



Young Berliners watching a C-54 land at Berlin Tempelhof Airport, 1948 – Author, Henry Ries, U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia

Military power wins battles, but spiritual power wins wars.

— George Marshall

The Germans must bear responsibility. But responsibility is not the same as guilt. Those who do not feel guilty and are not guilty of the Nazi crimes nevertheless cannot escape the consequences of a policy, which a far too large part of the German people had willingly joined.

— Willy Brandt



White-faced heron in flight, NSW, Australia – Author, Gronk Oz, public domain, Wikimedia

I had an attack of stage fright when Tomás came in. I steadied my nerves and went on stage. My piece, entitled *Herons*, was inspired by a film I'd found in the library of herons flying, landing, and lifting into the air. Nine dancers wear white leotards with trailing pale blue gossamer sleeves serving as wings which Gisella and I created in floating silk charmeuse. *Herons* is an aerial number with many grand jetées and running lifts. Due to a shortage of male dancers, I've not used males for the lifts; instead girls are lifting girls with their winged arms outstretched, sprinting at startling speed like birds in motion.

I was inspired by George Balanchine's *Serenade*, seventeen ballerinas creating ever-changing shapes, their ankle length diaphanous skirts producing a froth of movement punctuated by fluid arms ebbing and flowing. Abstract as Balanchine's choreography, *Hérons* is a kaleidoscope of geometric patterns which open and close as one column of dancers sails behind the first column, separating and spiraling, coalescing and breaking into fragments, whirling in large spirals, merging and disintegrating. As the dancers fly through the back lights silhouetted in an intermittent flashing of light, their winged arms create the illusion of herons in flight.

My final piece was experimental, danced to the first piece of György Ligeti's, *Musica ricercata 1*. Born in a Hungarian Jewish family whose parents were sent to Auschwitz, Ligeti's *avant garde* music was suppressed by the Soviets until he fled to Vienna. My number relies on lighting effects — spot lights placed behind the dancers rather than in front. Twenty dancers dressed in black race across the stage, ten from the right, ten from the left, crossing each other before flying off stage, then reversing back across the stage, their silhouettes flashing through blinding lights synchronized to the piano's pounding rhythms, faster and faster, a blur of kinetic motion, climaxing with an abrupt cessation of light, music, and motion — absolute darkness and silence. I was at once apprehensive and eager to hear what Tomás would say, but he only gave me a mysterious smile and said, "*Esplendorosa!*" He invited me to lunch and waited for me while I changed, then took me to Chez Samothrace run by a Greek by the name of Sophocles who makes the best Greek yogurt in Lausanne. Sophocles is not his real name, but a *nomme de guerre* from his partisan days fighting the Nazis in Greece. Tomás tells me Sophocles is the best talker in Lausanne with a complex opinion on any topic. The iconoclastic chef sports a grandiose black mustache, swears by Nietzsche as the champion of artists, follows the anarchist Bakunin, and furnishes his customers with newspapers and periodicals in French, Greek, Spanish, German, and Russian, mainly from the left spectrum. Tomás said Sophocles believes the Russian anarchist Nechaev to be absolute evil because of his belief that anything and everything was justified to achieve revolutionary ends. Bakunin, a humanist anarchist who believed in peaceful evolution rather than Nechaev's violent revolution, rejected Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat. Tomás agrees with Sophocles that in the guise of socialism, communism has created a dictatorship of an oligarchy which oppresses the worker. At the bottom of the menu is a quote from Bakunin — *Political Freedom without economic equality is a pretense, a fraud, a lie*. Sophocles says better than the dictatorship of the proletariat is Bakunin's anarchist syndicalism, which gives the trade unions ownership of the facilities of production. The owners would be the workers themselves.



Chez Samothrace – Shutterstock



Portrait of the young Mikhail Bakunin, 1843 – Author, Heinrich Ditlev Mitreuter, Public domain, Wikimedia

As I watched the workers crowding into the tiny pale-yellow room devouring Sophocles' moussaka and tzatziki and heatedly debating the crisis of the day while intoxicating odors emanated from the ancient stoves, I thought Chez Samothrace was a sort of a cross between a café, library, and union hall.

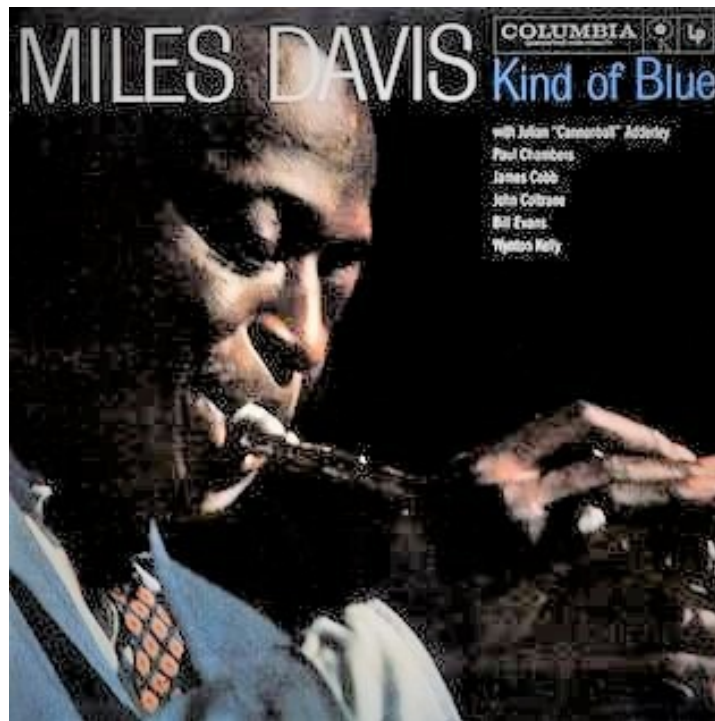
I ordered Spanakopita, spinach, onion, leek, and feta cheese pie with a crisp phyllo pastry crust, and Tomás had Kleptikos, lamb chops marinated in white wine and oregano, seared under a high flame then baked in the oven."

"You seemed reticent" I said, "about giving your thoughts on my dance."

"When I'm outside my area of dance, I hesitate to offer opinions." His dark eyes held mine for a long moment then he said, "I'm impressed with how you sustained my interest in the flight of the herons. I knew you were a marvelous dancer, but seeing your solo today, I realized you have *duende*."

I blushed with pleasure and said, "I'm working on another piece set to Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*."

"I've not heard it," Tomás said.



Cover for *Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis – Author, Columbia Records, fair use, Wikimedia. Miles Davis' sextet studio album, *Kind of Blue*, recorded in 1959, featured saxophonists John Coltrane and Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, pianist Bill Evans, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Jimmy Cobb. Davis departed from his earlier hard bop style, experimenting with the modal approach to jazz, achieving what many critics regard as the greatest jazz record, Davis' chef d'oeuvre, and one of the most influential albums ever recorded. Jazz critic Stephen Thomas Erlewine said, "Why does *Kind of Blue* possess such a mystique? Perhaps because this music never flaunts its genius. . . It's the pinnacle of modal jazz — tonality and solos build from the over all key, not cord changes, giving the music a subtly shifting quality."

“I’ll loan you the record,” I said. Miles made a classic for the ages. His sextet has Bill Evans on piano, John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley on sax, Paul Chambers on bass, and Jimmy Cobb on drums. I’m intrigued by *Flamenco Sketches*. I’ve listened to it a dozen times. *Flamenco Sketches* has Andalusian scales—a marvelous Iberian feeling. Miles tunes are haunting me. I’m brimming with ideas. I’d like for you to see it when it is finished.”

“I’d love to.”

“I’m working on a solo number set to Gabriel Fauré’s *Sicilienne, for cello & piano, Op.78.*”

“Ah yes, exquisite.”

“For the Fauré number, I’m making a transparent ankle length dress opening on bare legs, floating in the wind, like one Isadora Duncan might have worn. I’m bursting with ideas. It’s hard to decide what to do first. With my academic load, there’s not enough time to work out my ideas. I’ve begun a pas de deux to Sinatra’s *Witchcraft* and *To Be Young At Heart*, but not finished it. The problem is, there’s no boy at the school who’s right to be my partner. Balanchine makes his choreography based on the abilities of the dancer. That’s the way I’m going to work. I’ll finish the Sinatra number when I find a dancer who has exactly the right kind of movement.”

“You have extraordinary imagination and deep passion,” he said, his dark eyes flashing. “Are you serious about flamenco?”

“I love its ferocity,” I said.

“And you’re fierce?”

“Yes, I’m fierce.” That dimpled smile again. I was melting

“What are your plans?”

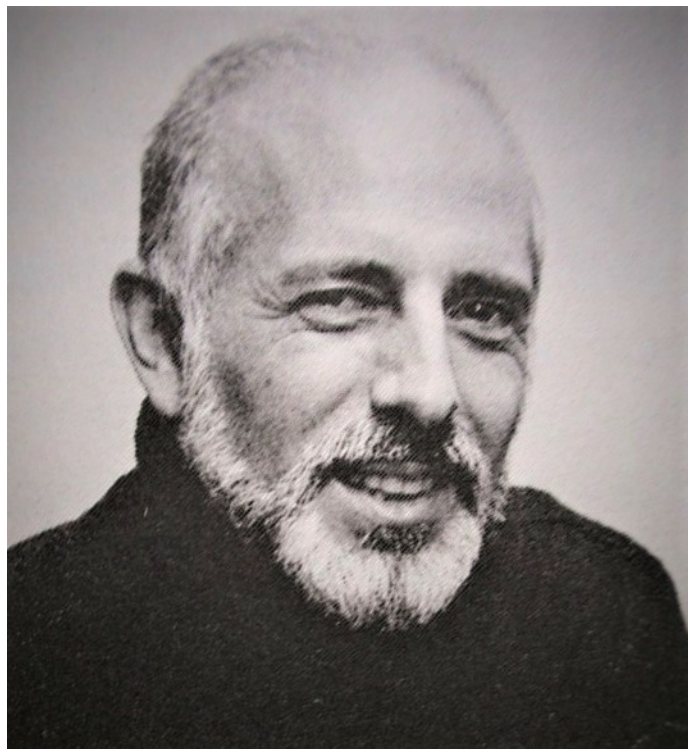
“I’m really torn, despite my desire to be a choreographer, I love writing. My sister instilled the passion. Growing up, she drilled me on the art of writing clearly and minimally. I have a passion for philosophy. I’ve inherited her love of history and ideas. I want to write books like Yvonne, make a difference in the world. But right now, I must choose between two paths. Working with you has inspired me to stay with choreography as my main thing. I can always write when I’m older. This year, I’m graduating in philosophy, political science, history, and dance at Lausanne. Once I’ve finished my degree, I’m going to New York to start a new life. For a choreographer, New York is the most exciting place in the world. I’d love to work with Eugene Faccuito.”

