

GERMANS

Comments and Challenges

[The original on-line version.](#)
Newsgroup: [rec.travel.misc](#)

* Origin: The Airtight Garage, San Francisco, Cal. 415-641-0348 (8:914/219)
Subject: Germans — September, 1994

RG} I just spent 3 weeks last month travelling in Germany, the Czech Republic, and Austria.

RG} I think that the people who are criticizing Germans, Americans, French, or whoever, are RG} really caught up in a simple social dynamic—one that has more to do with the general nature RG} of tourism.

Although I think that the statements you made are sensible and probably correct, my experience (during about two months of living and working) with the Germans in their Lebensraum(sp) was filled with negativity. Here are a few:

I stayed two consecutive nights at the hostel in Frankfurt. There was a limit of three. The third night, I stayed elsewhere. When I returned to the hostel the next night, I was denied entry on he grounds that I'd already stayed three nights. I showed them my IYH card clearly showing that I'd stayed two nights that I'd not been there the previous night. Their registry book showed the same. But their minds were made up and I was sent out into the cold, the dark, and the rain. That was the night I spent at the Sozialbehörde(sp) . . .

Several times, the following conversation was had with merchants:

Guten abends. Do you speak English?
Deutsch!
¿Habla usted español?
Deutsch!
Parlez vous Francais? [I don't speak French but, at the time, I had more French than German.]
Nein! Dis ist Deutschland und in Deutschland sie spreect Deutsch. Aus, Auslander, aus!
[You don't have to tell me that I can't spell German. I know that!]

I was taking a shower at a public bath. Two little boys came to point at, and discuss, my penis under the watchful eye of their father. Now there's nothing particularly unusual about that protuberance of mine and I found the incident most curious until I heard the father, sotto voce, say "Juden". Were it not for the tones of disgust and contempt in the father's voice, the incident would have been amusing. Because of those tones, it was disturbing and a bit frightening.

This one, however, I love:

Beauty Milton, a strikingly beautiful woman I knew here, was working in Hamburg as an entertainer "Direct from San Francisco". She was a retail clerk here. One day we were walking down Jungfernstieg, a lovely, covered, high-end shopping street across from the lake. I was dressed in a black leather jacket and was rather unkempt, with a few days growth on my face and long, wild, hair [in those pre-Beatles days, long-haired young men were extremely rare]. A cigar was in my mouth and a Herald-Tribune under one arm. She was elegantly dressed as a Paris model, exquisitely groom'd, with gold bangles on her forehead, jewellery hanging from her ears, choking her neck, and flowing on her arms, dangling from her wrists, and ringing her fingers. She was carrying a small basket from which the head of an even smaller white Poodle protruded. Even without her high heels, she was much taller than I. Arm and arm we strolled, she Black, I White, literally stopping Hamburg traffic! We loved it!

She laughingly said: These Germans are used to Black men. They've seen a lot of US soldiers. But they've almost never seen a Black woman. Hell, all I have to do on stage is stand there and let them stare at me. I don't have to do anything for them to think they got their money's worth.

I have a talent for languages and, after two months in Germany, was able to engage in simple conversations. But many Germans didn't understand me and I often had problems communicating.

My last day in Germany, I awakened in Munich believing that I could hardly speak German, even with the Hamburger accent that amused the Southern Germans, at all. Before the day had ended, I was in Austria. An amazing thing happened during that day: My German in Salzburg was *very* understandable and I was able to communicate my desires without difficulty! My first reaction to that realization was: Those jive fucking Germans! About a week later I was in Yugoslavia where my German was even better. At that time, German was a widely spoken second language.

I concluded that, one-to-one, the German is as kind and polite a person as you're ever likely to encounter. Two-to-one, they were tolerable. Three-to-one they became a goddamned army.

Some time later, some litterato told me that Goethe had said the same thing, much better, long before.

I entered Germany with an open mind. They didn't take long to close it. The best news I heard during the '80s was that the German birth rate was the lowest on Earth. Unfortunately, now it's the Italians.

* Origin: The Airtight Garage, San Francisco, Cal. 415-641-0348 (8:914/219)

From: Wshakl4d (wshakl4d@*.com) Date: 1994-09-19

Hurrah Icono.Clast ! After all the flames I've got for contributing to the Arrogant German Tourists thread, I feel vindicated. I could contribute many anecdotes regarding German tourists in America, particularly those I have dared to greet or offer to help in German. But perhaps ths thread had better die, before WW3 ignites again with the same adversaries as WW2.

I think you would find the German-speaking people in former East Germany somewhat more agreeable, as you did the Austrians and Slovenians.

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From: Patrik Germann (germann@comix.*.de) Date: 1994-09-24

Icono Clast (Icono.Clast@f219.n914.z8.rbbs-net.ORG) wrote:

: RG I just spent 3 weeks last month travelling in Germany, the Czech Republic, and Austria.
: That was the night I spent at the Sozialbehörde(sp) . . .

This shit could have happened to you in a lot of places. There are always assholes around. Don't blame it on a specific nation, since this I-AM-RIGHT-culture is not only specifically German.

