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# Walls, Borders, Boundaries

*Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe*



Edited by

MARC SILBERMAN, KAREN E. TILL & JANET WARD



***Bergahn Books***

New York • Oxford

First published in 2012 by

**Berghahn Books**

www.berghahnbooks.com

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#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Silberman, Marc

Walls, borders, boundaries: spatial and cultural practices in Europe / edited by Marc Silberman, Karen E. Till, and Janet Ward.

p. cm. -- (Spektrum: publications of the German Studies Association; v. 4)

ISBN 978-0-85745-504-8 (hardback: alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-0-85745-505-5 (ebook)

1. Europe--Boundaries--History. 2. Europe--Historical geography. 3. Geopolitics--Europe--History. 4. Territory, National--Europe. 5. Ethnicity--Europe--History. 6. Europe--Civilization. I. Silberman, Marc, 1948- II. Till, Karen E. III. Title.

D104.W35 2012

320.1'2094--dc23

2011051785

#### **British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper.

ISBN: 978-0-85745-504-8 hardback

ISBN: 978-0-85745-505-5 ebook

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## CHAPTER 6

# A “Complicated Contrivance” *West Berlin behind the Wall, 1971–1989*

DAVID E. BARCLAY

The age of heroes is said to be over.  
—Eleanor Lansing Dulles, “Berlin after the Four Power Talks,” 1971<sup>1</sup>

Writing in the 1960s, the novelist and essayist Wallace Stegner insisted that the postwar history of Berlin cried out for epic literary treatment: “The *great* book on Berlin is going to be a sort of Iliad, a story that dramatizes a power struggle in terms of the men who waged it.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the experience of Germany’s once and future capital after 1945 is full of high drama and powerful personalities, from Stalin and Truman to Ernest Bevin, Lucius Clay, Ernst Reuter, Willy Brandt, Walter Ulbricht, John F. Kennedy, and the “daring young men” who flew the Airlift in 1948–49. Berlin seemed to be the epicenter of the Cold War, the site of superpower confrontation, of “wars of nerves,” of America’s “finest hour,” the place where two competing political, economic, and cultural systems collided and competed spectacularly.<sup>3</sup> After August 1961 it was the site of the Wall, that grisly and constant reminder of the abnormal division of the world and of a great city.

But the period of West Berlin’s history after the mid 1960s, and especially after 1971–72, was decidedly unheroic and in many ways anticlimactic; it certainly did not lend itself to epic mythmaking. The historian Andreas Daum has written tellingly of the evolution of “America’s Berlin” after 1948, while Dominik Geppert has investigated the “mythology” of Berlin as the “front-line” or *Frontstadt* in the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> Yet after 1965 or 1966, the mythology of “America’s Berlin” lost much of its cultural salience and its evocative power, in the United States and in West Berlin itself. Symbolic of this development is what happened to the West Berlin Congress Hall (Kongresshalle). Built in 1956–57 at the height of West Berlin’s “heroic” phase, designed by the American architect Hugh A. Stubbins, and strongly promoted by the indefatigable US diplomat and Berlin friend Eleanor Lansing Dulles, the Congress Hall was intended to be an ideological statement about the American relationship to Berlin, a showcase for American design and American values. In 1980, however, its roof partially collapsed, killing one person and injuring several others.<sup>5</sup>

When one US official was asked if the Americans wanted to help rebuild it, he replied “that there had been no great public interest and to my knowledge no serious suggestion that US money might be available for its reconstruction.”<sup>6</sup> The halcyon days of “America’s Berlin” were long gone, even though the building was eventually rebuilt according to Stubbin’s original plans.

Key to the post-1960s transformation of West Berlin were global shifts in the Cold War that in turn contributed to a mutual desire to deescalate the situation around Berlin and, with that, the potential for a future Berlin crisis to spiral out of control. Thus, the real turning point in West Berlin’s history, and one that signaled the end of its “heroic” phase, was the negotiation and implementation of the Quadripartite Agreement of 1971–72 among the four postwar occupying powers. Supplemented by intra-German arrangements on the regularization of transit between West Berlin and the Federal Republic, the Quadripartite Agreement represented an attempt to create a semblance of normality in an abnormal situation. A “magnificent piece of pragmatic diplomatic obfuscation,” it was designed to make the Wall and the division it had cemented into something that, if not permanent, at least seemed to be an enduring part of the German and European political map.<sup>7</sup> Crucial to that endeavor was not only the “normalization” of West Berlin’s relationship with the Federal Republic, the German Democratic Republic, and the Soviet Union but also the careful maintenance of a structural status quo in West Berlin, based in turn on continued Allied occupation rights and a steady flow of subsidies from the Federal Republic. In the words of the British diplomat Sir Christopher Mallaby, West Berlin’s post-1971 situation depended on “a very complicated contrivance ... which tremendously and triumphantly succeeded.” It was, he concludes, “one of the wonders of the modern world.”<sup>8</sup>

