



A classic photo of the 1948-49 Berlin Airlift. "Just as a trickle of water can, if sufficiently prolonged, wear down the stoutest rock," wrote The New Yorker's E. J. Kahn in May 1949, "so the airlift, with its unostentatious but ceaseless trickle of flights, carved a hole in the Soviet blockade of [West] Berlin." A week later, Stalin ended his effort to starve the city into submission.

Berlin

During the summer of 1948, the future of West Berlin seemed to hang in the balance. On June 24, Josef Stalin finally shut off ground access to the city. Western officials wondered how ordinary West Berliners would react. An article in a local newspaper, the *Telegraf*, soon gave the answer: "What does the man in the street say? 'This too will pass' . . . He turns up his coat collar, presses his hat farther down on his forehead, and tramps home . . . Nobody complains; everybody grits his teeth." Here, Neil Spitzer tells how the Cold War split Berlin, and how West Berliners and the Western allies managed, in the face of Soviet pressures, to keep their half of the city free, democratic, and lively. And Josef Ernst describes life on both sides of the Berlin Wall today.

DIVIDING A CITY

by Neil Spitzer

In 1899, Walther Rathenau, industrialist and future statesman, returned to his native Berlin after having long worked elsewhere in Germany and abroad. Enjoying the company of the court aristocrats who flourished in Berlin under Kaiser Wilhelm II, Rathenau was struck by the city's newly acquired splendor. With a population of 2.7 million, the capital of the young German Reich had become not only Europe's third largest metropolis (after London and Paris) but also a symbol of economic and military might, of European culture and civilization.

"We had become both rich and powerful," Rathenau wrote at the time, "and we wanted to show it to the world . . . The feverish life of a great city, hungry for realities, intent on technical success and so-called achievement, clamorous for festivals, prodigies, pageants, and such-like futilities . . . all this produced a sort of combination of Rome and Byzantium, Versailles and Potsdam."

Berlin's heyday would be short-lived. Germany's defeat in World War I sparked a revolution that brought down the Reich in 1918, giving way to the fragile Weimar Republic (1919–33). During the "Golden Twenties," Berlin's cultural life would be as creative and stimulating as its politics were ominous (Rathenau, then Germany's foreign minister, would be assassinated by extremists in 1922). This was the Berlin, as historian Peter Gay has put it, of "Gropius' buildings, Kandinsky's abstractions, Grosz's cartoons, and Marlene Dietrich's legs." But Adolf Hitler's ascent to power would bring the Nazis and another ruinous World War.

Today, Berlin's aura is characterized less by grandeur than by what the Germans call *Wahnsinn*, or "madness." Split through its center by a concrete wall, Berlin, perhaps more than any other city in the world, expresses the absurd and tragic dimensions of human endeavor.

The isolation and division of Berlin is made all the more bizarre by the fact that no one deliberately planned it that way. For reasons of administrative convenience, representatives of the United States, Britain, France, and the USSR decided, during World War II, to occupy Berlin jointly after the Reich fell. But as the wartime alliance crumbled and the Cold War intensified, Berlin found itself at the epicenter of East-West conflict. The city became the focus of Stalin's efforts to drive the West out of Central Europe, and of the Westerners' determination to stand firm. Just as an Iron Curtain divided postwar Europe, along a line running "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic," as Winston Churchill said in 1946, so too would it sunder Berlin.

I THE BIG THREE

It might be said that the division of Berlin began in early 1943. By then, the Allies, having witnessed Germany's failure to conquer the Soviet Union or to block the Anglo-American landings in North Africa, could begin to contemplate the fall of the Third Reich. In March of that year, Churchill's foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, visited Washington to discuss with President Franklin D. Roosevelt what the great powers would do with Germany once the Nazis were defeated. It was crucial, remarked White House aide Harry Hopkins, to reach an understanding quickly "as to which armies would be where and what kind of administration [in Germany] should be developed."

Several different notions circulated at the time. In September 1943,

Neil Spitzer, 31, is an associate editor of the Wilson Quarterly. This article was prepared with the assistance of Richard L. Merritt, professor of political science at the University of Illinois, Urbana, and Michael H. Haltzel, Secretary of the Wilson Center's West European Program.



George Grosz's oil painting, Cafe. With his caricatures of weary prostitutes, smug businessmen, and one-legged war veterans, Grosz produced the kind of art-as-social-criticism for which Berlin became famous during the 1920s. His work, said one French critic, represented "the most definitive catalogue of man's depravity in all history."

the U.S. State Department recommended against total Allied occupation of Germany. "Combined contingents," a State Department report suggested, should take over only the nation's "key strategic centers." One British plan would have dispersed the various occupation units in an "interlarded" fashion throughout the conquered territory—a plan that would have preserved Germany's territorial unity. The U.S. War Department, however, opposed the scheme because it would have created serious supply and communications problems.

In any case, Eden, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov met at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in October 1943, where they signed a protocol establishing an inter-Allied European Advisory Commission (EAC). The commission's assignment: to spell out how the Big Three would occupy Germany once the Reich fell.

The EAC first convened at London's elegant Lancaster House on January 14, 1944. Sir William Strang, the British delegate, submitted a proposal developed by the Attlee Committee (named after Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee). According to the plan, an Allied Control Council, based in Berlin, would run Germany as a single unit. But for administrative reasons, they would divide Germany into three different occupation zones, in the way that New York City is divided into boroughs.

Under this arrangement, the Soviet Union would control a large eastern zone, which accounted for 40 percent of the nation's prewar territory, and 36 percent of its population.

The British, under the Attlee proposal, would control northwestern Germany, which included the key North Sea ports of Bremen and Hamburg, and the Ruhr, Germany's prime industrial area. The plan, finally, awarded the United States a region covering the Saar and southern Germany. Berlin, of course, lay 110 miles within the proposed Soviet zone. But the Allies did not want any one nation to control Germany's historic capital. Thus, the three countries' garrisons would each occupy one of three sectors in a special "Berlin area."

The EAC delegates received the Attlee plan favorably. The "glum and serious" (in Stalin's words) Soviet representative, Fedor Tarasovich Gousev, accepted this scheme without major complaints. The U.S. delegate, former New Hampshire governor John G. Winant, also viewed the plan favorably, but his superiors back in Washington did not. Roosevelt had no objections to the proposed Soviet zone. But he insisted that U.S. forces occupy the northwest, not the southwest. The United States, he reckoned, would need the North Sea ports of Bremen and Hamburg to redeploy its troops to invade Japan. Moreover, the southwestern zone would not permit direct access to American occupation forces; to get there, U.S. supply trains would have to transit war-torn France.

A Conciliatory Approach

Neither Churchill nor Roosevelt would budge on the zonal dispute. Indeed, when the Allies first signed the protocol on the occupation of Germany and Berlin on September 12, 1944, they did so without designating which zones the United States or Britain would occupy. However, Roosevelt and Churchill, meeting in Quebec several weeks later, would settle the matter. Roosevelt agreed to let the British occupy the coveted northwest zone. In exchange, Churchill granted the Americans control of the North Sea ports of Bremen and Bremerhaven, and guaranteed U.S. transit rights through the British zone. Even so, the British and the Americans quarreled over various definitions of "control."*

Ironically, the U.S. and British negotiators in London paid little attention to the issue that would loom large during the Cold War: the right of the Western allies to travel through the Soviet zone of Germany, to and from the Western sectors of Berlin. At the time, Western access to Berlin did not appear to be a problem. According to U.S. negotiator Philip E. Mosely, the Soviet delegate, Gousev, had promised his interlocutors that "the presence of American and British forces in Berlin 'of

*Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill formally approved their plans for the joint occupation of Germany at the Yalta Conference in February 1945—with one important change. They agreed that France would join in the occupation, and that its areas of occupation would be carved out of the Western zones of Germany and the Western sectors of Berlin.

course' carried with it all necessary facilities of access."

In retrospect, U.S. and British policy-makers appear extraordinarily negligent in not having insisted upon specific transit rights to and from Berlin. But in 1944, the Western allies tended to assume the best about the Soviets. Indeed, the Soviet negotiators, observed Mosely, had taken a "moderate and conciliatory approach to the problem of how to deal with postwar Germany." Besides, the whole arrangement was expected to be temporary. No one could imagine that the zonal boundaries would one day delineate the border between a (Communist) German Democratic Republic and a (democratic) Federal Republic of Germany. Roosevelt himself did not believe that American troops would stay in Europe much more than two years.

Stopping at the Elbe

As Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and their subordinates negotiated the future of Europe, the war raced toward its end. With the Germans struggling to defend their capital city, Stalin instructed the Red Army to stay put on the Oder River. Crossing the Rhine in the west, American troops, meanwhile, also had their eyes on Berlin. "From the day our invasion broke over the beaches of Normandy," said General Walter Bedell Smith, the chief of staff to Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower, "the goal of every Allied soldier had been . . . to seal the defeat of Nazi Germany by seizing the capital of the Reich itself."

But Eisenhower was not keen on taking Berlin first, even though the capital was within reach of the advancing Anglo-American forces. Such an assault, said General Omar Bradley, commander of the U.S. 12th Army Group, might cost 100,000 lives—"a pretty stiff price to pay," he added, "for a prestige objective, especially when we've got to fall back [into the zones of occupation] and let the other fellow take over." Hence, Eisenhower informed Stalin that he would direct his main thrust southward, toward Leipzig. That plan, Stalin replied, "entirely coincides with the plan of the Soviet High Command," adding disingenuously that "Berlin has lost its former strategic importance."

Churchill, however, was not pleased. "If [the Russians] take Berlin," he cabled to Roosevelt on April 1, 1945, "will not their impression that they have been the overwhelming contributor to our common victory be unduly imprinted in their minds, and may this not lead them into a mood which will raise grave and formidable difficulties in the future? I therefore consider that from a political standpoint we should march as far east into Germany as possible, and that should Berlin be in our grasp we should certainly take it."

Roosevelt and Eisenhower, however, could not be dissuaded. The Supreme Allied Commander ordered his Berlin-bound units to stop at the Elbe River, 53 miles from the city—which they did on April 11, 1945, the day before President Roosevelt died at Warm Springs, Geor-

gia. Six days later, the Soviets launched their final offensive against Berlin. Deploying one million men in the attack, the Soviets demonstrated that, to them, Berlin had *not* “lost its former strategic importance.” With the capital of his Reich under seige, Hitler and his mistress, Eva Braun, committed suicide in his Berlin bunker on April 30; the Germans surrendered on May 8, thus ending the fighting in Europe.

Allied bombing, and the desperate Battle for Berlin, in which some 100,000 Russians lost their lives, left Germany’s capital prostrate. During the war, Berlin’s population fell from 4.3 to 2.8 million; two-thirds of the city’s surviving residents were women. Potsdamer Platz, Alexanderplatz, and other historic squares were littered with corpses lying atop heaps of rubble. One-fifth of all buildings were destroyed. There was no electricity, no gas, and one-third of the subway line was flooded. Food was scarce, forcing people to barter furs, carpets, and jewelry for potatoes, flour, and bacon.

“A more depressing sight than that of ruined buildings,” wrote President Harry S. Truman, who saw Berlin during the Potsdam Conference of July 1945, “was the long, never-ending procession of old men, women, and children wandering aimlessly along the autobahn . . . carrying, pushing, or pulling what was left of their belongings.”