“Who is Faccuito?”

“Gene Kelly gave Faccuito the nickname of Luigi. After fighting the Japanese in the Pacific, at the age of 21, Luigi went to Hollywood to dance. But, a terrible car crash left him in a coma for a month, upon awakening finding himself paralyzed on the left side of his body with double vision. The doctors said he’d never walk again. He not only walked again, Faccuito danced with Gene Kelly, Judy Garland, Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, and Cyd Charisse and for choreographers Hermes Pan and Michael Kidd during the Golden Age of Musicals.”

“If he was paralyzed, how in the world did he manage to dance again?”

“After he discovered conventional therapy wasn’t going to help him, Faccuito invented a jazz exercise system which builds strength, balance, and alignment, step by step rehabilitating his wrecked body. Faccuito’s stretches and dynamic tension exercises have become the standard for teaching musical theater. Strength and balance are so important to a dancer. In the studios, dancers began to pick up on his warm-ups, stretching and strengthening exercises. He began teaching his system at the Rainbow Studios to dancers like Jacques d’Amboise and George Chakiris. Watching the American dancers as a child has inspired me to become a dancer. I’d love to have a chance to study under Jerome Robbins.



Publicity photo of Jerome Robbins – Public domain, Wikimedia

“I’ve studied his dances for *The King and I* — the slave fleeing her master. Gisella has told me about his dances in *West Side Story*, the terrific fight scenes between the New York street gangs. Robbins’ genius lies in how he uses everyday life in his choreography — his naturalism.



Publicity photo for *West Side Story*, 1961, from Deborah Jowitt’s *Jerome Robbins - His Life, His Theater, His Dance*, Public domain, Wikimedia

The Americans have had a great influence on my choreography. I’ve seen all the films of Fred Astaire, Ginger Rodgers, Cyd Charisse, Eleanor Powell, and Gene Kelly. No one has Fred Astaire’s kind of insouciance.”



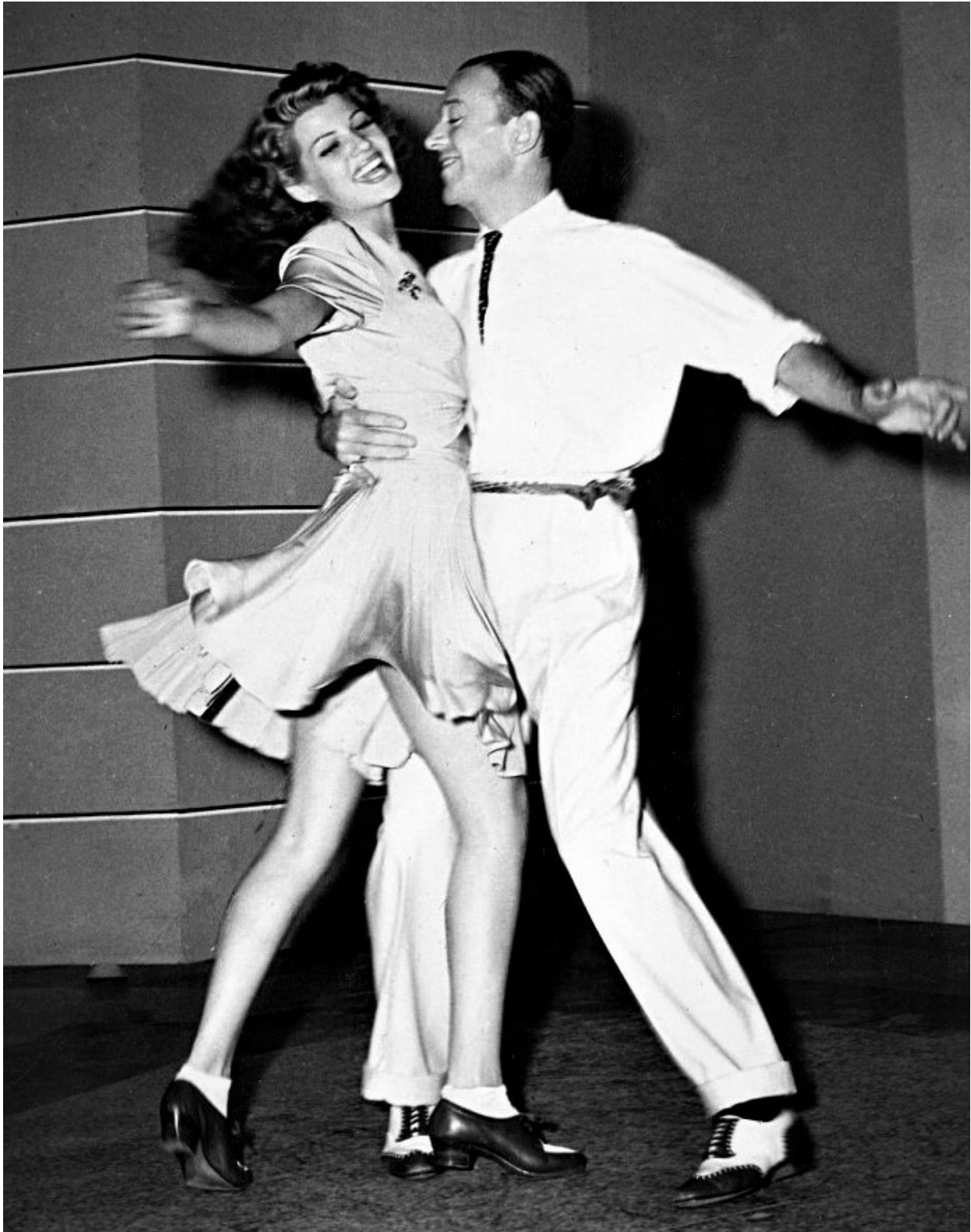
Fred Astaire and his sister Adele Astaire, 1906 – Publicity photograph for vaudeville act, *A Rainy Saturday*, Public domain, Wikimedia



Fred Astaire and Adele Astaire, 1921 – Publicity photograph, Public domain, Wikimedia



Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, publicity photo for *Top Hat*, 1935 – Author, RKO Radio Pictures, Public domain, Wikimedia. During the Great Depression, the dance team of Rogers and Astaire helped the public forget their troubles in *Flying Down to Rio*, *The Gay Divorcee*, *Top Hat*, *Follow the Fleet*, *Swing Time*, and *Shall We Dance*.



Fred Astaire and Rita Hayworth, publicity photo for *You Were Never Lovelier*, 1942 – Author, Columbia Pictures, Public domain, Wikimedia. Beginning in 1944, for three consecutive years, Rita Hayworth was named one of the top movie box-office attractions in the world. Trained by her father while she was a child, Hayworth was dazzling in [tap](#) and [ballroom](#). Dancing with Fred Astaire in “The Shorty George,” the two accomplished absolute mesmerism, as Fred’s natural elegance was counterpoised by Rita’s fiery and sensual exuberance. Rita’s death at 68 from Alzheimer’s disease, created a heightened awareness and greater funding for Alzheimer’s disease.

“I’ve heard great things,” I said, “about New York City Ballet’s Edward Villella. I want to see him dance Balanchine’s *Prodigal Son*. With his power and speed, Villella has an earthiness that other dancers don’t possess. He may be the best American dancer of his generation. And there is the Russian, Rudolf Nureyev, who has defected from Russia. The KGB tried to stop him from escaping, but he was granted asylum in Paris. Gisella is dying to go to London and see him dance *Giselle* with Margot Fonteyn.

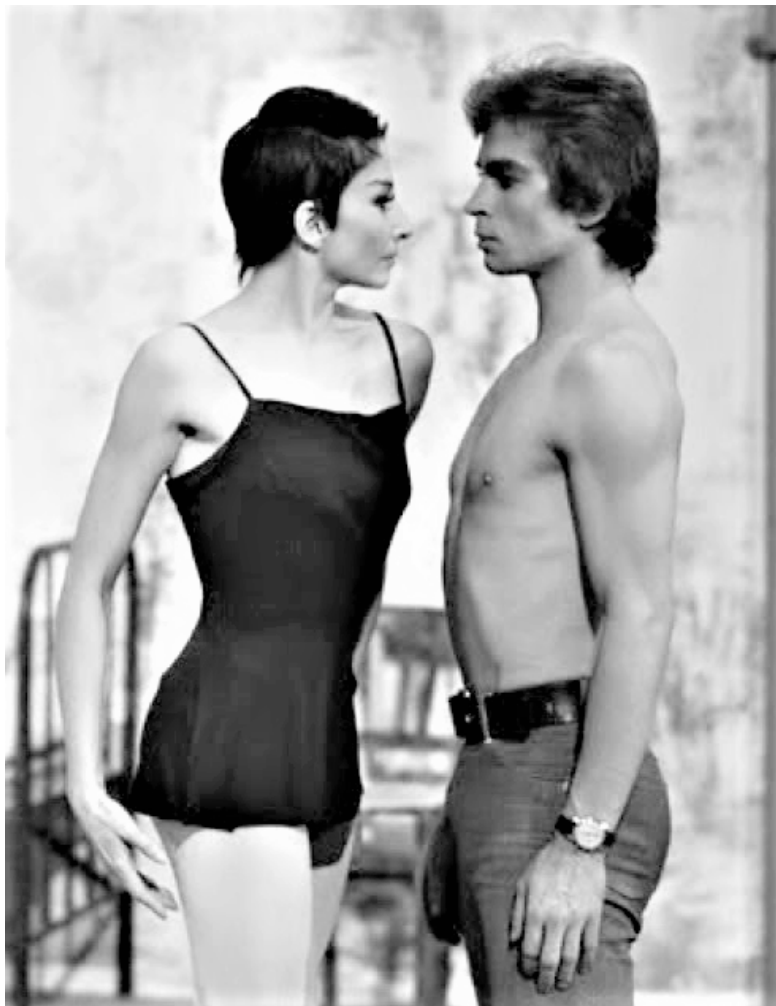


Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev, Wikimedia. Born on a Trans-Siberian train to a Tatar Muslim family, Nureyev only began his ballet training at the advanced age of 17, due to the interruption of the Soviet arts during World War II. Mentored by ballet master Alexander Ivanovich Pushkin at the Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet of Leningrad, by the late 1950s, he had become a sensation dancing with the Kirov Ballet. When the Kirov went on tour to Paris and London in 1961 to demonstrate Soviet cultural superiority, Nureyev was tracked by the KGB secret service as he mingled with foreigners and visited gay bars in Paris. Ordered by the company to return to Moscow for a special performance in the Kremlin, Nureyev smelled a rat, and with the help of a socialite and the French Police, escaped the KGB agents and applied for asylum in France, the first defection of a Soviet artist during the Cold War and creating an international media cause célèbre. Ninette de Valois, invited Nureyev to dance with the Royal Ballet, offering Margot Fonteyn to be his partner in his debut. Although 19 years older than Nureyev, she agreed and upon their performance in *Giselle* to a sold-out crowd, they received 15 minutes of thunderous applause and 20 curtain calls. Noted for their performances of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, despite their 19-year age gap and opposing temperaments – disciplined versus wild exuberance – Fonteyn and Nureyev created a partnership that lasted until her retirement, a friendship enduring for a lifetime.