This contrived normality persisted for almost two decades and helped to sustain a curious—indeed, unique—social and political culture in West Berlin itself, one in which the Wall was at once omnipresent and barely noticed. To understand how the Wall affected post-1972 West Berlin, it is thus necessary to consider in some detail the reciprocal and complex relationship between the Allies in West Berlin and the culture of the truncated city itself. Among other things, so “normal” had the contrived reality of West Berlin become in the 1970s and the 1980s that the Allies themselves sometimes needed to be reminded why they were there in the first place. And though West Berlin’s disparate cultures—political activists, artists, immigrants, students, adherents of alternative life styles including squatters and anarchists, and an aging “native” population—increasingly came to ignore or criticize the Allies, the unique “island” *Biotop* that made these cultures possible depended almost wholly on the Allied presence and on the maintenance of the status quo that the Quadripartite Agreement had enshrined. Until 1989–90 the Allies ensured that the island stayed secure, while the Wall itself increasingly became a kind of “absent

presence" to West Berliners—always visible, always there, always apprehended, often resented, but somehow not as important a part of lived daily experience as outsiders might have thought. People get used to boundaries, and in West Berlin they also had long been used to the presence of the soldiers who made the boundaries seem permanent and stable. This chapter examines the role of the soldiers and of the Wall alike and how the quadripartite settlement of 1971–72 affected them both.

### The Quadripartite Agreement and the Allies in West Berlin

It is surprising that, with a couple of notable exceptions, the Quadripartite Agreement of 1971–72 has attracted relatively little attention from historians in recent years, despite the complexity and significance of the discussions that took place in Berlin, Bonn, Moscow, and Washington.<sup>9</sup> Yet there can be little doubt that the agreement profoundly affected the nature and quality of life behind the Wall in West Berlin and that in many respects those effects were as much psychological and cultural as political or strategic. Moreover, the agreement itself is an almost classic example of the reciprocal interactions during the Cold War among the global calculations of the competing superpowers, the interests of the two German states, and the realities of life on the ground in Berlin itself.

Those realities, of course, had been profoundly altered by the construction of the Wall after August 1961. Ordinary West Berliners were now cut off from access to and communication with East Berlin and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Telephone services were interrupted. Transit travel across the GDR, never easy under the best of circumstances, became even more fraught with time-consuming difficulties and uncertainties. Between 1963 and 1966, East German authorities did permit West Berliners briefly to visit relatives in East Berlin during certain designated holiday seasons, such as Easter or Christmas, but after 1966 even those possibilities were closed down, except for "urgent family cases."<sup>10</sup> And although the first decade after the building of the Wall was marked by dramatic visits from Allied leaders who vigorously reasserted the Western commitment to the beleaguered city—such as John F. Kennedy in 1963, Queen Elizabeth II in 1965, or Richard M. Nixon in 1969—the years of walled-in isolation contributed significantly to West Berlin's various demographic, psychological, economic, and financial problems. These problems in turn were complicated by the emergence of a radical student left in West Berlin and by the bitter conflict between the student movement and the dominant Springer press in the city. Moreover, the remote possibility persisted, even after Nikita Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964, that a new crisis over Berlin could still escalate into a major superpower confrontation, and both

sides in the Cold War maintained active military contingency plans in the event of such a confrontation.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Western defense plans for Berlin, based on an Allied organization called "Live Oak," continued into the détente and post-détente era after the 1960s "as a signal to the Soviet bloc of the continued Allied determination to defend Berlin and Allied rights of access"—a determination that had been at the heart of Allied-Soviet disputes since the 1940s.<sup>12</sup>

By the late 1960s a number of well-informed observers were reflecting rather glumly that West Berlin was in the grip of a "malaise" from which it would be difficult to escape. To be sure, they noted, West Berlin remained a vibrant place that could still draw on its "heroic" post-1948 tradition and its older traditions of cultural openness and innovativeness. Still, as one British diplomat astutely pointed out in 1967, West Berlin's vibrancy and energy were "superficial." The walled-in rump city had already lost much of its "heroic" allure, as the Soviet threat had been ratcheted down during the Brezhnev era, and though West Berliners were feeling more secure, he continued, "a certain confusion, and even neurotic introspection" was the logical result: "the malaise affecting Berlin is essentially the consequence of an unnatural situation which is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future."<sup>13</sup>

Serious Allied negotiations with the Soviet Union on Berlin began in 1970—less out of a concern for the city's political and psychological doldrums than out of a desire, in the context of détente and *Ostpolitik*, to defuse the situation in and around Berlin while continuing to guarantee Allied occupation and access rights. The negotiations, like the ultimate Quadripartite Agreement itself, were complex by any diplomatic standard, driven by such factors as Soviet interest in ensuring West German ratification of the Moscow Treaty of 1970, the Soviet desire for a European security conference, the reality of Richard Nixon's overtures to China, Henry Kissinger's complex tactics of "linkages" and "back-channel" diplomacy, and the *Ostpolitik* initiatives of Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr. They included formal discussions among the four ambassadors at the Allied Control Council building in West Berlin, expert discussions in Bonn, German-German negotiations involving Egon Bahr and his East German counterpart, Michael Kohl, and, as just noted, "back-channel" discussions in Washington and elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> One measure of the Agreement's complexity and ambiguity was its opening paragraph, which referred not to Berlin or West Berlin but to the "relevant area." Moreover, because East and West German translations of the Agreement differed, it was decided that only the English, French, and Russian versions would be official.<sup>15</sup> Described by one State Department observer as "a cliff-hanger to the last," the document was finally signed on 3 September 1971, a day later than planned, because US Ambassador Kenneth Rush was suffering from high blood pressure.<sup>16</sup> But even then the Agreement (it was not a "treaty" in the traditional sense) did not go into effect. It had to wait until the two German states had agreed on a transit accord, which

took further weeks of negotiation and, of course, ratification by the West German parliament.<sup>17</sup> But by June 1972 everything was in place, and for the next seventeen years West Berlin's place in the world was largely determined by the 1971–72 accords.

