



—Deutschen Zentrale für Fremdenverkehr.

THE MAD METROPOLIS

Luncheon in München and Other Stories

By ARTURO and GLORIA GONZALEZ

TO THE uninitiated, the mention of Munich conjures up images of swastika-wearing Storm Troopers and Beer Hall Putschers, a furled umbrella and a piece of paper that said peace but spelled war.

However, this 800-year-old city has been badly maligned by history. It's the gayest metropolis in Europe and certainly the most rollicking in all the dour, businesslike Fatherland. After Munich, the rest of Germany is Prussia.

Geography book readers know Munich as the third largest city in Germany (after Berlin and Hamburg), a bustling community of 1,100,000 people camped on the banks of the Isar River just north of the Alps and south of the Danube, the capital of Bavaria and Germany's gateway to the south. Travelers insist that

Munich is a state of mind—or, more correctly, a state of madness.

Madmen were certainly required even to consider rebuilding this city after World War II when sixty-six Allied heavy bomber raids reduced the metropolis to 11,000,000 tons of junk. Munich was 70 per cent destroyed, more than half its inhabitants were homeless, and there was serious talk among the elders of deserting the rubble heap and moving the city completely downriver. But those who loved Munich refused to listen to facts and painstakingly began to rebuild. Today the Karlsplatz is said to be the most heavily traveled city square in all of Europe, and if you don't believe it just try crossing at the noon rush hour without being knocked over by a passing Volkswagen, or two or three of them.

Madmen have been an integral part of the history of Munich ever since the city was founded eight centuries ago as a village alongside a monastery on the Isar. King Ludwig I was a goutish and goatish eccentric who ruled the city in the early nineteenth century, taking as his mistress the equally bizarre Lola Montez, a Scottish dancer posing as a Spaniard. A subsequent revolt drove Ludwig from the throne and Montez out of town; she eventually reappeared in a New Orleans circus side show ("one silver dollar to kiss the lips that kissed a king"), ending her days in poverty in an East Side New York tenement.

Another Munich Ludwig—Mad King Ludwig II—ruled in the late nineteenth century, incurred gigantic debts, neglected the throne, and was finally

hustled off to the prisonlike Schloss Berg near Starnberg Lake, where he drowned the next day; whether accidentally or at the hands of an indignant Cabinet is still being argued. Even today a buoy marks the spot of his demise.

Other madmen figuring prominently in Munich's history include an Italian socialist named Benito Mussolini, who labored as a Munich stonemason for a number of months, the Russian publisher of a magazine called *Spark*, bearing the name of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (otherwise called Lenin), and a mad Austrian in a raincoat named Adolf Hitler, who announced his Nazi Party program on Munich's streetcorners.

The citizens of Munich blame the *Föhn*, a warm Alpine wind swooping up from the south, for all this madness in their midst; when the *Föhn* blows, all of Munich becomes allergic, jumpy, short-tempered. The wind acts as a depressant but visitors don't feel it; you have to live in Munich six months, local lore says, before you're affected.

To counter the ill effects of the *Föhn*, the people of Munich engage in what appears to outsiders to be a year-round carnival of special events. The lusty calendar begins promptly on January 6, Twelfth Night, when a seven-week beer blast called Fasching gets under way. The orgiastic rites of Fasching indicate quite clearly that Munich owes its heritage much more to the Druid Celts than to the stern barons of Prussia. During Fasching all married couples are advised to leave their wedding rings at home, and a German judge recently ruled that adultery during Fasching was not sufficient grounds for divorce. Each year German preachers thunder against the tradition of taking "Fasching wives," but to no avail; the revelry goes on unabated right through Shrove Tuesday.

ALL manner of parties and balls are the order of the day during the fifty-five frantic Fasching nights with guests wearing the elaborate costumes and masks that allow all sorts of carnal indecencies to go on without community fingers being pointed at the guilty parties. The city during Fasching gets politely smashed and business grinds to a halt. Girls show up at parties in bikinis, considered perfect for an evening's date. Cowboy hats and sheik's robes are *de rigueur* for the males. Much revelry comes to a climax on Fasching Sunday, which is devoted to a huge parade through the center of town with gala floats mocking everything sacred in German political, economic, and religious life.

On Shrove Tuesday, in the afternoon, the market women dance in the Viktualienmarkt; then everyone heads for a final giant party. The only rule observed by married couples during Fasch-

ing is that they try to eat breakfast together each morning.

The relative quiet of Lent is then broken by the strong-beer season. *Marzenbier* (March beer) drinking time ends on Josefi—March 19—the name day for everyone named Josef, Sepp, or Bep-perl. Lest drinkers despair, just a few weeks later it's *Maibock* time, the second strong-beer season, and everyone boils into the city's beer gardens for spring. It's important to note that Munich regards beer as food, and it is taxed as such. Münchenerers manage to pour down 230 liters of beer a year against 108 for the average German; that's a belting record of which the locals are extremely proud. But it takes working at it: you drink light or dark, *Märzen*, *Stark*, *Bock*, or *Weiss* with everything from your morning Krispies to the last snack of the night.

