

SPECIAL SERVICES TOUR OF POTSDAM



* 1950 *

Tour of Potsdam



Presented by the Special Services Branch
Compiled and edited by Viviane W. Adams
Berlin Military Post
1950

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BRIEF HISTORY:

Potsdam, first mentioned in the 10th century, is of ancient Slavonic origin. It was at that time a very small and unimportant fishing village in Brandenburg, the least populated part of the first German Reich. When Brandenburg became a German electorate in 1215, Potsdam, still a marshy chain of islands and lakes, was used only as a hunting-ground for the elector residing in Berlin.

Frederick, first Elector-Earl of Brandenburg, 1600-1640, began the development of Potsdam from a village into a town of palaces and parks. The *Stadtschloss* or Town Palace which he had built and the royal buildings were destroyed together with the city of Potsdam during the Thirty-Years-War (1618-1648).

When visiting Potsdam and Sans Souci there are three Prussian rulers to be remembered: Frederick, first Elector-Earl of Brandenburg, who first took an interest in Potsdam; Frederick William I (1713-1740), father of Frederick the Great, the Soldier's King who surrounded himself with giant guards and developed Potsdam into a huge garrison town, glorifying militarism; and Frederick the Great (1740-1786), who lived mostly in Potsdam and made of it a beautiful and royal city.

Modern Potsdam dates from the time of the "Great Elector" Frederick William, 1640-1688, and is more or less a mirror of Prussian history. The Great Elector, who drained the marshy island and developed Brandenburg's economic life, rebuilt the destroyed Town Palace on its old site in the style of a Dutch country-mansion because his wife was a Dutch princess.

Frederick I, 1688-1713, joined Brandenburg and East Prussia and made himself the first King of Prussia. He extended the *Stadtschloss* in the German Baroque style, and began the development of a new city.

Frederick William I was interested in developing Potsdam only in order to make room for his soldiers. He was

no great lover of pomp and luxury: he lived in two small rooms in the big and beautifully furnished **Town-Palace**.

Potsdam owes much of its glory to Frederick the Great, who made Prussia the first power in the German political concord. He was not only a soldier, he had a good artistic sense. His small Palace of Sans Souci is "a dream of beauty and life without care", whilst his New Palace is a symbol of might and power. Frederick the Great lived in Potsdam.

Most of the public buildings of Potsdam were built during the reign of Frederick the Great. He brought artists and architects from all over the world to work for him. He had a Dutch Quarter built for his Dutch craftsmen, and for his Russian musicians he built the Russian Colony of Alexandrowka.

The next century brought the foundation of the Second German Reich, 1871, when the king of Prussia became Emperor of Germany, (William I), and more palaces, large and small, grew up around Potsdam. The city became heavy with pomp and royalty, the seat of Prussian militaristic worship.

And it was here that in 1933 Hitler and Hindenburg made their pact and the Third German Reich was created. Again in 1945 the world heard of Potsdam when the famous Potsdam Agreement was signed in the **Marble Palace** in the heart of the city.

SPECIAL SERVICES TOUR OF POTSDAM

By Cpl. Howard Ellis

ITINERARY:

Special Services Branch, Berlin Military Post, offers a sister feature to the Berlin Tour in the visits to the old Royal City of Potsdam and the Sans Souci Palace. Cameras may now be taken on this trip.

The Potsdam Tour buses start from the parking lot across from the main gate of the **Headquarters Compound**, drive up **Argentinische Allee** and turn right onto **Potsdamer Chaussee**. This is all in the US Sector of Berlin.

To the left, on a pedestal, can be seen a **Russian tank**, a memorial of the Russian entry into Berlin. Following the old **Berlin to Wannsee** road, the tour crosses the bridge connecting the **Grosse Wannsee**, right, and the **Stolper Loch** or **Kleiner Wannsee**, left. On the right is the club house of the **Special Services Boat Club**, summer recreation area for military and civilian personnel stationed in Berlin.

The route runs straight ahead through the suburbs of **Wannsee** and on the left is the **Special Services Midnite Golf Club**, and 800 yards further on the border of the **US-Russian Sector** is reached.

On the left can be seen **Babelsberg Park** where a German Hollywood sprang up before the war. The bridge over the Havel River separating Berlin from Potsdam, the **Glienicker Bruecke**, was blown up by the Nazis when the Red Army was approaching. The buses cross on a temporary wooden structure.