“Gisella said that’s where she got her name, from the ballet *Giselle*. I’ll see Nureyev when he dances Kenneth MacMillan’s *Romeo and Juliet* with Fonteyn next year. That is the greatest romantic tragedy of them all. I’m in love with tragedy and Fonteyn has the gift of tragedy. Nureyev is only twenty-three and she’s forty-two. The London audience went crazy over them and gave them the longest applause ever known at a Royal Ballet performance. Have you seen him dance?”

“No, but I’ve seen an excerpt on television. The elevation of his leaps and his command of the stage is unparalleled in the West. I’ve heard he didn’t take ballet class until he was seventeen. What he’s accomplished as a dancer in a short time is unheard of.”

“He has a fabulous line and a dashing presence,” I said. “And that Tartar face. He’s like a Dionysian deity soaring across the stage. He’s both Dionysus and Apollo in one. Rudolf is beautiful just standing still. I can imagine Nureyev dancing with Zizi Jeanmaire in Jean Cocteau’s and Roland Petit’s *La Jeune Homme et la Mort*.



Zizi Jeanmaire and Rudolf Nureyev in Roland Petit’s *La Jeune Homme et la Mort*

“Right after the war, Jean Babilée’s performance in that role was a sensation at the Ballet des Champs-Élysées. At the end of the ballet, he hung by his neck on a gallows for a full minute supporting himself by only one arm wrapped around a column. Babilée was ever so powerful. It’s been said that Babilée could leap higher than any dancer since Nijinsky. During the war when he was dancing with the Paris Opéra Ballet, Jean was nearly captured during the Vélodrome d’Hiver roundup by the Nazi and sent to Auschwitz. He escaped Paris to fight in the Resistance with the Maquis in Touraine. Babilée is my hero. I’ve pasted his photo inside the door of my locker. If anyone can equal Babilée performance in *The Young Man and Death*, it’s Rudolf Nureyev. I just hope that the KGB doesn’t have him killed for escaping the Soviet Union.”

“Your fear is not unfounded. Anything is possible with the KGB.”

“Maya Plisetskaya is the fascinating Russian dancer,” I said with great enthusiasm. “I admire her daring streak. As a child, she’d break into a dance before a crowd in the street. With her tall, thin, and powerful body and her gift of splendid musicality, she joined the Bolshoi Ballet at the age of eighteen in the middle of World War Two. At twenty she was given the lead of *Raymonda*. But for sixteen years, the government wouldn’t let Maya tour outside Soviet Bloc countries.”

“Why?”

“They didn’t trust her because of her Lithuanian Jewish descent. When she was eleven, the KGB arrested her papa at dawn. Even though he’d been a dedicated Communist Party member all of his career, the party called him a traitor — an enemy of the state. He was executed during the Stalinist purges when Maya was thirteen. Her mother, a silent screen actress, was hauled off to a Soviet Gulag and exiled to Kazakhstan. Her mother’s sister raised her. Despite her tragedy, Maya didn’t escape to the West.”

“With that kind of brutality, why wouldn’t Maya escape as Nureyev has?”

“She didn’t have a chance to defect. Because of the execution of her father for the political crime of supporting Trotsky, she wasn’t permitted to go abroad. As soon as the Soviets took over the countries of Eastern Europe and adopted the Zhdanov Doctrine, the government no longer trusted Soviet artists.”

“The Zhdanov Doctrine?”

“After the war, the Soviet Central Committee adopted Zhdanov’s proposal, a world view which said the world was divided into two spheres — the imperialistic bloc led by the United States and the democratic bloc

led by the Soviet Union. The Zhdanov Doctrine declared that writers, teachers, and artists must strictly adhere to the party line. Any creative works which didn't follow the rules of the party would be banned, and the artists arrested. Russian composers Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, and Aram Khachaturian were hauled before a composer's tribunal, and forced to repent for their decadent compositions. Despite her success with the public and the critics, Plisetskaya was mistreated by the Bolshoi. The party distrusted her for many years.”



Maya Plisetskaya in Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, March 1961 – Author Mikhail Ozerskiy, Russian International News Agency, RIA Novosti, Wikimedia. Maya Mikhailovna Plisetskaya, a Soviet, ballerina, choreographer, and actress, suffered under Stalin's rule. When she was thirteen, her father Mikhail Plisetski was executed in 1938 during the Great Purge and her mother, actress Rachel Messerer, was imprisoned in a concentration camp. At the age of 9, she began studying at The Bolshoi Ballet School, performing at the Bolshoi Theatre at 11, and joining the Bolshoi Ballet at 18, quickly becoming their prime soloist. Despite her great artistry, since she was Jewish during a time of anti-Zionist crusades and her father had been executed, the Bolshoi refused to let her tour outside Russia for sixteen years. After the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953, First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin, and the USSR entered the "Khrushchev Thaw," a period when repression and censorship in the Soviet Union were relaxed, millions of political prisoners released from Gulag labor camps, setting in motion an increased effort by the USSR to exist peacefully with the West, leading to Khrushchev's visit in 1959 to the U.S. During the Thaw, Plisetskaya began to tour with the Bolshoi outside the country, her international fame as a ballerina exploited by the state during the Cold War to highlight the Soviet Union's achievements with Khrushchev proclaiming her as the best ballerina in the world. Her striking looks and red hair heightened her glamour on stage where she was not only a fluid dancer but a theatrically powerful dancer, her interpretation of *The Dying Swan* becoming her signature piece. Renowned for the height of her jumps and flexibility, her strength and charisma, Plisetskaya excelled in adagio and allegro, her dramatic portrayal of Carmen, achieving a legendary status. When the famous ballerina Galina Ulanova retired in 1960, Plisetskaya became prima ballerina assoluta of the Bolshoi Ballet.

“Since Stalin’s death, hasn’t Khrushchev relaxed the rigidity of the party?”

“Yes. Khrushchev’s admires Plisetskaya. Knowing that her prestige abroad will polish the image of the Communist Party, he gave her permission to tour abroad with the Bolshoi. Another reason for her decision to stay was her marriage to a young composer. That has brightened her outlook on life. Her tour of the U.S. caused a sensation. Admirers Robert F. Kennedy, John Steinbeck, and Ingrid Bergman were at her feet. A perfectionist who spends a great deal of time meditating on her interpretation of a role, she loves to explore new styles. This year she’s dancing *Spartacus* choreographed by Yakobson with music by Khachaturian. A dancer who loves sweeping movements and flying leaps, with elongated line and the plasticity of her arms, she conjures up vivid roles with individuality and passion.

“Plisetskaya is the counterpoint to the Russian prima ballerina assoluta, Galina Ulanova. Hailed as the greatest dancer since Anna Pavlova and adored by the Communist Party, Ulanova was awarded the Stalin Prize, Lenin Prize, and the ‘Hero of Socialist Labor.’ A protégé of Agrippina Vaganova at the Mariinsky Ballet in Leningrad, Ulanova’s purity of technique, expressive hands and ribbon-like fluidity has inspired Plisetskaya and Margo Fonteyn. Ulanova said, ‘Dance is the embodiment of music in movement,’ which is what George Balanchine has said, ‘Dancing is music made visible.’ Both Ulanova and Plisetskaya are gifted with a sublime musicality.”

“But you said Plisetskaya was the counterpoint of Ulanova?”

“While Plisetskaya displays athletic fireworks and fierce passion, Ulanova is a poet who so deeply identifies with her character that you see an ethereal creature transcending reality. She loses herself so completely in her role that nothing else exists. Ulanova avoids the classics like the *Nutcracker* and *Sleeping Beauty*, rather choosing roles which dig deep into a character’s psyche like *Swan Lake* and *Giselle*. Rudolf Nureyev said Ulanova ignored backstage rivalries within the Bolshoi Ballet. She was totally absorbed with the spiritual side of dance. Rudolf Nureyev says that Ulanova’s inner strength and human qualities explain why she remained pure, untouched by backstage intrigue. Inspired by Ulanova, Sergei Prokofiev composed *Romeo and Juliet* which became her signature role. Maya Plisetskaya said that Ulanova created her own style. Like Mozart, Beethoven, and Prokofief, she reflects the spirit of her time. Even when nearing retirement, she captured the pain and joy of teenage passion. I’ve not seen Ulanova dance, but ballet historians write that when Juliet rushes to Friar Lawrence distraught by her forced marriage to Paris, flying across the stage, her black silk

cape surging behind her, her steps express crushing despair. Ulanova's image was gentle, fragile, and soulful. Sergei Prokofiev calls Ulanova the soul of Russia.”

“Despite the difference in style,” Tomás said, “I would say, both Ulanova and Plisetskaya are the soul of Russia.”

“Both dancers share the gift of losing themselves in their character. The contrast of their personalities — ethereal poet versus dynamic rebel — complement one another on stage. Renowned for her dying swan in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, Plisetskaya is as great an actress as Ulanova. One Russian critic wrote, ‘Her arms can twist like snakes and beat like ribbons in the wind.’”

“And Maya remains loyal to Russia, even though they killed her father?”

“One reason,” I said, “would be because she married a composer who is rooted in Russia. Another reason would be her fierce loyalty to Mother Russia. Nevertheless, she has so many reasons to be bitter at the Stalinist regime, it's amazing that she didn't escape. The communists use her to glorify the communist state, forcing her to dance command performances of the dying swan for visiting heads of state until she was sick of it. And yet she continued dancing *Swan Lake*, hundreds of times, wrecking her body for Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, Khrushchev, and the elite KGB



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in Odessa, Russia, 1893 – Author, Vasily Czechowski, Public domain, Wikimedia. Tchaikovsky composed the music for *Swan Lake* in 1871. Based on a German fairy tale, Prince Siegfried falls in love with Odette whose stepmother has cast a spell upon her – a swan by day, a beautiful young woman at night, a spell that can only be broken by a man who promises to love her for all time.

“The great tragedy of Maria’s career is that her genius was never challenged in Russia. Few original roles were created for her. Stuck with the Bolshoi warhorses, she suffered from a poverty of creative choreography. Plisetskaya’s shimmering performances make the obsolete warhorses shine. Maya said, ‘You must sing with your body.’ I wish she had come to the West where Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Frederick Ashton, and Kenneth MacMillan could have choreographed ballets upon her. How wonderful that would have been.

“Plisetskaya is the enchanted Firebird of Russia imprisoned by the evil wizard, Kastchei. The Firebird could only be freed by Kastchei’s death. The evil wizard Stalin imprisoned Plisetskaya. Only after Stalin’s death could Plisetskaya be set free.”