The Quadripartite Agreement not only included the basic agreement itself but also several appendices and notes; it was kept purposefully vague and ambiguous in many of its particulars. The cumulative effect of the 1971–72 accords, however, was to underscore joint Allied responsibility for and continued occupation rights in Berlin. In the words of the American diplomat Martin Hillenbrand, the Soviets agreed to repudiate their frequent claims between 1958 and 1963 "that Allied rights in West Berlin were somehow capable of being abrogated or exhausted."<sup>18</sup> The four powers agreed that all future disputes would be settled peacefully, thus defusing Berlin as a potential site of armed superpower confrontation. For their part, the Soviets received a consulate general in West Berlin, which had long been one of their goals. With their willingness to sign the Quadripartite Agreement, they also were able to ensure West German ratification of Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* treaties.

Among the most ambiguous points in the Quadripartite Agreement were those that concerned West Berlin's relationship to the Federal Republic, which thus remained a matter of endless controversy and frequent protest on the part of the Soviets.<sup>19</sup> But for ordinary West Berliners living behind the Wall, the accords finally offered an opportunity to travel to East Berlin and the surrounding GDR, though of course under a variety of bureaucratic restrictions; and the Agreement also meant that vehicular traffic between West Berlin and the Federal Republic was more or less normalized. Moreover, the 1971–72 accords led to territorial exchanges between the GDR and West Berlin that ended some bizarre administrative anomalies, the most famous being the West Berlin exclave of Steinstücken, a tiny village of around two hundred people located about a kilometer from the main body of West Berlin. Steinstücken was completely surrounded by its own version of the Wall, with an American helicopter landing spot in the middle of the village.<sup>20</sup> After 1972, as a result of the territorial exchanges, West Berlin officials were able to link Steinstücken to the rest of West Berlin; the road itself was hemmed in on both sides by an expanded Wall, creating a bizarre tunnel effect.

For West Berlin the effects of the Quadripartite Agreement were immediate and obvious. As the journalist Peter Bender put it, "The Quadripartite Agreement of 1971 concluded the demythologizing of Berlin. It was a victory of practical reason over Eastern as well as Western missionary zeal, and the island city became a recognized part of the status quo. Never before had its existence been so thoroughly assured, but the purpose of that existence became questionable."<sup>21</sup> From the Allies' perspective, the Quadripartite Agreement served several useful functions. Sir Christopher Mallaby says that it was "a demon-

stration daily that the German question was still open” and that, despite the apparent stabilization of Europe during the détente era, not all outstanding questions of Europe’s postwar order had been resolved.<sup>22</sup> According to the American diplomat John Kornblum, it meant further that the Soviets had accepted the idea that the Allies had certain “originary rights” in Berlin dating to 1944–45, and that, pending some larger settlement of the kind that finally happened in 1990, the Allies’ presence in Berlin was recognized by the Soviets, which in turn worked to the Allies’ strategic advantage.<sup>23</sup>

Not surprisingly, those parts of the Quadripartite Agreement that were the most vague—such as the extent to which agencies of the Federal Republic could meet or be represented in West Berlin—continued to be a source of almost ritualized rancor and dispute between the Soviets and the Western Allies.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, during an especially rocky phase of the later Cold War in the early 1980s, the Soviets could still threaten to hold West Berlin and the Quadripartite Agreement hostage to the dispute over Soviet and NATO medium-range missile deployment in Europe.<sup>25</sup> Regular problems and disputes concerning the transit routes also persisted throughout the 1970s and 1980s, especially in 1974, when the Soviets and East Germans began to disrupt transit traffic to protest the presence of a West German government agency in West Berlin. This sort of harassment could sometimes lead to long delays and traffic jams at the border crossings. But these were the exception rather than the rule. For the most part, traffic between West Berlin and the Federal Republic flowed relatively smoothly throughout the eighteen years in which the Quadripartite Agreement was in force.<sup>26</sup>

### Forgetting the Commitment? The Allies and West Berlin after 1972

Indeed, the Agreement was so effective that it seemed to increase the possibility that the Allies—and especially the Americans—might forget their obligation to Berlin, or that they might assume that this commitment had been overtaken by events. West Berlin’s political leaders had long been worried that this might happen, and as early as 1972 it seemed to some Americans that the Allied role in West Berlin had now been “relegated to minor importance.”<sup>27</sup> By 1973, according to John Kornblum, “the understanding of the strategic importance of Berlin in the United States government reached almost zero.... There was a false, totally false understanding of what the intra-German treaties meant, and there was a strong predilection in the US government to assume that was the end of the German question.”<sup>28</sup> By 1975, Kornblum contends, American understanding of the continued importance of West Berlin had reached such a low level that he felt it necessary to organize a special, high-powered State Department seminar for the new US ambassador to the GDR, the former

Kentucky senator John Sherman Cooper. A clever and insightful man, Cooper listened to the assembled luminaries and then exclaimed, "This is all very interesting. But the war was thirty years ago. Why are we still in West Berlin?" Nobody could provide a clear or convincing answer.

