

# TOWN

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# Son of IPCRESS

'A winner - who comes on like - a loser!' says Michael Caine, and prods moodily at a plateful of coal-black German meats. And he is talking about Harry Palmer, that seedy, grainy, but oh-so-hip agent, as whom he manoeuvred to fame, fortune and a trunkful of Press clippings in *The Ipcress File*, and who now manoeuvres again, here, in *Funeral In Berlin*. And we are sitting here, in the *rotisserie* of the Berlin Hilton, coloured and shaped like a cigar-box, gleaming dimly in the German Gothic sunlight.

'A winner - who comes on like - a loser!' Also prodding at various German foodstuffs, boar and venison cuts from the Black Forest, orange salmon from the Rhine and hocks with names like serious nervous diseases, are Guy Hamilton, who is the director, and Elisabeth Ercy, who is French and young and beautiful, and Charlie Kasher, who is none of these, but is the producer, and has a soft, scarlet shirt, and a medium-rare tan to prove it. . . They are all listening, as Michael Caine is talking about that seedy, but oh-so-hip Palmer, but he might just as well be talking about Michael Caine.

'A winner - who comes on like - a loser!' Caine is a winner now all right, what with *Ipcress* cutting the double-zeroes off James Bond, and *Alfie* which, after raving through London, is off to New York this July, and *Gambit* just canned, co-starring with - yes! - Shirley Maclaine, and more, much more, including being a Deep Southerner for a new Otto Preminger film, and here again, with Harry Palmer in the spy-ways, much trodden, but still paved with gold.

Nor has it exactly been left unrecorded that Michael Caine came on like a loser. . . 'All that cockney-boy-made-good bit! Just forget it. Characters come up, characters I hardly know, and they say' - and Caine leans forwards, and behind those horn-rims (the sort of horn-rims that executives wear in ads to show you can look sexy even when giving dictation), he takes on this expression of deep, *sickening*, sincerity - 'Don't change, Mike! Whatever you do, don't change. . . ' they say. Change? What they really mean is, Please don't get big-headed! Well, I don't know about that. All I know is I am never going to have to take that . . . stuff they handed me. Not any more.

'Change? Well, as I see it I was rich from the day I was born. . . I just didn't have the money. But now' - And we are walking through the lobby, past a glassy showcase of watches - 'I could order every one of those, and not think twice about it. But they still come up to me, these characters, and I can see them thinking here's a right burke, and right away they start talking about four notches below their intelligence, and about eight below mine - "Hi, Mike!" they say, "How are the birds then?"'

