A REPORTER AT LARGE

DISPLACED

ONE of the oratorical flourishes that almost every politician uses when addressing a group of foreign-born citizens is to hail America as the haven of the oppressed. He tells of the coming of the Pilgrims; of the German Revolution of 1848, which sent us such valuable Americans as Carl Schurz; of the flight of the Irish from their potato famine; of the exodus of Russians in the time of the Czars; and, if he is really in good form, of the arrival of multitudinous Italians and southeastern Europeans early in this century. In another year or so, when enough of a new group of immigrants have landed here, the politician will be able to add a modern category, the D.P.s, or displaced persons. A Presidential order issued in December, 1945, permits an annual influx of thirty-nine thousand D.P.s, but so far, because of transportation difficulties and the complications of making selections among the hundreds of thousands of D.P.s in American camps and roaming the Continent, only seventeen thousand have entered the country. One morning a while ago, the Steamship Marine Perch landed five hundred and fifty-five displaced persons at Pier 86, at the foot of West Forty-sixth Street, and I was on hand in the hope of learning something about what it meant to a person to be, in the cold language of our time, "displaced."

I had made arrangements beforehand to meet and talk with a D.P. named Kurt Maier, a Czech Jew who speaks English without difficulty. He is a slight man with blue eyes that appear terribly tired but brighten when he becomes interested in something. His light-brown hair is thin, and he looks three or four years older than his age, which is thirty-five. He is a professional pianist and accordionist. Before the war, he played in Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Milan, and, mostly, in Karlsbad, where he was born and where his widowed mother was living. There, because of the large number of American and British tourists, he had plenty of opportunity to practice his English, which he had studied in school. He worked in resort hotels and cafés, either as a pianist or as an accordionist. In the summers, when wealthy tourists came for the cure, he got large tips for playing request numbers. He had many friends in those days, and he led a pleasant, footloose, independent sort of life.

When I found Maier, soon after he had debarked, he was standing under one of the usual large white placards—the one on which was painted, in black, the letter "M"—waiting for the customs men to inspect his baggage. Clasped tightly under one arm was a worn briefcase stuffed, as I later discovered, with sheet music. Beside him was the rest of his baggage, a valise. Also under the "M" were some other displaced persons—an elderly Polish priest, over whose black cassock was hung a G.I. musette bag; an even more elderly Austrian woman, in a wheel chair; and a young, handsome German woman holding a small girl by the hand. Passengers were still debarking when I arrived, and were being greeted at the foot of the gangplank by representatives of Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant welfare groups who told them where to go—in their own tongue if they could not speak English. The day was cloudy and windy, and it was dark on the pier, which was not especially crowded. The Marine Perch had tied up ahead of time, and so far there was no swarm of friends and relatives behind the barrier at the street end of the pier. The customs men, like the relatives, were slow in turning up. "Well," Maier said tolerantly, "I've waited years for them, I can wait a little longer."

I apologized for the poor service, and said that if I were in his place, I'd be impatient.

"To tell you the truth," he said, pointing toward the barrier, "I *would* like to know what is outside there in the street."

"Taxis, trucks," I said.

He laughed. "I should have known that myself," he said, "but when you've been thinking of nothing for years but coming to a particular place, you build up a funny picture in your head. This morning, I was leaning on the ship's rail, seeing New York at last, but it didn't look right. It looked smoky, as though it were full of factories. And the skyline! The other D.P.s and I thought the city had been bombed, just as the Nazis used to tell us. First we saw a skyscraper, then low buildings, then skyscrapers—up and down, up and down, just like after bombs. Also, the Empire State Building was not so big. I had thought it was much taller. Long ago, before the war, my sister Alice, and Karl, her husband, who are meeting me today, used to send me snapshots and postcards of your country. Some of the postcards were of the Empire State. Perhaps I looked at them too much." He laughed again, self-consciously.

I ASKED Maier what other thoughts he had had about America. He sat down on someone else's trunk. "The idea of coming to America could have begun with those postcards and snapshots of Alice's," he said. "When the Sudetenland was given to Hitler, I was playing in Karlsbad, at the Hotel Goldener Schild, where I had a room. I

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packed in a hurry. Then I checked my room to see if I'd forgotten something. A postcard of the Empire State was in a bureau drawer. I put it in my pocket. I didn't know why." Maier and his mother went to Prague, which was not in the occupied territory. He and an old friend formed a two-piano team and got a job at the Elysée Bar. His sister wrote often. Her news was not particularly exciting, but he looked forward to mail from her because she occasionally enclosed a snapshot of some place or building she and her husband had become interested in.