Ernst Reuter, West Berlin’s anti-Communist mayor (1948–53), was an ex-party member; as a youth, he had even worked for the Bolsheviks in the USSR.

II THE COLD WAR BEGINS

With Germany defeated, the Allies were in position to reconstruct Berlin. But how would this be done? How should a new city government and new political parties be established? How would labor unions be reorganized? Should there be free elections? What about a free press? The Allies, of course, had not settled such matters before the war's end. The EAC had not addressed these questions; it had merely drafted an agreement outlining the Allied occupation.

Indeed, "The EAC agreements," as political scientist Daniel J. Nelson has written, "were like a new house with no furniture in it." "None of the Allies," he observed, "seemed to have a clear idea of the kind of Europe which should result from Germany's defeat."

The Soviets, however, had thought more than a little about how to run Berlin. Even before the capitulation, Stalin had dispatched to Berlin a group of German Communists who had spent the war years in the Soviet Union. Walter Ulbricht led this "Committee for a Free Germany," which was better known as the "Ulbricht Group." "Our task," Ulbricht explained, "will be to form the organs of self-government in Berlin. We will go into the various Berlin boroughs and select those anti-fascist elements [which support] the new German administration."

Eager to get the city running as they saw fit, the Soviets tried to delay the entrance of U.S. and British forces. In June, the Soviets halted a Berlin-bound U.S. advance party 50 miles outside of the city; eventually, they would escort a trimmed-down entourage (about 200 men and 50 vehicles) through the metropolis.

"We went to Berlin in 1945," observed Colonel Frank Howley, who commanded the advance party, "thinking of the Russians only as big, jolly, balalaika-playing fellows who drank prodigious quantities of vodka and liked to wrestle in the drawing room." But Russian officers, he soon suspected, "had been briefed that we were their enemy, merely enjoying an armistice, and they regarded us as such."

With the Americans and British absent from the city, the Soviets swiftly took control in Berlin. The Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) appointed a City Council to run day-to-day affairs. They set up a Communist-run police force, banking system, and trade union, as well as newspapers, radio stations, and a five-tier food rationing system; public officials could get as many as 2,485 calories a day—about twice as much as the elderly. Perhaps most important, the Soviets dismantled machinery from mills and factories and rounded up surviving livestock, all of which they shipped back to Mother Russia. By the time British and American forces entered Berlin in strength on July 4, 1945, they faced a

Communist-dominated city administration.

Soviet efforts to reshape Berlin in their own image, however, would not go unchallenged. When the Soviets tried to merge the Communist and Social Democratic parties into a majority Socialist Unity Party (SED), some Social Democrats rebelled and formed their own non-Communist Social Democratic Party (SPD). Berliners registered a powerful protest against the Soviet regime in the first postwar municipal elections, on October 20, 1946. The Social Democrats won 49 percent of the votes, the Christian Democrats 22 percent, and the Communists just 19.8 percent. On June 24, 1947, the Municipal Assembly elected an avowed anti-Communist, Ernst Reuter (SPD) as lord mayor of Greater Berlin. The Soviets, however, refused to let him take office.

Moscow managed to maintain the upper hand in its own sector of Berlin. The city's central government, or Magistrat, could not carry out its decisions in any sector without the approval of the local Allied commander. Karl Mautner, then serving as U.S. liaison officer to the Berlin City Government, recalled how the Soviets kept pressure on Berlin's non-Communist parties: "The CDU [Christian Democratic Union] chairman, Walther Schreiber, was no longer permitted to attend meetings at CDU headquarters in East Berlin because of his 'anti-Soviet' attitude . . . SPD meetings in the Soviet sector were banned or the scheduled meeting place suddenly became unavailable . . . Mrs. Ella Kay, [the elected] mayor of Prenzlauer Berg [in the Soviet sector] was dismissed on the grounds that she was 'incapable of providing the people with firewood for the coming winter.'"

The Fulton Speech

By this time, the Western allies were no longer surprised. The Soviets were merely doing in Berlin what they were doing across the continent: implanting Communist regimes. Moscow would set up "People's Governments" in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. By March 5, 1946, when Winston Churchill made an appearance with President Truman at Fulton, Missouri, a clear pattern of Soviet behavior had already emerged. Now the leader of Britain's parliamentary opposition, Churchill said that:

A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory . . . From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere . . . this is certainly not the Liberated Europe we fought to build up.

From then on, Washington would become progressively less conciliatory in dealing with the Soviets. George F. Kennan, head of the State Department's Policy Planning staff, penned a now-famous article in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs* that would reflect Washington's new view of Moscow. "It is clear," Kennan wrote, under the pseudonym "X," "that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies."

III THE BERLIN BLOCKADE

The Western allies would employ "containment" not only in Southern Europe* but also in the Western sectors of Berlin. Finding that they could no longer collaborate with the Soviets, representatives from the United States, Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg met in London on February 23, 1948, to begin planning the eventual merger of the three Western zones of Germany into a Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and the introduction of a new currency there. At the March 20, 1948, Allied Control Council meeting in Berlin, Soviet delegate Vassily Sokolovsky demanded to know what had transpired at the London conference. When the allies refused to tell him, Sokolovsky stalked out.

The Russians retaliated by imposing a "mini-blockade" of West Berlin, interfering with truck and rail deliveries to and from the city. Undaunted, the Western allies introduced a new currency, the *Deutschmark*, into their three zones of Germany on June 20. The Soviets responded by imposing their own currency reform, valid for the Soviet zone of Germany and *all four* sectors of Berlin. The Western allies retaliated by introducing the new *Deutschmark* into their three sectors of the metropolis.

On June 23, Communist-led demonstrators, some carrying red banners, prevented the non-Communist City Assembly from convening on time at City Hall, in the Soviet sector. Inside, they crowded the City Hall chambers; outside, they broadcast speeches by Walter Ulbricht over a loudspeaker. Assemblymen demanded added police protection, but the police never arrived. A headline in the Communist newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, would later complain: "Majority of the Magistrat, Against All Reason, Favors Double Currency and Customs Barriers in Berlin—

*Under the "Truman Doctrine," in 1947 the United States gave Greece and Turkey \$400 million in military aid to offset Soviet pressures there.

THE 1948-49 AIRLIFT

When Josef Stalin first imposed a blockade of West Berlin on June 24, 1948, public officials in Washington, London, and Paris were not optimistic about maintaining a foothold in the city. After all, the Soviets, as U.S. Army Secretary Kenneth Royall put it, "have most of the trump cards." Indeed, they controlled access by water, road, and rail to the old German capital. Nevertheless, the 6,500 British, American, and French garrison troops and their dependents would remain, Royall said, "until the Soviets make life unbearable for even a small group."

What could the Western allies do? Various plans of action were proposed at the time. Royall suggested to General Lucius D. Clay, the military governor in the U.S. zone of Germany, that, for safety's sake, he evacuate American dependents from Berlin; Royall also wanted Clay to slow the introduction of currency reform (which had precipitated the blockade) in the Western zones of Germany and the Western sectors of Berlin.

But Clay refused to consider either move. Given the U.S. monopoly on the atomic bomb, he believed that the Soviets would not maintain the blockade by force; he proposed that the allies put together a convoy of about 200 trucks, supported by a U.S. Army regiment, to run the blockade along the Helmstedt-Berlin autobahn. The group would be "directed to clear all obstacles and to avoid shooting unless resisted by force."

The British, however, considered Clay's plan reckless. "If you do that, it'll be war," warned Britain's General Sir Brian Robertson. He urged that the allies supply Berlin by air. Clay, in turn, thought it "absolutely impossible" to feed 2.5 million West Berliners with an airlift. But officials back in Washington sided with Robertson. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, reported Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, feared that Clay's proposed foray might "shift the stage from one of local friction to that of major war." The Chiefs saw what the Germans would later call a *Luftbrücke*, or "air bridge," as a safe way to buy time.

Clay had no choice but to go along. "I may be the craziest man in the world," he told Berlin's Lord Mayor-elect Ernst Reuter, "but I'm going to try the experiment of feeding this city by air." President Harry S. Truman approved the decision and vowed to keep West Berliners supplied, "even if it takes every Piper Cub in the United States."

"Operation Vittles" began on June 26. The Royal Air Force, Clay figured, could provide only 150 planes. And the French, who were busy fighting Ho Chi Minh in faraway Indochina, could contribute ground personnel but no aircraft. The United States had only 102 transports in Europe. Thus, the allies initially would have to rely on several hundred relatively small planes, such as the two-engined Douglas C-47, to carry most of the cargo. These "Gooney Birds," as they were known, lumbered along at 160 miles per hour, and carried just three tons each. Not surprisingly, the East Berlin Communist daily, *Neues Deutschland* declared: "The *Amis* are leaving."

The *Luftbrücke* started slowly. But larger U.S. aircraft, such as the C-54



General Lucius D. Clay

transport, soon joined in. Before long, allied planes, which together flew as many as 1,000 daily sorties, were bringing 8,000 to 9,000 tons of supplies (everything from bags of coal and flour to vitamin tablets and typewriter parts) into the city every 24 hours. Poor weather and occasional Soviet harassment sometimes made the one-hour, 40-minute flights hazardous. On "Black Friday," August 13, 1948, a ceiling of fog descended over the city's rooftops, causing three crash landings near Tempelhof Airport. From then on, pilots who broke their flight patterns or missed their landing approaches were instructed to circle back to western Germany.

The adequacy of the *Luftbrücke* relied, in the end, on ordinary West Berliners. Consider, for example, how they shared electricity—which was severely limited after the Soviets cut off all utilities running from East to West Berlin. Under a rationing scheme, which allotted energy supplies to vital industries first, West Berliners would receive one or two hours of electricity daily, usually at night. In practice, each family would leave a single switch turned on in the evening, and when a light bulb lit up, they would do whatever had to be done. For instance, the Schmidts might use their one hour of electricity to boil potatoes for several other households, the Webers to cook string beans.

In the end, the Berlin airlift was a clearcut British-American success, even though 65 men perished, most of them in accidents. Total U.S. expenditures: about \$300 million. For the Communists, the blockade, which Stalin lifted on May 12, 1949, was a Cold War fiasco. The Soviet leader had prodded "the capitalist world with the tip of a bayonet," Nikita Khrushchev later observed, but the confrontation had been "badly thought out."

For Chaos, Hunger, and Unemployment.”

The first of the three major Cold War-Berlin crises began at 11 P.M. on June 23, when the East German (ADN) news agency's teletype machine at the British sector newspaper, *Der Tag*, began to clatter: “. . . Transport Division of the Soviet Military Administration, is compelled to halt all passenger and freight traffic to and from Berlin tomorrow at 0600 hours because of technical difficulties.” Moscow also cut off the flow of electric current, coal, food, and other supplies from the surrounding territory to West Berlin. The Berlin Blockade was on.

With this move, Stalin apparently believed he was delivering an ultimatum to the citizens of West Berlin: Either submit to Communist rule or starve. Moscow defended the blockade, saying that the Western powers, by setting up separate administrations in West Germany, had undermined not only the four-power control commission but also their right to participate in the administration of Berlin.

