

“Bachelor Paradise” (1959)

Abstract

Housing forms changed in East and West in the 1950s. For single men, the room rented from a landlady disappeared. It was replaced by affordable, functional one-room apartments on the attic floors of apartment buildings. In 1959, *Neues Deutschland*, the central organ of the SED touted the advantages of these new apartments. Similar apartments also existed in West Germany at the time.

Source

Who does not recoil at the thought of the proverbial “bachelor’s pad” – an unfriendly furnished room with thrown-together furniture from three generations, and, to top it off, a landlady who demonstratively scrubs the floor after each guest. Anyone who has ever “enjoyed” that will be especially envious of the young men and women who will move into one-room flats with modern furnishings in Stalinstadt this year.

Eighty apartments for single people are being built in the attic floor of new apartment blocks. The small units include, in addition to a living room of 16.5 square meters and a large sleeping nook of 4.83 square meters, a kitchen unit and a bathroom. Every room is accessible from the hallway.

The windowed section of the living room with the built-in, protruding cupboard makes the room quite homey. The bed, along with a night-table, is built into a niche that is separated from the actual living space by a decorative curtain. The apartment includes, apart from the built-in furnishings, two armchairs, a coffee table, and a dresser. And all of this costs 30 DM to rent, including warm water and heat. Who wouldn’t want to live there?

The small mansard apartments are not only quite livable, but also cheap. They are far less expensive to construct than other single-room apartments. Finishing a mansard apartment, including the built-in cupboards with fine wood trim, costs 8,600 DM.

Source: *Neues Deutschland*, February 7, 1959; reprinted in Christoph Klessmann and Georg Wagner, *Das gespaltene Land. Leben in Deutschland 1945–1990. Texte und Dokumente zur Sozialgeschichte*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993, p. 518.

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