

# THE SPIRIT OF BERLIN

BY FREDA UTLEY

VISITORS to Berlin, however great their resistance to the idea, usually leave convinced that the capital of Hitler's infamous Third Reich has been transformed into the focus of European resistance to total tyranny. This seeming paradox is easier to understand if one remembers that in the tragic record of Hitler's rise to power in Germany Berlin was conspicuous for its anti-Nazi vote, and succumbed only after the Communists had joined hands with the Nazis to destroy German democracy.

It seemed to me, in August and September, and even more forcibly at the end of November when darkness and cold were adding to the misery of the inhabitants, that a Phoenix had arisen from the ashes of the ruined city. German bravery, discipline and singleness of purpose are at long last, to judge from Berlin, being directed toward the defense instead of the destruction of Western civilization. The unity of purpose of Socialists, Liberals and Christian Democrats in face of the threat of a renewal of totalitarianism was providing a lesson for all Europe, in particular for di-

vided France. A nation whose best spirits recognize that it has sinned mightily was demonstrating in Berlin that it now had greater courage in resisting evil than others who have never been tempted, and never learnt the consequences of succumbing to a dictatorship which repudiates all moral values.

"We now know," a young German said to me, "that in the long run power depends upon the extent to which it is based on spiritual and moral values. Methods determine the road; every fraction of confidence won weighs more than any tactical success. Everything which Germans ever won by the sword was lost; her only permanent gains have been those won by moral force. Frederick the Great, Bismarck and Hitler gave us nothing which has not passed away, but the influence of Luther and the Reformation has been permanent."

The man who said this to me, Reiner Hildebrandt, is not a pacifist. Nor did he think that his own country was alone guilty of "crimes against humanity." To him it seemed that Western civilization as a whole was

---

FREDA UTLEY, *author of Lost Illusion, Last Chance in China, and other books on Russia and the Orient, has just returned from a four-month stay in Germany. She left Berlin at the end of November, and is now engaged in writing a book for the Henry Regnery Company.*

on trial, and that it had failed so far to meet the test of the machine age and of a world in which the misery of one people affects all others.

"The crisis in Berlin," in his view, "is an explosion of all the evils which evoked the previous totalitarianism, and now threatens us with the endless night of Communist domination."

Hildebrandt is part Jewish and a former friend of the young Haushofer who was executed for his part in the July twentieth plot against Hitler. He told me that he had been one of those Germans who had originally welcomed the Russians as liberators. Today he is among the most fearless and active anti-Communists in Berlin, and is in constant touch with the resistance movement in the Eastern zone. He was then seeking permission from Military Government to form an international league to help the victims of Communism. Failing to obtain it, he is now going ahead with the organization of a "Fighting group against criminals against humanity." In a recent article he wrote:

Decency requires that we take up this fight. We have a responsibility toward ourselves and toward the millions of people in Soviet concentration camps. We want peace but we do not speak the word peace if it means a continuation of the Cold War. We want a peace which presupposes freedom and respect for human values; a peace which will eliminate the internal as well as external causes of war.

The French, who had once asked "Why die for Danzig?" were now saying "What, die for Berlin!" Yet the

Berliners, ex-enemy nationals as they were, were surely right in believing that if the Western Powers failed this time to recognize the indivisibility of Europe, and to help the unarmed millions seeking to resist the Communist terror, not all the arms and atomic bombs manufactured in America might later on be able to save our civilization.

## II

The reaffirmation of spiritual values, faith in the spirit of man and readiness to die for liberty; in a word, recognition of the importance of the intangibles which decide the fate of civilizations, was, it seemed, the explanation for the spirit of hope which pervaded the besieged city of Berlin.

Yet it seemed that the conflict in Berlin was being regarded in America in terms of pure power politics; as if the city where West meets East was just a point on the map, worth so much or so little as a bargaining counter in an American-Russian conflict.