Potsdam is beautifully situated, surrounded by wide expanses of water and heavy pine forests. Some of its beauty was marred by aerial bombardment and heavy street fighting in the last days of the war, but nevertheless its palaces, parks and streets still show some of the glories of former times.

The tour buses drive down **Koenigstrasse** and pass on the right the huge barracks of the Life Guards and on the left that of the Hussar Guards, both famous Prussian Regiments of the Emperors. A little further along the tour passes under the **Berliner Tor**, a gate not very important architecturally.

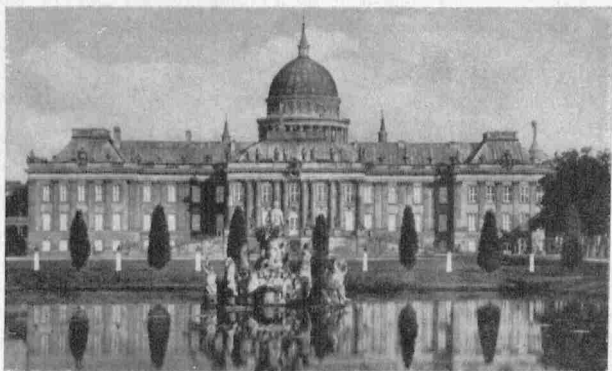
A Monument to Prussian Militarism

"Potsdam, a monument to Prussian militarism", is perhaps the most apt description of the once beautiful city built by the Prussian monarchs to perpetuate their memory. From the first sight of the Royal City through the bus windows until the bus turns "homeward", the sightseer is conscious of the warlike nature and pompous arrogance of Frederick, first Elector-Earl of Brandenburg, forerunner of the latter-day Prussian Kings.

Subsequent rulers, down to the last Emperor, enlarged and improved upon the original grandiose monuments and city plans.

THE MARKET SQUARE:

The first stop is made in the heart of Potsdam at the market square — **Altmarkt**. Bordering the square is the **Rathaus**, town hall, built in 1754 in the Dutch style, the **Church of St. Nicholas**, and the **Stadtschloss**, official residence of the royal family.



A pre-war picture of the Stadtschloss. This palace, the pride of the Prussian rulers, is only an impressive ruin today. No recent pictures are available because, although cameras are allowed on this tour, pictures may only be taken of the grounds and palaces in the Park of Sans Souci.

THE STADTSCHLOSS:

The **Stadtschloss** or Royal Palace as such, dates from 1750 when it was built on the site of the old hunting lodge of the Emperors. It has been added to and extended by each succeeding ruler. Seeing the ruin today it is hard to imagine the palace's former splendor.

Past the palace on the right there used to be an old lime-tree known as the "*Petition Tree*". The people of Potsdam used to pin up their petitions on its trunk for the so called "Soldier's King", Frederick William I., to read during his early morning walks.

Originally a beautiful park or **Lustgarten** spread out between the palace and the bank of the Havel River and a graceful colonnade connected the palace with the river. Frederick William I. transformed the lovely park of Potsdam, as he had that of Berlin, into a drill square and parade ground for his corps of giants, the famous Potsdam Grenadiers.

ROYAL STABLES:

Near the market place can be seen the ruins of the royal stables connected to the **Stadtschloss** by a colonnade and the **Nicolai Church** built in 1850. All the buildings in this group are built on the Georgian style and are vaguely reminiscent of 18th century London.

GARNISON KIRCHE:

A quiet street leads from the market place to the **Garrisonkirche** (Garrison Church) built in 1735 by Frederick Wilhelm I, father of Frederick the Great. In this church the two great sovereigns were buried. Their coffins were hastily removed and sent to Marburg for reburial as the Red Army entered Potsdam, April 1945.

Although ostensibly a place of worship, the **Garrison Church** is actually a monument to war, formerly housing the prize trophies and battle flags seized during the wars of the 18th and 19th centuries. It was here that Adolf Hitler came to power after a meeting with President von Hindenburg of the Weimar Republic of Germany. The handshake of these two men literally shook the world and brought into



The Garrison Church in pre-war days. This church which served as the burial place of the Prussian Emperors is completely gutted as a result of the Allied air-raid of April 17, 1945.

being the Third Reich which was to have lasted 1,000 years.