The Germans marched into the rest of Czechoslovakia that spring. At first there was very little trouble in Prague, but Maier did not feel secure. It was just a question of time, he knew, before some sweeping decree would affect him. Within a few months, the new rulers of Prague began to institute minor reforms. Maier was in the middle of a "Show Boat" medley one evening at the Elysée when a boyhood friend named Rudolph Fischer walked into the place and sat down. "We had gone to the same schools in Karlsbad and played together and done our lessons together," Maier said. "His parents and mine used to visit each other." Maier greeted him from the piano, but Fischer did not respond. Later, thinking his friend had not recognized him, Maier went over to Fischer's table and sat down. Fischer got up and left the café. "He had become a Gestapo man," Maier said. "The next day, my boss told me to look for a job somewhere else."

Maier decided to drop café work and give piano and accordion lessons. Most of the pupils who came to him were not Jewish, but as the German repression became severe, the non-Jewish ones reluctantly stopped taking lessons. Then, early in 1941, the Nazis, surprisingly, gave permission for the opening of a cabaret for Jews in Prague's Jewish district, and almost at once Maier was playing the piano again. "It was a gay place, and the nights were fine," he told me, "but the days were full of awful rumors." Mail was still coming from the United States, however. "I watched for my sister's letters from America," he said. "And when I wrote her, I would tell her to be sure and send me more pictures. In my gallery, finally, I had pictures of Broadway crowded at night, the Central Park Zoo with children and their parents standing in front of the cages, more pictures of the Empire State, and a view of New Jersey from the Hudson at West Eighty-ninth Street, which was near where Alice and Karl lived. I'd lie on the bed in my room and look at them over and over again."

Shortly before Pearl Harbor, the Jews in Prague were told to assemble at the Veletržný-Palác, an exposition building on the edge of town. From there, they were shipped, in lots, to a concentration camp outside Theresienstadt, forty miles northwest of Prague. Maier and his mother went in one of the first contingents. They spent two and a half years there. "Theresienstadt was not nearly as bad as the camps that came later," Maier said. "The Swiss and Swedish Red Cross representatives were always visiting it, and the Nazis wanted them to see how well they treated their prisoners. They let us have a coffeehouse and a garden." They also let the camp have a band, which played continuously from 10 A.M. to 7 P.M. in the coffeehouse. Maier, of course, was a member of it. His mother was put in a women's unit assigned to mending the clothes of the camp's Nazi staff. The days went by pointlessly. The prisoners were not terrorized at Theresienstadt, but Maier found living in a ghetto oppressive. "Before, I had never cared whether my friends were Jews or Christians. I still didn't. You know how it is with musicians—if you can play a nice obbligato or hold a long note, that's all that matters. But in this camp, each day, I was supposed to think, 'We are Jews. We are different.' "

In May, 1944, Maier's mother was transferred to the concentration camp in the Silesian town of Auschwitz, and shortly after that Maier himself followed. It was not, like Theresienstadt, a ghetto, but it had notable aspects of its own; conveniently located at each corner of the camp was a gas chamber and a crematorium. "At night," Maier said, "the flames in the crematoriums rose eight, nine feet into the air. They looked as though they came from the chimneys of a porcelain factory." The gas chambers were for the old and the sick. Maier's mother was sixty-one, so she was gassed. Maier learned about it, through the camp grapevine, the day it happened.

The young and the healthy were put to digging coal in the mines near Katowice and Gliwice. In general, they lived only a little longer than the gas victims, because the conditions in the mines were so bad that most of them died after a few months. Every night,

five or six of them deliberately threw themselves against the electrified wire fence that ran around the camp. Maier owes his survival to a quaint competition that developed among several concentration-camp commandants. The head of the Auschwitz installation, hearing that bands had been organized in other camps, was determined that Auschwitz should not be outdone. Maier, instead of being sent into the mines, was assigned to the camp's musical contingent. "There were twenty-four of us," he told me. "At six in the morning, we'd be standing outside the commandant's quarters at the camp gate playing 'Alte Kameraden' or some other march, so that the prisoners would keep step as they passed in review on their way to the mines. Other times, we'd be called out to play when truckloads of our fellow-prisoners were being driven off to the gas chambers. The idea was for us to drown out their cries, but we never could."