It was more than a little ironical to read the comments of Walter Lippmann, Sumner Welles, and others whose writings were quoted almost daily in the Russian-licensed German press. The same writers who were advocating a deal with Russia which would involve extinction of the lamp of freedom lighted in Berlin were reproving General Clay for standing up to Russia instead of "concentrating upon the conversion of the German spirit to freedom and democracy"!

How was it possible, one thought in Berlin, that anyone could still imagine that the punishment of opinion by denazification courts and penalties, "decartelization," land reform, or the *preaching* of democracy would decide the issue in Germany? How was it that these and other writers failed to see that it was example, deeds, our own attitude in the face of totalitarian aggression, and our support and protection of the fighting democrats in Berlin which were all-important? That if we should decide to retire from the battle for the sake of a temporary truce in the Cold War, and leave the Berliners to be overwhelmed by the Soviet Union, it might never again be possible to enlist the German people on our side? That the resistance movements elsewhere, in Poland, Czechoslovakia and other Soviet satellite countries, would be dealt a mortal blow if we should once again appease Russia and betray those who trusted in our promise not to abandon them? The unholy alliance of Communists and Nazis, so evident in Berlin (where even the chief of the Russian-sector police is a former Nazi), would then not only be able to destroy the democratic movement of infinite promise born in this ruined city and standing as a beacon to the oppressed, but also extinguish all hope behind the Iron Curtain. Germany might then once again in despair repudiate Western civilization instead of becoming a bulwark for its defense.

As one woman Social Democrat said to me during the Moscow negoti-

ations, "You can't treat *people* like pawns in a chess game to be moved forward, encouraged to fight for freedom against tyranny while America is at odds with Russia, and then sacrificed in another move to appease Russia. If you once again come to terms with Stalin over our heads and at our expense, you will never again be able to evoke the spirit which is now keeping us on your side in spite of Russia's greater strength and the hunger and terror Communism uses to break men's spirits."

As in a performance of Hamlet without the Prince, the rôle of the chief protagonist in the drama was omitted in much of the American comment on Berlin. Occasional tributes were paid to the courage and endurance of the Berliners who were daily risking their liberty or their lives by defying the Soviets in the Eastern sectors of the City. But the effect on them and all Germans, of the decisions being arrived at over their heads in Moscow, Washington, London or Paris, was barely mentioned. The elected representatives of the Berliners in their City Council were not even allowed to participate as advisors in the abortive currency negotiations which began in Berlin in September. We were still the conquerors and the Germans the conquered. While still vainly proffering the hand of friendship to the Russian dictator, we refused to treat as allies even those Germans who were daily proving the reality of their democratic professions.

The German people have suffered

too much not to be realists. Ready as many of them were at the beginning of the occupation to atone for the sins of the Nazis, they naturally refuse to accept the thesis that other nations should be allowed to commit crimes against humanity with impunity. They have begun to ask questions about *our* deals with the dictators, and *our* failures to take action against the Communists.

The Berlin weekly, SIE, wrote on August twenty-second:

We do not understand why the Communists are allowed to act according to the old maxim Might is Right, which they have reformulated as Arrogance Wins. We do not understand why Lubeck [in the British zone] continues to supply the Communist zone with electricity while tormenting darkness reigns in the Western sectors of Berlin. We do not understand why the gangster Markgraff who is wanted by the Prosecutor [for war crimes] can arrest people while his employees are not arrested when they come into the Western sectors. We do not understand why what was yesterday regarded as the collective guilt of the German people, namely tolerance of SA-like gangsterism, today passes as "conciliation."

When I returned to Berlin at the end of November, more questions were being asked. Why were the British exporting planes and machinery to Soviet Russia and even repairing the Red Army's transport in the British sector of Berlin? Why were the French surreptitiously exporting machinery from Berlin to Russia? Why was the United Nations in Paris failing to condemn the Soviet blockade of Berlin — surely an obvious "crime

against humanity"? Why was machinery still being dismantled and sent to Russia, Yugoslavia and various Soviet satellite countries from the Western zones?