Tamara Karsavina as the firebird and Michel Fokine as Prince Ivan in Ballets Russes ballet *The Firebird*, 1910 – Unknown author, Public domain, Wikimedia



Drawing by Léon Bakst of Tsarevitch Ivan capturing the Firebird, Ballets Russes ballet *L'Oiseau de Feu*, 1915 – Author, Léon Bakst, Public domain, Wikimedia

“It’s a tragedy when an artist with vision, is imprisoned by bureaucrats.”

“Dancers must take chances,” I cried. “Nureyev has set the standard. Now that he’s liberated from the Bolshoi’s corset, Rudolf can experiment with modern dance and work with choreographers like Martha Graham. Rudolf’s influence will make it de rigueur for classical ballet dancers to work in both classical and modern. After leaving the Denishawn School of Dancing, Martha Graham stripped away the more decorative movements of ballet and focused on sheer movement, creating the American classic *Appalachian Spring*, collaborating with composer Aaron Copland composing the Pulitzer Prize winning score and sculptor Isamu Noguchi designing the abstract set. It’s the revolution to which I belong.”



Martha Graham and Bertram Ross, 1961 – Author, Carl Van Vechten, Public domain, U.S. Library of Congress, Wikimedia.

“The KGB kept files on Plisetskaya,” I went on. “They kept her under watch constantly even after Khrushchev let her go abroad. While I agree with your attack on McCarthy’s witch hunt in the U.S., you must admit that the USSR’s mission to export its form of authoritarianism over the globe is a danger everywhere. From the Baltic to the Black Sea, Soviet troops occupy Eastern Europe. The Hungarians’ struggle for freedom was crushed in the Battle of Budapest. Then the Russians went after Berlin. Professor Abraxas Loukas is reviewing in our international diplomacy class the blockade of Berlin right after the Czech coup d’état in 1948. Have you read much about the Berlin blockade?”

“A little, but you’re the one studying it. Tell me.”

“I’ve just finished Loukas’ book on the blockade, an utterly fascinating story of what men can do when they must. Right after the Nazis were defeated, George Kennan, an American diplomat in Moscow, told Truman that Stalin’s claim of ‘capitalist encirclement’ was a fig leaf for seizing power in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Kennan who had studied the Soviet dictator’s Great Purge, said that Stalin had an instinctive fear of the outside world. He needed a hostile world to legitimize his autocratic rule. Kennan suggested to Truman that to foil Stalin’s expansionism, the U.S. must develop a strategy of containment. Kennan’s plan was to win the cold war with political and economic policy instead of military engagement.”

“Kennan’s plan for Soviet containment became the basis for the Truman Doctrine during the Greek Civil War. Because Britain’s economy was so weak after the war, Churchill told Truman that only the U.S. could prevent Greece from falling to the communists. With the Soviet threat to Turkey and Iran and Stalin’s demand for partial control of the Dardanelles straits in 1947, Truman urged the isolationist Republicans in Congress to pass the National Security Act of 1947 to guarantee that the U.S. would shield any government threatened by a Soviet takeover. The act created the CIA, the National Security Council, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and tripled the defense budget. In April 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed to respond militarily to any Soviet expansion. Congress passed the NATO Treaty giving notice to Stalin that the U.S. was enemy number one. The Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe responded with the Warsaw Pact Alliance. The Cold War was on.”

“But the security act,” Tomás said, “made the U.S. a police enforcer throughout the world. There were times when this served a good purpose and other times where it served to keep dictators in power.”

“It was the difference” I said, “between hard power and the soft power which Kennan supported. After

Eisenhower became president, his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, adopted hard power, which meant direct military intervention. Dulles' adoption of hard power was a big change from Kennan's soft power which had been the *raison d'être* for the Marshall Plan. Kennan believed that a free prosperous Europe would be the best long-range defense against communism. That prediction has proven to be true. Yvonne believed if a strategy similar to the Marshall Plan had been enacted to provide economic support for Germany after the First World War, Hitler might have failed to seize power."

"I don't know how soft power could be effective against a Stalin, Hitler, or Franco."

"A military invasion of the Eastern bloc," I replied, "would have been a worse option. Kennan believed that soft power and the promise of trade would encourage those who were reduced to poverty to throw off their shackles. The West promised a better tomorrow and Stalin feared that.



George Kennan, American diplomat, 1947 – Author, Harris & Ewing Collection, U.S. Library of Congress, Wikimedia. While secretary of state, George Marshall had Kennan, an authority on Soviet affairs, create and direct the State Department's Policy Planning Staff wherein Kennan helped draft the Marshall Plan for rebuilding Europe. In 1947, Kennan published in *Foreign Affairs*, the "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," stating that Stalin's constant use of the threat of "capitalist encirclement" was to consolidate his political power in the Soviet Union. Stalin needed a foreign menace to justify his dictatorial rule. Kennan proposed that U.S. policy be long-term, patient but vigilant to contain the expansion of the Soviet Union in Europe. In the beginning, Kennan supported France's colonial war against the communist insurgents in Indo-China because Southeast Asian raw materials were necessary for the economic recovery of Europe and Japan, but changed his views in 1949, becoming convinced that the French would never be able to defeat the Communist Viet Minh guerrillas because of the anti-colonialist sentiments of the Vietnamese.



Joseph Stalin. St. Petersburg Tsarist secret police document, 1911 – Unknown author, Public domain, Wikimedia

“A year after Kennan’s prediction of Stalin’s plans, the Soviet dictator installed a communist government in Romania, cancelled Polish elections, forced out Bulgaria’s democratically elected prime minister, and a communist government took power in Romania. In 1948, a coup d’état installed a communist government in Czechoslovakia, the last independent democratic government in Eastern Europe. Stalin refused to let any of his occupied satellites accept aid from the Marshall Plan, saying that U.S. economic aid was the ‘Trojan horse of American capitalism.’”

“The success of the Marshall Plan,” Tomás said, “caused the Soviets to come down even harder on freedom in Eastern Europe.”

“It came down really hard in East Germany. After the Nazi surrender, the U.S. and British army was not allowed into Berlin until after the Soviets had brutally repressed the surviving Germans. Consequently, after the brutality and an extremely harsh winter, the local elections in 1946 resulted in an overwhelming anti-communist vote especially in the Soviet sector. The British and United States occupation zones began coordinating their economies to prepare for a future West German state.”

“I understand that when the allies introduced a new hard currency, the Deutsche Mark, Stalin had a hemorrhage.”

“Stalin was paranoid to begin with,” I said, “but having a capitalist island paradise right in the heart of communist Germany was something Stalin was not going to tolerate. Knowing the U.S. had sent most of its army home by 1948, Stalin decided to seize Berlin. Defeating the German army had reinforced Stalin’s belief that policy can only be achieved through armed might. With little foresight, the Americans had kept only 30,000 combat troops in a city surrounded by 1.5 million Soviet troops. Realizing the strategic weakness of the U.S., Stalin ordered the blockade of all roads, railroads, and canals that carried food and supplies into the Allied sectors of West Berlin. Two and one half million people couldn’t survive unless they accepted communist rule. Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov said, ‘What happens to Berlin, happens to Germany. What happens to Germany happens to Europe.’ Truman realized that he could not abandon the Berliners no matter what the cost. But the big question was how could they save a city which had no defenses, no significant weapons, had only one month’s supply of food and coal, and was surrounded by a huge Soviet army?”

“That always amazed me,” Tomás said. “Why didn’t those 1.5 million men march in and wipe out the Americans?”

“Well, it did come within a whisker to the brink of war. Professor Loukas said the head of the air force General Curtis LeMay wanted to send fleets of B-29s with fighter escorts to bomb Soviet air bases while ground troops reached Berlin. I don’t think LeMay ever saw a target he didn’t want to bomb. But Truman didn’t want World War Three. The world had had enough of war. The military governor of the U.S. zone in Germany, General Lucius Clay said LeMay’s idea was absolutely crazy — there was the small detail of the one and half million Red soldiers surrounding Berlin. The people of Berlin were totally vulnerable. The Russians were going to hold Berlin hostage until the Americans, French, and British were forced out of the city without a shot being fired. Soviets believed they held all of the cards. While the Germans were not fond of the Americans who’d firebombed their cities to ashes, they were even less fond of the Soviets who had reduced Berlin to rubble, raped thousands of women, shipped factories and machinery out of the country leaving the Germans with practically nothing. While the communists were celebrating their brilliant victory of seizing West Berlin, they failed to take into account the resilience of the Berliners themselves.”

“So, my geopolitical expert, I’m dying to hear what happened next?”

“You’re teasing me. I’m not a geopolitical expert, just a student of Professor Loukas class in international diplomacy. The Pentagon and the U.S. with the full cooperation of the Brits decided to back American commander General Lucius Clay’s desperate gamble to save Berlin — *through the air*. While the peace agreements had not formally granted the allies ground access to the city, there was a provision that granted three air corridors to the city.



The Western powers were allowed only three air corridors to Berlin after World War II treaties – Author, Leerlaufprozess, GNU, Wikimedia

“The only way to stop an airlift supply to the city would be to shoot the Allied planes down. The Brits had previously calculated the resources required to support the entire city. The number of flights necessary to supply a city of two and a half million people, including the coal for the factories and homes, was enormous. It was beyond their wildest imagination. But they had no other choice. So ‘Operation Vittles’ was begun by the Americans and ‘Operation Plainfare’ by the British. Even with flights going out from both the Tempelhof and Gostow airports on three-minute intervals, they discovered it was only possible to bring in a fraction of the total required. The bad weather, days of fog and snow, the harassment by Soviet fighters buzzing the planes, searchlights blinding the pilots at night, crashes on the runway, a lack of workers to unload the planes in ten minutes flat, and a lack of aviation maintenance crews for hundreds of planes, put them far short of the tonnage needed to keep Berliners from starving. The airlift was failing and the Berliners were terrified.”

“Under those circumstances, how did they make it work?”



C-47 Skytrains and U.S. Navy Douglas R4D unload at Tempelhof Airport, Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949 – U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia



Cockpit of Douglas C-47 Skytrain Dakota – Author, Marine 68-71, Mesa-Arizona Commemorative Air Force Museum, Wikimedia



Interior of a Douglas C-47 Skytrain – Author U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia

“The biggest limitation at first was that there were only two airports and the available C-47 Skytrains had a payload of only 3 tons with sloping cabin floors making them difficult to unload quickly. But soon the C-54 Skymaster and C-74 Globemasters carrying 10 tons were put to work and the tonnage of supplies began to grow.



C-47 Skytrain with 'invasion stripes' that flew from a base in Devon, England during the D-Day invasion of Normandy – Author, Adrian Pingstone, Public domain, Wikimedia

“The Brits were landing the giant Sunderland Flying Boats on a lake in the British sector. The biggest challenge was bringing in enough coal to keep the Berliners from freezing. They even flew in milk for the babies, newsprint for the democratic press, and feed for animals in the Berlin Zoo.”