In response, Kornblum—then an official with the State Department's policy planning staff—prepared a special report in which he argued that the continued American presence in the walled city could be justified for four reasons: (1) West Berlin remained the fulcrum of the East-West conflict, especially in Europe; (2) the US could maintain its originary rights in the heart of Europe at a relatively low cost; (3) the US thereby found itself in a strategically advantageous position for further negotiations with the Soviets; and (4) the US still had an obligation to protect Europe from possible Soviet aggression.<sup>29</sup> Five years later, in 1980, Kornblum—now political adviser to the US Mission in Berlin—still felt obliged to remind American policymakers that Berlin remained the one place "on earth where we have been more consistent" than any other. In yet another memorandum to his colleagues, Kornblum insisted that

our major strength in Berlin is the continuity of our commitment stretching back to the early postwar days. This commitment includes our promise to defend West Berlin militarily, if necessary. It also includes continued political support for the overall status of the city and an engagement to maintain the practical improvements made possible by detente and in particular by the Quadripartite Agreement. "Continuity" therefore means continued defense of the "island" of West Berlin.<sup>30</sup>

Kornblum's vigorous support for a continued Allied presence resulted directly from his continued concern that US—and to an extent British and French—interest in the city had become attenuated now that the divided city was out of the headlines.

As we know, the Western Allies did indeed remain in Berlin until 1994, and until 1990 their structures, organizations, and practices remained largely unchanged.<sup>31</sup> The French remained concentrated in the city's north and northwest, focused on the Quartier Napoléon in Wedding and at Tegel airport; the British were mainly in Tiergarten and Spandau; and the Americans could be found in the city's southern districts, especially in Zehlendorf, at Tempelhof airport, and in Lichterfelde-West. They continued their patrols into East Berlin and their military missions in Potsdam. The Allied Kommandatura, the Allied governing body for the entirety of Berlin, had met since 1945 (but without the Soviets since 1948) and continued to meet in West Berlin's leafy Dahlem suburb. The Western commandants and their civilian counterparts regularly met with the governing mayor and with members and officials from the West Berlin *Senat*.

Allied forces continued their regular maneuvers, and certain events, such as the British Tattoo or the German-American and Franco-German Festivals, continued to follow their regular annual course. Allied dignitaries, including US and French Presidents or British royalty, regularly visited the city, most famously Ronald Reagan in 1987. For their part, mayors of West Berlin regularly visited all three Allied capitals, especially right after their elections: the last such trip before the events of November 1989 was Walter Momper's visit to Washington, DC, in the spring of 1989. But these events tended to be increasingly ritualized and even pro forma observances, without the charged political and symbolic significance of earlier affairs. The Allied presence in West Berlin, although integral to the contrived normality of the years after 1971–72, had become "normal." It defined West Berlin behind the Wall but had become a nondramatic backdrop to daily life. Thus it is hardly surprising that West Berliners at all levels increasingly tended to take the Allied presence for granted. Moreover, the numbers involved were not exactly overwhelming in a city of two million: in 1988 the US garrison, the largest of the three Allied groups, numbered about 6,500 soldiers, accompanied by about 7,500 civilian dependents.<sup>32</sup>

As often as not, ordinary West Berliners accepted the Allies as part of the landscape of their walled-in city. Indeed, for the most part West Berliners largely ignored them, even if they listened to Allied forces radio stations such as the American Forces Network or the British Forces Broadcasting Service. For their part Allied soldiers and their families were extremely isolated and rarely had anything to do with Germans. Kerstin Schilling, a native West Berliner born in 1962, observed:

In fact the Allied soldiers were hardly noticeable. Of course it could happen that the unexpected noise of tanks could disrupt the quiet of our streets. This meant that they were going on maneuvers. And this took place not only in more remote areas but also in the middle of the city. It could sometimes happen that we would be shopping in Wedding's Müllerstraße and run into young French soldiers next to our parked cars.

For younger West Berliners, she noted that the American, British, and French residential areas, shopping centers, and barracks had no meaning "other than as mere orientation points in West Berlin."<sup>33</sup>