All of these magnificent buildings around the market place were destroyed April 17, 1945, by the US Air Force and the British Royal Air Force in a 20-minute air raid.

WAISENHAUS:

The tour goes by the **Waisenhaus** (Orphans' Home), built by Frederick William I, where the children of soldiers killed fighting for the King were reared to be loyal soldiers of the Prussian army. The **Waisenhaus** was damaged during World War II.

MARBLE PALACE:

Crossing the **Canal Bridge**, the bus passes the **Marble Palace** wherein the Allies signed the famed Potsdam Treaty in 1945. The palace and grounds are now used as a recreation center for Russian soldiers and officers, the palace itself, as well as its neighbor, **Cecilienhof Schloss** (former residence of the Crown Prince), being used as a mess hall and rest area for Russian officers and members of the Soviet General Staff. No American has been allowed to enter here since 1945.

SANS SOUCI PARK:

The bus now enters the park of **Sans Souci**. The park is the largest of the Potsdam parks and covers an area of approximately five square miles. The buses park outside the gates to the **Neue Palais** built in 1769 in the Georgian style by Frederick the Great.

NEUES PALAIS:

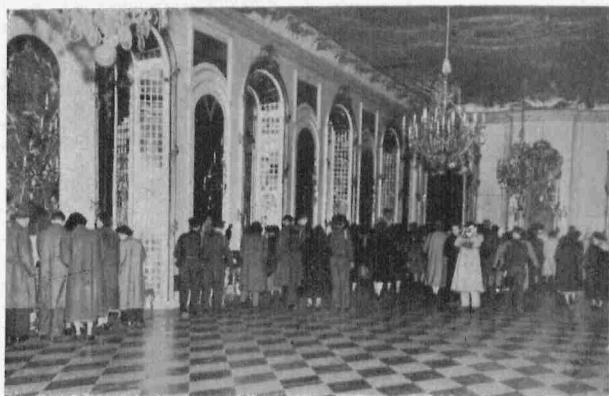
The story of the building of this palace is an amusing one. Returning from one of his many wars, the king was rumored to be short of funds with which to provision his armies. Neighboring kings decided this would be a good time to invade Prussia. The king had this lavish palace built, spending enormous sums on the furnishings, to impress his enemies with his wastefulness.

Donning felt slippers, so as not to mar the original parquet and mosaic floors, the visitors enter the palace through the side entrance of the South Wing, leading into the small



—Smith, Camera Club

The Neue Palais, the summer residence of the Prussian Emperors from the days of Frederick the Great until Kaiser William II, the last Emperor of Germany. Unharmd by air-raids and bombs its facade and sculptures only show the natural wear of 200 years and the neglect of the war years.



—Chenoweth, Camera Club

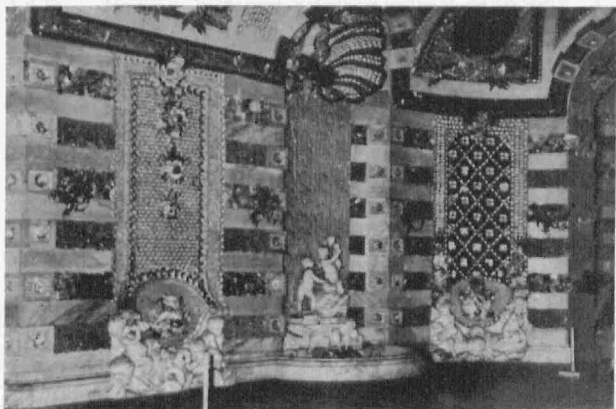
The Marble Gallery of the Neue Palais, used as a Dining Hall for state occasions, is 100 feet long.

library. There is not much of interest in this room, but it contains two original mosaic tables from ancient Rome said to be 2,000 years old.

The following rooms were the private apartments of Frederick the Great. From the library the visitors go into the **Mirror Room**. While living in the palace Frederick the Great used this as a sitting room. A painting of his wife hangs here. The next room is the small family dining room, noted for its ornate Meissen chandelier. Next comes the green-silver bedroom of the king, his brown-silver workroom, his dainty music room.