In spite of all the questions and doubts about our good faith, the Berliners were holding on. Indeed the most remarkable and significant fact, it seemed to me, was the failure of our long-continued appeasement policy toward Russia, or of our treatment of the Germans as a conquered people without rights, or of our original identification of Communism with democracy, to destroy all faith in Western professions and principles.

### III

Here among the ruins and the rubble, among a great people brought down to an Asiatic level of subsistence by war and defeat and the universal abhorrence of Nazi crimes which had led us to treat all Germans as deserving of punishment; here where the children went ragged and barefoot and left cold schoolrooms to wait in dark homes for their mothers to return from work — work like that of Chinese coolies stacking bricks, pulling heavy loads along the streets and doing a man's heavy labor on the airfields; here in spite of hunger and humiliation and back-breaking labor, one found, not despair, hatred of East and West alike and a futile lust for revenge, not nihilism or a cynical defeatism and self-seeking, but a stubborn faith in the values of Western civilization which the Nazis had de-

nied and Western occupation policies have done little to revive.

Here in the city where the anti-Nazis had fought hardest, but not hard enough, to prevent Hitler's coming to power, one sensed in every word and deed, not only of the City Assembly and Magistrat, but of the mass of the people, a determination never to let it happen again.

A student from the port of Rostock in the Russian zone, who came to see me in Berlin in September, said that the German workers there would prefer war, even if it meant death, to the misery of their life under the Communists. He also told me how depressing it was to hear every night on the radio that the Western Powers were still negotiating in Moscow, although they had said originally that they wouldn't until the Berlin blockade was lifted. "We are allowed no other papers but the Russian-licensed ones," he said, "and it is not encouraging to see the headlines about 'The great defeat of America,' and to read how you are begging Stalin to talk to you and come to terms."

The word democracy has been too debased by identification with Communism for it to be heard often in Berlin. An older, cleaner, word is used by the people and their leaders: freedom. At the great demonstration I witnessed on August 26, held outside the gaunt, fire-gutted Reichstag building after the Communist storm troopers and police had driven the City Council out of the Stadt House in the Russian sector, the keynote of all the

speeches was "freedom." This was the word which roused tumultuous applause among the hungry, shabby multitude.

The faces of all the people around me showed signs of privation and sorrow. Everyone, from the skinny children to the women old before their time, might have been expected to care more for promises of bread and peace. But it was not until a speaker said that "the fight is not only for Berlin but for freedom everywhere" that the tired, sad faces lit up and the applause rang out.

"We are unarmed but our spirit is stronger than theirs," said Ernst Reuter, the elected Mayor of Berlin prevented from taking office by the Russians. And the eyes of the crowd turned toward the Russian soldiers standing guard close by at the Soviet War Memorial.

The cynic may say that the Berliners are not democrats, that they are merely fearful of the Russian terror which every one of them has experienced in one form or another. True, that tragedy has touched every German one speaks to in Berlin, whether it is the women raped by the Soviet soldiers; the mothers whose husbands or sons were massacred in the Russian sack of the city or are still held as slave laborers in Soviet mines and factories; the families whose homes were burnt over their heads by the Russians; or those who have recently had someone arrested by the Communists and sent to the dread concentration camps at Buchenwald and Sach-

senhausen. Yet, Reuter that day had the crowd with him when he said: "If the Russian people were free to speak, they would be here with us fighting together with us for liberty."

Another popular speaker, the lovely and gracious Frau Annadora Leber, whose Alsatian husband was killed by the Nazis, declared at an open-air meeting I attended in Spandau: "Not every Russian is responsible for the crimes of those who rule over him. We all know that some Russians have shown us kindnesses. They are victims of the same system which oppresses us in the Eastern zone and now threatens all Berlin."

And she continued with these words of warning: "In the depression years many of you said: 'It couldn't be worse,' but you found out later that under the Nazis it eventually became far worse. Now, in spite of our terrible difficulties with food — no Berlin woman knows from day to day how she will be able to feed her family — we *know* that it would be even worse than now if the Russians ruled over us. We know that we would be taken away to slave labor camps and be ruled over by the same methods the Nazis used. The new PGs<sup>1</sup> (Communists) are the same as the old PGs (Nazis)."