The Soviets did not imagine that the 2.5 million West Berliners would be able to survive a blockade. Few Westerners did either. The population would need some 4,000 tons of supplies daily to stay alive. But West Berlin, emplaced deep within Soviet-controlled territory, had become a Cold War symbol of the vigor of Western democracy, and a crucial place for the Western powers to make a stand. As General Lucius D. Clay, the military governor of the U.S. zone in Germany told Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall: “We have lost Czechoslovakia. Norway is threatened. We retreat from Berlin. When Berlin falls, western Germany will be next. If we mean . . . to hold Europe against Communism, we must not budge.”

A Worldwide Embarrassment

But rhetoric alone would not enable West Berliners to survive. After much debate, the Western allies decided to supply their sectors of the city by air—a measure, they believed, that could only last for about 30 days. But British and U.S. transports, leaving every few minutes from nine different airfields in their zones of Germany, delivered enough coal, food, and medical supplies to sustain the West Berliners indefinitely (see box, p. 110). The longer the “air bridge” worked, the less pressed were the Western allies to consider making concessions to the Soviets.

Recognizing that the blockade had failed to expel the Western allies from Berlin, and suffering considerable worldwide embarrassment, Stalin began looking for a way out of the stalemate. The Soviet leader quietly told Kingsbury Smith of the International News Service on January 31, 1949, that he could see “no obstacles to lifting transport [and trade] restrictions” if the Western allies agreed to postpone the formation of a West German state, and if the Council of Foreign Ministers met to consider the German problem as a whole.

Stalin's conditions were not met, but after several months of secret

negotiations, Moscow agreed to lift the blockade on May 12, 1949. West Berliners, General Clay said, "had earned their right to freedom," and, he added, thus "atoned for their failure to repudiate Hitler when such repudiation on their part might have stopped his rise to power."

The airlift, however, did not solve the political impasse over Berlin. Soviet agents continued to disrupt the City Assembly at City Hall. Unable to conduct business, non-Communist members of the assembly repaired to the Technical University in the British sector on September 8. Their Communist colleagues stayed behind, claiming to run the entire city. On November 30, 1948, delegates from the *Kulturbund*, the Free German Trade Union Federation, and other Communist organizations met at the Admirals-Palast and drafted a new constitution that they said would be the sole legitimate basis for governing Berlin.

The Marienfelde Experience

Now Berlin had two de facto governments, each of which could make good its claims only in its half of the city. The Soviet and the Western sectors of Berlin would develop under opposing ideologies. East Berlin and West Berlin each became closely tied to (but officially separate from) the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, or the GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany, or the FRG), both of which were created in 1949.

East and West Berlin would not easily coexist. After a slow start (due to the blockade), West Berlin made stunning economic progress, thanks, in part, to Marshall Plan aid. The value of its exports rose from \$3 million in 1950 to \$30 million in 1954; by that year local industrial production had returned to about 70 percent of its prewar level. Once again, shoppers and tourists crowded West Berlin's now-refurbished boulevard, the Kurfürstendamm. East Berlin, from which the Soviets had stripped much manufacturing equipment, lagged behind. For East Berlin's workers, wages were low and hours were long. A pound of butter cost 10 marks (then, about \$2.50), a pound of coffee, 75 marks (\$18.75); new clothing was scarce.

For East Berlin officials, the presence of affluent, brightly-lit West Berlin made it difficult to generate popular zeal for the Communist New Age. West Berlin's newspapers published photos of East Berliners shopping in West Berlin's most fashionable stores. Savings-minded Westerners crossed into East Berlin, where they traded West German marks for cheap East German marks, and proceeded to clear the shelves in East Berlin's *Handelsorganisationen*, or state stores.

Most humiliating to Walter Ulbricht's regime was the unrelenting exodus of East German citizens—most of them young and well-educated—to the West, via West Berlin. During the 1950s, the trip was neither expensive nor dangerous. Residents of Leipzig or Potsdam left Ulbricht's "Communist Workers' Paradise" merely by taking a train to

East Berlin, then boarding a subway car to West Berlin. There, they would make their way to the Marienfelde Refugee Center, where they received food, temporary shelter, and, presumably, a schedule of airline flights from Tempelhof Airport to the destination of their choice in the Free World—often Hamburg, Frankfurt, Paris, or London.

The East German regime tried desperately to cut off the West-bound brain drain. They severed telephone communications between East and West Berlin, reduced the number of intracity crossing points, and constructed a 100-meter-wide “death strip” along the West German frontier. Still, by February 1953, some 30,000 East Germans, voting with their feet, were fleeing their homeland every month.

To increase factory output, the Ulbricht regime, on May 14, 1953, proposed a 10 percent increase in individual production quotas. For workers, theoretically the prime beneficiaries of communism, this was the last straw. On June 16, several thousand construction workers marched to the East German House of Ministries, where they demanded the government’s resignation and the holding of free elections.

Word of the protest spread rapidly. By the following morning, thousands of workers across the city had gone on strike. Demonstrators burned Communist Party banners along Unter den Linden (the city’s main boulevard), stormed local Communist Party headquarters, smashed



The East Berlin uprising of June 17, 1953: Soviet tanks were sent in not only to quash the revolt but also to deter West Berliners from joining the fray.

the windows of state grocery stores, and set fire to police stations. A crowd of 50,000 demonstrators marched to the Brandenburg Gate and tore down the Red flag flying above it. For a brief moment it appeared that a popular revolt, the first in Eastern Europe since World War II, would topple the Communist state.

Some Americans and West Germans wanted the new Eisenhower administration to give the rebels a hand. But despite all of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's earlier talk about "liberating" Eastern Europe from communism, Washington quickly decided not to intervene. The United States, President Eisenhower declared, "planned no physical intervention on the Soviet Union's side of the Iron Curtain."

Soviet tanks and troops quickly moved in. During the fighting, an estimated 260 demonstrators lost their lives. East German courts sentenced another 19 people to death. On June 18, West Berlin mayor Ernst Reuter warned the Communists in a solemn radio broadcast that "a people cannot be held in submission in the long run, with martial law and bayonets and tanks." The exodus to the West continued.

Throughout the 1950s, the impasse over Berlin proved a reasonably accurate barometer of the Cold War. At times, the crisis atmosphere seemed to wane, only to wax again when East-West tensions rose elsewhere. The next major Berlin confrontation would not occur until 1958, when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, perhaps emboldened by Soviet accomplishments in space,* resolved to dislodge what he called "a bone in Russia's throat" once and for all.

IV KHRUSHCHEV'S ULTIMATUM

The second Berlin crisis commenced on November 10, when Khrushchev told a visiting delegation from Poland that the right of the Western powers to cross East German territory, to travel to and from West Berlin, would have to be negotiated with the German Democratic Republic. The British, French, and Americans, Khrushchev said, had created "a kind of state within a state," in West Berlin, from which their agents were conducting "subversive activity" against East Germany. The Soviet leader went on: "The [West] German militarists are thinking of swallowing up the German Democratic Republic, annexing Poland's western lands and staking claims on the territory of Czechoslovakia and other Socialist countries."

On November 27, Khrushchev issued a formal note to the Western allies, which compared the Berlin situation to a "smoldering fuse that has

*The Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, the first artificial earth satellite, on October 4, 1957.

been connected to a powder keg." He demanded that the Western allies evacuate Berlin, allowing the establishment of "an independent political unit—a free city, without any state." Western failure to do so, the Soviet premier threatened, would simply result in the Soviets giving the East German government control over the access routes to Berlin. The Soviet leader added that the Kremlin would "make no changes in the present procedure for military traffic [between West Berlin and West Germany] for half a year." Only "madmen," Khrushchev concluded, "can go to the length of unleashing another world war over the preservation of privileges of occupiers in West Berlin."

Whatever the actual intent of the Soviet note—its contents, when read in full, were highly ambiguous—President Eisenhower considered it an "ultimatum." In its formal reply to the Soviets, Washington said that it "would not embark on discussion with the Soviet Union upon these questions under the menace [of an] ultimatum." The U.S. press was a good deal more excited. The Soviet note, said the *New York Times* on November 29, "displays such contempt for truth and common intelligence and appeals so openly to brute force as to raise serious questions about the state of mind now ruling in the Kremlin."

Over the next few months, Moscow would conduct a war of nerves as the "deadline" (May 27, 1959) to the six-month ultimatum approached. On Christmas Day 1958, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko warned the West that "any provocation in West Berlin," could start "a big war, in the crucible of which millions upon millions of people would perish and which would bring devastation incomparably more serious than the last world war." Perhaps sensing Western resolve, Khrushchev, on March 19, broke the stalemate by saying what the Western allies had been arguing all along: "I believe that the United States, Britain, and France do have lawful rights for their stay in Berlin. These rights ensue from the fact of German surrender as a result of our joint struggle against Nazi Germany." The crisis faded.

The Three Essentials

As politicians in Washington, Paris, and London wondered if the world would survive the next Berlin crisis, West Berliners themselves enjoyed an ever-higher standard of living. "The last time I strolled down the Kurfürstendamm [in 1948], it had the vitality of a lump of putty," wrote journalist John Gunther in 1960. "Hungry people stood in line for spoonfuls of naked corned beef out of a can; you could buy a girl for a cigarette. But today the fashionable area of Berlin has chic shops magnificently filled with merchandise from the ends of the earth."

Thanks to Western affluence and freedom, East German emigration continued apace. In 1960, some 240,000 East German "visits" to the West were one-way trips—and about 80 percent of them were made through West Berlin. By now, both Khrushchev and Ulbricht were des-



East Germans at West Berlin's Marienfelde Refugee Center, April 1961. More than half were under 25. The first words that an East German baby learned, went the joke, were "mama," "papa," and "Marienfelde."

perately seeking ways to shut off the exodus. At a March 1961 Warsaw Pact meeting, Ulbricht proposed that his government seal off the "escape hatch" to the West by closing the border between East and West Berlin. But Khrushchev still favored his old "free city" plan, which he proposed to the new U.S. president, John F. Kennedy, at their Vienna summit meeting on June 4, 1961. Khrushchev insisted that a "peace treaty" be signed between the four allies and East Germany, making the Communist regime responsible for access to Berlin.

Kennedy rejected the Soviet proposal outright and declared that the Western allies would, if necessary, resort to military force to guarantee "three essentials": continued allied presence in Berlin; unrestricted use of access routes to and from the city; and freedom for West Berliners to choose their own form of government. Khrushchev responded: "I want peace, but if you want war, then that is your problem."

Kennedy's West European allies encouraged him to hold the line with Moscow. "When Khrushchev summons you to change the status of Berlin, in other words, to hand the city over to him, stand fast!" French president Charles de Gaulle told Kennedy. "That is the most useful service you can render to the whole world, Russia included." On July 25, Kennedy addressed Americans on television: "West Berlin," the presi-

dent said, “has now become—as never before—the great testing place of Western courage and will.”

At this point, East Germans began to sense that *something* was about to happen. Since 1949, some 2.8 million of their compatriots—one in every six—had fled to the West. Those who had considered leaving reckoned that it was now or never. About 4,000 East Germans would flee during the last weekend of July. Surely, the Eastern Bloc could not sit idly by while the GDR, as Secretary of State Dean Rusk noted, was “hemorrhaging to death.”