Now the rooms become larger, the ceilings more ornate. The tourist, slipping and sliding in his felt slippers, has reached the reception room or **Marble Gallery**. The chandelier is of rock-crystal and in the corner stands a bust of Frederick the Great. There is a small sitting room between the reception room and the lovely **Marble Gallery**, used as a dining hall for state occasions. The paint on the ceiling depicts Morning, Noon, and Night. This room is 100 feet long.

On the first floor and in the center of the palace is the **Shell Hall**, a whole room inlaid with shells, minerals and



—Chenoweth, Camera Club

Shell Room in the Neue Palais

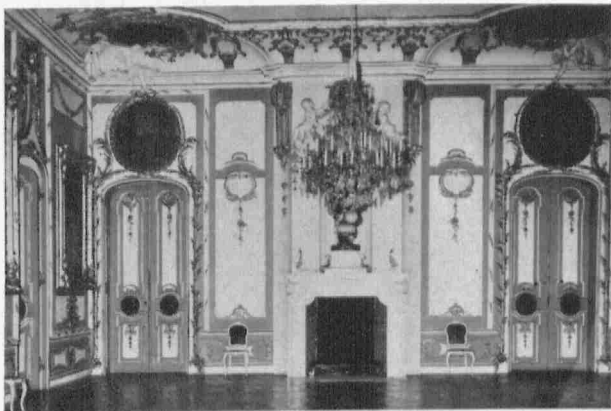
precious stones, a sort of Aladdin's Cave. The hall was famous for the Christmas parties the Queens gave to the children of Potsdam. Originally it was without windows and gave one the feeling of entering a real cave.

Passing into the North Wing the tour comes to the **Tamerlan Room**, a room specially designed to hold the massive oil painting showing King Tamerlan of Turkey, after his capture at the battle of Ankara, being brought before King Bajazet of Mongolia. The painting fills all of one wall.

The next room was used by Kaiser William II as a recreation room for billiards, cards, etc. Last room on the main floor is the small reception room used by the Kaiser and his wife the Empress Auguste-Victoria.

An outstanding feature of the **Neue Palais** is the **Royal Theater**, on the second floor, currently used by the public pending the restoration of the Potsdam Theater, destroyed in the 1945 air-raid. It seats four hundred on red velvet-covered benches.

Still on the second floor, above the **Marble Gallery**, is the **Dancing Hall** with a beautiful inlaid floor of maple and



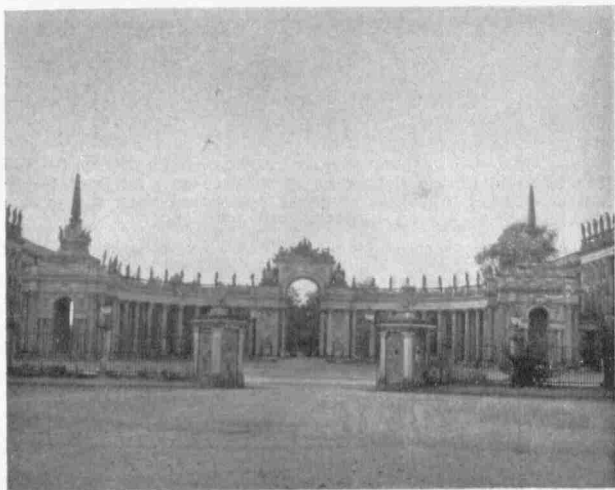
—Chenoweth, Came a Club

The State Ball Room or Dancing Hall in the Neue Palais, situated above the Marble Gallery, with a 100-foot floor inlaid with maple and rosewood.

rosewood. The paintings on the wall are by Guido Reni and Giordano, and show Diogenes; the Judgment of Paris; Lucretia being attacked; and Lucretia committing suicide.