When Maier arrived at Auschwitz, his sister's postcards and snapshots and all his papers were taken away from him. "I felt lost without the American pictures," he told me. "I'd close my eyes and try to recall every feature of them. I got so I thought I could see all the faces in that snapshot of the crowd on Broadway." Gradually, however, the images began to fade. "The more this happened to me, the more difficult it became to go on believing that there was any world outside Auschwitz. And when you decided that Auschwitz was the whole world, the idea of walking into the wire fence some night seemed reasonable."

Maier had been in the camp about a month when he received assurance, in an odd way, that the world was still bigger than Auschwitz. One afternoon, an American fighter plane flew over the camp, turned around and flew back, circled for a while, and then dived at one of the high watchtowers just inside the wire fence. A Nazi soldier was doing guard duty on the tower. There was a burst of machine-gun fire from the plane, and he toppled from his platform and bounced off the wire fence below. "Now, here is the interesting thing. Only the Russians were regularly flying in our vicinity," Maier said, "but the plane that happened to come to our camp and kill the guard was an American, who must have been lost, and this impressed me."

AFTER two months at Auschwitz, Maier was shipped farther west, to a camp at Sachsenhausen. Right be-

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side it, the Nazis had constructed an underground airplane factory, which two shifts of slave laborers kept going twenty-four hours a day. Soon after Maier arrived, he asked one of his fellow-prisoners if the camp had been bombed by Allied planes. "No," the prisoner answered. "The Americans are flying in this section, but they haven't bombed the camp, because they don't want to kill us. But we are not so sure they are right. Some of us think they ought to bomb this place in order to disrupt the factory. Without us, the Nazis can't produce airplanes. Others believe that if we are spared, we may be able to rebel against the Nazis when the right time comes."

At night, in the barracks, this question was constantly debated. Occasionally, when the arguments became bitter, some peacemaker would say, in effect, "Well, the Americans have more information than we have. We must trust them." "I could never find out what made them so certain that the Americans knew about the underground factory," Maier told me. "But that did not make any difference. The speculation about whether the Americans were right or wrong gave a life to the camp that I had seen at neither Theresienstadt nor Auschwitz. The people acted as though they could control their own fate. All they had to do, it seemed, was to agree unanimously among themselves on what America's bombing policy should be. Fortunately, they never did."

Maier was at Sachsenhausen only three weeks, and then was shifted farther west, to Ohrdruf, in Thuringia. Near this town, six thousand slave laborers were completing two projects in a lovely hillside forest—a V-2 launching site and a defense line. The laborers, most of whom were not Jews, had been drafted in every occupied country on the Continent. Maier was assigned to the V-2 site and given a wheelbarrow, a shovel, and a pickaxe. The guards shot a great many laborers who faltered. Beatings were common. One afternoon, when Maier did not seem to be working fast enough, a guard wearing brass knuckles went to work on him and permanently scarred his chest.

The only respites at Ohrdruf came on the occasions when Allied planes—always American now—flew over the area. Then the laborers had to throw themselves on the ground and lie motionless, so as not to reveal the fact that a project was under way there. The thousands of slave workers, dressed in their prisoners' uniforms, lay ab-

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solutely still on the hillside, as though they were playing in some ghastly, well-rehearsed tableau. "It was such pretty country," Maier said. "Our hillside looked down on a valley that had a crooked river going through it. We would think of freedom when we looked at the country. We would not often think of it when we were inside our barracks. When the American planes were overhead, we would press against a stone, resting at last, and look up at the tall birches and firs of the forest and the yellow alpine flowers, and smell the valley air. On those days, I knew what we would talk about in our barracks at night. It was always the same. 'If only the pilots would land and pass out guns to us!' we would tell each other."

Maier was beginning to wonder how much longer he could stand the work when he was summoned to the headquarters of the Ohrdruf commandant, whose name was Stibitz. The Nazi pointed at an accordion lying on his desk and said, "I have had much difficulty in finding this instrument. I want to hear music. Play. Play 'Mamatschi.'" This is a sentimental ballad about a little boy who keeps asking his mother to buy him a horse. Maier became Stibitz's private minstrel. Often the commandant invited two or three other Nazi officers in to spend the afternoon in his office in the prisoners' area listening to Maier. Once they made him play "Mamatschi" over and over for an hour. "Just as you'd expect, one of them cried," Maier recalled.

