

# Erich Kästner, “Visitors from the Country” (1930)

## Abstract

---

The writer and publicist Erich Kästner (1899-1974) achieved worldwide fame primarily through his children’s books. However, he began his career in the Weimar Republic with satirical, often socially critical articles and poems, which he began to write while still a student in Leipzig in order to finance his German studies. After completing his doctorate, Kästner moved to Berlin in 1927, where he published articles in various newspapers and magazines both under his own name and under several pseudonyms. His first book, the poetry collection *Herz auf Taille*, was published in 1928. A year later, his first children's book, *Emil and the Detectives*, was published and became an instant bestseller. Kästner, who made no secret of his anti-militarism and was politically close to the Social Democrats, was one of the authors whose books were burned by the National Socialists in 1933 for being “culturally Bolshevik.” Unlike many other intellectuals critical of the regime, however, he remained in Germany, where he survived the Nazi regime and the Second World War. This humorous poem from 1930 describes the confusion of rural visitors in the face of the pace and noise of modern urban life as epitomized by Potsdamer Platz, the transport hub in the heart of Berlin.

## Source

---

### Visitors from the Country

They stand distraught at Potsdamer Platz  
and think Berlin is too loud.  
The night glows in kilowatts,  
A girl says hoarsely: “Come with me, my darling!”  
And shows an awful lot of skin.

They are amazed and don’t know what to do.  
They stand and just stare.  
The trains rattle. The cars scream.  
They want to be back home.  
And find Berlin too big.

It sounds as if the big city is groaning,  
because someone is scolding it.  
The houses sparkle. The subway roars.  
They are not used to all this.  
And find Berlin too wild.

They bend their legs in fear  
and do everything wrong.  
They smile in dismay. And they wait silently.  
And stand around on Potsdamer Platz,  
until they are run over.

---

Source of original German text: Erich Kästner, *Ein Mann gibt Auskunft*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1930.

Translation: GHI staff

Recommended Citation: Erich Kästner, “Visitors from the Country” (1930), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:document-4651>> [March 16, 2026].