

HEELS AMONG THE HEROES

BERLIN

IT WAS 10 P.M. and closing time at the Mayflower Club (beer and sandwiches for enlisted men) in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Soldiers spilled out of the doorway in a buzz of boisterous talk and restless speculation about how to spend the next hour before military curfew. In a timid, tentative semicircle on the edge of the sidewalk opposite the brightly lighted entrance stood some Germans—six or seven urchins and an equal number of older boys with fuzz on their chins and blank looks in their eyes. They were the “butt boys,” a prideless squad of scavengers preying on discarded American cigarettes.

Suddenly a soldier, a buck private replacement who couldn't have been more than 18 himself, swaggered over toward them, swinging his arms like a Golden Gloves contender. “G’wan, get out of here, you lousy little bastards,” he said loudly. “Beat it!”

The Germans backed off the curb, slowly. The soldier's laughter was brimming with bravado and the heady sweetness of new authority, as he joined a couple of buddies. “Where did you say that Fräulein lived?” he asked. The enemy stood silent as the trio rounded the corner, but if their smoldering stares had been radioactive, the private would have dropped in his tracks. . . .

“Which goes to show,” remarked an observer of this incident, “that G.I. Joe and Company as an occupation army are no better than the other conquering heroes of history. In some respects we look worse.”

Whatever happens to the currently stymied Potsdam policies, which we had so fondly hoped could be used to revive Germany as a reasonably healthy but contrite and peaceful nation, the fact is that human relationships between Germans and Americans were never more critical than they are today. High and responsible military government officials, whose sentiments about how the Germans should be treated have by no means become maudlin, will tell you this frankly. A sort of insidious moral corruption has spread among us, so to speak, like an occupational disease.

Admittedly, it would have taken an army of paragons to have yielded not to Germany's rampant temptations. There were the buxom Fräuleins so unbearably available. A mistress for the price of a candy bar, a pack of cigarettes, the shared warmth of a room. Such a friendly girl could hardly have been a Nazi. . . .

Then there was the obsequious burgher whose exquisite set of Dresden china could be had for a pinch of coffee that the mess wouldn't miss anyway. A G-2 officer in Berlin had to lash himself to refuse a

Rembrandt original that a Nazi was eager to trade for his freedom. Came the bonanza, when the Red Army gave \$500 each, more or less, for almost any piece of machinery that would tell time. In a few short weeks some G.I.s sent home more money than the average U.S. citizen saves in a lifetime. Cigarettes or penicillin or more folding paper bought diamonds and other riches from

bedraggled Berliners and travelers from Poland.

But careful observers caution you to keep one thing straight: The Army is not the principal defendant in this case. The Army is just barely beginning to recover from the tornado of redeployment which all but wrecked its mechanism of military government in Europe. And what is the Army getting as replacements for the occupation forces? Eighteen-year-old kids. Most of them have eight weeks' basic training, the hot breath of adventure and little else. Some of them had never even fired a carbine before coming overseas.

“Strictly for the birds,” one seasoned officer commented. “There shouldn't be a man in the Army of Occupation, officer or soldier, under 25.”

“Here all the things any self-respecting father would try to keep a high-school boy away from—wine, women and easy side dough to boot—are thrown in the youngster's face. You can't blame the boy. Is he supposed to get religion all of a sudden?”

Too Complicated a Job for Teen-Agers

Officers, civilians and G.I.s themselves agree that teen-agers are too green for this serious, complicated assignment. “But that's how the American voters wanted it,” a staff officer is apt to remark, bitterly, “or that's how Congress thought they wanted it anyhow, and that's what we got.”

So now the pay-off is beginning to come, and it isn't pretty. From the American standpoint, at least, the occupation of Germany, well into its second year, has reached a phase where the authorities are virtually as preoccupied with the grave problems posed by their own personnel—and their immediate impact on the Germans—as with the vast and frightening riddle of the future of this wanton, crumpled nation.

Despite every appeal, warning and precaution

Army families are provided with living standards nearly as high as prewar U.S.A. The impact of all this plenty upon German have-nots is an envy which can easily be turned to hatred

Fraternization is such a problem that even holding hands is barred. This couple is brave



BY EDWARD P. MORGAN

that the Army medics have been able to devise, the venereal disease rate among American troops in Europe rose to a new high of 264 per 1,000 men in June.