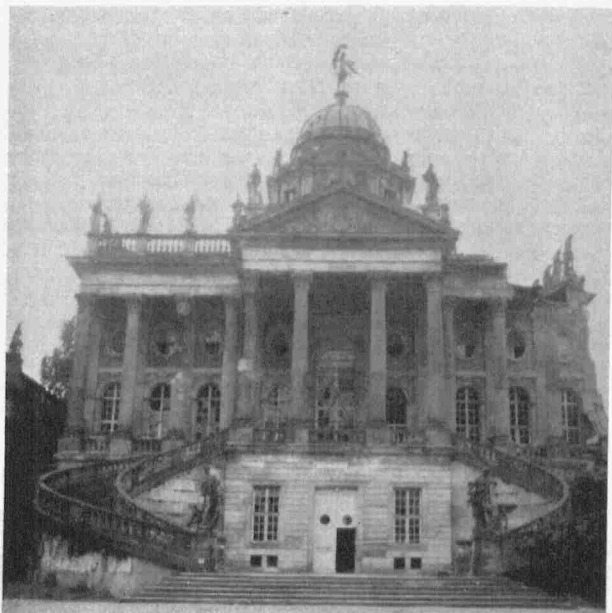
This main building of the **Neue Palais** is 700 feet long and contains 200 rooms and one bathroom. It was not greatly damaged or seriously looted during this last war and the visitor can find much of interest to see and get a good idea of its former luxury from its rich panelling and flooring. All the successors of Frederick the Great have used it as a summer residence. Kaiser William II, the last Kaiser who was exiled to Doorn, had a great deal of remodelling done in the palace and he added the large terrace with the heavy candelabra on the side overlooking the gardens.

Across the wide avenue from which the buses approach the palace are the **Communs**, two picturesque buildings intended as quarters for the royal retinues, connected by a semi-circle of colonnades. The left building contains the kitchen and is connected with the palace by an underground passage. In the others were billeted the palace guards.



Les Communs

—V. W. Adams



—V. W. Adams

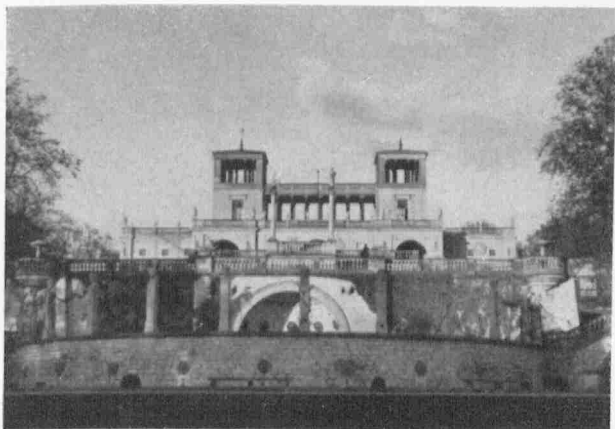
The left end of the Communs used later as a visitors house and containing the vaste kitchens connected with the palace by an underground passage.

ORANGERY:

It is a short drive over to the **Orangery**, an extensive structure in the Florentine style, built as a summer residence for Emperor Frederick IV, 1856-1861. Since then it has been used mostly as a hot house for raising warm climate fruit for the king's table.

The buses stop at the foot of the beautifully terraced grounds, laid out in the style of the 16th century, and it is quite a breathtaking climb up to the palace.

Through the trees to the right, in the distance, can be seen the little **Japanese Tea House**, the pavilion built by



—Smith, Camera Club

The Orangerie and the terraced gardens leading up to it. It was built as a summer residence for Emperor Frederick IV and since then used to raise tropical fruits and exotic flowers for the royal household.

Frederick the Great for summer afternoon parties.

Instead of approaching the Palace of Sans Souci through the terraced gardens and having another stiff climb, the buses drive around by the side entrance.

SANS SOUCI:

Again the visitor must don slippers to enter the long, 320-foot, one-story palace of Sans Souci. The group enters through the **Parole Room** where Frederick the Great used to sit, almost 200 years ago, and issue orders and confer with his advisors. In summer he held these conferences outside in the fore-court, amidst the surrounding colonnade.

Frederick's rooms in Sans Souci have been preserved very much as he left them. From the Parole Room the visitor goes into the Small Gallery. Most interesting are the figures in the four alcoves — originals from ancient Pompeii and reputed to be over 2,000 years old.