“That’s fantastic,” Tomás said, clapping his hands together. “They even managed to feed the animals?”

“They succeeded in keeping most alive, unlike the people of Leningrad who, surrounded for months in winter by the Nazis, had to eat all of the animals in the zoo.



Short Sunderland GR Mark 5 of No 201 Squadron, Royal Air Force moored on the Havel River, Berlin Germany – Author, RAF, Public domain Imperial War Museum, Wikimedia. The crew relaxes on the roof of the Sunderland while crates of salt are unloaded. During winter, the ice on the Havel River and Lake Wannsee made landing impossible.



Douglas C-54 Skymaster, 1943 – Author, U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia. A four-engined aircraft used in World War II and Korean War, the C-54 Skymaster was based on the civilian DC-4 airliner. Used for air-sea rescue, scientific research, and missile tracking, during the Berlin Airlift, it carried coal and food to West Berlin. During the war, the C-54 not only carried Franklin D. Roosevelt, Douglas MacArthur, and Winston Churchill, it was used by the Royal Air Force, the French Air Force, and the armed forces of a dozen nations.



Short Sunderland Mark IIIA with Mark V radar blisters and nose guns – Unknown author, Canadian Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia



Gunners in the Short Sunderland Mark I with .303 Vickers K-type machine guns mounted in the upper fuselage hatches – Author, Devon S A, Public domain, Imperial War Museum, Wikimedia



Loading milk in a U.S. C-47 Skytrain headed for Tempelhof, Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949 – U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia



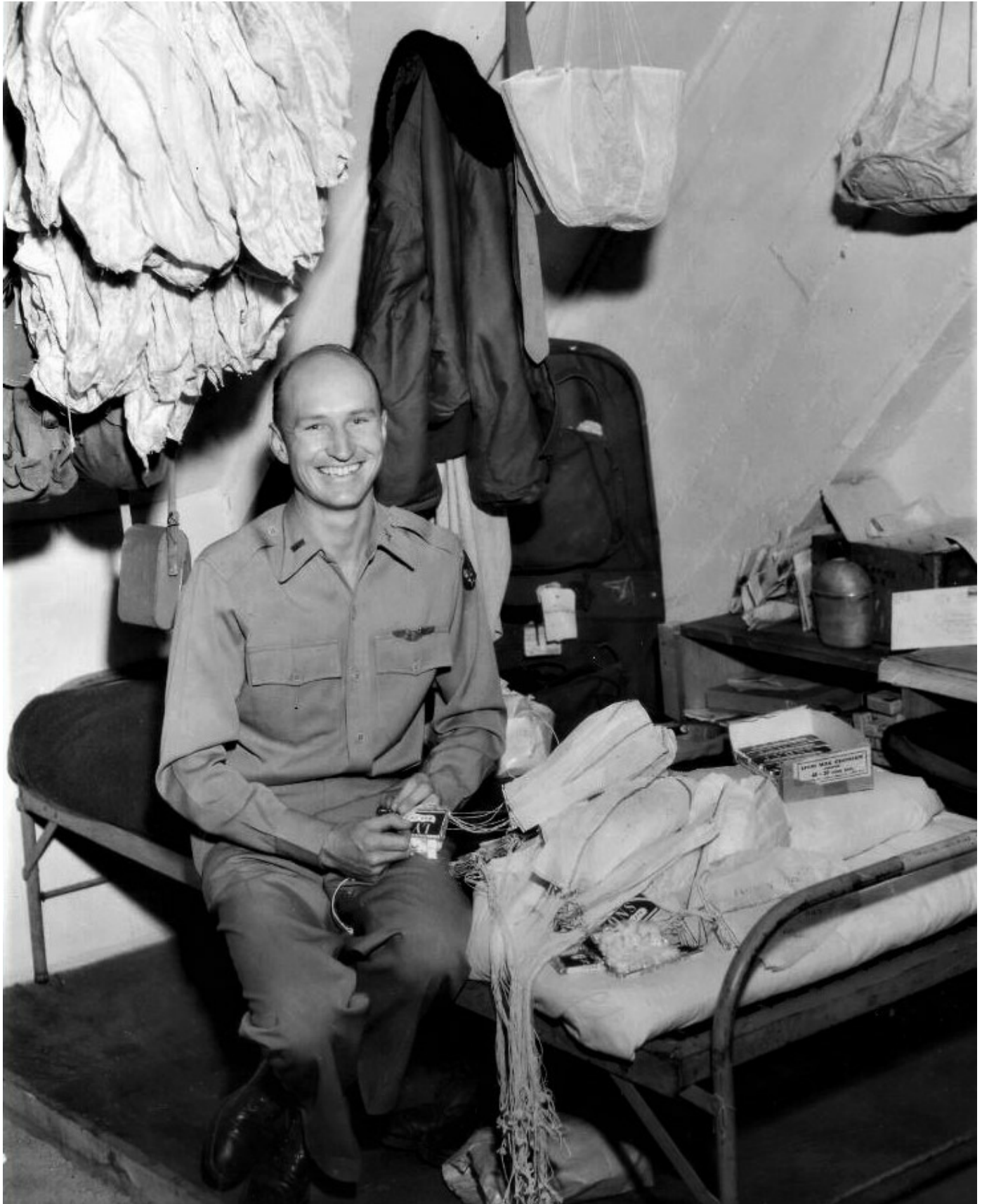
Barefoot German children get to see 20 tons of flour from the United States unloaded from a C-74 Globemaster at Gatow airfield in Berlin during "Operation Vittles," 24 June 1948 – Author U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. National Archives, Wikimedia

“Trying to rebuild after the war and bogged down in a colonialist war in Indochina, France had only a few planes they could supply. But France could build the third air field which was absolutely necessary if ‘Operation Vittles’ was going to have a chance of succeeding. General Jean Ganeval took charge of building Tegel airfield in the French sector. First challenge to overcome was that the cargo planes were not large enough to bring the giant earth movers required to level the field. A Brazilian genius solved the problem by cutting the giant machines apart, shipping them in pieces and welding them back together. The French built the Tegel airfield in three months mainly by the labor of thousands of German women. Those women were good shovelers. But there was one little problem that could kill a lot of airmen — a tall radio tower right next to the field just across the border in the Soviet sector, hazardous to the flight of the planes. The tower was a potential death trap. The Soviet general laughed when asked to remove the tower. General Ganeval didn’t argue. He sent a demolitions crew in one night and blew it up. Problem was solved. The Soviet general called him screaming, ‘How could you do this?!’ General Ganeval replied, ‘With dynamite, my comrade.’”

“There were many heroes other than General Ganeval. The most memorable was Uncle Wiggly Wings.”



Douglas C-54 Skymaster making a “Little Vittles” candy-drop by parachute over Tempelhof airfield – Author, U.S. Air Force, Wikimedia



1st Lt. Gail Halvorsen, “Uncle Wiggly Wings” of the 17th Military Air Transport Squadron, rigging miniature parachutes for Operation Little Vittles, carrying candy for the children in Berlin, parachutes that Halvorsen and his fellow pilots dropped from their C-54 Skymaster when approaching the Tempelhof landing strip – Author, U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia



Berliners watching an airlift plane land at Tempelhof Airport, 1948 – Author, U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia

“And who was Uncle Wiggly Wings?” Tomás laughed.

“One of the American pilots, Lt. Gail Halvorsen, was walking across Tempelhof field one day and spotted small boys beyond the fence watching wave after wave of planes coming in, a common pastime of girls and boys to watch their saviors from the sky. Gail said hello and answered the boys’ questions about airplanes. He noticed they were proud and didn’t ask for anything but a little conversation with a pilot. Gail searched his pockets and could only find two sticks of spearmint gum to give them.”

“The next time I fly over,’ he promised the boys, ‘I’ll drop some chocolate.’”

“How will we know it’s you or else we’ll miss the chocolate?’ They asked.”

“I’ll wiggle my wings. Just look for the parachutes.”

“The next day, on his approach to Berlin, Gail rocked his plane’s wing and dropped some chocolate bars attached to a handkerchief parachute to the children below. The kids loved the chocolates falling from the

sky. Soon there was a stack of letters arriving at Base Operations addressed to ‘*Uncle Wiggly Wings*’ and ‘*The Chocolate Flier*.’ Gail was in trouble with his commander at first, but when the chief of the airlift heard of Gail’s chocolates, he encouraged the chocolate air drop. Soon many airmen were dropping candy in ‘Operation Little Vittles.’ By the time of the Berlin airlift, three tons of chocolate had been dropped to the children. The chocolate drop represented a huge propaganda victory over the Soviets. It lifted the spirits of the Berliners.”

“It’s amazing,” Tomás said, “how much good will chocolates can create.”

“The Soviets did everything in their power to make it fail — shutting off the West’s electric power, closing the Parliament, and taking over City Hall. Fearing that the Soviets would march in at any moment and they’d be abandoned by the West, one-half million Berliners assembled before the Brandenburg Gate across from the ruins of the Reichstag to plea for the West to not abandon them. This made a deep impression on the Americans back in the states. It reinforced their determination to not abandon the Berliners. That winter with little coal to burn and hardly any more trees to cut down, the Berliners were freezing but said, ‘It is cold in Berlin, but colder in Siberia.’”



The Brandenburg Gate after the Soviet’s army assault on Berlin, June 1945 – Author, Carl Weinrother, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia



Brandenburg Gate restored – Author, Drrcs15, Wikimedia. Built by command of Prussian King Frederick William II between 1788 and 1791, the Brandenburg Gate was designed by Carl Gotthard Langhans based on the Propyleaea, the gateway to the Acropolis in Athens. After Napoleon defeated the Prussians at the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt, the Quadriga, a chariot drawn by four horses driven by Victoria, the Roman goddess of victory, was taken by the French emperor to Paris. When Napoleon was defeated in 1814, Prussian General Ernst von Pfuell restored the Quadriga to Berlin. Under Hitler’s Third Reich, the Brandenburg Gate became a symbol of the Nazi Party. Reduced to ruins after the Soviet army’s assault on Berlin and following the Nazi surrender, East and West Berlin governments partially restored the Brandenburg Gate, but once the Berlin Wall was begun by the German Democratic Republic to seal off East Berlin, thousands of West Berliners led by Mayor Willy Brandt on 12 August 1961 protested the wall that would close all access to the Brandenburg Gate for 28 years, the gate becoming a symbol during the Cold War of the desire to unify the two Germans. In 1989, a series of revolutions in Poland and Hungary, and a growing resistance in the citizens of East Germany, led to the East German government allowing GDR citizens to visit West Berlin, and in the following year, culminated in the demolition of the oppressive Cold War barricade and the reunification of Germany, 3 October 1990.