#### IV

Every speech I heard, and every talk I had with Germans of all kinds in Berlin, convinced me that it is not only the close and ever-present fear

<sup>1</sup>Short for *Partei Genossen*, i.e., Party Comrades.

of Russia which inspires the German resistance to Communism. It is as much their experience under the Nazis, and their realization that Communism means a repetition of it, which holds the Germans on our side of the Iron Curtain.

"Berlin is not Prague" is more than a patriotic slogan. It expresses the German determination to show the West that those whom we fought yesterday are more to be relied upon in today's world-wide struggle against the totalitarians than some former allies in whom we put our trust, but whose leaders succumbed without a struggle to Communist pressure.

In a long talk I had with Ernst Reuter in his house in Berlin, he said that the feeling in the city was that by a certain kind of behavior the Germans could redeem themselves and "make it impossible for the West to treat us any longer as 'natives.'" (The phrase "indigenous population" is, it must be noted, in common usage by Military Government to signify the German people.)

The war was, however, still too recent for the United States and Britain to accept the Germans as allies. If the courage of the Berliners had convinced American military men, from generals to GIs, that the Germans could become our best allies on the Continent, sentiment at home, French fears and blindness, and the original pattern of behavior set by our occupation policies, precluded a radical change in our attitude toward the Germans. We had made a half-turn

since we began to understand that "you can't do business with Stalin"; we had begun to revive Western Germany and to set our faces against further dismantling; and friendly relations with the German people were now encouraged rather than discouraged. But we still failed to treat the Germans as equals.

In besieged Berlin American and British buses, reserved for allied personnel, still drove around the town almost empty, while the Germans trudged on foot or waited in long queues for the few and overcrowded street cars, or buses, cut to a skeleton service by the Russian blockade. We, "the conquerors," still occupied the best houses, reserving ample space for ourselves, while the majority of Berliners lived in squalor in cellars and bomb-wrecked apartments. "We" still ate to repletion, drank well, and even had fresh milk imported by air from Denmark, while Berlin babies had none, and no Germans except black-marketeters had enough to eat. The demarcation line between the occupation forces and the "natives" was still applied even to the lavatories in Military Government offices — some were labeled only for use by Americans, and others were permitted to German personnel. We, the "conquerors," had electric light 8 hours out of 24, while the Germans had only 2 hours' use of current and only enough gas to boil a kettle of water a day. In some parts of the Western sectors of the city electric light and gas were available only at 1 A.M., and tired women who

had worked all day had to rise to cook and wash in the middle of the night; but "we" could still dance by electric light until 11 P.M. Our houses were warm day and night, but the Germans had no coal. Even their overcrowded hospitals were unheated and in darkness, while our almost empty hospitals had their lights burning all night.

## v

The word which I heard most often in Berlin was *Menschlichkeit*. It is a word difficult to translate because it means so much: behavior worthy of a human being, decency, kindness, consideration for others, respect for the individual irrespective of nationality, class, religion or power — everything which should distinguish a free man from a brute, a slave or a robot.

It is the realization that the Rights of Man (in the good old-fashioned eighteenth-century sense which inspired the French and American Revolutions) are primary, and that no economic and social system which denies them is bearable, which has united the Socialist, Liberal and Christian Democratic parties of Berlin in the face of the Communist threat to liberty.

There was a unity, to be found nowhere else in Europe, between agnostics and Christians, Protestants and Catholics, socialists, liberals and conservatives, because one and all realized that the struggle for the world is primarily one between civilization and barbarism, between the individual and the machine, or State, which

seeks to reduce everyone to slavery; between the totalitarians who would drag us all down to the level of the beasts by denying individual responsibility, conscience and *Menschlichkeit*, and those who insist that "security" is only to be won by submission to tyranny.

