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## Ball Has a Brush With the Russians

By **ROBERT BALL**  
Special Correspondent for The Eccentric

**MAINZ, West Germany**—Most Americans are fortunate enough never to have had to do with the police of Soviet satellite countries or with Russian Intelligence officers. Believe me, it's no pleasure.

My brush with the Iron Curtain John Law occurred in Berlin's Soviet Sector, where I was covering the Witsundale Rally of the Soviet Zone mass youth movement, the so-called "Free German Youth."

It all began on the platform of the Friedrichstrasse "S-Bahn" station. Camera in hand, I was ready to board the train that would whisk me back into the West. A hand on my arm detained me. It was a slim little man in the black uniform of the East German People's Police.

Had I been taking pictures? Did I have a permit to be in the Soviet Sector?

I HAD NONE, but tried to bluff with a Russian translation of my American permit, provided for the border patrol at Helmsstedt. It didn't work.

"It's probably all right," said the little man. "The Russians have the final say here. But just come down to the station while we check it."

The police office, smelling of cheap cigarette smoke, was in a dingy corridor off the ground floor lobby of the station.

The chief demanded my papers. I handed him passport, Berlin permit, and Russian translation.

"I'm American," I said.

**HIS EYEBROWS** went up; the



**VOLKSPOLIZIE ON PARADE IN RUSSIAN SECTOR**  
Peoples Police are photographed by reporter.

other policemen in the room looked up in interest.

Singling out the Russian translation, he remarked, "No good. It's in Russian, but the seal is American."

With a suspicious look, he gathered all the papers together.

"Wait here," he said, and left the room, taking my credentials with him.

I learned then that when you are picked up by the People's Police, you spend a lot of time waiting.

I had two hours and a half to inspect the ideological decorations of the office; pictures of the leaders of the "German Democratic Republic," a cheap gilded bust of Marx on a red cotton throw, a parade banner with the inscription "Down with American Warmongers," and a poster extolling world peace, in which a Soviet dove appeared to be dive-bombing the world.

AT 2:30 a round-faced sergeant looked in the door.

"Who am I supposed to arrest?" he asked. It was me.

That was the first time the word arrest had fallen, and I didn't like it. However, he only escorted me to a vacant office, where the waiting continued.

Two things disturbed me; I had to leave my camera in the main office, and I had been refused permission to contact American authorities by phone.

I was cut off from the West just as surely as if I had been in Moscow, and my papers and camera were in the hands of the People's Police, to do with presumably as they chose. The sergeant interrupted my thoughts.

"DON'T WORRY about being sent to Siberia," he said, in what seemed to me a much too jolly voice. "We don't really operate

## Kiwians Map Sale Of Christmas Trees; Plan for Convention

Next scheduled steak fry at the Birmingham Kiwanis club will be held Tuesday evening at the Ralph Williams "ranch," 886 Henrietta.

At the meeting held Aug. 1, plans were discussed for the convention to be held in Grand Rapids Sept. 17. The club president,

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be handled entirely by Germans. But tell me, what would happen in your country if a Russian entered Helmsstedt?

I answered hopefully that I thought he would be escorted to the border. The Russian frowned and called for the police chief.

"Handle this case according to the laws of the German Democratic Republic," he commanded.

"Yes, sir," said the chief. The Russian looked at me coldly.

"Auf Wiedersehen (Till we meet again)" he said, and went out. I asked the chief what was to happen.

"He seems to have something against you," he said, shaking his head, and he left the room. My hopes reached a low point at that moment, but, mysteriously, some twenty minutes later, the chief reappeared with my papers, camera and films, all intact.

"You can go free," he said.

IT WAS MIDNIGHT when the interval train stopped for inspection at Helmsstedt and a lone Russian soldier was pacing the platform.

The train began to roll. I leaned out the window. "Auf Wiedersehen," I said.

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**THE INTERROGATION** lasted an hour and a half. Bit by bit, from the turn of the questions, I sensed that he had decided first, that I wasn't a spy, and second, that I wasn't a saboteur.

"What are you going to write about the Rally," he asked, suddenly.

I explained, mentioning that I had been interested in whether the youths had been pressured into coming to Berlin. Had they?

I answered that as far as I could learn, no.

"But you will write that they were forced," he said sharply.

I denied that and asked why I should write what wasn't true.

"Because otherwise you will lose your job," he declared, standing up. "I have no authority over you. You're continued. Your case will

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