As West Berlin became more "normal" after 1972, West Berliners themselves were increasingly inclined to complain about certain aspects of the Allied presence. To be sure, anti-American demonstrations in the city had taken place with great frequency after 1966. Despite an uptick during the early 1980s, though, they were probably less numerous after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, and violence directed against the Allies remained limited. More frequent were complaints about the noise and destructiveness of Allied maneuvers or about the environmental consequences of Allied actions.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes these

were simply matters of mutual cultural misunderstanding, as when the prominent Christian Democratic politician Franz Amrehn complained vehemently to US authorities about his American neighbors' predilection for letting their dogs bark and their children play noisily on Sunday, thereby disrupting the German tradition of *Sonntagsruhe*.<sup>35</sup> On other occasions, grassroots environmental activists organized campaigns against American and British plans to build new housing for military personnel or to cut down trees. On one occasion in 1978, the Community for the Protection of Berlin Trees filed a much ballyhooed civil suit against the commander in chief of US forces in Europe, the secretary of the Navy, and the US commandant in Berlin in a vain attempt to stop construction of a 250-unit, thirteen-acre housing project for US military families in the environmentally sensitive Düppeler Feld close to the Berlin Wall. Construction was finally permitted on the basis of Allied occupation law, which took precedence over Berlin or German statutes.<sup>36</sup> On another occasion, the British decision to fell 33,000 trees near their airbase at Gatow resulted in large public protests, leading one American diplomat to conclude that the "younger generation does not share the experience of the older generation that without the presence of the Allies in Berlin during the crises of the postwar era, Berlin would have been a lost outpost."<sup>37</sup>

At critical or controversial moments like these, West Berliners were often reminded that their lives were shaped both by the Wall and by the realities of the Allied presence within the walled-in city. To cite yet another important example: in the late 1970s and early 1980s several Polish airplanes were hijacked and flown to Tempelhof airport. Occupation and US law superseded Berlin and German justice in each case, and a 1979 hijacking trial took place under the auspices of a special US court that was based in New York but conducted its hearings in Berlin.<sup>38</sup>

Not surprisingly, a succession of West Berlin mayors chafed under many of the restrictions that were imposed upon them by the requirements of the Allied occupation. This was not new. Back in the late 1940s and early 1950s Ernst Reuter himself had long sought to expand the purview of his office, reduce the Allies' role in matters of local governance, and broaden the autonomy of West Berlin's various local authorities. After 1972, however, while insisting on their determination to work with the Allies, West Berlin's mayors often tried to circumvent Allied occupation rules and expand their own room for autonomous decision making, especially in the context of relations with the GDR. According to Allied diplomats in Berlin at the time, the two Christian Democratic mayors in the 1980s, Richard von Weizsäcker and Eberhard Diepgen, were known for occasionally "playing fast and loose" with Berlin's four-power status, especially in connection with plans for the city's 750th anniversary celebrations in 1987.<sup>39</sup>

In light of all these developments, John Kornblum is convinced that the combination of growing Allied—and especially American—indifference to West Berlin and West German eagerness to reach an accommodation with the GDR in the late 1980s might well have made it impossible for the West to maintain the post-1972 status quo in West Berlin: “Had the Russians not collapsed in ’89 as they did, I personally don’t think we could have held our position in Berlin politically for ten years, maybe not five years.”<sup>40</sup> We shall never know, of course, because the events of 1989–90 did indeed permanently alter the physical, political, and cultural landscape of Berlin. But in looking back at the last two decades of West Berlin’s history, it is clear that without the Allies and the Quadripartite Agreement, West Berlin would not have been able to develop and maintain its strange and unique culture in the shadow of the Wall. A brief look at some aspects of that culture will shed additional light on the reciprocal influences of the Allies, the Wall, and the citizenry of the island city in an unheroic age.

### **“A Sunny Affair”? West Berlin and the Wall after 1972**

The former West Berlin mayor Klaus Schütz has argued that, as a consequence of the changes the truncated city experienced after 1971–72, the experience of those West Berliners who were born after 1961 differed sharply from the experiences of those who remembered the “heroic” times.<sup>41</sup> His observations are repeatedly confirmed in the memoir literature and by numerous personal conversations and interviews. Even non-native newcomers to West Berlin, such as the journalist Claus Christian Malzahn, born in 1963, could observe that life “in the shadow of the Wall was a sunny affair.”<sup>42</sup> And Malzahn actually lived in a flat directly adjacent to the Wall in the district of Neukölln. In most respects, though, his experiences with the Wall resembled those of the natives: “The world was beautiful. We never thought a single second about the Wall, mines, and barbed wire, although all that was right in front of our noses. For us West Berliners the ‘Protective Wall’ had become transformed over the course of time into a piece of furniture, like an old fashioned chest of drawers, an unloved heirloom.... At any rate the Wall was a part of Berlin, like the Ku’damm or the Funkturm. Most residents hardly even noticed it.” On its western side, in other words, it had become a tourist attraction.<sup>43</sup> Other younger West Berliners, new arrivals and native-born alike, tend to echo Malzahn’s perceptions. For example, Kaya Tiglioglu, who arrived in West Berlin from Turkey in 1969, asserted that “The Wall never bothered me,” while the journalist Olaf Leitner wrote: “And at some point the West Berliners no longer noticed the Wall. Just imagine, there’s a Wall and nobody goes there. And that’s the way they acted.”<sup>44</sup>

