

Getting Into Germany Quite a Job, Nowadays, Ernest Hemingway

Getting Into Germany Quite a Job, Nowadays

Easy to Get Document From French Embassy, But the Germans are More Suspicious—No Tourists Allowed, No Newspapermen Wanted.

FAMOUS EXPRESSES NO LONGER IN SERVICE

The following is the sixth of a series of articles on the Franco-German situation by Ernest M. Hemingway.

By ERNEST M. HEMINGWAY. Special Correspondence to The Star.

Offenburg, Baden. April 30—In Paris they said it was very difficult to get into Germany. No tourists allowed. No newspaper men wanted. The German consulate will not visa a passport without a letter from a consulate or chamber of commerce in Germany saying, under seal, it is necessary for the traveler to come to Germany for a definite business transaction. The day I called at the consulate it had been instructed to amend the rules to permit invalids to enter for the "cure" if they produced a certificate from the doctor of the health resort they were to visit showing the nature of their ailment.

"We must preserve the utmost strictness," said the German consul and reluctantly and suspiciously after such consultation of files gave me a visa good for three weeks.

"How do we know you will not write lies about Germany?" he said before he handed back the passport.

"Oh, cheer up." I said.

To get the visa I had given him a letter from our embassy, printed on stiff crackling paper and bearing an enormous red seal which informed "whom it may concern" that Mr. Hemingway, the bearer, was well and favorably known to the embassy and had been directed by his newspaper, The Toronto Star, to proceed to Germany and report on the situation there. These letters do not take long to get, commit the embassy to nothing, and are as good as diplomatic passports.

A Fight For a Letter.

The very gloomy German consular attache was folding the letter and putting it away.

"But you cannot have the letter. It must be retained to show cause why the visa was given."

"But I must have the letter."

"You cannot have the letter."

A small gift was made and received.

The German, slightly less gloomy, but still not happy: "But tell me why was it you wanted the letter so?"

Me, ticket in pocket, passport in pocket, baggage packed, train not leaving till midnight, some articles mailed, generally elated. "It is a letter of introduction from Sara Bernhardt, whose funeral you perhaps witnessed to-day, to the Pope. I value it."

German, sadly and slightly confessed: "But the Pope is not in Germany."

Me, mysteriously, going out the door: "One can never tell."

In the cold, grey, street-washing, milk-delivering, shutters-coming-off-the-shops, early morning, the midnight train from Paris arrived in Strasburg. There was no train coming from Strasburg into Germany. The Munich Express, the Orient Express, the Direct for Prague? They had all gone. According to the porter I might get a tram across Strasburg to the Rhine and then walk across into Germany and there at Kehl get a military train for Offenburg. There would be a train for Kehl sooner or later, no one quite knew, but the tram was much better.

In Strasburg.

On the front platform of the street car, with a little ticket window opening into the car through which the conductor accepted a franc for myself and two bags, we clanged along through the winding streets of Strasbourg and the early morning. There were sharp peaked plastered houses criss-crossed with great wooden beams, the flyer wound and rewound through the town and each time we crossed it there were fishermen on the banks, there was the wide modern street with modern German shops with big glass show windows and new French names over their doors, butchers were unshuttering their shops and with assistants hanging the big carcasses of beeves and horses outside the doors, a long stream of carts were coming in to market from the country, streets were being flushed and washed.

I caught a glimpse down a side street of the great red stone cathedral. There was a sign in French and another in German forbidding anyone to talk to the motorman and the motorman chatted in French and German to his friends who got on the car as he swung his levers and checked or speeded our progress along the narrow streets and out of the town.

In the stretch of country that lies between Strasbourg and the Rhine the tram track runs along a canal and a big blunt nosed barge with LUSITANIA painted on its stern was being dragged smoothly along by two horses ridden by the bargeman's two children while breakfast smoke came out of the galley chimney and the bargeman leaned against the sweep. It was a nice morning.

Money and Grunts.

At the ugly iron bridge that runs across the Rhine into Germany the tram stopped. We all piled out. Where last July at every train there had formed a line like the queue outside an arena hockey match there were only four of us. A gendarme looked at the passports. He did not even open mine. A dozen or so French gendarmes were loafing about. One of these came up to me as I started to carry my bags across the long bridge over the yellow, flooded, ugly, swirling Rhine and asked: "How much money have you?"

I told him one hundred and twenty-five dollars "Americain" and in the neighbourhood of one hundred francs.

"Let me see your pocketbook."

He looked in it, grunted and handed it back. The twenty-five five-dollar bills I had obtained in Paris for mark-buying made an impressive roll.