—Founier, Camera Club

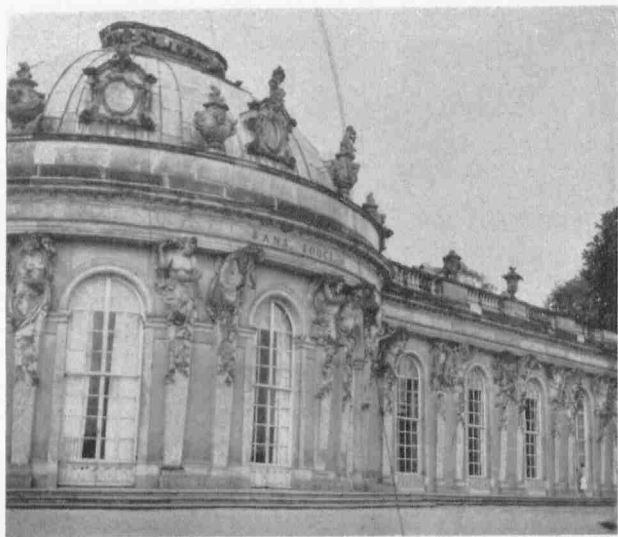
The Palace of Sans Souci, a beautiful and graceful one-story little palace, built for Frederick the Great by the famous architect Knobelsdorf as "a dream of beauty and life without care", and the terraced gardens below it.

Next comes the **Dining Hall**, an interesting room with columns in one piece of Carara marble. The mosaic floor in this room is very beautiful. The domed ceiling has some interesting sculptures depicting all the arts and sciences; these are intermixed with the emblems of war.

In the east wing of the palace is the **Audience and Reception Room** with a very fine painted ceiling and paintings on the wall depicting Potsdam in 1779 done by Meyer.

Next comes the **Concert Hall**. Not a very large room but an exceptionally beautiful one. Various musical instruments are embossed on the walls. Note the bagpipes. The blue vase on the mantelpiece is of interest being the first of this color to be produced at Potsdam, in 1757. The table is of Belgian marble, the fireplace surrounded by very finely carved Russian marble. The music stand is the original one used by Frederick the Great while playing his flute. The spinet is the one that was played by Bach when he visited the King.

Beyond the Music Room we come to the room in which Frederick the Great lived and worked. On the desk is a drawing by Huebner of Frederick the Great's death mask. The bed screen was made by his favorite sister, Amalie. The



Close-up of Sans Souci

—V. W. Adams

King died in this room in front of this fireplace August 17, 1786.

The little alcove adjoining this room was used as a bedroom by Frederick. On the left wall is a painting by Rohde depicting the Emperor's last moments — the chair below the painting is the one in which he died.

In the small corridor are paintings of Frederick the Great's greyhounds.

At the end of this wing is the circular library panelled in cedar, the Emperor's favorite room. The books were moved out during the war to Thuringia. On the mantelpiece is a bust of Frederick, the only one for which he actually sat.

The visitors return through these rooms and find themselves again in the **Marble Gallery** which they pass through and enter the West Wing.



Voltaire's room at Sans Souci

—V. W. Adams

The rooms in this wing were used mostly as guest rooms and rooms for the adjutants, but at the end of this wing is the room of Voltaire, the great French philosopher who spent seven years visiting Frederick the Great, working and writing in this room. The curtains and furnishings are the original ones, the chandelier is Meissen porcelain, the petite

point up-holstery of the chairs is the handwork of nuns, depicting scenes from the fables of La Fontaine.

When Voltaire's liberal ideas and democratic principles finally conflicted too strongly with Frederick the Great's autocracy, the philosopher walked out on his old friend. It is said that the King then, in a fit of jealous rage, ordered that the room be redecorated with wall paper and carvings of jibbering monkeys and parrots so as to cast aspersions on Voltaire's taste.