"The change in the inner content of German socialism is the most important development in Europe today" was the comment made to me by Frau Doctor Ulrich-Biel, a woman leader of Berlin's Liberal Party. In her little room, a partly-bombed apartment house, she said to me: "I could not in the past join the socialists because of my fear of regimentation and because of the socialist opposition to religion. Not that I was a churchgoer, but because I always had respect for the secret of the world and could not reduce everything to materialistic terms. Now after all I have seen and experienced, all the sorrow and fear and misery of our life in Berlin these past fifteen years, I look to having the church on my side. The life of man is too short and he is too frail for him to dispense with a home for the great truths of Christianity. Men are too weak to preserve the truth alone; they must have a tradition to preserve it: a church. Many German socialists realize this today. They are more concerned with preserving the values men live by than with economic theories. All those who do not believe that liberty and human rights are the primary concern have gone over to the SED."

Otto Stolz, a young man who had been expelled from Berlin University for his anti-Communist activities and had already made a name for himself as a writer, told me that he and many other German socialists no longer believed that "nationalization of the means of production and distribution" would solve the problems of human society. "We now know," he said, "that the end of capitalism may, as in Russia, lead only to tyranny. Our main effort must be directed against all those who deny the fundamental value of human rights: freedom of speech and conscience, equality before the law and government by consent, by freely elected representatives of the people."

Most people in Berlin have nothing to lose but their freedom. Perhaps it is this and the terrible trials and privations they have endured which gives them their clear view of essentials and their inner strength. They have become so inured to material hardships and have experienced such great sorrows that those who have not been broken have acquired a rare spiritual fortitude.

Frau Melle, a representative of the Liberal Democratic party who had been thrown into the street with her little girl when the Russians came, had seen her husband carried off by them, her sister raped, her father killed and her mother die of shock, said to me: "We are no longer influenced by fear of losing our possessions, since we have none, and because we have lost so much more than

material comforts. Germans in the Western zones may think that there could be nothing worse than the Anglo-American occupation and the loss of their savings through the recent currency reform. But in Berlin we know that all that is nothing compared to the ultimate horror of Communist domination."

## VI

In my conversations with Otto Stolz and other young Germans, including both students from Russian-controlled Berlin University and visitors from the Eastern zone active in the resistance movement, I was impressed most of all by the fact that war, defeat, hunger, and the ever-present fear of ending up in a Soviet concentration camp, had not broken their spirit or sapped their energies. It was also surprising that our original occupation policy had not succeeded in turning German youth into cynics, time-servers or ruthless egotists. For had we not made a mockery of our democratic professions and ideals, not only by treating all Germans, including the victims of Hitler's prisons, as pariahs, but also by condoning Soviet atrocities and treating Communists as democrats? We had even insisted upon the inclusion of Communists in the City and Lander administrations, and put Communists on denazification boards. In Berlin, for instance, although the October 1946 elections had given the Socialists, Liberals and Christian Democrats 80 per cent of the votes, the Allied *Kommandatura* had refused to

allow majority rule and insisted on the inclusion of the Communists in a "coalition," although the latter's party, the SED, had polled only 19 per cent of the city's vote. And even today, I was told, the British and American Occupation authorities do not permit the Germans to oust the Communists who still hold some positions in the Food, Labor and Health offices of the Western sectors, unless they are proved incompetent, or to be sending "open" reports to the Russians!

"Yet you still place your trust in us?" I enquired.

"Yes," replied a pretty girl with red hair and an impudent smile, "we know we must have patience and wait until Americans stop being political babies."

I'm aware, of course, that not only is Berlin not Prague; it is also not all Germany. The important fact, it seemed to me after a month in Berlin, is that there is a movement there which could lead Germany to become a real democracy, and might also reinvigorate and unite by its example the divided and confused anti-totalitarian forces of Europe and America.

There was a sinister reverse side of the hopeful Berlin picture. Some of the die-hard Nazis have made common cause with the Communists, and there might be a recrudescence of aggressive German nationalism under a Red instead of a Black Flag. Former National Socialist theoreticians today hold leading positions in Berlin University and other universities under

Russian control. The head of the disciplinary Court of Berlin University, Fritz Noglich, who now gives lectures on the Social and Political Situation which all Berlin students must attend, was formerly a leading Nazi anti-Semite and anti-Catholic writer. In a famous book on Ludendorf he had once urged a union of German and Russian National Bolshevism against the West.