V

THE WALL GOES UP

When the Warsaw Pact Council met August 3-5 in Moscow, Ulbricht pointed out to Khrushchev that Kennedy had limited his “three essentials” to the protection of *West* Berlin—thus signaling NATO’s intention of doing nothing as long as the East did not encroach on its rights. This time, the Warsaw Pact members saw little choice but to back Ulbricht’s plan to seal the escape hatch.

Shortly after midnight on August 13, 1961, East German soldiers, riding atop army trucks, streamed down Unter den Linden, Berlin’s majestic eight-lane boulevard. Peeling off at various points, the troops and workmen began erecting a 103-mile barrier, which ran through the center of Berlin and between West Berlin and East Germany. In Potsdamer Platz, where many East Berliners crossed into West Berlin every day, members of the People’s Police (*Vopos*) and border police (*Grepos*) dug up cobblestones to put up fenceposts, between which they strung barbed wire. The barrier ran down the middle of streets, through neighborhoods and school yards, along canals, following the border between the Soviet and the Western sectors of the city.

“The present situation regarding the traffic on the borders of West Berlin,” explained a Warsaw Pact communiqué, “is being used by FRG ruling quarters and intelligence agencies of the NATO countries for undermining the GDR’s economy . . . Through deceit, bribery, and blackmail, [Bonn] makes some unstable elements in the GDR leave for Western Germany. These deceived people are compelled to serve with the [West German Army], or are recruited to the intelligence agencies of different countries to be sent back to the GDR as spies and saboteurs.”

Berliners were outraged by the events that took place on the day they would later call *Stacheldrahtsonntag*, or “Barbed Wire Sunday.” By 11 A.M., some 2,000 people gathered on the Western side of the Brandenburg Gate, yelling “Put down your guns” and “Hang Ulbricht” (the East German leader) to the silent *Vopos*. Some East Berliners clambered over the Wall at weak spots; others swam to West Berlin

across the Teltow Canal.

The East German move caught the CIA off guard and Western leaders on vacation. Charles de Gaulle was resting at his country home at Colombey-les-Deux-Églises. Britain's prime minister, Harold Macmillan, was heading for a hunting holiday in northern England. And Kennedy was relaxing aboard his sailboat, *The Marlin*, off Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, when he was summoned by radio. Back on shore, Kennedy telephoned Secretary of State Dean Rusk in Washington.

Rusk told the president that neither the East Germans nor the Soviets had entered the Western sectors of Berlin. And they had not cut off access to West Berlin from West Germany. Indeed, this was an "internal security" measure, Rusk concluded, not "a play against Berlin." How would Washington respond? U.S. troops in Berlin, the president knew, could not fire on the East German *Vopos*, tear down the new barrier, or otherwise intervene in the Soviet sector of Berlin without risking World War III. "Go to the ball game as you had planned," Kennedy said to Rusk. "I am going sailing."

Many West Berliners clamored for allied action against the East German regime. JFK dispatched a U.S. motorized column to West Berlin, but the Western leaders were simply not willing to risk a military confrontation by knocking down the barrier. Besides, had they done so, observed Howard Trivers, a U.S. diplomat, the East Germans could simply have "moved back 200 or 400 yards and commenced to rebuild the barbed-wire fence there."

"Berliners raged and grieved," British journalist Norman Gelb would later observe, "but what the Communists were doing to them and their city meant far less to the president than the awesome fact that he had been prepared for a war in which millions of people, including Americans, might have died, and suddenly it looked like it wasn't going to happen—not yet."

Checkpoint Charlie

President Kennedy assigned General Lucius Clay—who was beloved by Berliners as a hero of the 1948–49 airlift—to serve as his personal representative in Berlin. Shortly after arriving, the general found himself in a new confrontation. The showdown began when East German *Vopos* began demanding that U.S. officials show their passports when crossing into East Berlin in cars bearing American license plates. This represented a clear violation of Berlin's four-power status: Under Allied protocols, Western officials had as much right to move freely about East Berlin as they did in West Berlin. If U.S. officials went along with these demands, they would be formally recognizing East German sovereignty over East Berlin.

Employing "get tough" tactics, General Clay, on October 25, stationed 10 U.S. M-48 Patton tanks and three armored personnel carriers



John F. Kennedy in West Berlin on June 26, 1963. Overwhelmed by the warm reception, the president said to his speechwriter, Ted Sorensen: "We'll never have another day like this as long as we live."

on Friedrichstrasse at Checkpoint Charlie, the U.S. border crossing point at the new wall. Each time the East German *Vopos* stopped an official American vehicle, jeeps equipped with machine guns were sent in to escort the vehicle over the border, forcing the *Vopos* to step aside.

On October 27, the Soviets decided to meet intimidation with intimidation by positioning 10 tanks on their side of the checkpoint. With U.S. and Soviet tanks face to face, just 100 yards apart, millions of Americans wondered if the long-feared U.S.-Soviet clash over Berlin was finally at hand. But to Clay, the mere presence of Soviet armor in effect reaffirmed Western rights because it destroyed "the fiction that it was the East Germans who were responsible for trying to prevent Allied access to East Berlin." After 16 hours, the Soviets broke the tension by withdrawing their tanks from Checkpoint Charlie, as did the Americans 30 minutes later.

The showdown at the checkpoint would mark the last time that Moscow and Washington would come close to an armed conflict in the old German capital. There are several reasons why. First, neither side seriously believed it was worth risking a war over Berlin. Second, the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962—perhaps the most dangerous crisis of the Cold War—forced leaders in Moscow and Washington to rethink the hazards of Soviet-American confrontation. Finally, with regard

to Berlin, the United States and its allies were willing to tolerate the status quo. West Berlin, after all, stood as a powerful symbol of the West's determination to defend freedom, even where it was most vulnerable; and the Berlin Wall stood as concrete evidence that the Communist system was not only unworkable, but inhumane.

John F. Kennedy enjoyed one of the most spectacular moments of his presidency on June 26, 1963, when he addressed 150,000 cheering Berliners from a platform outside West Berlin's City Hall:

There are many people in the world who really don't understand—or say they don't—what is the great issue between the free world and the Communist world. Let them come to Berlin. There are some who say that Communism is the wave of the future. Let them come to Berlin. And there are some who say in Europe and elsewhere, 'we can work with the Communists.' Let them come to Berlin . . .

All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin. And therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words 'Ich bin ein Berliner.'

VI

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

The Berlin Wall would have many symbolic and many tangible (and paradoxical) effects on the city of Berlin, and on East-West relations.

The Wall upset the daily lives of many Berliners. Suddenly, 53,000 East Berliners who had been employed in West Berlin could not get to work. For them, travel became severely restricted, emigration nearly impossible. (Since 1961, only 5,000 East Germans and East Berliners have escaped illegally; at least 72 have died at the hands of the *Vopos* while trying.) The Wall also barred relatives who lived on opposite sides of the divide from visiting one another. For more than two years (from August 1961 to December 1963, when West Berliners were again allowed to visit East Berlin), the barricade separated parents from children, brother from brother.

But the Wall, ironically, also brought a certain calm. By ending the exodus of East Germans to the West, it made West Berlin less of an embarrassment to Ulbricht, and thus eased the threat of further Soviet attempts to drive the Western allies out of the city. It enabled Willy Brandt, West Germany's chancellor (1969–74), to initiate *Ostpolitik*—his policy of reconciliation with East Germany. In other words, "the Berlin Wall," as Harvard's Timothy W. Ryback has observed, provided "a simple solution to complex social, political and economic problems," which explains why it "will remain in place for the foreseeable future."

Finally, the Wall—or at least the political stability it helped produce—enabled the foreign ministers of France, Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union to negotiate and sign the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin on June 3, 1972. The accord did not resolve the “Berlin problem”; it merely reaffirmed the wartime protocol. Under the agreement, the four powers pledged to “mutually respect their individual and joint rights and responsibilities, which remain unchanged.” The agreement reasserted the right of all four Allied victors to occupy Berlin jointly. It guaranteed access to West Berlin and the right of West Berliners to visit East Berlin.

The document stipulated that West Berlin could not become part of the Federal Republic of Germany, although “ties” between the two could be maintained. (The Bonn government keeps a liaison office in West Berlin, and represents the city in international forums. But West German politicians may not perform “constitutional or official acts” in West Berlin.) In a sense, the Quadripartite Agreement represented a victory for the West. The accord, at least on paper, killed the Soviet Union’s long-cherished goal of controlling all of Berlin. Today, West Berliners live in a bustling democratic enclave, albeit 110 miles inside a nation under Communist rule.

Yet, few Germans can be happy about what has happened to Berlin since World War II. Today, 43 years after V-E Day, a once-great metropolis remains occupied and divided with a wall running like a scar down its center and around the periphery of its Western sectors. The scar remains there in part because many of the key decisions regarding Germany’s future were made in 1944–45, before the Western allies fully understood what the Soviets had in mind for Eastern Europe.

Indeed, during World War II, Churchill reflected in 1953, many Westerners even feared that Josef Stalin would *stop* fighting Hitler once the Red Army regained the prewar frontiers. Little wonder, he wrote, that “the question of the Russian zone of occupation in Germany therefore did not bulk [large] in our thoughts.” With Western leaders trusting in Stalin’s goodwill, many of the more sophisticated plans for Germany’s future, Churchill said, “lay upon the shelves as the war crashed on.”

THE BERLIN SCENE

by Josef Ernst

It is a leisurely Saturday afternoon in May, in West Berlin.

On Breitscheidplatz, the main square in the heart of the city, two dozen German women dressed in sports suits, all in late middle age, are stepping out, moving gingerly to the beat of a Bavarian march. With their ample midriffs pressing against their leotards, these members of an exercise club from Munich lift and twirl their batons toward the sky. Some 300 shoppers and passersby—senior citizens, middle-aged couples, many with their children—applaud approvingly as the group completes its routine.

Just 100 yards away, in the shadow of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the multinational “Ku’damm Allstars” are stirring up a bigger ruckus with their drums and electric guitars. The group’s audience, standing in a semicircle around the band, comprises a diverse lot: some are tourists, either from elsewhere in Europe or the United States; others are natives. Some are light skinned, others dark skinned. Nearly all of them are under age 30.

Suddenly, a long-tressed, bearded, jeans-clad young German ambles through the crowd, in front of the Allstars, seemingly oblivious to the music, or to the fact that he is strolling across center stage. The band’s lead singer, a red-haired American from San Francisco, stops the music and gently seizes the trespasser. “Hey, I want everyone to take a look at this,” he says to the onlookers, who know enough English to understand him. “This is what we used to call a ‘hippie’ in America. They were once big in Haight-Ashbury. But don’t you know that this style went out in 1968?” Embarrassed, the German mutters “hands off” and walks away.

In some respects, the entire scene *is* West Berlin—that large (pop. two million), extraordinarily diverse, even bizarre city, undergoing drastic socioeconomic changes. Just as Greater Berlin is divided into East and West, so is West Berlin divided into two generations.

Many who belong to the older generation—the 42 percent of West Berliners who are 45 years of age and older—remember Adolf Hitler, the *Gestapo*, their Jewish neighbors being hauled away in the night, the Anglo-American bombing raids, the final apocalyptic Soviet assault. They remember Berlin when it was in ruins. They remember forays into the countryside to exchange prized family heirlooms for food. They also remember the stresses of the Cold War—the Berlin Blockade (1948–49), Nikita Khrushchev’s “Ultimatum” (1958), and the building of the Berlin Wall (1961). They have aging friends and relatives in the East.