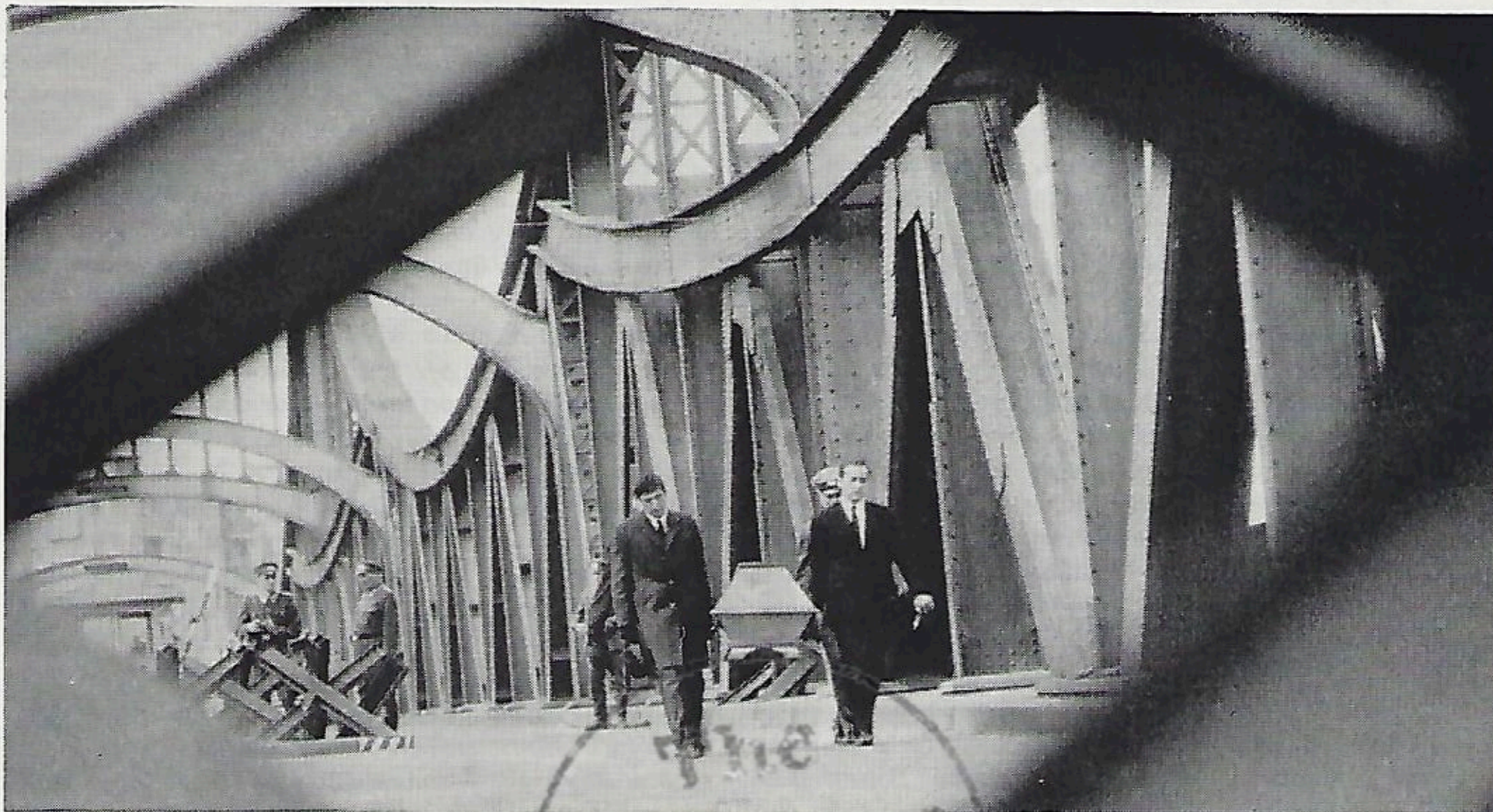
And Caine breaks off. . . He doesn't sound so much aggravated, as *disabused*, a monotone of bleak optimism, like breaking biscuits, or dropping things into a jar. . . 'When we were shooting *Ipcress*, one of the producers got dead worried about my voice. "Why doesn't it go up and down?" he said, "Like, like. . . " "Like Sean Connery?" I said, and he said "Yes." But as a matter of fact, they got cold feet about everything - "He walks like a zombie," they said, "Who is this goop with the glasses, anyway?"'

And we are sitting in the oyster-coloured marble

foyer, waiting for coffee, opposite the lift-shafts. Today is a day off filming, and a good day to reconnoitre Berlin, but we are waiting for coffee. Intermittently, there is a hydraulic whoosh! and the lift-doors open, and out step German financiers in bronze raincoats, glasses catching the light like flaming pennies as they examine the obvious charm of Liz Ercy.

'The pattern of how I made it is dead simple

**MEANWHILE, BACK IN BERLIN,  
MICHAEL CAINE AND COHORTS  
PUT DEIGHTON THE SECOND  
ON CELLULOID. TEXT BY  
ANTHONY HADEN-GUEST;  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SERGIO  
STREZZI**



*Above, plot of Funeral in Berlin hinges on a coffin crossing into West. Left, Michael Caine inside shop near Checkpoint Charlie which displays newspaper clips about escape attempts – successful or otherwise*

really. What I call the story of my success. Because I am a success, aren't I? So let's forget all that modest . . . stuff. My first good part was in *The Long and The Short and The Tall*. Only £16 a week, but that's a lot of money when you're broke – it was directed by Tony Page in Glasgow, his first job, but he's a famous director now, and I got another part because of that . . . and another. . . Then I was asked to audition for the cockney part in *Zulu*. Well, Jimmy Booth got the cockney part, but I got the toffee-nosed part . . . and Harry Saltzman saw that, and put me in *Ipcress*.'