The tour is brought to an end with the long descent down



—V. W. Adams

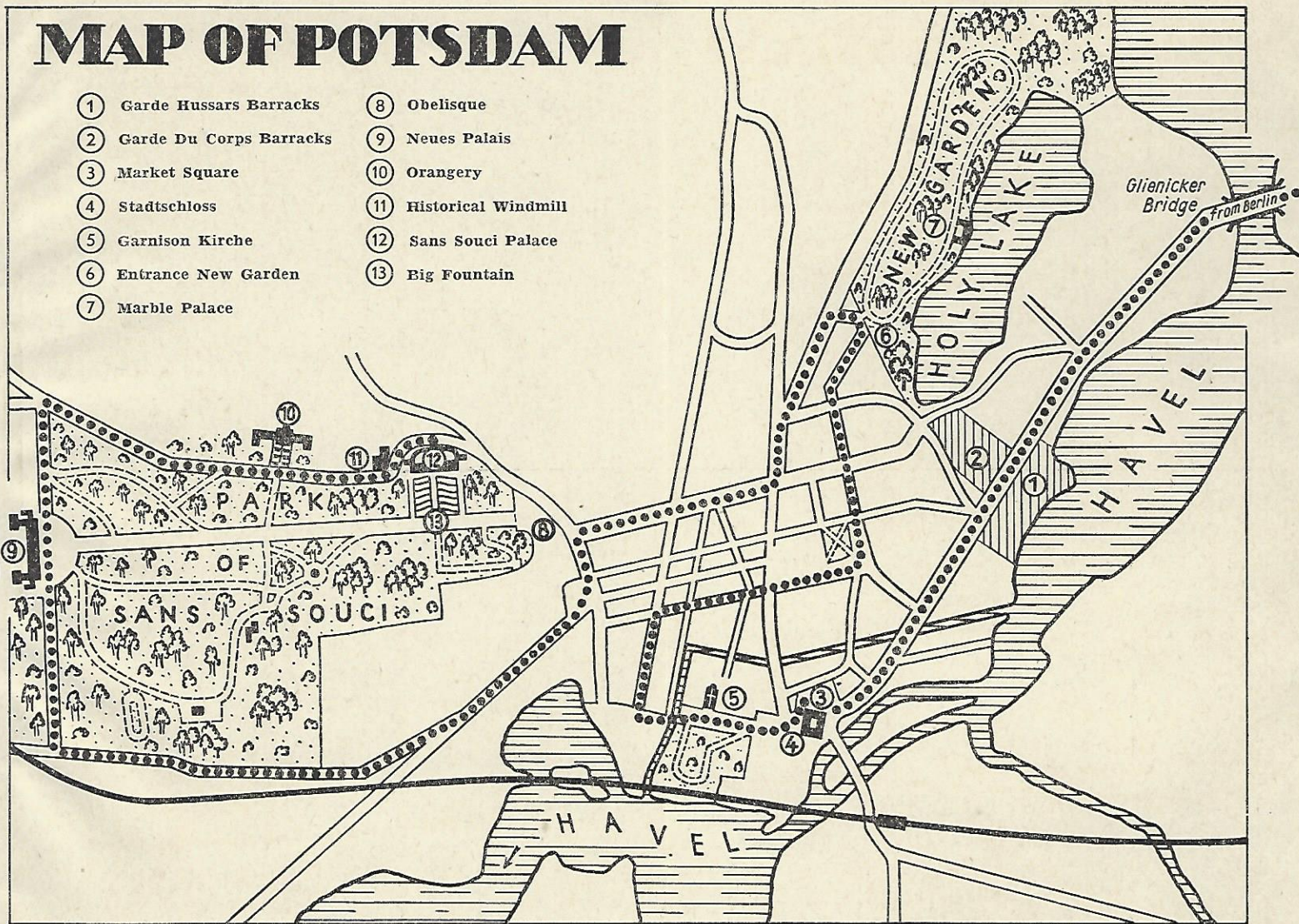
Glienicker Brücke or bridge, blown up during the war, has recently been rebuilt and opened to traffic. It has been renamed by the Soviets "Bridge of Unity". Leaving the American Sector the tour crosses over on this bridge to the Russian Zone and entering Potsdam drives up the Neue Königs-Strasse.

the six terraced stairways leading into the park where the magnificent fountains play.

On the return trip the tour goes by the Brandenburger Tor of Potsdam built in 1770 in the style of a Roman triumphal arch. This Gate is not as large or as impressive as the one in Berlin. It then skirts the old town walls and turns again into Koenigstrasse, passes the huge barracks and heads back to Berlin.

MAP OF POTSDAM

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| ① Garde Hussars Barracks | ⑧ Obelisque |
| ② Garde Du Corps Barracks | ⑨ Neues Palais |
| ③ Market Square | ⑩ Orangery |
| ④ Stadtschloss | ⑪ Historical Windmill |
| ⑤ Garnison Kirche | ⑫ Sans Souci Palace |
| ⑥ Entrance New Garden | ⑬ Big Fountain |
| ⑦ Marble Palace | |





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