A word about Munich's snacktimes. The morning sausage delicacy is invariably *Weisswurst* consumed with sweet mustard, rolls, pretzels, and of course beer, as the *Rathaus Glockenspiel* chimes 11. Pork sausages with kraut, boiled beef with horseradish, liver cheese that's not really liver cheese, and salted radishes that have had enough time to absorb the salt are all tossed down at every equivalent of a coffee break.

IN October, the city goes dotty once again for a huge country fair held on the Theresienwiese just inside city limits. Oktoberfest dates back to 1810 when the marriage of King Ludwig I was the best excuse for a beer blast, the party grounds being named after his bride, Therese. Farmers pour in from the Bavarian countryside; whole oxen, suckling pigs and thousands of chickens—a specialty called *Brathendl*—are roasted on spits over coals. Strong beer (naturally) is specially brewed and tossed down by the huge steinful. You have to struggle for a seat at the long tables; the best bet is to smile, say "*Bitte*," and squeeze in.

This sixteen-day drunk begins each year on a Saturday with a parade starring the principal Munich breweries, each of which sends a barrel-laden wagon, drawn by the fanciest-clad horses in

equinedom and chauffeured by brewmasters dolled up in the traditional German regalia of *Lederhosen*, velvet vests, and high boots. Since Munich boasts one-third of the world's breweries, it's quite a parade.

When Oktoberfest visitors are not chugging down beer, gobbling roast chickens, or gorging themselves on hot ox, they're watching Punch-and-Judy shows, banging away at shooting galleries, riding loop-the-loops, and in general acting like fairgoers anywhere.

Just about the only inhabitants of Munich who don't get drunk during Oktoberfest are the sole teetotalers in town—the animals in the City's fine Hellabrunn zoo. Everyone else pours the brew down.

EVEN when there's no carnival going on, Munich night life is lively. You can find all of the luxury of the Latin Quarter, or the seamy charms of Greenwich Village inside Munich's borders. Wherever you go, the main form of amusement is almost inevitably a quart-sized stein. The biggest bar in town is the Hofbräuhaus, its brewery built in 1583 as the court brewery, now run as a public service by the City of Munich itself; and called the seat of Bavarian *Gemütlichkeit*.

It's about as intimate as Grand Central Station, but the beer flows and one soon forgets about the décor. At the long wooden tables, you'll find every strata of Munich life, from top executives to laborers, to housewives rocking baby carriages alongside—everyone but the babies tossing down the brew. "Thirst Is Stronger Than Homesickness to the Troth," says a huge carving overhead, and the *oompa oompa* of the German band in the corner and the thumping of steins on the oaken tables can quickly make you believe this is true.

One hundred and sixty busty, blonde waitresses are the chief performers at the Hofbräuhaus, the gals in blue being veterans and those wearing red aprons apprentices. A *fräulein* moves from red to blue when she can hoist thirteen steins at a time. The house record is sixteen, held by a gal with the arms and hands of Sam Huff.

The beer served at the Hofbräuhaus is tested in a rather unusual way. Six stout German *burghers* enter the establishment and pour some of the house beer over an oaken bench. They then sit on the wet bench and consume several rounds of brew. At a given signal, the tasters rise together after having tossed down the last stein. If the bench rises with them, firmly adhered to their *Lederhosen*, the beer is a good beer. If it sticks to their seats as far as the doorway, it's a great brew.

Among the more sophisticated spots
(Continued on page 112)





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An Adventure in Auvergne

By NAOMI BARRY

"OH! ABOVE ALL don't go to Auvergne!" This, believe it or not, was the final line of an article in the French weekly *Candide*, advising the French on where to take their vacations in 1965. The writer lyrically vaunted the attractions of this province of swift trout streams, crystalline lakes nestling in extinct volcanic craters, upland meadows as rich with flowers as a *mille fleurs* tapestry, cathedrals built on the summit of rock pinnacles. Then, at the sudden thought of what tourism might do to so much natural loveliness,

he let loose his cry: "Don't go to Auvergne. Where will liberty go, once you have forced her to flee?"

This hitherto bypassed heartland of France is on the threshold of discovery. It is not really off the beaten path, for it is a natural gateway into the Dordogne Valley. Furthermore, the area can easily be traversed if you are going from Paris to the Riviera or Geneva to Bordeaux.

The first notable Auvergnat was Vercingétorix, chief of a Celtic tribe known as the Arverni. He was only twenty years old when he stopped Caesar on the

plateau of Gergovie, not far from the present city of Clermont-Ferrand.

Historically, Auvergne was Druid country. In their oak forests, they studied astrology, geography, and medicine. Caesar described them as the nobles of Gaul. The Druids contemplated the wisdom of the heart and taught that the soul was immortal. They were poets who bequeathed their influence without leaving a written word.

Lafayette was born in Auvergne, in the Château of Chavaniac, which may be visited from Easter to October. The