The toffee-nosed part? Caine, who wears his chip like a stainless-steel epaulette, whose morose wish about that big-hearted East End background is that it should be pulled down as quick as possible? . . . And why not? 'Michael Caine,' a California producer told me, enthusiastically. 'That lean, languid look . . . that fairish, wavy hair . . . that sort of frontal understatement. Do you remember Leslie Howard? Caine is one of nature's gentlemen – Niven and Rex Harrison and all those are just nature's gentlemen's gentlemen. Do you know why Caine is getting so big in the States after just a couple of movies? He is giving us a stereotype that we needed – The New Model Englishman!'

Now, out into that German-Gothic sunlight, where the Berlin Hilton stands and glistens, podgy and proud, (like those chequered slabs of fancy cake in provincial tea-rooms) into a . . . wasteland, Antonioni country. . . of decomposing concrete slabs, tilted inanely over a ter-

rain of scrub and split asphalt, rusted oil-drums, mildewed rags and huge gates of wrought-iron, like kneaded black puddings, opening into . . . nowhere! or the past – 'This was the *Tiergarten*' Caine says, knowingly. 'Where all the nobs lived. . . I was here in Germany for a year, with the army.'

'The Return of Mike Caine!' the film publicist suggests gleefully. Caine scotches the phantasmal feature. 'That was fifteen years ago. And what was I doing? Guarding the trains. . . We used to sleep in the old Olympic Swimming-Baths. I didn't make a corporal. . .'

So, it is decided to visit the Wall, where Caine is due to have some publicity photographs taken, silhouetted dourly against the Other Side. One of the studio Mercedes is driven towards Checkpoint Charlie and the Wall, by a student chauffeur with obvious delusions of *grand prix*. . . 'We aren't allowed to go over into the East Zone,' says Caine, without apparent regret. 'Orders of Harry Saltzman. Things seem to be hotting up again. There was this Russian MIG just came down in the British Sector. What they do is to spend their time breaking the sound-barrier and the windows, all along the Wall. When they have broken all the windows, they get a special putty medal. . . And one clever plane went and crashed, so they have lost a lot of face.'

And this is the Wall. A weighty stretch of masonry, and the waxing or waning of the celluloid spy boom won't shift one brick. . . Because unlike the other voguish plot cycles – costumery, cowboys, or the imminent SF-operas – the spy thing, with its atmosphere of shifting loyalties and decaying faiths, is a real thing, a real trade, with Berlin and its Wall, a prime symbolic equation. '*Sie Verlassen Den Amerikanischen Sektor*' announces a sign. 'Well, where do you want me then?' Caine asks the photographer, and we climb one of those wood rostrums, like ropeless gallows, which tourists can climb for a look into the mysterious East. . . 'Here? Right then. This,' says Caine, tonelessly, 'is where they shot two children the other day. They were playing, and sort of dared each other to jump on the Wall. They were 8. I suppose the guards are a bit nervous now.'

We move closer. 'The narrower the No Man's Land is, the nigglier they are. Hullo . . . I think he's planning to take the *last* picture of me. Think of the money. Look at those Vopos' . . . about twenty feet away, the East German *Volkspolizei* are scrutinising us through field-binoculars. . . 'Pretty mean looking, eh? He's having a right glim at me.' Soon – even Vopos are human – the lenses swivel, and the person being glimmed is Liz Ercy. . . 'There you are. He fancies you, darling. I knew we were right to bring her. A few days ago, we were shooting our East Berlin bit, in a few crummy houses near the Wall. And there were all these coppers zeroed in on us, all along the Wall, Grepos, Vopos, but mainly the Vopos. . . They are the real bastards, the indoctrinated ones, and the poor old Grepos are just soldiers. And we had asked permission to run up an East Berlin flag, and the West Berlin coppers said No, but if we had, wouldn't they just have wondered what the hell was going on.' 'A popular uprising against Capitalism. . . 'They would have been over in a flash.' 'The best beer in Berlin,' in a *Hofbrauhaus*.

'Artists and people of talent,' Caine pronounces sombrely, 'Have all got heavy eyelids – Look at all the artists, you know, the good ones. All heavy eyelid men. . . ' He is talking to Steve Previn, who is the brother of André Previn, and is concerned with production. Previn, a notably skinny eyelidded man looks non-plussed. I study my eyelids reflected off a fish-knife.