Maier's musical career at Ohrdruf came to an end after American planes had made their first nuisance raids on the part of the camp where the Nazi officers and guards had their quarters and bomb shelters. They had orders to use the shelters whenever the siren was sounded. The commandant, however, always hustled over to the prisoners' area, where he was pretty sure no bombs would be dropped and he would be safe. He would proceed to his office, where Maier would be waiting for him. "Stibitz demoted me," Maier said. "Instead of having me play 'Mamatschi,' he would have me make him coffee, or he would take off his boots and order me to shine them. Once he took a shower and told me to soap him. He thought up the lowliest things, because he knew what I was thinking—that in his time of danger he had come to *me*, that as long as those American planes were in the neighborhood, I could feel superior to him. I even felt sorry for

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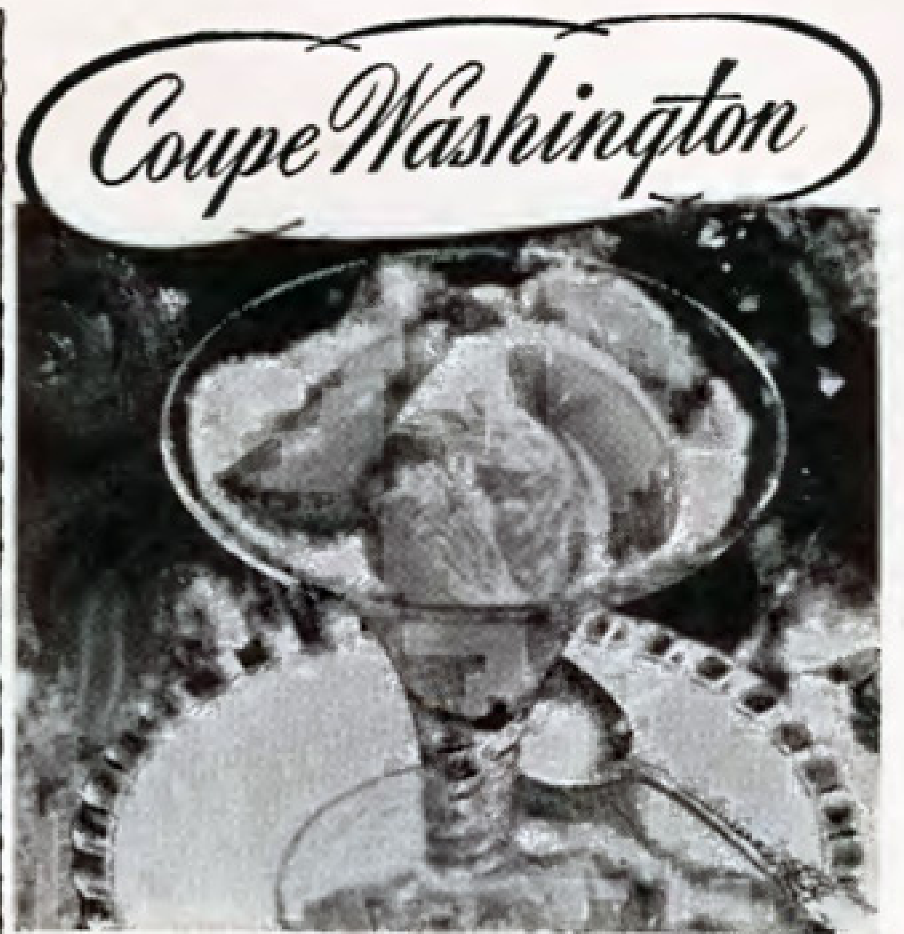
old Stibitz occasionally, and I think he knew that."