Many other examples could be cited. Perhaps even more important is the fact that the Russians are using the full force of economic pressure to suppress the democratic opposition. Only "reliable" students can get grants to study, and special privileges in money and in kind are given to those who support the Communist dictatorship. All Germans who can and will be useful to Russia are offered "Stalin parcels" of food and fuel. Those who join the SED for the material advantages this gives them can perhaps not be counted upon by the Russians. Their most reliable allies, and the most dangerous to us, are the former Nazis who hope that by submitting to the Soviets now, and working with them against the West, Hitler's "Thousand-Year Reich" will eventually be restored.

So far there are hardly any Berliners prepared to join up with Stalin and his stooges against the West. This was proved last December 5, by the overwhelming vote for the democratic parties, and by the courage of the German workers who dared to strike in the Russian sector. Nevertheless,

it is a mistake to assume that the Germans must inevitably remain on our side.

In Bavaria, where the horrors of a Russian occupation have not been experienced, a considerable number of people were reputed to have become secret members of the Communist Party, and others were giving money to the Communists, not because they had any sympathy for the Communist cause, but as insurance against the dreaded future day when the Red Army might come and "democratize" the Germans.

So long as we insist that the Germans are to remain defenseless while they also have no guarantee that we will not revert to the policy of appeasing Russia and France at their expense, there is a real danger of their submitting to the Communists in despair. This danger is rendered all the more acute by the continuance of dismantling which is depriving thousands of German workers of their livelihood, and making millions fear that there is no hope for Germany if she continues to side with the West.

The political weakness of Soviet Russia, so evident in Berlin, proves that there are as yet too few Nazi or other collaborators of the Communists to bolster up their dictatorship. The German people, so far, have shown their determination to rejoin the Western community of nations, however narrow and steep the road of atonement. Let us not make it impossible for them to become a part of the Europe we hope to save.

# THE COLOR OF THE WORLD

A STORY

BY EVAN S. CONNELL, JR.

IF YOU'D ask Mrs. Passen about Shannon McCambridge, she'd likely fold her veiny hands together and say, "The Lord will destroy him." If you'd ask her about the Widow Gorman, she might turn away without even answering. Mrs. Passen is sort of the link between God and Cow Lake.

Cow Lake was built in 1827 in the middle of the prairie. Now it's in the middle of the Kansas wheat fields, but outside of that nothing much has changed. Only two things break up the squares of wheat. One is the creek-bed that cuts behind the grave-digger's shack, and sometimes has water in it during March. The other is a bunch of black pins that stick up off to the south. Those are oil derricks, but the oil men quit a long time ago. The derricks are rusting. Life comes pretty hard in southern Kansas. Maybe once a month some of the folks go over to Wichita.

Dust covers almost everything. If a car goes by, dust winds up from the concrete and settles on the silent dogs that lie against the curbs. If one of the

dogs walks somewhere its trail is marked for several minutes by a row of dust mushrooms.

There's no saliva on the lips of the women who go to Mrs. Passen's every Wednesday to gain strength from the Gospel, and there's no sweat on the Widow Gorman when she comes into town, except under her arms. There's no whisky on the counter in back of Dummy's pool hall, but the folks who like to drink make Dummy keep the counter there. They like to look at it. The farmers never talk about it, but when they're in town they go over to Dummy's to look at it. They feel of its slick brown top and suck at their teeth for a while.

A little bit after the sun comes up the side doors of the houses open and old women come out. They have celluloid fans that advertise a hardware store. They sit on the porches until sundown, waving the fans. Most of them sit in swings that have chains screwed into the roofs. When they get up at noon or when they pull at their cotton stockings the chains squeak.

---

EVAN S. CONNELL, JR., is doing graduate work in painting and sculpture, as well as writing, at Columbia University. He has contributed fiction to several small magazines, and he recently won first prize in the \$500 Stanford University short-story contest.