But was West Berlin in fact, as another journalist described, a "paradise between the fronts" in the Cold War?<sup>45</sup> Not everyone was enamored of the divided city's "scene," or the uniqueness and supposed excitement of its various lifestyles in the shadow of the Wall. Demographically, post-1972 West Berlin with its artificially aged population managed to hang on into the late 1980s with a population of about 2.1 million, thanks to, among other things, an infusion of immigrants from countries such as Turkey. But economically, West Berlin was on constant life support from the Federal Republic. It had been a subsidized city since the 1950s, and that remained the case throughout the unheroic era after 1972. For contemporaries such as Henryk Broder, "West Berlin was hysterical, petty, shitty, full of dog crap—a city where you constantly were running your nose into something, because it really was a totally enclosed little enclave. With hysterical people and with such a demonstrative survival symbolism."<sup>46</sup> Even sympathetic writers such as Peter Schneider—whose *Mauerspringer* (*Wall Jumper*, 1982) is perhaps the most famous literary evocation of the Wall and its effects—could observe that West Berlin managed to maintain a vital and cosmopolitan culture despite its "unhealthy isolation" in a "luxurious Alcatraz." But it was also "a society without a future" and a place, according to Schneider, where one always encountered the same people and the same faces.<sup>47</sup> One British official noted insightfully that post-1972 West Berlin was a strange combination of "agreeable backwater" and metropolis: "Having no hinterland to speak of, the Western part of the city is relatively free from traffic jams and the rush hour. Lying on no through routes in any direction, it has the tranquillity of a cul-de-sac."<sup>48</sup>

West Berlin was always an artificial entity, an artificial place, and after 1972 it was a place that no longer quite seemed to fulfill a central or clear role in the Cold War, despite Allied assertions of its continued importance and their determination to stay and to assert their occupation rights. Thus it tended to breed an artificial, hothouse culture, or rather several hothouse cultures. The GDR that surrounded West Berlin has frequently been described as a *Nischengesellschaft*, a society in which individuals tried to find a private niche for themselves as a refuge from the oppressiveness and stuffiness of the larger political system. But in its own democratic and very different way, West Berlin was also a *Nischengesellschaft*, full of people in very different kinds of neighborhoods, living very different kinds of lives and looking for very different sorts of things. The "heroic" and consensual culture of anti-communist defiance that had bound the *Insulaner*—the "islanders"—together had already begun to dissolve by the mid 1960s with generational shifts and the coming of the student movement.<sup>49</sup>

These changes accelerated after 1972. Having lost much of its traditional working-class base, West Berlin continued to be a city full of aging natives for whom the more recent arrivals might as well have come from another planet. West Berlin had become a place where various kinds of people sought refuge,

from young men seeking to avoid the West German draft to young people searching for places, such as the Berlin district of Kreuzberg, that were open to alternative—and inexpensive—forms of social experimentation.<sup>50</sup> Those experiments could range from “ecoshops” to anti-authoritarian childrens’ centers (*Kinderläden*) to nontraditional living arrangements to out-and-out squatting and the renovation of unoccupied buildings: in other words, expressions of a society within a society that helped to give rise after the mid 1970s to modern forms of feminism and environmental activism, embodied in the “Alternative List” (*Alternative Liste*), West Berlin’s variation on the Greens. The city’s curious combination of cosmopolitanism and provincialism was also attractive to non-Germans, including overseas rock stars such as David Bowie, Iggy Pop, and Brian Eno, who lived in the city in the mid and late 1970s and produced some of their most famous work at the Hansa-Studio there. Bowie’s complex song “Heroes,” about lovers in the shadow of the Wall, has been described as a kind of anthem for young West Berliners born in the early to mid 1960s.<sup>51</sup>

In short, behind the Wall and under the aegis of the somewhat inattentive Allies, West Berlin after the 1960s—but especially after 1972—sustained several interrelated kinds of cultures: a subvention culture, an alternative culture, a niche culture, and, not to be overlooked, a culture of violence that assumed almost ritualized forms.<sup>52</sup> That culture, which had begun to emerge about 1966, could occasionally assume terrorist forms connected to other terrorist actions in the Federal Republic, such as the assassination of Judge Günter von Drenkmann in late 1974 or the kidnapping of the Berlin Christian Democratic leader Peter Lorenz in 1975. But by the early 1980s a rather different, Berlin-focused culture of violence had emerged, one that, at least initially, mainly involved confrontations with the police over issues of housing and squatting. Of course, there was nothing uniquely “West Berlin” about alternative or squatter cultures or even a culture of violence during these years. Hamburg and Frankfurt, for example, also had significant alternative “scenes.” But it can be argued that the scope and extent of these cultures was greater and more enduring in West Berlin, not least because of the unique situation of that city.

By the early 1980s squatters had seized a number of empty buildings in West Berlin, and the city government responded with a mixture of conciliation, negotiation, and toughness. Violence often erupted when police attempted to empty occupied buildings.<sup>53</sup> On one such occasion in September 1981, an eighteen-year-old man named Klaus Jürgen Rattay was killed when he was accidentally hit by a bus during a melee; his death in turn led to further violence in which ninety-three police officers were injured and numerous buildings and automobiles were attacked and set alight.<sup>54</sup> Other forms of violence, usually directed against buildings, automobiles, and the police, also developed in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s. These often took the predictable form of violence on the margins of otherwise peaceful demonstrations, or they could

assume ritualized forms, like the frequent disruptions on May Day that continued well after unification in 1990.

