

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.

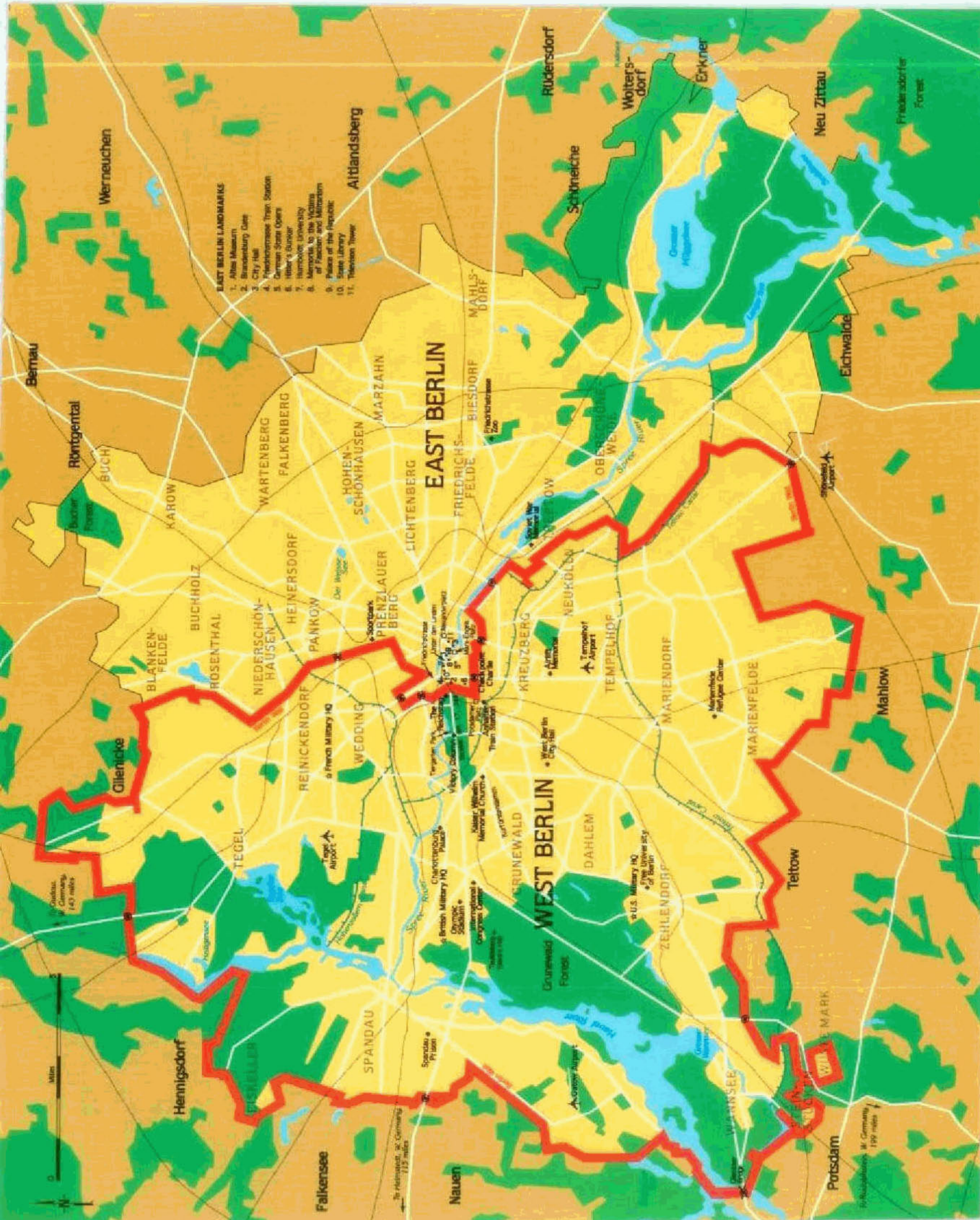


The Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) Talks (1973-)

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. Altes Museum
 2. Brandenburger Gate
 3. City Hall
 4. Friedrichssee Train Station
 5. German State Opera
 6. Haber's Tomb
 7. Humboldt University
 8. Memorial to the Victims of Famine and Militarism
 9. Palace of the Republic
 10. State Library
 11. Television Tower

EAST BERLIN

WEST BERLIN



0 to 1.5 miles
0 to 1.5 kilometers

Werneuchen

Berlino

Röntgental

BUCH

KAROW

BLANKENFELDE

BUCHHOLZ

ROSENTHAL

WARTENBERG

FALKENBERG

NIEDERSCHÖNHAUSEN

HEJNERSDORF

PANKOW

WEDDING

PRENZLAUERBERG

HOHEN-SCHONHAUSEN

MARZAHN

LICHTENBERG

FRIEDRICHSFELDE

MAHLSDORF

BIESDORF

Rüdersdorf

Schmelche

Waltersdorf

Erkner

Neu Zittau

Eichwalde

Gliencke

TEGEL

REINICKENDORF

WEDDING

PRENZLAUERBERG

KREUZBERG

NEUKÖLN

TEMPELHOF

MARIENDORF

MARIENFELDE

Mahlow

Hennigsdorf

SPANDAU

Falkensee

Nauen

STRUNEWALD

DAHLEM

TEGEL

Teltow

MARIENDORF

ZEHLENDORF

MARLITZ

Portsdam

0 to 1.5 miles
0 to 1.5 kilometers

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