BY March of 1945, the Allies had advanced so close to Ohrdruf that the camp's male prisoner population was evacuated. The men, most of whom had no shoes, were forced to march to Buchenwald, eighty kilometres away. Over half of the marchers had to drop out along the way and were shot. American planes, patrolling the roads, swooped down to check on the ragged parade. When they recognized the prisoners' uniforms, they dipped their wings. By the time Maier's party reached Buchenwald, the Germans there had gone berserk and were shooting prisoners indiscriminately. To those who survived, the new prison was at least tolerable, because Allied artillery fire could be heard coming closer every day. Then, on the morning of April 11, 1945, small-arms fire could be heard, and the Nazis at the camp fled. The men in the Buchenwald underground broke out guns they had secreted, armed the other prisoners, including Maier, and went on a shooting spree of their own, picking off any Nazi they could find. Most of the prisoners then scattered over the countryside and never came back. Maier was one of those who returned. "I wanted to see who had freed us," he said. "It was the Americans, all right."

IT was lucky that Maier decided to return to Buchenwald, because the next day he came down with typhus. For six weeks, he lay desperately ill in the S.S. barracks, which the Americans had converted into a hospital for the liberated prisoners. By mid-June, thanks to American doctors, nurses, and medicines, he was on his feet again. Soon afterward, a Special Services officer asked him if he would like to be an entertainer at the 1st Armored Division's Officers' Club in Stuttgart. Maier jumped at the chance. One afternoon, not long after he took the job, he was playing some Gershwin tunes for a lieutenant and a captain when the lieutenant asked him if he were German. "Czech," Maier answered. "Oh," the lieutenant said, "you're a D.P." Maier, who suspected an American wisecrack, smiled and asked, "What's that?" The lieutenant told Maier what the initials stood for, but Maier did not quite understand. He looked at the captain, who he knew could speak German. "*Verschleppte Personen*," the captain said. "'*Verschleppte*,'" Maier said to me, "means displaced by force, against one's



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will. It was accurate, God knows, but when I heard it for the first time, that afternoon, I suddenly felt annoyed with myself. I had been displaced for so long that it had seemed like a way of life to me. Now this new name made me wonder what the way of life had amounted to. Yes, I and hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs and Letts and Greeks and Hollanders were going to outlive Hitler and Göring, but we had not fought. All we had done was suffer and create a new species—*Verschleppte Personen.*"

Maier didn't want to go back to Karlsbad, even though during his imprisonment he had looked forward to the day when he could. His mother was dead, and he had heard from another D.P. that the house he was born in had been bombed. There were other reasons, too. "Take a pleasant day I used to have in Karlsbad," he said. "Most of the time, I was playing at the Hotel Regina. O.K.? In the morning, on my way to breakfast, I'd buy *Die Wirtschaft* from a newsstand dealer to whom I always gave a Christmas present. Well, he went Nazi. So did the waiter who brought me my eggs. I had a Skoda car and I'd drive out to Tüppelsgrün, a swimming club where I'd often swim with Miki Prosser—also a piano player—and two girls, Flora and Gertrude. Prosser was afterward gassed at Auschwitz, and so was Gertrude, and Flora became a Nazi colonel's mistress. After lunch, the four of us would drive back and go promenading on the Mühlbrunn, the main boulevard, and see what kind of people were in the international set that year. We'd have beer and sandwiches at the Café Passage, and then it would be time to go to work at the Regina. One of the regular customers, a local leather-goods man, was quite an admirer of mine. Every evening, he'd lead the applause and tell me I was better than Eddy Duchin. But the day I left Karlsbad for Prague, after Hitler came in, he ran after me in the street and shouted, 'Glad to hear you're going to Palestine, Maier!' Late at night, when the Regina was nearly empty, some policemen on duty would drop in for a quick free drink. One of them, Rudolph Turnovsky, and I became close friends. The Nazis caught him committing sabotage." Maier shifted on the trunk on which he was sitting. "I decided it would be better to look for a new home."

Once Maier had made up his mind to look for a new home, the choice was obvious enough. He had lost his sister's address, but a U.S.O. entertainer who