: Several times, the following conversation was had with merchants:

: Guten abends. Do you speak English?
: Nein! Dis ist Deutschland und in Deutschland sie spreect Deutsch.
: Aus, Auslander, aus!

I find it hard to believe that you had several conversations of this kind. Even if the merchants would be nationalistic their first priority is probably to sell goods to customers. I fully disagree with the statement beyond this saying:

>Germans are nationalistic and egocentric.<

They are no more than Americans, French, Italians, the British and so on.

: Two little boys came to point at, and discuss, my penis . . . "Juden".

How long have you been to Germany when this happened? Is your command of German that perfect that you would understand something somebody says with these noisy showers around you? Was it at that time?

Another time, to me it seems as if you did not go to Germany open-minded, but bearing in mind that about 50 years ago the Nazis killed 6 Million Jews.

: I have a talent for languages

After two month you had a Hamburger accent? Your American accent did not mix with it? What a hell of talent you must be . . .

Having been to Germany without any sincere attempt to learn German before, it seems you must be either a genius or not.

: My German in Salzburg was very understandable

You do not seems to know the cultural and linguistic difference between those two countries. I, again, fully disagree to your description of Germans as being intolerant and obnoxious towards foreigners.

Again you seem to had you mind set already, before even going to Germany. Learn about a culture and understand. Germany's history has more, much more, than the history of the Third Reich.

Besides, if you were able to communicate your desires, what level of language acquisition would you consider this? At what level of speaking would your American accent would not be hearable and at what level could one claim to speak with a Hamburger accent?

: I concluded that, one-to-one, the German is as kind and polite a person as you're ever likely to
: encounter. Two-to-one, they were tolerable. Three-to-one they became a goddamned army.

You went there open-minded? Man, think before talking prejudistic nonsense without having experienced a culture.

: I entered Germany with an open mind.

I cannot believe that.

: They didn't take long to close it. The best news I heard during the '80s was that the German birth
: rate was the lowest on Earth. Unfortunately, now it's the Italians.

I think there is nothing more to say if your opinon and attitude is really like this. If you have this view you are a prejudist to the extreme and do not meditate about what a culture is. I fully reject your statements in the above letter. And, frankly speaking, I feel disgusted.

[Patrik](#), a German.

From: Wshakl4d (wshakl4d@*.com) Date: 1994-09-24

germann@comix.*.de (Patrik Germann) writes:

>And, frankly speaking, I feel disgusted.

The tone of the above speaks for itself. Q.E.D.

From: phys218@csc.canterbury.*.nz Date: 1994-09-24

germann@comix.*.de (Patrik Germann) writes:

> Another time, to me it seems as if you did not go to Germany open-minded,
> but bearing in mind that about 50 years ago the Nazis killed 6 Million Jews.

So it is impossible to both know that and be open minded? To be open minded about Germans you have to be ignorant of their history? I have never heard any other nation claim that you cannot be open-minded about them if you know their history. Interesting...

> I fully reject your statements in the above letter.

Denial, denial, denial - is that all the answer that can be given?

[LoyndWatson](#)

L.Watson@csc.canterbury.*.nz

From: Uli Mittermaier (uli@koala.*.de) Date: 1994-09-26

Icono Clast writes:

>I entered Germany with an open mind. They didn't take long to close it. The best news I heard
> during the '80s was that the German birthrate was the lowest on Earth . . .

.. but YOU are definitely not a racist, are you??

[Uli Mittermaier](#)

D-84405 Dorfen

Germany

From: Icono Clast (Icono.Clast@f219.n914.z8.rbbs-net.ORG) Date: 1994-09-19

David Hardiman's San Francisco All-Star Band did not have a good day today at the Union Street Spring Festival. But a bad day with this band is better than most bands' good days.

The Swing Dance Contest scheduled for 4:30 didn't happen 'til well after five. The band got started late because the preceding fashion show ran late.

Looking at the entrants, we anticipated Third Place after Mike and Debbie, the best-by-far of the three couples who could dance. We expected Third Place after Mike and Debbie, the best-by-far of the three couples who could dance. We expected my day-time partner to be second, with the guy she was dancing with and I and the woman with whom I was dancing a close third. Many other couples entered the contest, but none could dance.

After the first of three heats, the best couple was thrown out. We couldn't believe it! After the second heat, four (I think) couples remained.

We were surprised that my day-time partner and our mutual friend were given Third Place. So naturally we thought we'd won. But, no. We were given a lovely Second Place ribbon. The winning couple couldn't dance at all. We have no idea why they even got into the finals.

The judges were introduced by festival promoter Terry Pimsleur. They were German businessmen here for reasons I don't know. It's clear they knew absolutely nothing about dancing, particularly Swing dancing, a form indigenous to this country.

When we were discussing our incredulousness at the results, one (no, not I) said something to the effect of: Well, what do you expect from Germans?

The blue ribbon's gold type says:

Union Street Spring Festival 1993
Swing Dance Contest
Second Place

BTW, when I told this to my partner, she said:

"Do you really think Germans would give First Place to two Jews?"

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