Clergymen have warned that Germany is becoming the "cesspool of Europe," and that the occupying powers are to blame. Some German churchmen have been accused of being anti-Allied by discouraging fraternization. "If I were a German priest," an American Catholic chaplain remarked to me in Bavaria, "I would tell the girls of my parish every Sunday to stay away from soldiers. They can't marry them, so they shouldn't go with them."

The Army has always had camp followers. Training centers at home had their "Victory Girls." London had its "Piccadilly Commandos." But Germany's "Veronica Dankeshöns," as Shep, the Stars and Stripes cartoonist, christened them with the ironic initials VD, are the most tragic lot of all. There have been the inevitable suicides, a homicide or two. One of the weirdest complications occurred in Munich where a colonel had planned to keep his German girl friend, formerly the mistress of a *Luftwaffe* lieutenant general, as his housekeeper after his own wife and child had come from the States to join him. Needless to say, it didn't work out.

Another of the Army's worries is the frequency of soldier assaults on German civilians. In Bavaria in July, according to official figures, there were 431 incidents involving U.S. troops and Germans. Much of this is blamed on rookie replacements, who never heard a shot fired in anger but are "out to get their Nazis" and thereby establish that they have hair, if not combat medals, on their chests.

One evening a G.I. stopped a civilian on a lonely street in southern Germany. "Got the time, Mac?" he demanded. The civilian looked at his wrist and answered in English. "Gee, mister," the startled soldier said, "it's a good thing you didn't speak Kraut."



Three comely German Fräuleins protest the "Off Limits" barrier. It takes a strong man to remain firm

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR COLLIER'S BY EMIL REYNOLDS

The Army has launched an extensive sports program as one way of rehabilitating German youth

That's a nice watch you've got there and I'd been thinking I might just take it." The civilian was an Army special agent in plain clothes.

German police, who have no jurisdiction over Allied personnel, have nevertheless occasionally attempted to intervene in soldier-civilian altercations. Some have been killed for their pains.

Property takes a beating, too. The other Saturday night, some soldiers invaded a little *Gasthaus* in the village of Ammerland on lovely Starnberger See, southwest of Munich, absorbed the liquor they had brought with them and then proceeded to heave the clocks and furniture of the inn into the street.

Schoolroom Wrecked by Army Hooligans

Some G.I.s in Berlin once were sent to help repair a school for Army children. "They threw ink bottles all over hell and jumped on the piano," complained an officer who checked the damage. "What is this, Halloween?"

The major black-market cases read like Oppenheim:

A full colonel and his Wac wife are flown from Chicago to Frankfurt to face charges of making off with a million and a half dollars' worth of Hessian crown jewels from Kronberg castle. . . . a lieutenant colonel from Philadelphia shoots himself fatally in the mouth rather than brave further investigation of his activities, which are alleged to include not only trafficking in cigarettes and food but fraudulent real-estate deals. . . . The Army's criminal investigation division arrests an aviation weather observer in Berlin and announces it has nipped an international black-market ring with multimillion-

dollar potentialities, allegedly operated by an enterprising family with branches (and relatives) in Paris, New York and Shanghai.

And in still another case there is high contraband in porcelains and Picassos, part of which were purportedly unloaded on an unsuspecting New York department store.

Not that the Russians, British and French haven't been guilty of the same oversights. Not that they haven't had trouble and scandals aplenty in their own respective occupation zones, but that's another story or maybe three.

We came as conquerors, as General Eisenhower said, but along with the power and authority, we forgot, it seems, the terrible responsibility involved in being Americans in Europe, away from home. Europeans had still regarded us as creatures from the American dream. We forgot that fact, with which we might have done so much.

With a longing, restless, almost female kind of envy, Europe had come to look upon the United States as a crazy, wonderful land, shimmering with the good life, and where liberty and the pursuit of happiness burgeoned, free, from the rich earth. Even the Germans, then, were prepared to discover something magically superior in Americans themselves. After all, the propaganda had worn thin, Hitler's supermen *had* collapsed; they were still terrified, though, of the Russians and it would do no harm at least to hope that the Americans would be something extra special.

Instead we turned out to be ordinary human beings and misbehaved. This came as a double shock. We did work some of our magic but most of it was *verboten* to the Germans. (Continued on page 108)





CLOCK WITHOUT HANDS

BY GERALD KERSH

ILLUSTRATED BY C. C. BEALL