One might mention a few more cultures in post-1971 West Berlin: a culture of immigrants, embodied mainly in the large population of Turkish origin; a very visible "official" culture, symbolized by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and West Berlin's stunning museums, theaters, and musical life and closely connected to the "subvention culture"; and a "culture of mediocrity," symbolized by the generalized decline in the quality of West Berlin's political class after the early 1970s, despite such exceptions as mayors Hans-Jochen Vogel or Richard von Weizsäcker. Symbolic of that political culture of mediocrity—and grist for the mills of the radical oppositional cultures—was a succession of sleazy scandals in the 1970s and 1980s involving assorted construction projects and dubious property speculators.<sup>55</sup> In its last years, then, West Berlin hardly offered an edifying or inspiring spectacle. Its heroic days were long gone.

### Conclusion: An Oddly Dialectical Relationship

West Berlin after the Quadripartite Agreement was a walled-in city in search of a mission or a function, but apart from offering a cultural *Biotop* unique in Europe, it never really succeeded in finding one.<sup>56</sup> It never really managed to become a kind of international meeting place or a site of mediation between East and West, despite the construction of the massive International Congress Center in the late 1970s (ICC Berlin, now itself a candidate for demolition). Its last great public attempt to develop a new kind of identity for itself, at least architecturally, came with the city's 750th anniversary in 1987, when West Berlin hosted the International Building Exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung* or IBA) and sponsored significant architectural innovations and renovations in many parts of the city. For most West Berliners, though, IBA did not change much. Neither did elections in early 1989, which resulted in the formation of a new-style coalition government headed by Walter Momper that included the Social Democrats and the Alternative List.

Then the Wall came down. And with it West Berlin disappeared. Always artificial, a quintessential and historically unique creation of the Cold War, West Berlin had survived for almost two decades after 1972 based on the maintenance of an internationally agreed status quo, an arrangement that encouraged an oddly dialectical and generally unnoticed relationship between the Allies and the various cultures of West Berlin, the existence of which was only possible if the Allies were also present. The Allies were there to ensure the maintenance of their own occupation rights but also to guarantee a "normal" life behind the Wall, and the different cultures that arose there depended—in ways that many of them would never have consciously or overtly accepted—on a continued

Allied presence. That largely unconscious relationship between the Allies and the cultures of West Berlin was mediated by the reality of the Wall itself. It was quite unheroic, but, as Christopher Mallaby asserts, in its own strange way it worked brilliantly, and for a rather long time.

## Notes

1. Eleanor Lansing Dulles's "Berlin after the Four Power Talks," an unpublished memorandum dated 4 February 1971, is held in the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter: NARA), RG 59, Lot 80 D225, Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs, Office of Central European Affairs, Berlin Desk, Political Subject Files 1970–1972, Berlin Negotiations: German Eastern Policy to Texts: Inner German Agreements, Box 2.
2. Wallace Stegner, "On the Writing of History," in *The Sound of Mountain Water* (New York, 1997), 203. I am grateful to my colleague James Lewis for calling this essay to my attention.
3. Richard Reeves, *Daring Young Men: The Heroism and Triumph of the Berlin Airlift, June 1948–May 1949* (New York, 2010); Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour* (New York, 2008). Notably less "epic" and heroic in its treatment is Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946–1949* (New York, 2007).
4. Andreas W. Daum, "America's Berlin, 1945–2000: Between Myths and Visions," in *Berlin: The New Capital in the East. A Transatlantic Appraisal*, ed. Frank Trommler (Washington, DC, 2000), 49–73; idem, *Kennedy in Berlin*, trans. Dona Geyer (New York, 2008); Dominik Geppert, "'Proclaim Liberty throughout All the Land': Berlin and the Symbolism of the Cold War," in *The Postwar Challenge: Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945–1958*, ed. Dominik Geppert (Oxford, 2003), 339–63.
5. Klaus Grimberg, "The Cold War in Architecture," *The Atlantic Times* (September 2007). See also Axel Besteher-Hegenbarth, Dina Koschorreck, and Bernd M. Scherer, eds., *Das Haus. Die Kulturen. Die Welt. 50 Jahre: Von der Kongresshalle zum Haus der Kulturen der Welt* (Berlin, 2007), esp. the articles by Steffen de Rudder, Michael S. Culen, Harald Jähner, and Claus Leggewie.
6. J. Richard Bock, memorandum of conversation with Eberhard Diepgen, 28 October 1980, NARA, RG 84, US Mission Berlin, Subject Files 1945–1990, Senat Liaison Officer, Sent Chrons August–December 1979 to Sent Chrons November–December 1981, Box 1.
7. Peter Millar, 1989 *The Berlin Wall: My Part in Its Downfall* (London, 2009), 37–38.
8. Sir Christopher Mallaby, comments in panel discussion on "The Fall of the Berlin Wall: London – Bonn – Berlin (East and West)," in Allied Museum Berlin, *The Windsor Park Seminar. Berlin: The British Perspective 1945–1990. 1–2 September 2009, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Park, London* (transcript on CD-ROM, Berlin, 2011), 47. [http://www.alliiertenmuseum.de/download/windsor\\_park\\_seminar.pdf](http://www.alliiertenmuseum.de/download/windsor_park_seminar.pdf) (accessed 11 January 2012).

