

Von Schnitzler Commentary

East Berlin Deutschlandsender in German to Germany 1842 GMT
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(Summary) Murders have taken place at the wall, and not just one. The victims were Peter Goering, Reinhold Huhn, and Siegfried Widera, NCO's of the National People's Army. They were killed by shots fired from West Berlin in the execution of their duty. They protected the frontiers and the laws of their state. There were other victims; for instance, Fechter and Schultz. They lost their lives because they believed their enemies and not their friends. Thus they became guilty and fell victim at the same time.

All over the world, orders, regulations, laws, and rules govern frontier procedures. It cannot be said that we have left anyone in a state of ignorance regarding the purpose, peculiarities, and laws of our frontiers. Those who want to cross need permission to do so. This is recognized by all foreigners who come to see us.

Every year millions of West Germans and West Berliners recognize it when using our autobahns, railways, or when visiting us. And even the West Berlin Senate recognized it by putting its signature to the protocol regarding visits to relatives. Those who want to cross our frontier need our permission to do so. Those who are not given permission cannot cross. Those who nevertheless try to do it, will be called to halt, and the dangerous and criminal character of his attempt is brought home to him by warning shots. If he does not pay heed, the force of arms is brought to bear. Those who court danger perish by it. Let them stay away from our state frontier; then they can save themselves blood, tears, and loud recriminations.

This is not the first time I have said all this so forcefully, but in view of the disgusting and mendacious clamor raised by Western politicians and journalists regarding the frontier incident on Christmas, it must first of all be made quite clear that our frontier soldiers deserve the greatest respect and profound gratitude. They and the frontier violators cannot be compared. The former are fulfilling their duty; the others are criminals. No one can possibly equate the police with the criminals.

When in Duesseldorf a small-time pickpocket is shot dead by the police while escaping, or in Munich a 15-year-old car thief (loses his life?), the West German and West Berlin press report it in a three-line news item without comment. Then it is not a matter for banner headlines, crosses and protests, and tirades of hatred against policemen. Death is always tragic, and a frontier is almost never a thing of beauty to behold and even less so if it has to take the shape of a wall. But men such as Fechter and Schultz are not victims of the Vopos. They are not victims of the wall. They are the victims of the policies and politicians who forced us to exercise sharp control over our frontier and against whom our soldiers stand guard. The wall is not an isolated phenomenon, and the state frontier in Berlin is not just a coincidence. It is the consequence of Berlin's partition, and Berlin's partition is not an isolated occurrence but a consequence of Germany's partition. This partition is not our doing.

Our frontier soldiers are friendly and helpful to everyone who respects our frontier. They are hard and implacable toward those who violate our frontier. This is not contradictory and hypocritical but logical and consistent, and it is profoundly human. This is so because all attempts to deny the existence of the GDR, to disregard its sovereignty, and to violate its rights and duties carry with them the danger of tension, provocation, and war. What could be more human than to quell such dangers from the very outset. Our frontier soldiers carry arms so that peace may be preserved.

They are doing difficult service and difficult work, for they need not only ability and willingness; at times they must exercise the state power with utmost vigor and incisiveness for the sake of peace.

We react sharply only to frontier provocations. Otherwise, we react to the hostile policy of the West with offers and proposals prompted by reason and good will, and we say that only negotiations can lead to an easing of tension. Let me tell you this once again and not for the last time, my listeners: If today Germany consisted exclusively of the Federal Republic, it would be a misfortune for us and our neighbors, just as the uniform Kaiserreich and the uniform Hitler state were a misfortune. It is fortunate and a blessing that the GDR exists, offering as it does an alternative to the Bonn state of aggression and to the frontline city of West Berlin.