'All artists' says Caine. 'Look at Toulouse-

Lautrec,' says Liz. Her eyelids are medium-thick. . . My own are thickish. Caine's are like the covers off a meat-dish.

So the death-wish Mercedes drops us back, and reconnaissance continues. Miss Ercy's reconnaissance kit is something in tweed and leather from a London boutique, Caine is in peccary casuals and a blue cardigan, as thick as a navy's sandwich, Peter Medak, the assistant producer, is in a black raincoat, glittering with brass rings. . . The Kings Road International. We walk past the toyshop with an inviting window display of a seven-foot stuffed alligator and a stuffed mandrill – four foot of anatomically accurate, blue-and-red-ribbed upholstery. . . '£25,' they simper. 'We accept sterling'. Past a bookshop, and another inviting window display. 'James Baldwin . . . Shylock . . . Oscar Wilde.' Caine reads off, 'Are they trying to tell us something?' Then down past the Aquarium, and past a sidewalk cinema, where coy hoardings announce a naturist film, starring a naked nature girl of some 14 years. 'Dead kinky, eh?' . . . when another girl, of somewhat over 14 years, passes, and looks at Caine . . . and switches on!

'Aha!' he takes it all in. 'Doesn't happen here much yet. . . Funny. Germany and Switzerland were the only two places that *Ipcress* bombed. Wait for this one, though. They'll recognise me then all right.

'How will I react when everybody recognises me? When and *if*. I don't know yet, but you know what Burton and Taylor do, spend a lot of money making their homes so marvellous that they never have to go out.

'Because, now, of course, I get people recognising me all the time in London, and all the aggressive ones. . . They come up, in clubs and restaurants, and say "I liked you in *Zulu*, but let's face it – " they say *Ipcress* was . . . stuff. Sometimes, I'm polite and say "Well, *Sir*, if you've said all you have to say, would you mind going?" Sometimes I'm . . . blunter. Television was different. I made 125 television plays and people would recognise me, but nobody ever knew my name. They don't watch the credits, see? They've gone into the kitchen for a brew-up . . . So they stop me and say, "I know *you*, you're him in the funny hat, that fell downstairs. . .

Good luck – son!’ Condescending, you see . . . on television, you have been in the front parlour, putting on a show for nothing. Not in the movies. They have to go out, and they pay for the privilege. . .

‘And the theatre? Look, I’m a star, now . . . I get offered parts, but in ten years, I never got a day’s work from the West End theatres, and it wasn’t from lack of looking. Now I don’t owe them *anything*.’

(Much later, I am having coffee with Len Deighton, the progenitor of the Palmer figure, and the seedy-spy thing, and, behind those round lenses, he has a hunted look. . . ‘Mike is really going to enjoy being famous’ he says, ‘Me? . . . I only want to be a has-been.’)

. . . and now we have reached the Europa Centre, an automated island, with its surrealist – international of cafés – Tokyo Coffee-Bar, Piccadilly Drug-store – and the twirling three-legged sign on the Mercedes-Benz building (‘We are shooting a scene on that thing,’ says Medak. ‘Free advertising for the Isle of Man,’ says Caine), and the Kaiser-Wilhelm Church, the one war-charred, ruined tower, sticking up in an obscene gesture of reproach (to whom?), between two brand-new blocks, gridded windows winking with coloured-glass squares, like a sanctified IBM machine . . . and all around walk those middle-aged fraus, with faces like horses’ skulls, and hats like felt-lined shell-cases, that make the odd-job bowler look flimsy. . . ‘The thing about Berlin is that you get the sort of people going

out who stay at home in London. . .’

And so on down the *Kurfurstendamm* (hereinafter to be called the Ku ‘Damm) past the glass-fronted cafés, elbowing out into the street, past showcases, like glass-walled catafalques, on the pavement, in which are laid out cashmeres, and first editions, and, here, a collection of antique military decorations, Iron Crosses winking conspiratorially at passers-by.