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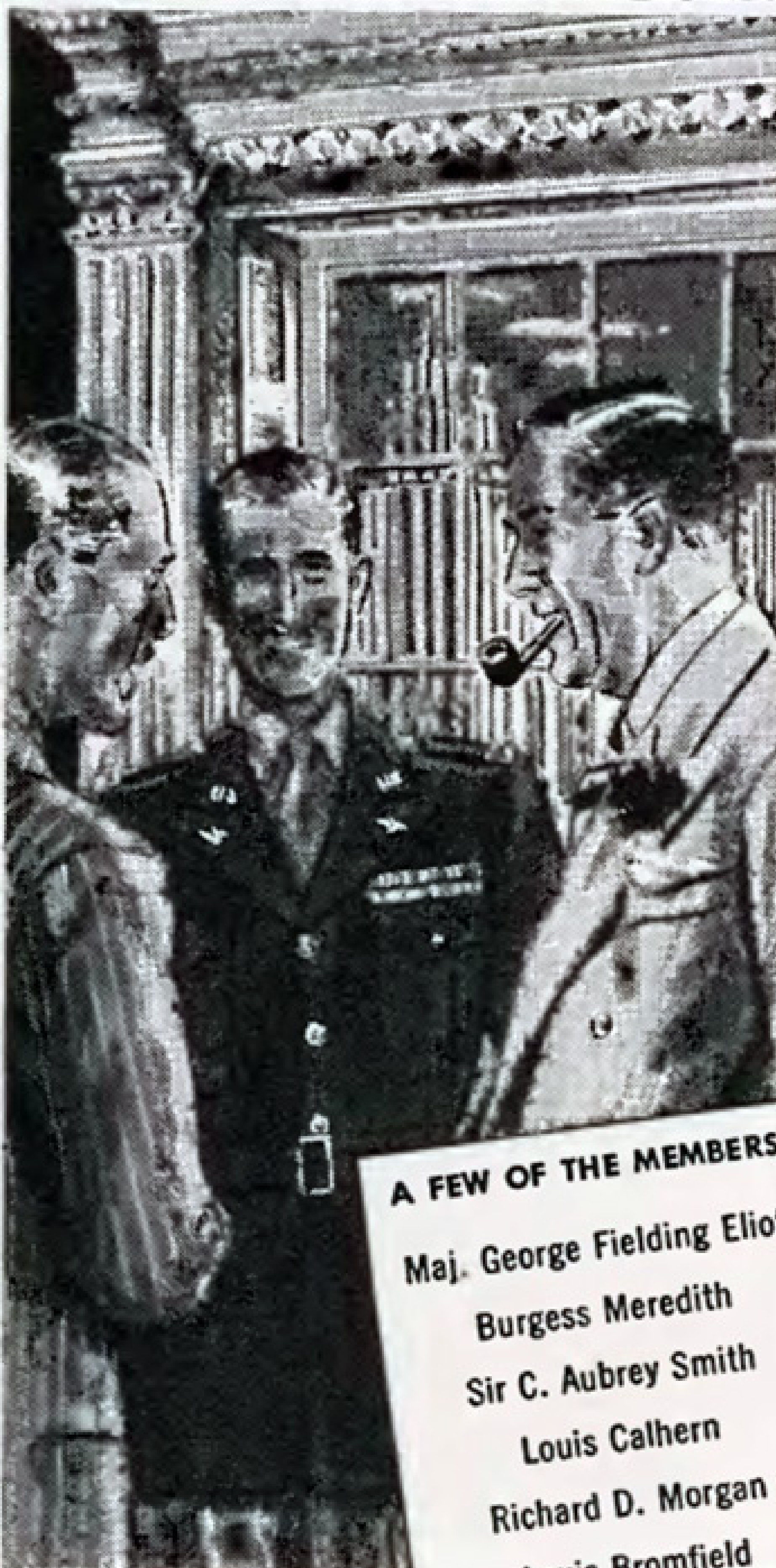