“But an airlift of that magnitude,” Tomás said, “would require thousands of trained mechanics, ground crews, warehouse laborers, and thousands of cargo planes.”

“The workers unloading the planes were Berliners,” I said. “The good-looking young woman chosen to serve the sandwiches and drinks to the American and British pilots while they were waiting to be unloaded were all Berliners. The aviation mechanics and ground crews were from their former enemies the German Luftwaffe. As Emile once said, it’s a good idea to hire the army you’ve defeated. If you don’t, you’ve got big problems. The Germans, British, French, and Americans worked together like a well-oiled clock, a flight going out every three minutes, twenty-four hours a day for over a year, an undertaking which had never been attempted before. Forty or fifty airmen died in crashes before the blockade was lifted.”

“It’s still a mystery,” Tomás said, “why the Soviets didn’t just march in and take the city.”

“At that moment, the U.S. had the bomb, the Soviets did not. What the Stalin didn’t know, Loukas said, was that not one of the B-29s in England was armed with the atomic bomb.



Boeing B-29 Superfortress in flight – U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia. The B-29 Superfortress, a four-engine **propeller-driven heavy bomber** designed for high-altitude bombing and low-altitude night incendiary bombing, was the most expensive program of World War Two. The B-29 state-of-the-art technology with a pressurized cabin and an analog computer-controlled fire control system allowing one gunner and a fire control officer to control four remote machine gun turrets, made it effective throughout the Korean War and was not retired until the 1960s after 3,970 had been built.



Boeing B-29 Superfortress Wichita assembly line, 1944 – U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia



Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Enola Gay" landing in the Mariana Islands after dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan – Author, U.S. Air Force, Public domain, Wikimedia

“If the Russians had known that, it would have been a tragedy for the Berliners. That is why maintaining secrecy is so critical in wartime. That’s one reason Papa survived working with the resistance. You don’t give up information under any circumstances.”

“Many believe Stalin was a brilliant leader,” Tomás said, “but not only were his collectivization of agriculture and five year plan economic catastrophes, he also made an error in thinking that he could seize Berlin. Germans were bitter over the Soviet’s destruction of Berlin and its pillaging of German factories and resources. After Germany’s cities were reduced to rubble, there was only death, destruction, and hopelessness in Germany. The demobilized German soldiers were without jobs, still wearing their filthy uniforms begging for food and cigarettes. The Germans had massacred millions of people and enslaved millions more, and now the world celebrated the crushing of the Nazi monster. The Germans were suddenly a race apart, cursed by the world.”

“The ruthlessness of Stalin is no surprise,” I said. “When I was kid, Emile Charreau told me stories about Stalin being a bank robber and killer during the Russian Revolution. After the war, he made no distinction between traitors or Russian prisoners of wars — they were all equally guilty of the crime of being

outside Russia. A soldier must die rather than be captured. I'm surprised that Stalin didn't have cyanide capsules given to his troops before going into battle. He even disowned his only son Yakov after his capture by the Germans. The Allies forcibly repatriated two million Russians POWs and refugees back to the USSR, sending them to a terrible fate where Stalin had them liquidated or sent to slave labor camps in Siberia.



Gulag prisoner labor constructing the Belomokanal, the White Sea-Baltic Canal, 1932 – Unknown author, Public domain, Wikimedia. The Gulag, an acronym for “Main Administration of Camps,” were called “corrective labor camps” by the politburo of the Soviet Communist Party. Vladimir Lenin set up the Gulags to imprison dangerous and anti-state persons who were “harmful to the dictatorship of the proletariat.” In 1929, Joseph Stalin began a ‘dekulakization’ program to wipe out the kulak class of wealthier peasants resulting in the imprisonment and execution of peasants who resisted the Soviet program of forced collectivization of agriculture, and during the 1932-1933 Holodomor, the starvation of six million Ukrainians. During the 1930s, forced labor camps were part of the Soviet industrial big push to exploit natural resources, colonize remote areas of Siberia, and construct infrastructure and heavy industry. During the severe famine of 1931 to 1933, out of the eighteen million working in the prison camps, six to seven million perished, many of them intellectuals and artists due to the hostility of Soviet leaders toward the intelligentsia. In 1940, the USSR occupied Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bessarabia, and sent hundreds of thousands of citizens to the Gulag camps. After the German invasion in the winter of 1941, a quarter of the Gulag population died of starvation due to the bitter working conditions and the resulting famine caused by the Nazi invasion. By analyzing archival data, scholars estimate that of the millions of prisoners sent to the Gulags, as many as two million perished due to forced labor and starvation. As factories were converted to produce armaments during the war, the NKVD collected skilled workers from the Gulags to produce tanks, aircraft, and ammunition. Like the Nazi forced labor camps, the productivity of the Soviet camps was poor compared to civilian workers due to inadequate machinery and tools, coerced labor with little sleep, and scarcity of food. As Hitler’s armies pushed into Russia in 1941, many of the Gulags had to be moved to the East, the rapidity of Operation Barbarossa so rapid that the NKVD massacred many of the slave laborers to prevent them from falling into Nazi hands. Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who survived eight years of Gulag imprisonment, published *The Gulag Archipelago* in 1973, revealing to the international community the inhumanity of Soviet forced labor.



Chiefs of the Soviet labor camps constructing the Belomokanal, the White Sea-Baltic Canal, 1932 – Unknown author, Wikimedia

“Stalin’s war crimes,” I said, “were as repugnant as the crimes of the Nazis. Stalin’s modus operandi was not the way to win the hearts of the Berliners.”

“And when the Allies,” Tomás said, “banned all strategic exports from the Eastern bloc, it put pressure on the Soviets to back down over Berlin. If the Eastern bloc couldn’t sell their products to the West, their economies would collapse. The blockade had an opposite effect than Stalin had intended for it brought Western Europe closer together. Out of the airlift, the German Federal Republic was created. The blockade of Berlin accelerated the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance for defense. It was Stalin’s biggest miscalculation. Canada, Portugal, Italy, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland joined with the U.S., France, and Britain to form NATO in 1949. My country didn’t join.”

After most of the crowd had left the cafe, Tomás moved us closer to the wood stove near the kitchen and ordered a sumptuous dessert, Greek yogurt with honey and walnuts and a Frappe, chilled Greek coffee with milk, honey, and crushed ice.

There was another thing I didn’t mention,” I said, “General Clay told the American government to abandon the Morgenthau Plan.”



**Frappe, Greek iced coffee –
Author, Elwiki74, Wikimedia**

“The Morgenthau Plan?” Tomás said.

“It was the Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau’s plan which the U.S. first adopted to eliminate Germany’s ability to wage war. Like Clémenceau’s determination after World War One, the plan was to strip German factories of machinery, destroy its industrial capacity, and turn Germany into an agricultural state which would never be strong enough to fight again. Professor Loukas told us that Lucius Clay saw this as self-defeating. Clay had the same insight that John Maynard Keynes had after World War One when he called the Versailles Treaty, a Carthaginian Peace that would crush Germany and eventually lead to an even more horrific war. A hungry people and a failed nation, General Clay said, would leave the country vulnerable to the Soviets. Instead of economic dismantlement of Germany by the Russians, Clay’s Report recommended economic reconstruction. A broken Germany wouldn’t be an asset to Europe. The U.S. reversed the policy of sending machinery, minerals, and machinery from Germany to Russia and began sending aid through the Marshall Plan. It was a big shot in the arm to the Germans who were starving and freezing in winter.”

“I’ll agree wholeheartedly with you,” Tomás said, “the Marshall Plan and the airlift were Harry Truman’s great foreign policy successes. It cemented a friendship between Germany and America. After the Russians destroyed Berlin, Germany was broken. The Germans were overcome by remorse and hopelessness.

A year before the airlift, there were still four million German soldiers being used as forced labor in the the Soviet Union. The German minorities in Poland and Czechoslovakia were beaten and driven out of the country of their birth by the fierce need for vengeance. The Germans civilians were blamed for SS atrocities. The homeless immigrants were driven back into Germany which only increased the misery of a ruined nation without food or resources. The airlift created a bond between America and Germany that would've been impossible to predict after the Allies' firebombing destroyed Dresden and Hamburg. Ruin was everywhere.

“Impressionable people rave about strong leaders. But the force that brought Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin to power also led to their failures. Their obsession with their own infallibility and the will to power made them ultimately fail. A leader's inability to change course when obstacles occur is a fatal flaw. The neo-Nazis acclaim Hitler as a military genius, but time after time, Hitler refused to listen to his generals. Nowhere was it more evident than at Stalingrad when Hitler refused to allow the German army to break out of the Soviet entrapment, a hopeless situation which led to the complete annihilation of the Germans. Like Stalin, Hitler expected everyone to die for his sake. Hitler's order to deport the Jewish population and execute prisoners of war alienated Field Marshall Erwin Rommel who believed that the atrocities of the SS Panzer Das Reich in massacres like Oradour-sur-Glane would result in Germany losing the war.”



Field Marshall Erwin Rommel to the right of Adolf Hitler in Poland, September 1939 – Author, Kliem, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia

“Rommel and other top German officers,” Tomás said, “came to the conclusion that Hitler should be removed from power. They saw the writing on the wall. Germany must negotiate an end to the war. The only way to save Germany was to kill Hitler.”

“When the Gestapo,” I said, “tortured the conspirators and discovered Rommel’s support, Hitler said the German hero must die. Hitler knew the Germans held Rommel in such esteem that he couldn’t publicly execute him for it would damage German morale. Hitler decided to offer Rommel a chance to commit suicide by a capsule of cyanide. If Rommel chose suicide his family and staff would be spared. After Rommel’s death, it was announced in the press that he died of a heart attack. Hitler ordered a national day of mourning and Rommel was buried with full military honors, his coffin emblazoned with a Nazi swastika. Dictators devour their own.”



Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel's funeral procession, 18 October 1944 – Author, Hoffman, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia

“Flexibility and subtlety,” I said, “when things go wrong is what makes a leader like Franklin Delano Roosevelt so valuable to a nation. That’s why, along with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, Roosevelt is respected as one of the greatest of U.S. Presidents. Those who worship strong men believe that accommodation is weakness. They fail to understand that the puffed-up chest of a Mussolini and the scorched

earth policy of Stalin may succeed at first but as André Malraux said, ‘There have been murderers and tyrants, and for a time they can seem invincible. But in the end, they always fall.’

“Franklin Delano Roosevelt accomplished more in a wheelchair than any other American of his generation did on two feet. Emile told me that FDR’s mother’s maiden name, Delano came from a French Huguenot ancestor who immigrated to American. Roosevelt’s mother said, “My son is a Delano, not a Roosevelt at all.’ We can thank a French descendant who led the Americans in the liberation of France.”