"No gold money?"

"Mais non, monsieur."

He grunted again and I walked, with the two bags, across the long iron bridge, past the barbed wire entanglement with its two French sentries in their blue tin hats and their long needle bayonets, into Germany.

Not Very Cheerful.

Germany did not look very cheerful. A herd of beef cattle were being loaded into a box car on the track that ran down to the bridge. They were entering reluctantly with much tail-twisting and whacking of their legs. A long wooden custom's shed with two entrances, one marked "Nach Frankreich" and one "Nach Deutschland," stood next to the track. A German soldier was sitting on an empty gasoline tin smoking a cigaret. A woman in an enormous black hat with plumes and an appalling collection of hat boxes, parcels and bags was stalled opposite the cattle-loading process. I carried three of the bundles for her into the shed marked "Towards Germany."

"You are going to Munich too?" she asked, powdering her nose.

"No. Only Offenburg."

"Oh, what a pity. There is no place like Munich. You have never been there?"

"No, not yet."

"Let me tell you. Do not go anywhere else. Anywhere else in Germany is a waste of time. There is only Munich."

A grey-headed German customs inspector asked me where I was going, whether I had anything dutiable, and waved my passport away. "You go down the road to the regular station."

A Deserted Station.

The regular station had been the important customs junction on the direct line between Paris and Munich. It was deserted. All the ticket windows closed. Everything covered with dust. I wandered through to the track and found four French soldiers of the 170th Infantry Regiment, with full kit and fixed bayonets.

One of them told me there would be a train at 11.15 for Offenburg, a military tram: it was about half an hour to Offenburg, but this droll train would get there about two o'clock. He grinned. Monsieur was from Paris? What did the monsieur think about the match Criqui-Zjawny Kilbane? Ah. He had thought very much the same. He had always had the idea that he was no fool, this Kilbane.

The military service? Well, it was all the same. It made no difference where one did it. In two months now he would be through. It was a shame he was not free, perhaps we could have a talk together. Monsieur had seen the Kilbane box? The new wine was not bad at the buffet. But after all he

was on guard. The buffet is straight down the corridor. If monsieur leaves the baggage here it will be all right.

In the buffet was a sad-looking waiter in a dirty shirt and soup and beer stained evening clothes, a long bar and two forty-year-old French second lieutenants sitting at a table in the corner. I bowed as I entered, and they both saluted.

"No," the waiter said, "there is no milk. You can have black coffee, but it is ersatz coffee. The beer is good."

French Refuse Passports.

The waiter sat down at the table. "No there is no one here now," he said. "All the people you say you saw in July cannot come now. The French will not give them passports to come into Germany."

"All the people that came over here to eat don't come now?" I asked.

"Nobody. The merchants and restaurant keepers in Strasburg got angry and went to the police because everybody was coming over here to buy and eat so much cheaper, and now nobody in Strasburg can get passports to come here."

"How about all the Germans who worked in Strasburg?" Kehl was a suburb of Strasburg before the peace treaty, and all their interests and industries were the same.

"That is, all finished. Now no Germans can get passports to go across the river. They could work cheaper than the French, so that is what happened to them. All our factories are shut down. No coal. No trains. This was one of the biggest and busiest stations in Germany. Now nix. No trains, except the military trains, and they run when they please."

Four poilus came in and stood up at the bar. The waiter greeted them cheerfully in French. He poured out their new wine, cloudy and golden in their glasses, and came back and sat down.

French "Good People."

"How do they get along with the French here in town?"

"No trouble. They are good people. Just like us. Some of them are nasty sometimes, but they are good people. Nobody hates, except profiteers. They had something to lose. We haven't had any fun since 1911. If you make any money it gets no good, and there is only to spend it. That is what we do. Some day it will be over. I don't know how. Last year I had enough money saved up to buy a gasthaus in Hernberg; now that money wouldn't buy four bottles of champagne."

I looked up at the wall where the prices were:

Beer, 350 marks a glass. Red wine, 500 marks a glass. Sandwich, 900 marks. Lunch, 3,500 marks. Champagne, 38,000 marks.

I remembered that last July I stayed at a de luxe hotel with Mrs. Hemingway for 600 marks a day.

"Sure," the waiter went on, "I read the French papers. Germany debases her money to cheat the allies. But what do I get out of it?"

There was a shrill peep of a whistle outside. I paid and shook hands with the waiter, saluted the two forty-year-old second lieutenants, who were now playing checkers at their table, and went out to take the military train to Offenburg.

The End