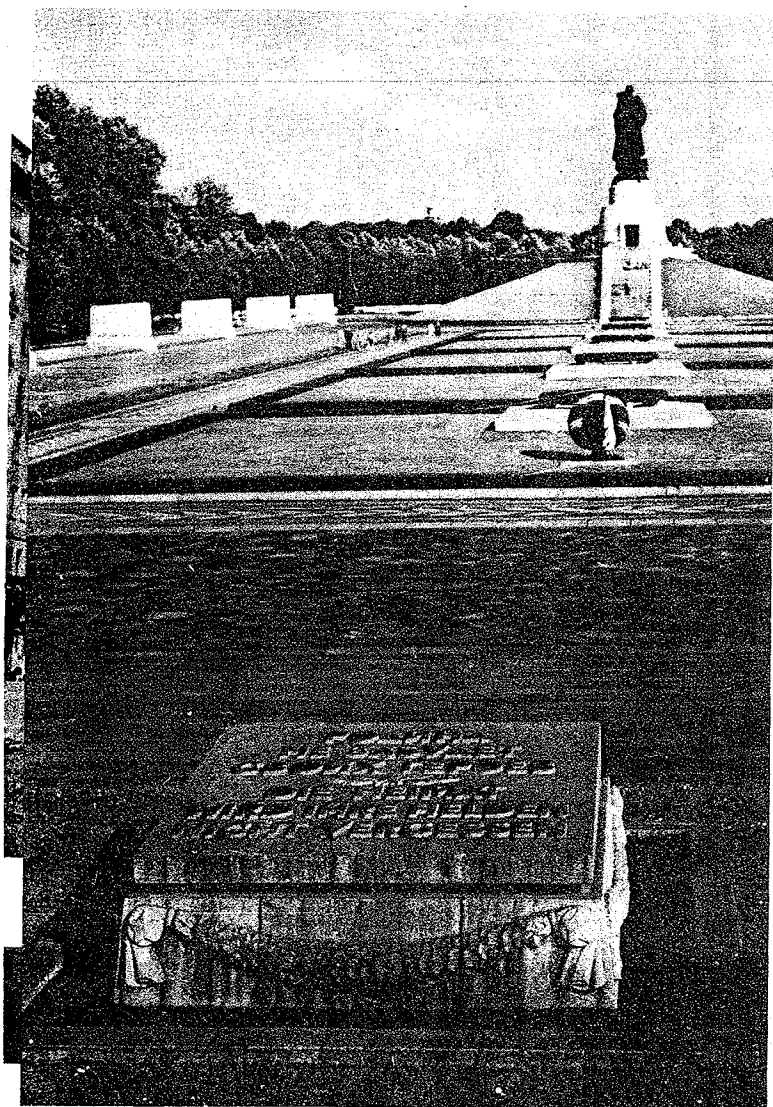
At any time of day, but especially during an afternoon rush, Kurfurstendam (or any large street in the free world) is like any crowded street in America. Cars move bumper to bumper, and people inch their way on the sidewalks. Something would seem awry if you saw but twenty cars during those two busy hours! Something would seem missing if only two hundred people filled the scene. This was Stalinallee! That was Socialism. Stalinallee is truly a Soviet showplace--but only a picture--not real life! A street of grandeur, yet stripped of a population.

Berlin's last great tale was by far the most macabre one.

In the Communist sector there is the world's largest memorial cemetery. Big and beautiful, it boasts well for the Soviet cause--but its story is not a truthful one. At the base of this rectangular park we find a statue of Mother Russia weeping for her lost children. Moving on through a row of stately pines, we are confronted by two ponderous Russian flags, made of marble, draped in mourning and pointing towards each other. We walk only a few yards beyond these, and stand at the edge of a deep step. A marble tablet honoring those "who gave their lives for the advance of the Soviet Republic" is the first to confront our eye. Further on we see three elevated concrete structures, protruding from the ground; and lastly, in the distance, a hill with a mausoleum at its top. There is no story understood at first; all is silent--until the guide speaks.

We learn, if we did not already know, that this display is





not all true. As at other Communist showplaces only part of the truth is presented. The guide, who is a free German, speaks in an ironic tone, for she is one who professes, "Es gibt nur ein Deutschland" ("There is only one Germany."). We had been led to believe beforehand that the mausoleum confines three men; one chosen from each rank of the Soviet army; in truth they were picked at random. We had been led to believe that each elevated grave holds three thousand "brave heroes" of the Soviet army; in truth there are Englishmen, Frenchmen--even Americans--buried here. This last truth our guide speaks only in German, perhaps as an intimate touch to her fellow countrymen, perhaps because the citizens of other lands would be offended. The irony in her voice made the story all the more tragic.

The city and the stories are two years behind me now. Already they have changed. Stalinallee is now Karl Marx Allee, but its story remains the same. The big story of Berlin is now written in the headlines of the world, but the little stories, such as these, the city intimates only to those who come to see her.