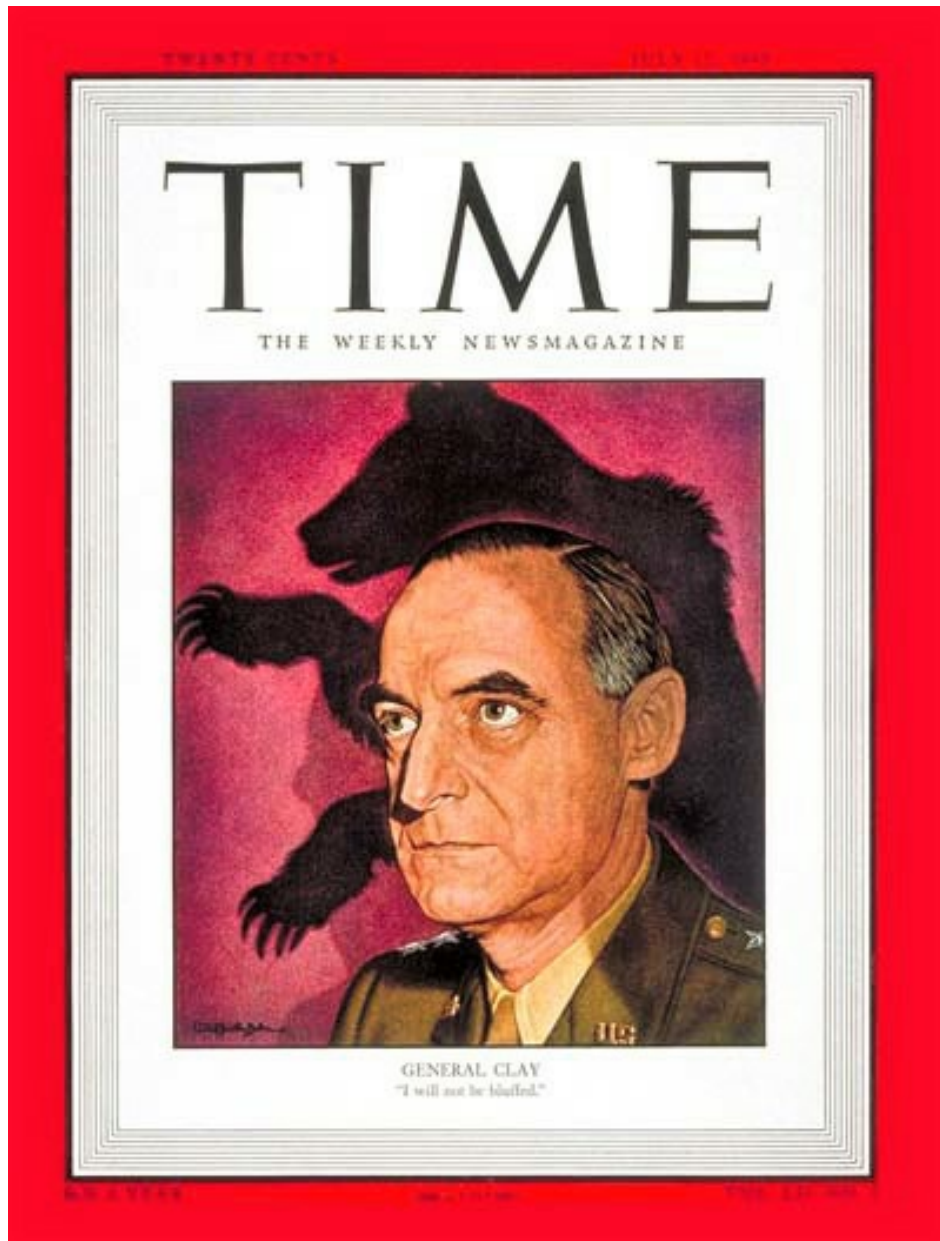
Tomás smiled, crinkles appearing at the corner of his Asiatic eyes. “Céline, I’m impressed with your insight, especially at your age.”

“I have Yvonne and Emile to thank for that.”

“You understand,” Tomás said, “that the difference between a maniac and a great leader is to possess suppleness and resilience when you’re up against the wall. This was apparent in the Berlin airlift which was a big gamble for Harry Truman, George Marshall, and the chief hero, General Lucius Clay. But the gamble paid off. It preserved the freedom of the West Berliners.



Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower confers with Lt. Gen. Lucius B. Clay at Gatow Airport, Berlin, Germany during the Potsdam Conference, 20 July 1945 – Unknown author, U.S. National Archives, Wikimedia. In the background is Gen. Omar Bradley.



Lucius D. Clay, 12 July 1948 – Author, *TIME* magazine, Public domain, Wikimedia. In 1947, General Clay succeeded Eisenhower as military governor of occupied Germany and created *Der Monat*, a journal intended to encourage German intellectuals to support U.S. foreign policy, a journal that was delivered along with supplies during the Berlin airlift. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Clay supervised the construction of 450 airports that became the structure of the U.S. civil aviation network. After the war, Clay commissioned “A Report on Germany,” which moved the American occupation policy away from the Morgenthau Plan that advocated the economic dismantlement of Germany to one of economic reconstruction, preparing the groundwork for the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe.

“The symbolism of the Berlin airlift,” Tomás said, “was the beginning of a new Europe. Willy Brandt, the Mayor of Berlin, is the man I admire most in Germany. During the war, Willy fled to Norway and Sweden to escape Nazi persecution, remaining in exile until the Allies took Berlin. As Mayor of West Berlin, Willy has bitterly challenged the Soviets’ brutal repression in the Hungarian Revolution and opposed Khrushchev’s proposal that Berlin be established as a ‘free city.’”

“Under Walter Ulbricht,” I said, “the German Democratic Republic nationalized German industry and initiated an orthodox five-year Stalinist plan to develop heavy industry at the expense of consumer goods, leaving only shoddy products in the stores for the people to buy. With Marxism-Leninism indoctrination compulsory in the schools and Soviet rule becoming more and more repressive, East Berliners began fleeing to the West. Every year more and more of the intelligentsia fled, the brain drain threatening to undermine the economy. In desperation, Khrushchev and East German leader Walter Ulbricht ordered a wall to be constructed which would completely close off the East from the West. Ulbricht called it the ‘Rampart to defend against the fascist capitalism of the West.’ Anyone who tried to escape across the one hundred-meter strip of death that divided the two cities would be shot on sight.”



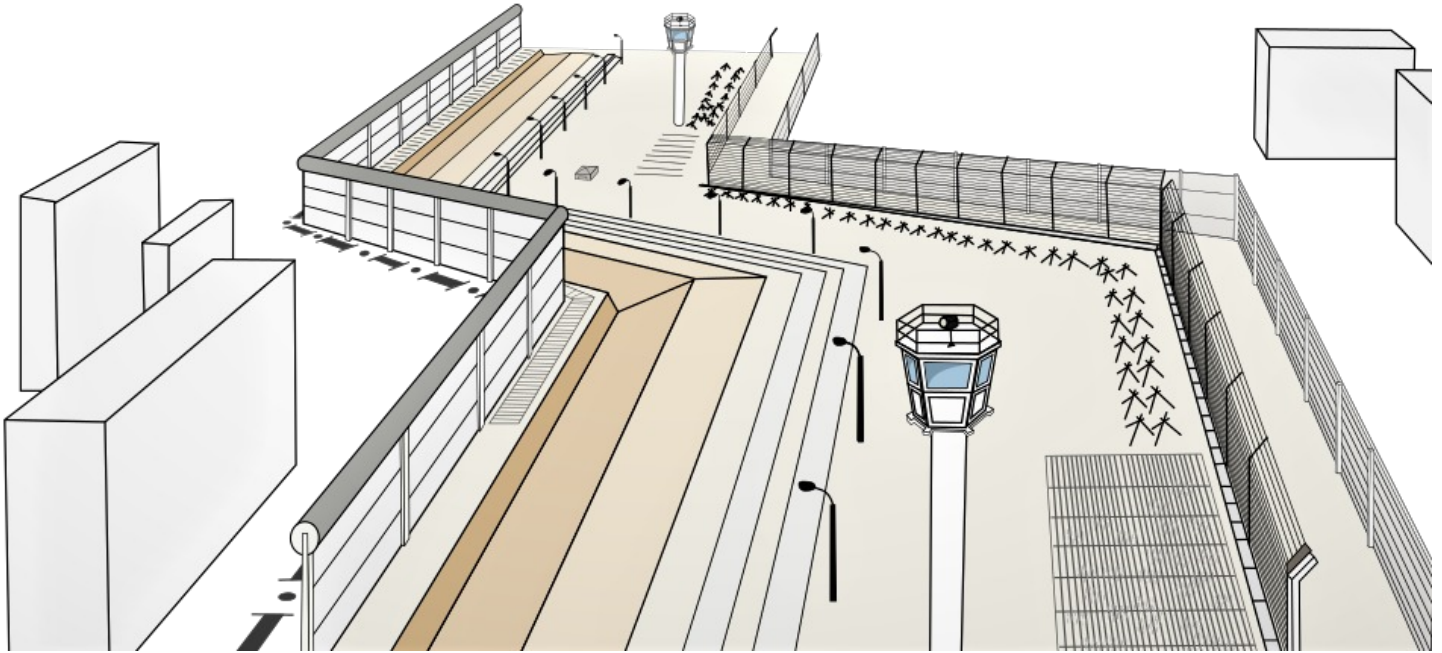
East German workers building the Berlin Wall, 20 November 1961 – Public Domain, U.S. National Archives, Wikimedia

“I remember,” Tomás said, “Mayor Willy Brandt calling it the ‘Wall of Shame.’”

“East Berliners,” I said, “lost their jobs because they could no longer work in the western sector. Split by the two zones, families could no longer see each other. The British, American, and French, zones were sealed off from the outside world forming a concentration camp surrounded by a hostile communist state. From the communist point of view, anyone leaving the German Democratic Republic was committing an act of moral depravity, a betrayal to the communist state. To escape meant death.”

West Berlin

East Berlin



Berlin Wall – Author, 4Kclips, Shutterstock



Berlin Wall death strip with Czech hedgehog and guard tower – Author, George Garrigues, Wikimedia



Berlin Wall – Author, 4Kclips, Shutterstock

“Germany remains two radically different worlds,” Tomás said. “Willy Brandt’s urban development for Berlin has resulted in a German economic miracle — construction of hotels and office buildings, tens of thousands of apartments, the restoration of the baroque Charlottenburg Palace and The Reichstag which was destroyed when the Soviets took Berlin.”

“My sister Yvonne taught a course on the reparations levied on Germany after World War One. From that disaster, the West learned a lot about reparations and how they can keep a country from rebuilding its economy. After World War Two, the West needed a strong democratic West Germany as a bulwark against the Soviets. They couldn’t realize a strong West Germany unless its economy was restored. In 1953, Germany’s creditors met in London to consider reducing Germany’s debt despite the fact that Nazi Germany had committed a vast number of war crimes during their occupation of Europe. The resulting London Debt Agreement canceled 60% of Germany foreign debt.”