But the younger generation knows only today’s divided Berlin, and

its members feel little in common with those who live *drüben*—"over there"—in drab East Berlin. Most of the young have either been born, or have arrived, in the city since the Wall was built. This generation includes ordinary office workers, ambitious government bureaucrats, thousands of students, blue-collar factory workers, and young homemakers. Finally, this population encompasses punks, hippies, freaks, and myriad other types of *Aussteiger*—literally, those who have "stepped out" of mainstream bourgeois society. West Berlin is one of the main centers, as political scientist Walter Laqueur has said, of the "German psychoscene and [of an] alternative subculture."

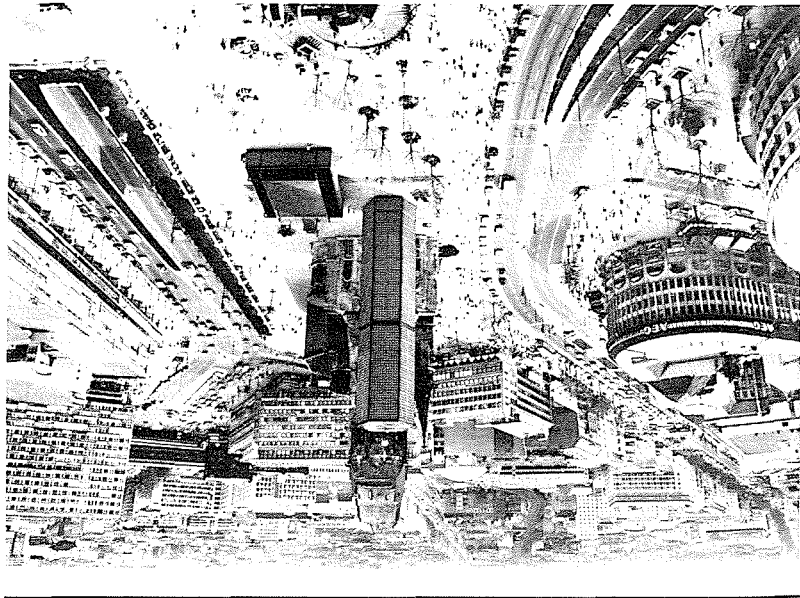
Fading Images

If the *Berliner Szene*, as the inhabitants call this subculture, seems to loom unduly large, that should not be so surprising. The metropolis has long been described as fast paced and sharp edged, like Paris or New York. "A Berliner has no time," as the writer Kurt Tucholsky (1890–1935) once observed. "He is always busy, making telephone calls, arranging dates." Shepard Stone, director of the Aspen Institute in Berlin, who left Dartmouth to study at the University of Berlin in 1929, has written that, as always, "the city remains slightly mad, open to experiments, some promising, some absurd." Today, West Berlin may be the only city in the world that employs a "rock commissioner" to award grants to bands with names such as *Einstürzende Neubauten* ("Collapsing Structures").

What strikes many visitors to West Berlin is how much it differs from Frankfurt, Munich, Hamburg, and other large cities in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Like those metropolises, West Berlin enjoyed its own *Wirtschaftswunder*, or "economic miracle," during the 1950s and '60s. Today, the Kurfürstendamm, the city's main thoroughfare, rivals Paris' Champs-Élysées in elegance and in the number of cafes and restaurants. Every day some 75,000 shoppers spend about \$600,000 at Kaufhaus des Westen, the city's famed six-story department store. Patrons can shop for everything from leather luggage, to fresh lion's meat, to 1,500 kinds of cheese.

But perhaps because West Berliners have lived through so much, or perhaps because of the invigorating "Berlin air," the economic miracle changed the city less than it did the FRG. "Two countries," the Swedish writer Lars Gustafsson has argued, "could not be more different than the scarred, clever Berlin, with its lively sharp intellect, with its revolu-

Josef Ernst, 31, is a writer and former WQ researcher, who now lives in West Berlin. Born in Norderney, West Germany, he received a B.A. from Southern Illinois University (1979), and an M.A. (1985) and a Ph.D. (1987) in political science from the Free University of Berlin. He is the author of The Structure of Political Communication in the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Federal Republic of Germany (1988).



West Berlin's gleaming Breitscheidplatz, with the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church at center. City fathers preserved the ruins of the old church so that residents would not forget how World War II devastated the city.

tionary groups, its Marxist day care centers... and the stupid, money-distended [Federal Republic] with its supermarkets, its portable TV sets, and its creaking pompous furniture."

West Berlin has changed in fundamental ways since it made headlines during the Cold War. Though it is an "enclave" sitting in the middle of Communist East Germany, most West Berliners do not think of their largely green, 185-square-mile metropolis in that way. Embracing nearly three times the area of Washington, D.C., the city is big enough for winter skiing (on *Teufelsberg*, or "Devil's Hill," built from wartime rubble), for summer skinnydipping at a secluded beach, for a three-hour boat ride down the Havel River. Little wonder that West Berliners do not pay much attention to the infamous Wall.

The images of the city as "an island of freedom" (John F. Kennedy), as "a bone in Russia's throat" (Nikita Khrushchev), or as "an abcess in the flesh of socialism" (Pablo Neruda) have faded. Now, West Berlin stands as a meeting place between East and West, in the middle of Central Europe. It was at midpoint on Berlin's Glienicke Bridge that, in February 1986, for example, the Soviets traded dissident Anatoly B. Shcharansky and three other "Western spies" with the Americans for five Warsaw Pact intelligence agents who had been caught in the West. That East Berlin and West Berlin coexist peacefully represents a

quiet victory for Western diplomats and Western stamina. Over the last 20 years, the Soviets and the Western allies (the United States, Britain, and France) have not resolved their disputes over the status of Berlin, but they have agreed to disagree. In the Western view, *all* of Berlin remains, as it has been since the end of World War II, under four-power administration. The Soviets, however, consider East Berlin the capital of East Germany (the German Democratic Republic or GDR) and West Berlin a separate entity. The Quadripartite Agreement, which all four allies negotiated in 1971, and signed the following year, papered over these differences. "The situation which has developed in the area," it says, in the vaguest possible terms, "... shall not be changed unilaterally." The accord also guaranteed the allies, West Berliners, and West Germans free access to the city.

NATO's Trip Wire

The task of Western diplomats working in West Berlin is to maintain the city's fragile status—a mission that sometimes puts them at loggerheads with the local government. Last year, for example, East German leader Erich Honecker invited Eberhard Diepgen, West Berlin's 47-year-old Christian Democratic mayor, to East Berlin to celebrate the city's 750th anniversary. Diepgen's eagerness to make the trip irked allied leaders, who saw in Honecker's invitation a shrewd maneuver to get the mayor to recognize East Berlin as the capital of the GDR. "If we acknowledge that East Berlin has become just another part of East Germany," said one U.S. official, "then what happens to our argument that West Berlin still has the same status as it did at the end of the war?"

In the end, the East German foreign ministry canceled the invitation. The government explained that, in criticizing the East German police, or *Vopos*, for the shooting of would-be escapees at the Wall, Diepgen had made "slandorous attacks" on the East German state.

The allies know that the 6,000 American, 3,000 British, and 2,700 French troops who are segregated in their barracks and training grounds could not long withstand a Warsaw Pact assault. At best, they could only serve as a "trip wire" for NATO retaliation. But they remain in the city to demonstrate the West's willingness to support democratic governments—even one that is surrounded by a Communist regime. Some allied actions—for instance, the expropriation of suburban farmland for firing ranges or military housing—have not endeared the troops to the natives. In an effort to improve relations, the allies have agreed to a *Rechtsbereinigung*, or a "cleaning up," of old laws that empowered the allies to prohibit the publication of newspapers, to require citizens to carry passports, to arrest Berliners for carrying pen knives, etc.

Some would like the allies to go further. "We want German courts and German laws," said Renate Künast, a prominent member of the Alternative Liste Party. "And we want the Western military presence

reduced to a symbolic one. There's no possibility of [the allies] defending Berlin anyway." Those who have opposed the allied occupation have done so peacefully. It was, after all, Arab terrorists, not West Berliners, who bombed the "La Belle" disco in April 1986, killing an American G.I. and a Turkish woman, and injuring 230 others. Opinion polls have indicated that some 80 percent of the locals favor the allied occupation. When U.S. G.I.'s and West Berliners do mingle, at nightclubs such as "Go In" or "La Belle," relations are usually cordial, and German-American scuffles are rare. West Berliners turn out in droves for the July 4 Allied Forces Day parade, air shows, and similar events.

Many of the younger folk, however, regard the parades, U.S. Army patrols along the Wall, and other military routines with a certain derision. At a youth hangout called the "Potsdamer Abkommen" ("Potsdam Agreement"), the condom dispenser at the back of the tavern is decorated with the U.S., British, and French flags—one for each brand. A sign above the machine reads: "Schutzmächte" ("protective powers").

Few West Berliners of any age joke about West Berlin's 254,000 foreign *Gastarbeiter*, or "guest workers," whose presence has created many (predictable) difficulties. The Turks, who account for almost half of all foreigners living in the city, began arriving in the late 1960s. Today, in Kreuzberg and other Turkish ghettos, dark-eyed children play soccer in the streets to the exotic sound of Turkish music, which wafts out of nearby bars. On Friday afternoons, hundreds of Turkish men, their heads topped with white *takkes*, may be seen genuflecting toward Mecca on the lawns of the city's 25 mosques.

The Magic Word

Most of West Berlin's other immigrants—Greeks, Sri Lankans, Lebanese—have arrived more recently, and by highly unorthodox means. Indeed, many of these immigrants were *delivered* to West Berlin by the East German government. Here is how the operation worked: In the immigrants' native lands, the East Germans advertised cheap flights to Berlin aboard *Interflug* airlines. Desperate for work, thousands of future *Gastarbeiter* bought tickets, and soon found themselves at Schönefeld Airport, just south of East Berlin.

From there, the *Vopos* put the immigrants on commuter trains bound for the Friedrichstrasse station in East Berlin. At Friedrichstrasse, the immigrants would board streetcars headed into West Berlin, where they would arrive two minutes later. Because the Western allies did not consider the Wall an international boundary, they could not require the "refugees" to clear customs. Once the immigrants said the magic word ("asylum") they became candidates for permanent residency in West Berlin or the FRG.

Under Western pressure, the East Germans agreed to stop importing and re-exporting the refugees in 1987—but not before they had

WEST BERLIN: THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Coming into West Berlin by jetliner, the window-seat passenger can see the Berlin Wall three times. Heading east, he first glimpses the barrier where it runs between East Germany and West Berlin. From an altitude of several thousand feet, the broad "death strip" looks as benign as a country road. The jetliner flies over the Wall for the second time (at a lower altitude) at a point where it slices through the middle of Greater Berlin. Turning back from the east, on its final approach to Tegel Airport, the plane crosses the "controlled border" again, with watchtowers now in clear view.