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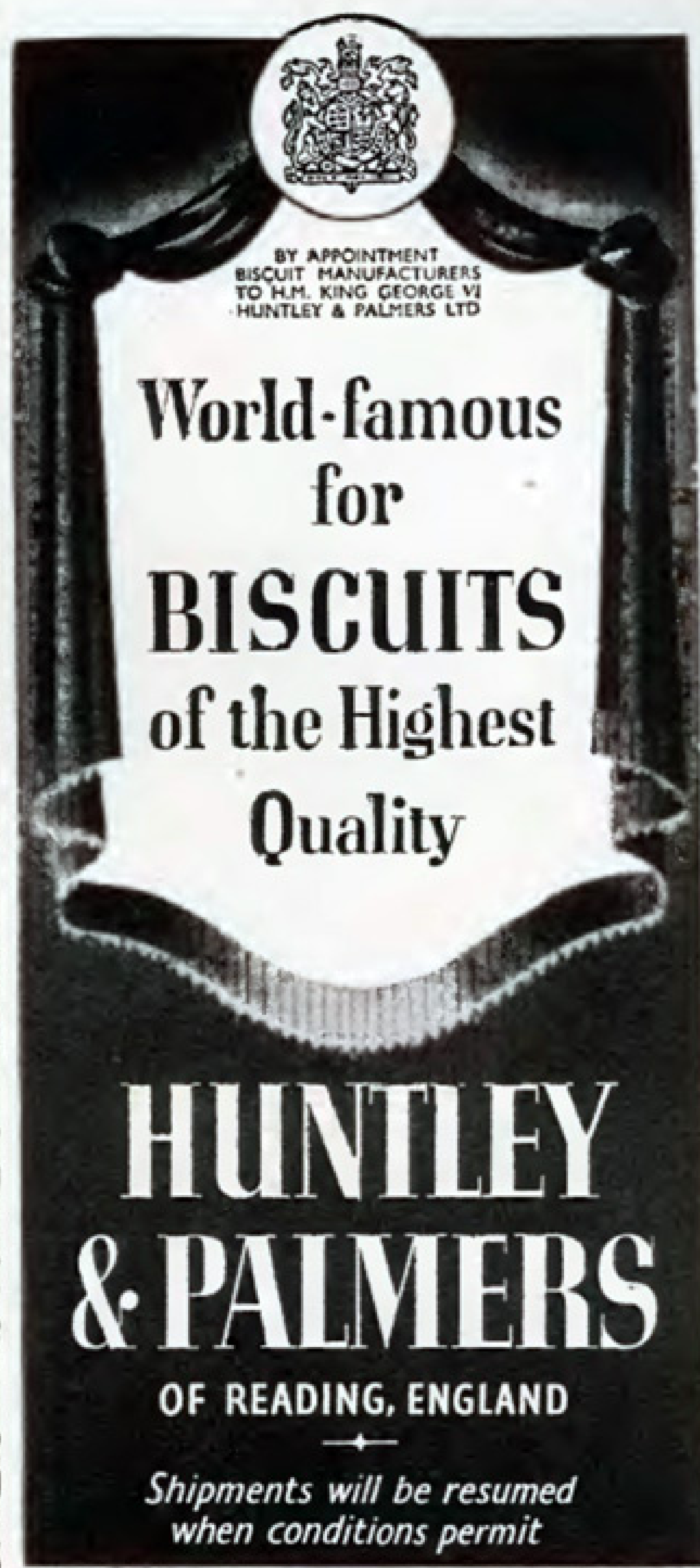
returned to America found her and told her that her brother wanted to come to this country. She "sponsored" him with the immigration authorities; that is, she guaranteed that he would not become a public charge in this country. Maier was put on a D.P. waiting list, and after six months was instructed by the American Consulate at Stuttgart, where he was still working at the officers' club, to proceed to Bremerhaven to board the Marine Perch.

WHEN the customs man finally came along to inspect Maier's valise and briefcase, Maier greeted him with a solemn handshake. The official grinned and said to me, "Some of them even ask for my autograph." The inspection was quick. Maier had few possessions. Among them was a green fatigue suit, with the number 104994 sewed on it. "A souvenir," Maier told me. "Buchenwald." The customs man stamped Maier's two pieces of luggage, and a lady welfare worker appeared and led him to where everyone else who had cleared customs was seated, on a row of chairs about a hundred feet short of the barrier. She wrote down his name and the name of his sponsor on a piece of paper, which she took to a young man who was announcing over a public-address system.

The D.P.s said very little to each other as they waited. They seemed tense, and they stared at the announcer, as if by doing so they would know sooner whose name he was going to call out next. By now, the relatives and friends had arrived in force and were crowded behind the barrier. Several policemen kept telling them to stand back. They set up a din, which subsided abruptly whenever a name was announced over the public-address system. Maier was as tense as the other D.P.s. "A few more minutes," he said excitedly, "and I will be out in the street and really in America." He stopped as the announcer said, "Erno Grünwald, sponsored by David Weiss! Erno Grünwald for David Weiss!" Then he said, "The American soldiers in Germany used to tell me that one had to watch how one walked in American streets, because they were covered with chewing gum. I don't expect to see that, but I expect some surprises. In fact, I have already been surprised, in a way. I had always pretended to myself that the harbor where I arrived would have only one pier, with the word 'America' in lights. But this morning we passed many piers, and I remembered my little fantasy about the pier. Why so many piers? Do



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some people refuse to land in America unless they can land at their favorite pier? Also, this morning, from the boat, we saw a plane writing 'Pepsi-Cola' in the sky. I had heard of Coca-Cola, but never of Pepsi-Cola—"

"Szymon Wroclawski . . ."