“I wasn’t aware,” Tomás said, “Germany’s foreign debt was restructured after the war. Other than the United States, which countries were carrying Germany’s debt?”

“Britain, France, Spain, and surprisingly, Egypt and Greece,” I replied. “The right equation meant that Germany had to be able to pay back the debt while maintaining a high level of growth and still be able to improve the living standards of its people. In other words, they had to pay back without getting poorer. The most innovative feature of the London Debt Agreement was the clause that said West Germany should only pay for foreign debts out of its trade surplus. Furthermore, repayments were limited to 5% of export earnings each year. This clever idea insured that the creditor nations would be motivated to buy German exports and consequently help develop a thriving economy in West Germany.

“That’s extraordinary,” Tomás said, “considering that Prussia demanded huge reparations from France after the 1870 Franco-Prussian war.”

“It wasn’t just altruism on the part of the U.S.,” I added, “It made economic sense. The American economy had been rescued from the 30’s depression not only by Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s policies but by gearing up industrial production to defeat Hitler and Japan. After the war was won, the problem was how to maintain full employment in the U.S. during peace time. Europe had been so devastated by the war that none of the countries could buy American products. To reconstruct Europe, the question was — should the money be given or loaned? If they were provided loans and used the money to buy American goods, then they would have no money left to repay the loans and would be forced to borrow more money to pay off the previous loans including interest which would insure a perpetual cycle of indebtedness. The thinking was that if they were not required to pay off loans, then they could use the donated dollars to achieve reconstruction and purchase U.S. exports thereby guaranteeing full employment in the U.S. The same economic thinking behind the Marshall Plan led to the London Debt Agreement which reduced Germany’s indebtedness to create a vibrant economy.”

“Well it worked,” Tomás said. “The economic miracle of the German recovery is why the Soviets have built the Berlin wall. Even though Willy Brandt lost the election for Chancellor to the right-wing candidate Konrad Adenauer, he’s planning to run in the next election for Chancellor as the Social Democratic Party candidate. There is one thing that Willy and Konrad agree upon — they both hold the German military and Prussian aristocracy responsible for bringing Hitler to power.”



German statesman Willy Brandt meeting John F. Kennedy at the White House, 13 March 1961 – Author, *U.S. News & World Report*, U.S. Library of Congress, Wikimedia. Willy Brandt, leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany from 1964 to 1987, and Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1969 to 1974, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971 for his development of *Neue Ostpolitik*, New Eastern Policy, which created a rapprochement with East Germany and improved relations with the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other communist Eastern Bloc nations. Upon becoming Chancellor, Brandt reformed domestic policy, directing increased funds for housing, transportation, communication, schools, and support for farmers. By increasing pensions, unemployment benefits, housing allowances, subsistence aid, and social security benefits for injury and sickness, by the end of the Brandt Chancellorship, West Germany had achieved one of the most advanced systems of social welfare among all nations.

“It was also the industrialists,” I said. “Without their financial support, Hitler would have never taken power. At the Krupp Trial in Nuremberg, Alfried Krupp, the CEO of Krupp, was sentenced to twelve years and his possessions seized. But in 1951, the verdict was reversed.”

“Why?”

“The necessity of rebuilding the economy of Germany. Instead of serving a 12 year sentence, Alfried Krupp was freed after only two years and most of his industrial empire restored.”

“Outrageous,” Tomás said, “the Krupp tanks, artillery, and submarines were responsible for millions of deaths. The Krupp factories used 100,000 forced laborers from conquered countries. One quarter of them were prisoners of war, thousands dying in subhuman conditions.”



Krupp production of Tiger I tanks – Author, Hebenstreit, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia



Krupp industrial complex destroyed by Allied bombing, April 1945 – Author, U.S. Signal Corps, Public domain, Wikimedia



Krupp Trial defendants, from left, Alfried Krupp, [Ewald Löser](#), Eduard Houdremont, Erich Müller, Friedrich Janssen, Karl Pfirsch, and Karl Eberhardt – Unknown author, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia

“There was one German industrialist who’d supported Hitler but turned against him.”

“Who was that?”

“Fritz Thyssen, the leader of the huge steel and coal trust. Once he saw that Hitler was the wave of the future, he provided funding to the Nazi Party. Shortly after Hitler seized total power, Thyssen became outraged by the Nazi ‘Sterilization Law’ designed by Germany’s racial hygienists that ordained the sterilization of people with ‘genetically determined’ diseases. Disillusioned, Thyssen protested the purge of 1934, the persecution of clergymen and the Jewish extermination in 1938. He believed a war of expansion to the East would destroy Germany. ‘If human civilization is not to perish, everything that is possible must be done to make war impossible in Europe,’ he said. Thyssen realized he’d been duped by a demagogue who was obsessed by romantic fantasies and historical delusions. ‘Hitler, he said, ‘was a barbarous and bloody anachronism.’ Thyssen paid dearly for turning against the tyrant. When he refused to approve the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and sent a telegram to Hermann Göring saying that he was opposed to the war, the Nazis confiscated Thyssen’s vast industrial empire.”

“What happened to Fritz Thyssen?”

“He was arrested and imprisoned in the concentration camps of Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and finally in Dachau where he was liberated by Allied troops in 1945. But Thyssen was an exception. The great majority of the corporate leaders were happy to make the profits that the Nazis provided them. During the Nuremberg Trials, the great industrialist Alfried Krupp refused to accept any responsibility. He said he’d supported Hitler because the economy during the Weimar government was unstable. The bitter clash between political parties and the chaos allowed no opportunity for business. ‘Hitler,’ Krupp said, ‘offered us a path to prosperity and that’s what we got.’ The German businessmen wanted a system that worked and allowed them to work unobstructed. ‘Hitler accomplished,’ Krupp said, ‘what he promised to do.’”



Adolf Hitler as an infant, 1889 – Author, Josef Franz Klinger, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia



Adolf Hitler, 1938. German chancellor, 1933-1945 – Unknown author, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia

“He accomplished the destruction of Europe,” Tomás said, slamming his fist down on the table. “What a cowardly refusal to take responsibility. The business elite furnished Hitler with the tools to lay waste to all of Europe and put millions of soldiers and civilians in the grave.”



Berlin Wall remains – Author, Datguy, Wikimedia

**The concrete columns, the barbed wire, the death strips,
the watch towers and the machine guns, those are the
hallmarks of a concentration camp. It will not stand.**

— Willy Brandt

“I know it sounds crazy, but as I just said, in the early 50’s, the Allied powers decided that Krupp and the great industrialists were necessary to build a resurgent Germany. They were released from prison by a declaration of clemency by the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany. Most of their assets were returned to them. The West believed that only a strong German economy could stand up to the communist menace in East Germany. The urgent needs of the present compelled a moral amnesia of the past.”

“Willy Brandt,” Tomás said, “has the astonishing belief that Berlin and eventually the two Germanys can be united.”

“I’ve read in *L’Express*,” I said, “that Willy plans to introduce *Neue Ostpolitik*, a new policy of rapprochement with East Germany, the Soviet Union, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Instead of trying to isolate the Soviet bloc, Willy’s policy looks for an engagement with the East. He wants to encourage the Eastern Bloc to lift their siege mentality. He dreams of establishing a new relationship between East and West. Willy wants to finally end World War Two.”



Willy Brandt, left, and Willi Stoph in Erfurt, Germany, 19 March 1970, the first encounter of a West German leader with an East German leader, one step towards a rapprochement between the two German states – Unknown author, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia. Unlike Konrad Adenauer’s Christian Democrats, Willy Brandt’s Social Democrats worked to establish a degree of cooperation with East Germany.

“Another important thing that Willy is doing,” Tomás added, “is to increase expenditures on education by a great amount. He believes that’s the secret of a strong Germany. Spain badly needs to improve its education. But under Franco, it’ll never happen. Maintaining control is more important to Franco than encouraging people to live better. If Willy is successful, his policy will bring an enormous change to Europe. He will show us how Europe can be transformed. A German destroyed Germany. Now, a German is rebuilding Germany. After so many wars — could France and Germany be friends?”

“The other man, Tomás continued, “that promises to transform Europe is economist Jean Monnet. During the war, Monnet was a member of de Gaulle’s exile government in Algiers. He observed there would be no peace in Europe if each country insisted on standing alone. The countries of Europe are too small to guarantee the prosperity and well-being of the people. For their economies to flourish they need larger unrestricted markets. The answer was to form a federation. In order to create a peace which Europe has never known throughout the centuries, Jean Monnet believes it’s absolutely necessary to form a union of European nations. Step by step, Jean Monnet’s ideas are being advanced for a European union. The Treaty of Rome has established the Common Market. We’re moving toward the removal of trade barriers and the establishment of a European Economic Community. Jean Monnet is a visionary. Maybe someday we’ll live in a United Europe where people move between countries as freely as they do in the United States.”



Jean Monnet, Architect of the European Coal and Steel Community established by the Treaty of Rome, 1957, the predecessor of the European Union – Wikimedia. A French political economist and diplomat, Jean Monnet was sent by the British Government in 1940 to the U.S. to ask President Franklin Delano Roosevelt for a massive increase in the supply of American weapons so that Britain could prevail against a German invasion. Recognizing the great capacity of American industry, Monnet convinced Roosevelt to launch a massive arms production as an economic stimulus and vital support of Britain against Hitler. He was believed to be so significant in the U.S. and British alliance that it was said Monnet aided Churchill in writing his messages to the American president, and on the following day, assisted Roosevelt in composing his response, a collaboration that gave birth to the Victory Program between the two nations. After the war, British economist John Maynard Keynes declared that Monnet’s involvement in the cooperation of Britain and the United States shortened World War II by a year. In respect for Jean Monnet’s service to France, President François Mitterand ordered his remains transferred to the Panthéon of Paris, the mausoleum for the remains of distinguished citizens of France.



Treaty of Rome signing ceremony, 1957 – Unknown author, fair use, Wikimedia

“Oh, Tomás,” I cried looking at my watch, “I just remembered I have a late dance class. I’ve had such a wonderful time. Thank you for a lovely lunch.

“*Bien,*” he said arising. “*Allons nous.*”

On the way out, Sophocles took my hand saying, “It is always an honor to receive a beautiful dancer. Tomás has talked so much about you.”

Tomás blushed and Sophocles laughed with a roar, his big black mustache jumping up and down. “I can only speak the truth,” Sophocles said, “You are welcome to our literary salon at any time. Your next lunch at Chez Samothrace is on the house.”

When we stepped outside, it was threatening rain.

“Wait.” Tomás stepped back inside the café and returned with an umbrella. “You can bring it to class.”

He lifted my hand to his lips and kissed it like an Andalusian gentleman.