Some visitors may find it strange that the notorious barrier, which separates two different worlds on the ground, looks so unmenacing from the air. But West Berlin, sitting 110 miles inside East Germany, far from NATO forces (see back of fold-out map), is a peculiar place.

Consider the city's confusing legal status. Under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949), West Berlin is a *Land*, or state, of the FRG. But the Quadripartite Agreement of 1972 reaffirms the four World War II Allies' supreme control over the entire metropolis, West and East; the pact only permits "ties" between West Germany and West Berlin to be "maintained and developed."

What diplomats call "Berlin theology" is complicated. Though West Berlin is under allied occupation, the government in Bonn pays the ex-



penses of the U.S., French, and British garrisons there. West Berlin sends 26 representatives to the West German Parliament, but they may not vote on legislation, or help choose the federal chancellor. The United States maintains an embassy in East Berlin, even though it does not recognize the city as part of—much less the capital of—East Germany.

The Soviets walked out of the four-power Allied Control Council in 1948, but they still cooperate with the Western allies in several ways. They helped guard Rudolf Hess, Adolph Hitler's old crony, at Spandau prison, until last year, when he committed suicide. And Soviet officers work with their British, American, and French

counterparts at the Berlin Air Safety Center (BASC). The BASC monitors the plane traffic in the 20-mile-wide air corridors that link West Berlin and West Germany.

"Since we're in the same room around the clock, our shift work becomes routine," said Air Force major Rick Fuller, deputy chief of the U.S. element at the BASC. "Remember, I get up in the morning and see this [Soviet] guy in his underwear across the room."

As residents of an alien enclave, West Berliners depend on East-West cooperation. Incoming shipments of coal, fuel oil, and other crucial raw materials must cross the GDR. And, since 1985, the city has received Siberian natural gas via a Soviet pipeline. Although Moscow is unlikely to tamper with the gas flow, the West Berliners are stocking a year's supply of gas underground—just in case.

Nowhere is Berlin's political geography more bizarre than in Steinstücken (pop. 200). A quiet hamlet of farmers and shopkeepers, it belongs to West Berlin, but sits a half mile inside of East Germany. Near the southwest corner of the city, the Wall takes a 90-degree turn to the east, runs out to Steinstücken, loops around the 85-acre village, and comes back again. Strolling to Steinstücken is an unsettling experience; pedestrians find themselves in a kind of roofless tunnel, hemmed in by 13-foot walls on each side of what was once a peaceful suburban lane.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (1949)
 HQ: Brussels

In peacetime, the armed forces of all countries belonging to NATO remain under national commands. But in wartime, they would be controlled by NATO's integrated Allied Command Europe, under U.S. general John R. Galvin. The 861,500 allied military personnel stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany hail from six countries: the FRG (488,000), the United States (246,000), the United Kingdom (67,000), France (50,000), Belgium (25,000), and the Netherlands (5,500). Although a member of NATO, France has not participated officially in its integrated military structure since President Charles de Gaulle withdrew his forces in 1966.

Flags indicate major military headquarters.

The Warsaw Pact (1955)
 HQ: Moscow

Although the pact was founded ostensibly to counter the threat of a "remilitarized" West Germany (which joined NATO in 1955), Moscow had already brought the armed forces of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and East Germany into the Soviet command system by 1949. Soviet armed forces now number some 380,000 in East Germany, 60,000 in Czechoslovakia and 40,000 in Poland. The Czechs, Poles, and East Germans can muster 771,000 men. The pact, however, may not be as strong in Central Europe as such figures suggest. When the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, to crush reformers there, Romania refused to join in, and little Albania, led by Enver Hoxha, quit the alliance.

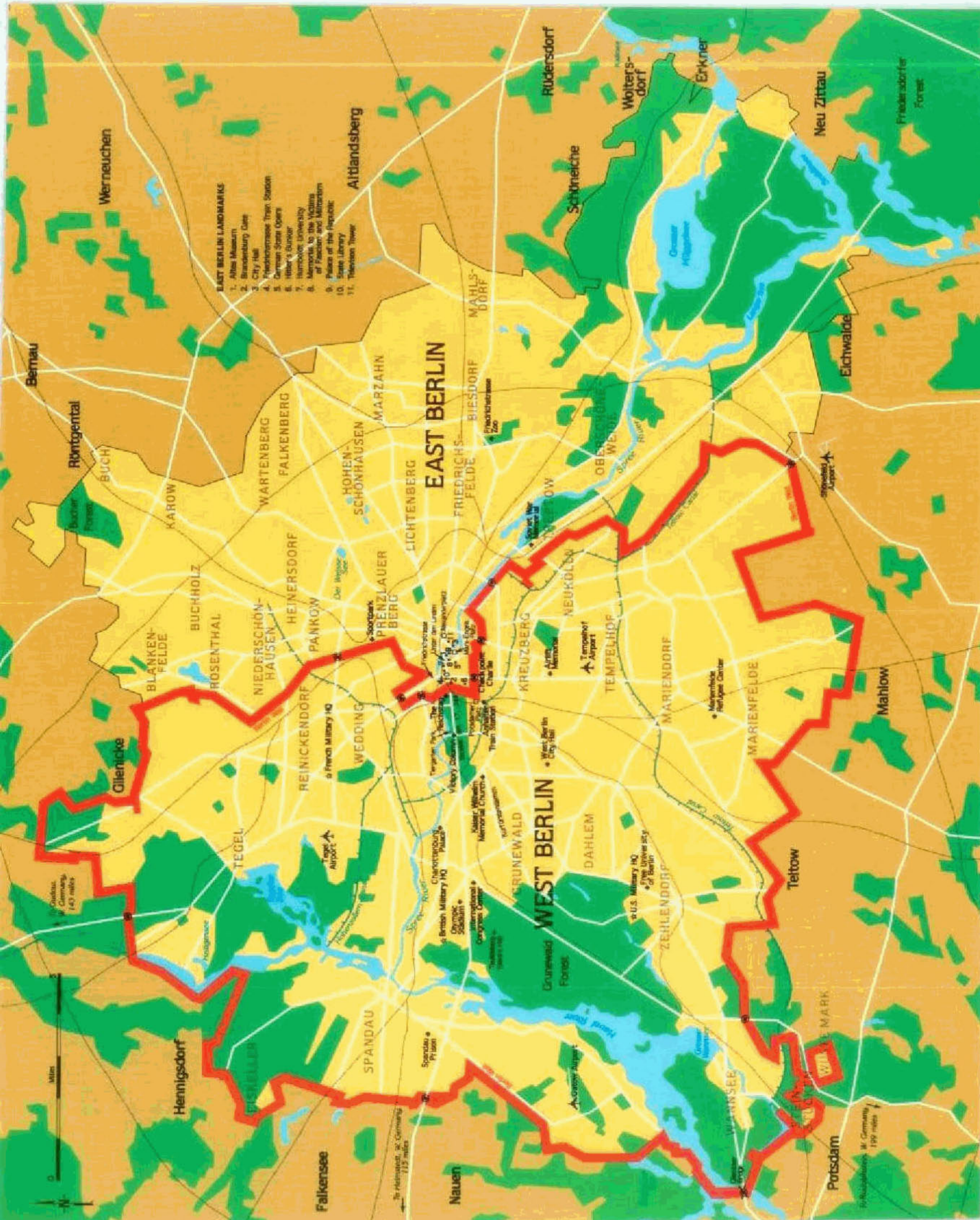


The Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) Talks (1973-)

In 1973, NATO and Warsaw Pact officials began meeting in Vienna to discuss curbs on conventional forces in Poland, Czechoslovakia, the two Germanies, and the Benelux countries. But the talks stalled for two reasons: negotiators could not agree on the number of present Warsaw Pact forces; and because any treaty requiring the withdrawal of U.S. and Soviet forces would have forced the Americans to pull back 3,000 miles across the Atlantic, but the Soviets, only a few hundred miles (to Poland's eastern border). In June 1986, however, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev proposed that the forces on each side be reduced by 25 percent—across an area stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. U.S. negotiators also hope to limit the number of tanks and other nonnuclear weapons—categories in which the Soviets have clear superiority over NATO.

The Stockholm Treaty (1986)

A surprise Soviet invasion of Western Europe has long been a NATO nightmare. In September 1986, diplomats from The United States, Canada, the Soviet Union, and most nations in Europe, meeting in Stockholm, agreed to certain "confidence and security building measures." The resulting treaty requires each of the 35 signatories to disclose information on all military exercises far in advance; invite other nations to send observers when it stages troop movements involving more than 17,000 men; and permit "challenge inspections" by its adversaries every year.



- EAST BERLIN LANDMARKS**
1. Altze Museum
 2. Brandenburger Gate
 3. City Hall
 4. Friedrichssee Train Station
 5. German State Opera
 6. Haber's Lounge
 7. Humboldt University
 8. Memorial to the Victims of Fascism and Militarism
 9. Palace of the Republic
 10. State Library
 11. Television Tower

EAST BERLIN

WEST BERLIN



0 to Potsdam, 11.5 miles
0 to Berlin, 14.3 miles

Werneuchen

Berlino

Röntgental

BUCH

KAROW

BLANKENFELDE

BUCHHOLZ

ROSENTHAL

WARTENBERG

FALKENBERG

HEINERSDORF

PANKOW

HOHEN-SCHONHAUSEN

MARZAHN

PRENZLAUERBERG

WEDDING

REINICKENDORF

FRIEDRICHSFELDE

MAHLSDORF

BIESDORF

BIESDORF

NEUKÖLN

KREUZBERG

TEMPELHOF

MARIENDORF

MARIENFELDE

TEITOW

MAHLOW

SPANDAU

SPANDAU

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Gilbertke

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brought some 10,000 foreigners to the city. The immigrants' life in West Berlin has resembled the life of new immigrants everywhere: Most have taken low-paying menial jobs, most have settled in low-rent ghettos, and nearly all have suffered from discrimination. Some of the city's most common graffiti reads: *Ausländer raus!*, or "Immigrants Out!"

The city government has responded to the plight of the city's foreign nationals in ways that have been both stern and accommodating. The authorities have refused to give immigrants resident permits unless they agree to settle outside the overcrowded neighborhoods of Kreuzberg, Tiergarten, and Wedding. They have also declared that Turkish juveniles turning 18 who have lived in Berlin less than 10 years must be "repatriated to their native country."

And the city has also waged a public relations campaign called *Miteinander leben in Berlin*, or "Living Together in Berlin," which exhorts West Berliners to treat the newcomers with respect. One of the campaign's posters, seen on billboards and in the subway, portrays 26-year-old "Anastasia"—a well-groomed Greek woman, dressed in Western clothes, who works in Berlin as a tax accountant. "The key to working together is mutual trust," she is shown saying on the poster. "The same is true for living together."

The Spirit of Tolerance

Over the last 20 years, West Berlin has also become an oasis for West Germany's most free-spirited young people. Many flock to the city to study at the Free University of Berlin (enrollment: 95,000). While it is true that some young men come partly to avoid serving 15 months in the West German *Bundeswehr* (as residents of a city under allied occupation, they are ineligible for the draft), most counterculturists migrate to West Berlin for the same reason that many young Americans move to San Francisco: to enjoy the permissiveness that the city not only accommodates but also encourages. Despite its Nazi interlude, Berlin has long been known as a city with an open mind and a big heart. "All religions must be tolerated," said Prussia's Frederick the Great (1712–86), for "every man must get to heaven his own way."