‘I suppose I did surprise Hollywood a bit. They still seem to think all British actors are fags. One trouble is that the British accent is just like the American fag accent. . . They think that British actors have no, no – nothing, on screen, anyway. Most Englishmen who arrive in LA, well, they don’t whoop it up in clubs at all. Either they take a girl with them, or they start taking one out, just one, in a nice, quiet way. . . Well, I didn’t give a . . . I’m not trying to project any image. ‘There was this party that Howard Kotch from Paramount threw for me in the ballroom of the Beverly Wilshire. Seven hundred and fifty high-class guests, you know, from studio heads to Gloria Swanson. I was new in Hollywood, and this was for *Alfie*, but most of them had seen *Ipcress*, or heard of it. . . There was a good swing band, but nobody was dancing or anything. A typical Hollywood party. Bright lights, and buckets of ice, and bottles of Scotch and everything actually on the tables, so that you can get stoned before you start – I met about 1,500 people in Hollywood, and I was stoned all the time. That’s the way to travel! . . . and, suddenly, we had this British pop group come on, long hair and all . . . and everybody was dead quiet, and I was tense and sort of sweating, but I took Shirley Maclaine out on to the floor, and we went mad. *Swung*. . . You could see by the looks on their faces that they didn’t expect me to frug, they thought I was going to do a fox-trot or something.

‘But I do all those dances pretty well. I mean, it all started with us. So, we went mad, and soon there were a hundred couples dancing. . . I danced with Nancy Sinatra, Liza Minelli, had a ball. I drank a lot that evening. Normally? No. All that hell-raiser bit, they try to stick on Terry Stamp and me. . . Dead boring. I am interested in the ladies, and ladies aren’t interested

in drunks. And I don’t need to drink because I am unhappy, because I am not unhappy. I am six hundred per cent happier than I have ever been. . .’

Today’s location is the Swinemunde Bridge, or rather a plasticated mock-up of that particular check point, over a railway line, which echoes with the vampire shrieks of trains. . . Charlie Kasher is standing around in a stained white raincoat, looking paternalistic, like a popular headmaster, or as though he were half-afraid that the unit might defect with his equipment to the Soviet. . . ‘Caine?’ he says ‘This is one of the most articulate actors I have ever met. . . I was warned he would give trouble, do the Hollywood bit. . . He just does his job. I think he will be a big star, an *actor* star. It takes courage to underplay the way he does, you know. The temptation is to make like – well, picking your nose, scratching.’

We drift over to where Guy Hamilton is in lugubrious conference with Otto Heller, the chief cameraman. They are surrounded by grips, looking very Western Desert in special-issue sand-coloured anoraks, and they are peering intently at a patch of recently wet road, staring it dry, staring, but, no, it stays soggy. . . Petrol, they decide, petrol, and some of those grips, with that special mateyness found in heavily unionised industries, stagger over with a couple of drums. . . Whoomf! But, no, the bridge stays soggy, except that now the surface is gridded and bubbly, like an incinerated kipper. . . ‘We shall 65▷

just have to – wait!’ Hamilton says, so he, and Heller, and the Desert Corps, drift off to the mobile canteen, to sink into sweetish orange coffee and ham-and-cheese rolls. (‘These *wursts* – bleeding marvellous sausages!’ says Caine. ‘But they can’t get the crew to touch them’) . . . shades of the BR Cafeteria! ‘Of course, is not so much a spy film as a cold-war film,’ says Charlie Kasher. (Of course, no spy films are just spy films any more.) ‘And, after *The Billion-Dollar Brain*, well, how about having Palmer resign from the service. Put him into a completely different situation. Like a debt collector? It’s the Harry Palmer psychology that is the main attraction, and we own Harry Palmer. Not Len Deighton. Hell! We invented the name.’ ‘The Harry Palmer name!’ says Mike Caine, and we are preparing to go to dinner, and David Pelham, the publicist, is telling the involved story of how Anthony Armstrong-Jones and he photographed Bea Lillie, or was it the other way around?, and Caine goes on, ‘We were all sitting around trying to think up a dead – ordinary – name. ‘How about Palmer?’ said Harry Saltzman, and we said, Great! and now for the first name – ‘Harry!’ everybody shouted. . .

‘But, seriously, I owe Harry a lot – not just career, But he takes marvellous care of my money. Not that I am a stupid idiot about money myself . . . I think it is the cowboy actors who are really in it, you know, people like Gene Autry and Randolph Scott. . . They plod on, and buy a few thousand acres

of prairie, and a couple of years later it turns into Palm Springs or something . . . and the agents. I met this agent in Hollywood, with a voice like a circular saw, and a sort of white plastic face, and money in his eyes, and I’ll never forget his look when I came in, as he measured me up and down, adding me up at so many dollars per inch.

