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Night Life among ruins. An article.

Mann, Klaus

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NIGHT LIFE AMONG RUINS
An article to be written by
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Berlin, after World War I, famed for its bold, colorful night life. (Some personal memories...) Now, after World War II, the beaten, humiliated city has lost all its pep and glamour. Yet, even in its present state of utter misery and exhaustion, the former German capital -- once known as the Babylon of Europe -- desperately tries to live up to its old reputation. If no joy or "clean fun" are to be found in Berlin today, the shattered city ~~has~~ still to offer certain amusements of a more dubious, rather macabre nature.

The macabre element prevails even in the artistic field. (Some remarks about characteristic films and plays recently produced in Berlin.) But if postwar Germany's playwrights and screen authors have a predilection for the sordid and sinister, their wildest fantasies appear tame and polite compared with the "real thing" -- the incredible reality of daily (or rather, nightly) life in occupied Berlin.

Scenes of vice and misery, wretchedness and corruption. The "Kurfürstendamm" (main artery of the Anglo-American sector) as a center of prostitution; the railroad stations -- especially the "Bahnhof Zoo," near the "Kurfürstendamm" -- as nocturnal meeting-places of black-marketeers, whores, gangsters etc. Glimpses of homosexual dance halls, secret brothels, and some other "specialities." Conversations with prostitutes, narcotic-peddlers, and so forth.

Another aspect of Berlin's night life: the Black Market restaurants, where big-time operators feast on French champagne and Russian caviar, while millions of their countrymen are starving. The most spectacular establishment of that type -- a discreetly located place in the western suburbs, run by Herman Göring's former major-domo -- is to be described in detail.

To round up the picture, some of the newly established artists' clubs are to be depicted -- in the Russian sector as well as in the western districts --, including some sketches of prominent personalities and popular characters.

The role played by occupation troops in the "lower depths" of nocturnal Berlin, is to be emphasized throughout the article.

Approximate length: 3000 words.

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If this were to be
written from a thoroughly
masculine point of view,
in a lively style, and
with plenty of illumina-
ting anecdotes instead of
a great deal of sober
reflection, it certainly
would interest us. Mr.
Mann would, of course,
have to try it purely
on speculation. D.B.