Young West Berliners have taken up Frederick's edict with a vengeance. Whereas in the United States, hippies, punks, and other groups come and go, in West Berlin, the counterculturists never seem to fade. On the street, one sees as many hippies, with their long hair and tie-dyed T-shirts, as orange- and green-haired punks. There are other groups too. The radical *Autonomous* reject everything in life, especially the law. Their slogan: *Legal, illegal—alles egal* ("legal, illegal—who cares"). With powdered faces and jet-black hair, the *Gruftis* favor a macabre, Draculean look. They gather at the "Was Sonst?" ("What Else?") bar on Orianenburger Strasse until sundown, when the gays move in.

Not surprisingly, the city's counterculture has transformed Berlin

into one of Western Europe's more notorious drug havens. In 1978, a 15-year-old girl who called herself "Christiane F." wrote a book that described her life as a junkie-prostitute on the streets of West Berlin. The book, *Die Kinder am Bahnhof Zoo* ("The Children at the Zoo Station") was serialized by the weekly magazine *Der Stern*, and was later made into a popular movie. Christiane's story not only shocked many middle-class West Germans but also seemed to confirm what many had suspected: West Berlin was a city of crime and decadence.

Wessies and Half-Wits

Ironically, it is "the system" so scorned by the hippies and punks that makes possible their freewheeling existence. Unlike their American counterparts, students in West Berlin are under no pressure to complete their higher educations in a limited amount of time, or to find jobs thereafter that will enable them to pay off college loans. Fully subsidized by the state, the "Free University" is just that. Moreover, by enrolling as students, young West Berliners may receive health insurance (\$42 a month), public transportation ticket books (\$22 a month), and other services at low cost. Meanwhile, they pay the rent with *Deutschmarks* that they receive from indulgent parents or earn from part-time jobs. Thus the metropolis hosts thousands of *Langzeitstudenten* ("long-time students") who take eight, nine, or even 10 years to earn their degrees (if they get them at all).

If the counterculturists do not hold West Germans in high regard (referring to them, derisively, as *Wessies*), many West Germans voice little admiration for young West Berliners. "Smart Berliners move to West Germany," says my friend Thomas, a native West German, "and German half-wits come to Berlin."

What unites the young *Aussteiger* is their shared antipathy toward the West German state and toward Western authority in general. In his novel *The Wall Jumper* (1983), Peter Schneider, a screenwriter and longtime city resident, summed up the counterculture's perspective in his portrait of a rebellious young woman visiting East Berlin. In the Communist East, he wrote, "she has sympathetic listeners; she can catch her breath. But this is a delicate balance: Eastern tales of woe would upset her sense of having come from the worst of all possible worlds. The idea that she enjoys certain freedoms in the West—if only the freedom of movement—would weigh unbearably on her conscience. She can't afford to admit that she has any privileges, because she derives her identity from her status as a victim."

Within West Berlin's counterculture, the "Alternatives" have played the most constructive role. Alternatives run their own cooperatives and "collective" natural food restaurants, coffee shops, book and record stores, film and art exhibits, newspapers and magazines. During the summer they stage cabarets, rock concerts, and "dances 'til dawn"



West Berlin's "Alternatives" boast their own schools, doctors, and day-care centers, so why not a biweekly entertainment magazine (circ. 60,000)? The Alternative "network," observes British writer John Ardagh, is so extensive that one can "depend on it more or less completely," except for having to "pay taxes and utility bills."

at an Alternative circus tent called the "Tempodrom." And, most importantly, they have founded their own political party, the "Alternative Liste," which, in the last election, won 10.6 percent of the popular vote, and 15 of 144 seats in the West Berlin Parliament.

Politically, it is not easy to say what the Alternatives advocate—except, generally, a society that is less materialistic and more gentle with the environment. In 1980–81, Alternatives occupied several dozen homes that, in the middle of an acute housing shortage, had been purchased and left vacant by real estate speculators. Cried the squatters: *Lieber instand besetzen als kaputt besitzen* ("Better to occupy and renovate than to own and wreck"). They have also persuaded the city to stop salting the roads during the winter—a measure that helps prevent auto accidents, but harms nearby trees.

So far, the Alternatives' daily newspaper, *die tageszeitung* ("the daily news"), which published its first issue on April 17, 1979, represents the counterculture's most remarkable achievement. Owned by its 180 employees, many of whom are under 30, the "taz" (pronounced "tots") operates without a managerial hierarchy. Indeed, all of the employees—including its correspondents in Moscow, Paris, London, Johannesburg, Rome, and Madrid—earn the same modest monthly salary (about \$830). At morning staff conferences, which are held around a long table in the paper's kitchen, no one is officially in charge.

The *taz* now reaches some 60,000 highly educated readers who seem to enjoy its editorial unpredictability. Before Ronald Reagan visited the city in June 1987, the editors argued that, in light of the U.S. president's willingness to negotiate with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the Alternatives had little reason to protest. Still, demonstrations, the *taz* conceded, would take place. "We in Berlin," the paper concluded, "love traditions, and when Ronald Reagan comes, you demonstrate. Here in Berlin, we have a Pavlovian reflex."

Route 128 an der Spree

West Berlin's counterculture, and the welfare state that sustains it, could not flourish without a vigorous city economy. Before World War II, Berlin, then the site of many large chemical and manufacturing firms, was known as *Chicago an der Spree*. Not only did the war destroy about 70 percent of the city on both sides of the Spree River, over half of its plant and equipment wound up in Communist hands. After the war, business executives, unsure about Berlin's political future, were reluctant to set up shop there. Even as the Cold War ebbed, the city's up-and-coming entrepreneurs routinely moved their main headquarters to Frankfurt, Munich, and other cities in the FRG.

"You could see then that in 10, 20, or 30 years, the Russians wouldn't need military force to take over West Berlin," as Kurt Kasch, a member of the Deutsche Bank of Berlin's board of directors, has observed. "The city would be exhausted internally." Indeed, between 1960 and 1983, West Berlin lost about 150,000 jobs in manufacturing.

But in 1981, the local economy began to turn around. Elmar Pieroth, the city's secretary of economics and labor, who wanted to make "earning money . . . fun in Berlin," set up a public fund to invest in hi-tech firms. The city also converted the old brick AEG electrical plant into the *Gründerzentrum*—an industrial park for companies that produce various hi-tech products. Having already drawn over 300 hi-tech businesses (such as Siemens, Schering AG, IBM, and Nixdorf) to the city, officials are now optimistic about transforming West Berlin into a sort of *Route 128 an der Spree*. "Boston is a place with old industry that started to rebuild and modernize 25 years ago," Pieroth observed recently. "Berlin is the oldest place of continental industry. We don't have MIT and Harvard, but we have the Technical University, 180 research institutes and 37,000 people working in science."

West Berlin's economy would not be as robust as it is without the help of generous politicians (and taxpayers) in the FRG. Bonn gives the city about \$7 billion a year in direct assistance; it provides another \$4 billion in various subsidies to encourage companies and families to settle in the city. Corporate taxes, for example, are 22.5 percent lower in West Berlin than in the FRG. All employees receive annual government bonuses equal to eight percent of their gross incomes.

Such largesse explains, in part, why the average "Horst Janke" in West Berlin lives so comfortably. Let us imagine him: A resident of the southwest neighborhood of Neukölln, Herr Janke pays roughly 700 DM (about \$420 per month) to rent an apartment large enough for himself, his wife Sabine, and their 2-year-old son, Dieter. Every workday morning, Horst awakes and quickly consumes breakfast (open-faced sandwiches with coffee) while reading *BZ*, the city's most popular tabloid. He eyes the customary photo of a bare-breasted *Fräulein* on page three and scans the soccer scores.

Like most West Berlin husbands, Horst leaves the family car, perhaps an Opel Kadett, at home for his wife. He hurries off through the rain (Berliners enjoy only about 40 days of clear, blue skies every year) to the nearest subway station. Along subway line Six, the train stops several times in West Berlin before passing (some 20 feet underneath the Berlin Wall) into East Berlin. The subway car trundles through the dimly lit *Stadtmitte* (center city) terminal without stopping. This is one of Berlin's old stations that the East Germans have boarded up. Under East Berlin, the train halts only at Friedrichstrasse. The doors slide open, and a few West Berliners, who will be spending the day in East Berlin, get off. Above, in the station, East German *Grepos*, or border police, see that no East Berliners board.

The subway train then wends its way back into West Berlin. Sev-



U.S. G.I.'s patrolling the Wall. The papers on the face of the Wall are 1987 census forms, pasted up by West Berlin's anticensus protesters.

eral minutes later, Horst reaches his destination: the Borsig factory, where he works eight hours a day as a welder, building heavy machinery. His monthly pay after taxes: about \$1,200. His wife works part time at a small restaurant. In the evenings, Horst and Sabine watch rented movies on their VCR; on weekends, they meet with friends at their favorite pub, "Joe am Ku'damm." The Jankes and other West Berliners (and West Germans) can look forward to six weeks of paid vacation (guaranteed by law), which they often spend on the North Sea or on the beaches in Spain.

No matter how well the average West Berliner fares, he cannot entirely ignore the inconvenience (and oddity) of living in a city that is surrounded by a wall. The "anti-fascist bulwark," as the East German regime calls it, is West Berlin's premier tourist attraction—as it should be. The Wall, observes West Berlin scholar Helmut Wagner, "is the concrete expression of a situation which can only be upheld by means of bureaucratic and military force."

The "Wall" is actually more akin to a *Todesstreifen*, or "death strip." Its dimensions are impressive: 103 miles long, between 50 and 150 yards wide, with a 13-foot-high concrete wall running along either side. Armed guards, some atop watch towers, others on foot, keep an eye out for would-be escapees. The strip is equipped with barbed wire, vehicle traps, and flood lights. Always innovative, West Berliners have used what might have been a boring, blank stretch of concrete in many ways. The city's artists have viewed the barrier as an ideal showcase, creating a new genre of "Wall Art." And everyone else considers it a good place to scribble graffiti, which often appears in English: "Last Coke for 10,000 miles" and "Would the last person out [of East Berlin] please turn the lights off?"

The Living Museum

Americans who wish to pass through the Wall into East Berlin usually do so at Checkpoint Charlie. At the East German border station, they must purchase a day visa (five marks), and exchange 25 West German marks for 25 East German marks. The experience can be harrowing. Belongings may be inspected by an X-ray machine; personal mail is often read. And, perhaps most annoying, visitors will be blocked at each stage in the border-crossing process by a series of locked doors. Thus, they wait in the sometimes dark corridors until the *Grepos* buzz the doors open, allowing their guests to pass through.

In East Berlin, visitors find themselves in what some Western writers call a "living museum." Not only are many of the old city's most celebrated landmarks, such as the German State Opera, the National Library, and the Brandenburg Gate located here; people still live pretty much the way they did in the early 1960s. "Young girls still curtsy there," as American journalist Preet J. Visilind has noted. "Streetcars

rattle and sing on boulevards of polished stone. Neon light is an infant art. Paper, not plastic, wraps the *Bratwurst*."