‘And what with always being burgled, you know what they are doing nowadays? Selling those big houses, and they build penthouses. On the top of other blocks. Yeah, pools and everything. ‘Excuse me – your swimming-pool is

leaking into our bedroom. . .’

We are dining in the Pinocchio, which is Italian, and styled in trattoria trad, with hanging Chianti bottles, and brightly coloured maps and things. ‘I think I’ll nosh some of that *pizza al prosciutto*,’ says Caine, and, meanwhile, Guy Hamilton and Mrs Guy Hamilton, who was Karima in *Outcast of the Islands* have decided on a *Soave Bolla*, and it appears, with an un-Berliner, Mediterranean speed. . . ‘Have you noticed how few girls there are here?’ demands Caine, gloomily.

‘France, that’s where all the beauti- 66 ▷

◁ 65 ful girls are. . . England, well, it’s better than it ever was before. My generation . . . well, we are not going to take that bourgeois . . . stuff any more. And the girls, well, they all look sharp, but they are scrubbers. Well, I have had scrubbers, I have done the full scrubber bit, and, now, I am a movie star, and I want beautiful girls, with a bit of class . . .’ ‘Scrubbers?’ says Miss Erey, but more *Soave* arrives, and grilled soles, and canelloni, and my *pollo alla sorpresa* and the surprise is that when I touch it with a fork . . . a jet of hot butter . . . surprises my shirt-front.

‘Actually,’ says Mike Caine, and he is leaning over towards me, and this is confidential, not for the rest of the table, just him, me and a few thousand readers, ‘I consider myself a normal-sexed person. I mean, I like – affection. Now, when I first made it, I was sharing this flat with Terry Stamp, and I went a bit mad – but now? Well, forget it! ok, so I like women. Well, I really like them, like being with them . . . But these interviewers from the dailies, I can talk to them for two hours, and then I just casually mention one girl I have had, and – down it goes – they have decided what to write before they come.

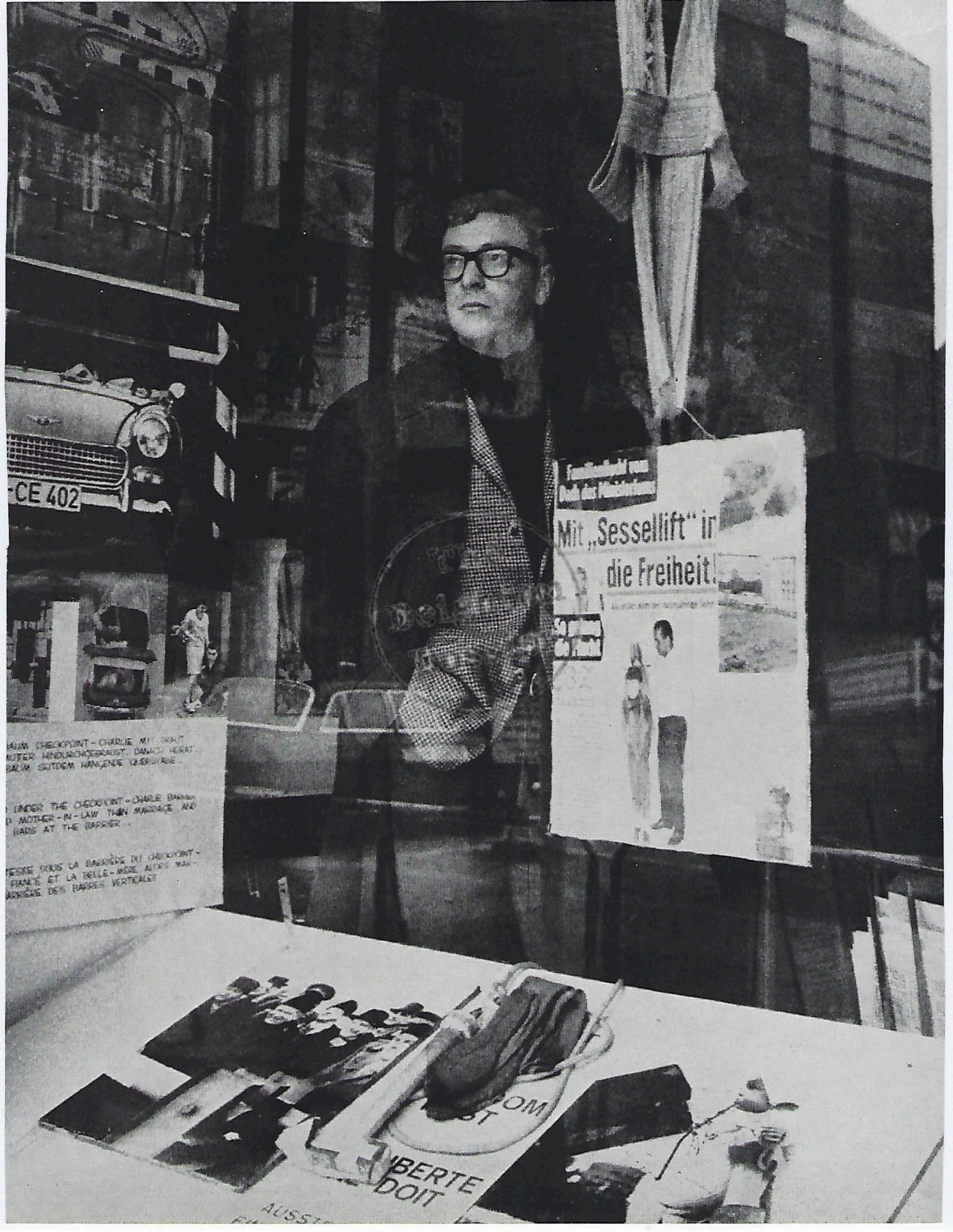
‘I don’t lie to women. I don’t tell them the truth either. I just don’t talk, so the time comes when you finish with one, and on to the next. . . Now that I have become well known, naturally I am surrounded with beautiful, available women. Well, my attitude is, use them before they use you. . . Use you? You see, a lot figure they would like to try you, just once, for the experience . . . or, mainly, there are the ones who want

