



## Christmas-West haunting

**By Ralph Boulton**  
EAST BERLIN (Reuter) — While East Germans decorate trees for the yuletide season, the well-heeled ghost of Christmas-West haunts the playrooms of this Communist country.

West German television advertising, watched with a mixture of wonder and disgust, projects a glittering image of Christmas splendor into more spartan East German homes. Chic clothes, home computers and holiday season trinkets all beckon.

Although they sport festive lights at this time of year, the department stores of East Berlin cannot reflect the fantasy world promised by their counterparts on the other side of the border.

Aware of the lure of this western "paradise," East German leader Erich Honecker has announced a new drive to bridge gaps in consum-

er supplies, especially in clothes. Recent economic plans for 1986-90 show he prefers to trim back industrial investment rather than cut consumer improvements.

But the East-West consumer goods gap is especially evident at Christmas.

Children's lists of presents include western toys unobtainable here.

Said one parent: "I suppose parents over there have problems when they just can't afford all those things. But that doesn't make it easier for us when we try to explain that this plastic lorry (truck) or that doll can't even be seen in our country."

"It's one time we could do without our little 'window on the West,'" she added with a nod toward the television.

Adults can treat themselves to some of the trappings of their wealthier fellow Germans if they have

the western currency to shop in special Intershops.

But Christmas in East Germany is by no means a tale of tallow candles and empty larders. The comparison with the West may be dispiriting, but Eastern neighbors such as Poles and Russians view East German shops with envy.

East Berlin's colorful Christmas fair is a bustle of food stalls, toy sales and rides. Cuban oranges make an annual appearance in the shops, and bananas and nuts are available periodically.

East Germany makes world-famous wooden toys. But, people complain, the very best go for export.

The deputy minister responsible for consumer goods industries, Waldemar Harz, denies the "export myth."

"There will always be some complaints, but it's just not true that the best is exported," he said in an interview. "There are some shortages, but in general, we can say that citizens here have a standard of living that meets their demands."

The centralized state planning mechanism had become more flexible and responsive to people's needs, even adjusting to western advertising in some areas.

## Ann Landers

### "Too little, too late"



Dear Ann Landers: Please print this letter so that others who find themselves in a similar situation might be better prepared to handle a sorrow that will burden our family members as long as we live.

My father passed away a few months ago. He was a fairly religious Jewish man who married a Catholic woman late in life, after Mama died. When he married this woman he stopped practicing his religion but he did not convert to Catholicism. They were married for ten years.

Unfortunately, father never told us where he wished to be buried. We just assumed that he would be next to Mama in the Jewish cemetery. We were wrong. His wife had him buried in a Catholic cemetery. We feel she showed no respect for us, his children. We tried to talk her out of it but it was impossible. Legally, we had no recourse.

We find it very difficult to visit our father's gravesite. We also find it hard to believe that this is the way he wanted it. We will still never know the answer. It is buried with him.

Too late we realize we should have had a meeting with our father and his wife and discussed the situation. We are certain he would have made it clear that he wanted to be buried in the Jewish cemetery and we would not be so miserable. — Angry in New Jersey

Dear New Jersey: Another example of "too little too late." I feel sad for all concerned. I hope your letter serves as a catalyst for some discussions that will spare others from suffering the same fate.

Dear Ann Landers: Private businesses and government offices around the country have apparently

been conned into having piped-in music for the "enjoyment" of the caller on hold.

Here's one caller who resents being forced to listen to music that is not my style. Worse yet, some phones are piped-in radio stations that can trap the holder into listening to commercials. Many times I thought someone was talking to me and I have answered, "What was that again?" I feel pretty foolish when I discover I am talking to myself.

The quality of music over the phone leaves a lot to be desired. But my real objection is that the government is spending my tax dollars on tasteless, frivolous telephone music and commercials.

I am not a chronic complainer nor a malcontent. I'm just an average citizen with a legitimate beef. If enough people feel as I do they should say so. In the face of a horrendous uproar something will have to be done to get rid of this pesty practice. Are you willing to say how YOU feel about it, Ann? — Bill H., Rochester, Wash.

Dear Bill: Yup, I'm willing to say. I don't care for the music or the commercials. I've got nothing against silence. In fact I think we could use a lot more of it.

Dear Ann Landers: Our neighbor's child is having trouble in school. He was labelled a "slow learner." I believe the problem started when he was a toddler.

The boy was left-handed and his father insisted that he be forced to switch over. Could this have interfered with his learning ability? — Johnstown, Pa.

Dear John: The experts say it is not a good idea to try to make a righthander out of a southpaw. The forced switch may have interfered with the child's learning process.

## In Passing around the Hat



Each year Jerry Ham of Medicine Hat Plymouth Chrysler donates a 4 X 4 to the new Miss Rodeo Canada. This year is no exception as Kelly Fredell of William's Lake shows.

—News photo Frank Webber

## Children look south for Santa

PAUNGASSI, Man. (CP) — While many children expect Santa Claus to fly from the North Pole in a sleigh pulled by reindeer, youngsters on this remote Indian reserve expect him to arrive in a single-engine Otter — from the south.

For the last six years Mark Scott has travelled to this community 270 kilometres north of Winnipeg, bringing gifts for 200 children and the only sense of Christmas some of them have ever known.

"Without him, most of these children just wouldn't have a Christmas," says teacher Charlie McKay.

Standing on frozen Fishing Lake, eyes skyward straining to catch their first glimpse of the flying Santa, the children waited for Scott's

arrival. Older boys on snowmobiles pulling wooden sleighs waited to escort Santa and his load to the reserve school.

The children shuffled restlessly as the 53-year-old Scott, clad in his holiday finery, along with helpers and the pilot, began unloading boxes of toys and candy.

Back in Winnipeg, boxes of parkas, jeans and other clothing, had to be left behind, to be collected later, because there wasn't any more room in the Otter.

Scott, who works as a school caretaker, made his first trip to the reserve six years ago with the Transcona Optimist Club.

Since then, he has organized the yearly visits himself.

"Something keeps drawing me back to this little village," Scott said, surveying the modest houses clustered on a bluff overlooking the lake.

"I think it's the light in the children's eyes that keeps drawing me back. I know something sure does."

Scott receives most of his toys and gifts through donations from individuals and merchants throughout Manitoba and northwestern Ontario.

He and his wife collect, sort, package and store the gifts and the band council covers the cost of the plane trip.

The gifts Scott brings for the children are likely the only ones they'll get for Christmas, McKay says.

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<p><b>La-Z-Boy Rocker Recliner</b> \$498 Interest "0" 6 Equal Payments of \$83.00 1st Payment March 1987</p>	<p><b>Front Load Candle VCR</b> With Wireless Remote Control \$477 Interest "0" 6 Equal Monthly Payments of \$79.50 1st Payment due March 1987. Not exactly as shown</p>

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