"But I am talking like a tourist," Maier said. "I am *not* a tourist, you know."

"Josef Zeichner . . ."

"There are so many things I want. It is so long since I have invited friends to spend an evening with me at my place. It is years—"

"Max Alexander . . ."

"I would like to have a regular job once more. I'd like to be playing music again in a small café full of people who have come together to drink and talk and have a good time, a café where no one would dream of saying 'Jewish swine' to me. Perhaps, after a while, I might even have a family of my own. But American women are probably too remarkable for me. I have heard that on Sundays, American fathers can be seen pushing baby carriages. In Europe, that never happens. There, the women—"

"Kurt Maier . . ."

Maier sprang from his chair. He stood still for a minute, uncertain what to do next. Then the welfare worker came up to him. "Follow me," she said. The two of them went off toward the barrier as his name was repeated over the public-address system. Behind the barrier, I could see a man and woman start to push forward through the crowd. These two finally reached the gate, but there an officer stopped them. The woman cupped her hands, and I could hear her voice above the noise: "Kurt! Kurt!" It was then that Maier saw her. He began to run, and since his briefcase and valise were light, he could move quickly. In a few seconds, he was yards ahead of the lady guide. She stopped, watched him for an instant, and then turned and came back for another displaced person.

—Daniel Lang

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So You're Naturally Radiant!

Be sure
Bradford
Bachrach
photographs you
at the most
radiant moment
of your life.
BACHRACH STUDIOS
CLOSED MONDAYS
—*Adv. in The New Yorker.*

Damn! That's our day.

The TIME Advertising Quiz No. V

HOW DO YOU RATE AS AN ADVERTISING EXPERT?
HERE'S A WAY TO TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

(Answers below, upside down)

1. E. T. Wright Company, maker of Arch-Preserver Shoes, advertises in TIME to reach three of these five groups:

A. U.S. postmen who walk millions of miles every week delivering the 1,091,574 subscription copies of Time. ☐

B. 1,800,000 Time-reading men who occupy positions of leadership and influence "in all walks of life"—and do a lot of recommending to their friends. ☐

C. Thousands of Time-reading doctors, for their possible prescribing or recommending influence on the use of Arch-Preserver Shoes by their patients. ☐

D. Archbishops, archdukes, architects, archeologists and archers. ☐

E. Best customers of leading department stores and men's wear stores—proved time and again to be Time-readers. ☐

2. The H. & S. Pogue Company, leading Cincinnati department store, recently ran a fashion advertisement in TIME for four of the following reasons:

A. A survey showed that Pogue's own customers vote Time their favorite magazine. ☐

B. The advertisement would be an excellent springboard for a store-wide promotion of Time-advertised products. ☐

C. Time reaches 1,500,000 high-income women across the nation. ☐

D. To help promote the new longer skirt styles with the slogan, "Pogue skirts will go down in Time." ☐

E. To build prestige and good will for Pogue's, among the many Time-reading executives of companies who supply the store with merchandise. ☐

3. Steinway & Sons advertise regularly in TIME for three of the following reasons:

A. To sell new Steinways to the 900,000 well-off Time families who have no piano, *and* to the 600,000 who own a piano of some kind. ☐

B. To tell Time-reading apartment dwellers about their new fly-weight "Infant Grand." ☐

C. To establish among business executives the prestige of the piano industry in general and Steinway in particular. ☐

D. To register their new slogan, "Steinway to Paradise." ☐

E. To reach the many Time-reading executives who can influence the purchase of musical instruments for schools, churches, clubs, etc. ☐

You can do one thing with your advertising in many magazines. But you can do many things with your advertising in one magazine—because that one magazine has collected as its audience a primary readership of 3,000,000 people who are many things to any advertiser.

There's ALWAYS an EXTRA REASON for Advertising in

Every fact about the TIME audience in this advertisement is correct. The right answers are: Question I, B., C., and E.; Question II, all but D.; Question III, A., C., and E.