to be seen around with you, get taken to the parties, get into the papers. They are probably the ones who are trying to get into movies, and they try to pull the publicity themselves.

‘Well, I know that sick sex scene in London, and forget it – I don’t want birds coming up to me – I am the go’vnr. . . I don’t want these girls, who one moment are telling you they want to be laid, and the next are raving on the parquet with LSD. . . Not for me, a one night’s stand means two months. . . ok, it’s corny, but I’m a Romantic. And I’m quite a catch – I make a lot of money.’

*Zabaglione. Provolone. Cappucino. . .* And now? The Scotch Club? ‘No, that’s a drag. And the Riffi . . . that’s closed. Everything here was either good last week, or is going to be good next week, or its just been closed by the law . . . like that last place we went to, with all the fellers dressed as girls. They come on, and they are beautiful, but no, it’s an ice-cream. . . Ice-cream? Freezer. Geysers. Bloke.’

But it turns out that the New Eden is open, and it may not be exactly swinging, but along we go, and some of the local talent is there, playing fruit machines and bar football, and dancing to a sweaty trio, all the local hookers . . . so we grab a table, and nestle around a bottle of Cutty Sark – ‘Yeah! This is the place. Look at all those pictures!’ And the walls are pinned up with signed snaps of some-time *habitués*, misspelled celebrities, Eddie Constantin, and – ‘look. There’s Shirley!’ – yes, Shirley Maclaine, and Michael Caine? ‘Not yet. They haven’t heard of me yet. But just you wait.’ □



Familienhilfe von  
 Paul und Marie

# Mit „Sessellift“ in die Freiheit!

ALLERRECHTST BEI UNGLÜCKLICHEN KRIEG

UNTER CHECKPOINT - CHARLIE MIT SEINER MUTTER HINDURCHGEHT. DANACH KOMMT MARIA, SEITDEM WÄHNENDE KESCHTAGE...

UNDER THE CHECKPOINT - CHARLIE BRINGS HIS MOTHER - IN - LAW THRU AVIATION AND HANGS AT THE BARRIER...

PASSES UNDER LA BARRIÈRE DU CHECKPOINT - FRANÇOISE ET LA BELLE - MÈRE ALORS MARIE ARRIVENT DES BARRIÈRE VERTICALES

AUSST...

LIBERTE DOIT...

...MOM...