Indeed, while Alexanderplatz and the immediate downtown area boasts a facade of Soviet-style modernity, the outlying districts, such as the working-class neighborhood of Prenzlauer Berg, still show the nicks and scars that they acquired during the war. The state seems omnipresent: the *Vopos* patrol the streets on foot, usually in pairs. The "International Book Store" on Alexanderplatz advertises works by Marx and Engels and sells Communist Party literature—available in German and Russian. There is little commotion or even traffic—just the occasional whine of East German-built *Trabant* cars. During the winter, the acrid fumes of burning coal hang in the air—and grow sufficiently dense to provoke "smog alerts" in West Berlin.

Still, East Berlin is the most exciting place available to East Germans to visit. Here, tourists find not only museums and a spectacular 1,200-foot-high television tower but also the country's best restaurants, discos, and late-night bars. The Honecker regime, however, does not let good times get out of hand. When the British rock group Genesis performed a concert on the lawn of the Reichstag in West Berlin last June, 4,000 young East Berliners gathered near the Wall to enjoy the festivities from afar. East German *Vopos*, however, broke up the party, as the



West Berlin's Kurfürstendamm. Says historian Gordon Craig: Berliners have tended to be "energetic, ebullient, colorful in their speech, quick at repartee, prone to sentimentality... [and] in time of trouble, courageous."

youths shouted "The Wall must go!" and (to show their support for *glasnost*) "Gorbachev! Gorbachev!"

For its part, the Communist government flatly denied that the imbroglio had even taken place. "There can be no talk at all of clashes between youths and police," a spokesman said. "They exist only in the fantasy of Western correspondents who drive to and fro over the border with the aim of creating a sensation."

West Berlin still presents thorny public relations problems for East Germany. On the one hand, the Communist authorities want to keep Western influence to a minimum. Thus, they publish city maps depicting the Western side of the metropolis as a white desert, marked "Westberlin." And East German tour guides deliberately do not point out the Reichstag, which is clearly visible from the East. "At Friedrichstrasse, at the Brandenburg Gate, our Berlin ends," wrote East Berlin journalist Horst von Tümping. "A different Berlin, one of yesterday, even of the day before yesterday begins there."

On the other hand, the Honecker regime believes it cannot ignore the East Germans' appetite for Western goods—and pop culture. To that end, it installed antennas in low-lying Dresden so that the residents there could watch *Der Denver-Clan* with Joan Collins and John Forsythe. East Germany has also allowed women over age 60 and men over age 65 to qualify for 30-day visas to West Berlin. (They use the time, of course, for shopping.) Most importantly, the regime now allows ordinary East Germans to apply for a visa allowing them to leave the GDR for good. The process may take as little as six months; since 1984, some 20,000 East Germans have emigrated to the West every year.

The Romantic Fantasy

From its dealings with the West, the East German government has managed to reap considerable financial rewards. As noted, it collects 25 *Deutschmarks* from every Westerner who enters East Berlin. The Bonn government also pays the Honecker regime to remove West Berlin's garbage, to maintain the autobahn and the rail lines that run between West Berlin and West Germany, and periodically to dredge the Teltow Canal. The Bonn government gives the Communists a \$5,000 "ransom" for every person they allow to emigrate to the West. Total annual payments from Bonn to East Berlin: about \$7 billion.

In addition, the Communists earn hard currency from Western consumers. East German *Intershops* sell untaxed Western goods to anyone who can pay for them with Western currency. Located most prominently in East Berlin's Friedrichstrasse subway station—where West Berliners may enter East Berlin—the *Intershops* offer savings on cigarettes, liquor, and electronic equipment of "up to 35 percent."

With so much cross-border traffic and business going on, it is not surprising that public officials on both sides of the Wall occasionally

dream about unifying the two Berlins, and the two German states. Last year, Mayor Diepgen made a trip to Washington D.C. Speaking at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Diepgen said that both East and West Berlin would be celebrating the city's 750th anniversary "in the knowledge that it is all about one city" with "a common history" and a "common hope for the future."

But I believe that this notion, that there exists one Germany and one Berlin, divided only by artificial political borders, is now a romantic fantasy. The two Berlins and the two Germanys, like North Korea and South Korea, have been moving in different directions for 40 years. East Germany and West Germany represent radically different and mutually incompatible societies. Several years ago, Erhard Krack, the mayor of East Berlin, was asked what would happen if the Berlin Wall were taken down. "Personally, I don't think many of our citizens would go over to the West," he said. "Our people have a good life."

Krack was not just singing the East German national anthem. The young East Berliners whom I have encountered express a hankering for blue jeans and rock music, and they would like to be able to visit Paris or New York. But then, almost in the same breath, they say that unlike the West European governments, Honecker's regime guarantees them a job, a steady income, and someplace to live. There may be little freedom or opportunity or excitement in grey East Berlin, but neither are there many economic risks, at a time when about 10 percent of all West Berlin workers are unemployed and on the dole.

So what *would* happen if the East Germans, with permission from Moscow, took down the Wall? West Berlin novelist Peter Schneider has written that today East Berliners probably would *not* rush into the arms of West Berliners. Nor would the Westerners necessarily open their arms to greet them. Instead, he believes, and I suspect he's right, that "there would be a hesitant standing still."



BACKGROUND BOOKS

BERLIN

Few major cities in the world have been more buffeted by politics in the 20th century than Berlin. Yet unlike other major West European capitals—Rome, Paris, London—old Berlin bloomed late as a cosmopolitan center. “Prior to 1871,” as Gerhard Masur points out in **Imperial Berlin** (Basic, 1971), “the great powers of the world would not have considered the city worth the price of a bitter international struggle.”

The city, writes Gordon A. Craig in **The Germans** (Penguin, 1983), was founded late in the 12th century as a tiny trading settlement on the banks of the Spree River. Enjoying relative peace and freedom under the margraves of Brandenburg, Craig observes, Berlin was a typical medieval market town, which boasted “a patriciate of great merchants and nobles, a *Bürgerium* of masters of trades and handicrafts, organized in guilds, a Jewish community, and a sizeable transient population.”

In 1442, the state of Brandenburg fell under the control of the Hohenzollern dynasty, and Berlin served as the residence of the Kurfürsten, or “prince-electors” (who helped select the Holy Roman emperor). Although the Kurfürsten attracted bankers, court purveyors, and a new class of tradesmen to the city, Berlin, writes A. J. P. Taylor in **The Course of German History** (Putnam’s, 1962), remained an “overgrown military camp,” still “remote and obscure.” But the Hohenzollerns would strengthen and expand the state of Brandenburg by annexing East Prussia, thus leading the way to the crowning of Frederick I, “King in Prussia,” in 1701.

Under Frederick I, and especially under his grandson, Frederick the Great (1712–86), Berlin began to achieve a certain distinction. During the 18th century, Prussian monarchs enlarged the city by merging it with neighboring

Köln. They founded the Academy of Sciences, and built many of today’s landmarks, including the Opera House (1743) and the Brandenburg Gate (1791)—the great ceremonial Doric gateway that stood as a symbol of Prussian strength and unity.

The 19th century severely tested the Prussian monarchy. Napoleon’s armies occupied the capital for two years (1806–08). And the revolutionary turbulence that swept across Europe in 1848—brought on by unemployment and poor working conditions—reached Berlin too.

The fighting that took place on March 18, 1848, between workers and government troops, says Hajo Holborn in **History of Modern Germany, Vol. 3, 1840–1945** (Princeton, 1982), took the lives of 250 Berliners. The soldiers suppressed the revolt, but, as Holborn writes, the angry rioters afterward paraded the “March Dead” through the palace courtyard, while King Frederick William IV stood by, watching “the macabre show.”

Meanwhile, Berlin, with the growth of its porcelain, textile, and iron industries, was developing into a factory city. By the time it became capital of the new, enlarged, unified German Reich—which Chancellor Otto von Bismarck formed after Prussia defeated France in 1871—Berlin boasted a cosmopolitan population of one million. The city, observes A. J. Ryder in **Twentieth Century Germany** (Columbia, 1973), represented “a study in contrasts . . . an industrial giant set among the sandy forests of Brandenburg, the radical capital of a highly conservative state, a centre of avant-garde artists in a metropolis characterized by ostentatious new wealth and the grey proletarian suburbs.”

For Berliners, World War I meant not only the loss of loved ones but also the

rationing of food, the "turnip winter" of 1916-17, and, at war's end, massive workers' strikes and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II. David Childs' **Germany Since 1918** (St. Martin's, 1980) recounts the city's and the nation's struggle to recover. Some two million Germans perished during the war.

Though often referred to as the "Golden Twenties," the much-romanticized Weimar Republic (1919-33) was, as Otto Friedrich says in **Before the Deluge** (Fromm, 1986), a time of great suffering. Food was still scarce, joblessness high, and the rate of inflation soared. Friedrich cites novelist Klaus Mann's description of the prostitutes who strolled "like fierce amazons" along the Kurfürstendamm. "One of them," Mann wrote, "... whispered into my ear: 'Want to be my slave? Costs only six billion and a cigarette. A bargain.'"

The era, however, was "golden" in a cultural sense. During these years, men such as filmmaker Fritz Lang, architect Walter Gropius, playwright Bertolt Brecht, and artist Wassily Kandinsky all flocked to Berlin. The renaissance they created, writes Peter Gay in **Weimar Culture** (Greenwood, 1981), represented a reaction to the apparent "disappearance of God, the threat of the machine, the incurable stupidity of the upper classes, and the helpless philistinism of the bourgeoisie."

Adolf Hitler's ascent to power in 1933 ended not only the Republic but also Berlin's spirit of tolerance. The capital became the site of book burnings, Nazi torchlight parades through the Brandenburg Gate, and raids on synagogues and Jewish businesses ("Crystal Night," No-

vember 9, 1938). Unfortunately, the best works in English on the Nazi period, such as Joachim C. Fest's **Hitler** (Random, 1975); Karl Dietrich Bracher's **German Dictatorship** (Holt, 1972); and Alan Bullock's **Hitler** (Harper, 1971), say little about daily life in the city; they focus instead on the rise and fall of the Führer's regime, its horrors, and World War II.

As it happens, there is no shortage of vivid chronicles of the postwar division of Berlin and the three Cold War crises. These include Lucius D. Clay's **Decision in Germany** (Greenwood, 1950); Philip Windsor's **City On Leave** (Praeger, 1963); and Jean Edward Smith's **Defense of Berlin** (Johns Hopkins, 1963). Two of the most illuminating accounts of the events leading to the building of the Communists' "anti-fascist barricade" in the summer of 1961 are Curtis Cate's **Ides of August** (Evans, 1979) and Honoré M. Catudal's **Kennedy and the Berlin Wall Crisis** (International Publications, 1980).

Today, visitors usually find West Berlin a bright, bustling place. But on a harsh winter's day, the larger cityscape, with its ugly Wall and grey Eastern sector, still can remind one of the scene that Christopher Isherwood described in his **Berlin Stories** (Bentley, 1979). Berlin, he wrote in 1935, "is a skeleton which aches in the cold... I feel in my bones the sharp ache of the frost in the girders of the overhead railway, in the ironwork of balconies, in bridges, in tramlines, lamp-standards, latrines... the city, which glowed so brightly and invitingly in the night sky above the plains, is cold and cruel and dead."