

BERLIN'S NOMADS

For millions of Germans, the first peacetime winter means a desperate trek around the country in search of shelter and the hope of enough food to maintain life. Railway stations are assembly points and clearing grounds for the homeless and the hopeless, a nightmare of interminable waiting for trains which, if they arrive at all, are packed to suffocation point. A little of the old, quizzical arrogance remains; but only a very little. People wait for hours to clamber on to the cattle truck expresses and the few passenger trains left by the R.A.F. A hundred mile journey takes days instead of hours, and the ordeal is one that only the fittest can face. Travellers are allowed to take so little luggage that keeping warm is impossible. And mid-German winters are anything but mild.

In under three months nearly 2 million German refugees fled westwards to Berlin. As winter approached, Allied authorities searched for a solution. With insufficient food and shelter, most of the wanderers had to leave again. Retracing their steps go a fragment of the nomads of present day Germany.

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