9. An otherwise excellent documentary collection on the British in Berlin only mentions the Quadripartite Agreement briefly: Keith Hamilton, Patrick Salmon, and Stephen Twigge, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series III, vol. 6, *Berlin in the Cold War, 1948–1990* (London, 2009), 81, similar to Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall 13 August 1961–9 November 1989* (London, 2006), 367–68, and more recently Edgar Wolfrum, *Die Mauer. Geschichte einer Teilung* (Munich, 2009). Thorough treatments are to be found in M. E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969–1973* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001), chaps. 4–5, esp. 113–34; David C. Geyer, "The Missing Link: Henry Kissinger and the Back-Channel Negotiations on Berlin," in *American Détente and German Ostpolitik, 1969–1972*, ed. David C. Geyer and Bernd Schaefer, Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, Supplement 1 (Washington, DC, 2004), 80–97; Wolfgang Ribbe, *Berlin 1945–2000. Grundzüge der Stadtgeschichte* (Berlin, 2002), 144–48; Wilfried Rott, *Die Insel. Eine Geschichte West-Berlins 1948–1990* (Munich, 2009), 273–77; older, still useful, but largely superseded studies include Gerhard Wettig, *Die Bindungen West-Berlins seit dem Vier-Mächte-Abkommen* (Cologne, 1978); Honoré M. Catudal Jr., *The Diplomacy of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin: A New Era in East-West Politics* (Berlin, 1978); David M. Keithly, *Breakthrough in the Ostpolitik: The 1971 Quadripartite Agreement* (Boulder, CO, 1986).
10. Gerhard Kunze, *Grenzerfahrungen. Kontakte und Verhandlungen zwischen dem Land Berlin und der DDR 1949–1989* (Berlin, 1999), 79–216.
11. Among other things, see Gregory W. Pedlow, "Allied Crisis Management for Berlin: The LIVE OAK Organization, 1959–1963," in *International Cold War Military Records and History: Proceedings of the International Conference on Cold War Military Records and History Held in Washington, D.C. 21–26 March 1994*, ed. William W. Epley (Washington, DC, 1996), 88–116; Sean M. Maloney, "Notfallplanung für Berlin: Vorläufer der Flexible Response 1958–1963," *Militärgeschichte NF* (1997): 3–15; Winfried Heinemann, "Die Doppelfunktion der DDR-Grenztruppen," unpublished paper presented at German Studies Association, 10 October 2009, Washington, DC.
12. S. J. Lambert, "Background Note on Live Oak," 25 June 1975, The National Archives, Kew (hereafter: TNA), DEFE 24/881.
13. R. G. A. Etherington-Smith to Sir Frank Roberts, "The Present Malaise in Berlin," 9 August 1967, TNA, FCO 33/266. Cf. Sir Frank Roberts to George Brown, 22 August 1967, *ibid.*
14. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, remains the best analysis of the negotiations. See also David C. Geyer, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States 1969–1976*, vol. 40, *Germany and Berlin, 1969–1972* (Washington, DC, 2007); David C. Geyer and Douglas E. Savage, eds., *Soviet-American Relations: The Détente Years, 1969–1972* (Washington, DC, 2007). There is also a substantial memoir literature by many of the main participants; vast amounts of archival materials have yet to be digested, but see especially "Strange Normality: What Was So Special about the Quadripartite Agreement 1971/72?" in Allied Museum Berlin, *Windsor Park Seminar*, 74–91.
15. Official English version of the Quadripartite Agreement in TNA, FO 949/78/1.
16. David Klein (US Mission Berlin) to Department of State, 3 September 1971, in Geyer, ed., *Foreign Relations*, 40: 913.
17. Peter Joachim Lapp, "Die Transitwege von und nach Westberlin," in Friedrich Christian Delius and Peter Joachim Lapp, *Transit Westberlin. Erlebnisse im Zwischenraum*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 2000), 125–70; Kunze, *Grenzerfahrungen*, 243–80. Official text of the transit accord: NARA, RG 59, Lot 80 D225, Bureau of European and Canadian

- Affairs, Office of Central European Affairs, Berlin Desk, Political Subject Files 1970–1972, Berlin Negotiations: German Eastern Policy to Texts: Inner German Agreements, Box 2.
18. Martin J. Hillenbrand, "The Legal Background of the Berlin Situation," in *The Future of Berlin*, ed. Martin J. Hillenbrand (Montclair, NJ, 1980), 62.
  19. *Ibid.*, 63–67.
  20. Senatskanzlei Berlin, memorandum on "Berlin-Gespräche der Vier Mächte. Hier: Gebietsaustausch," 14 July 1971, NARA, RG 59, Lot 80 D225, Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs, Office of Central European Affairs, Berlin Desk, Political Subject Files 1970–1972, Box 6; Joachim Nawrocki, "Hoffnung für Steinstücken. Gebietsaustausch – ein Thema der Berlin-Verhandlungen," in *war gewesen. West-Berlin 1961–89*, ed. Detlef Holland-Moritz and Gabriela Wachter (Berlin, 2009), 180–84 (originally published in *Die Zeit*, 5 November 1971); Kunze, *Grenzerfahrungen*, 281–85, 394–99. On Steinstücken see Gabriele Leech-Anspach, *Insel vor der Insel. Ein kleiner Ort im kalten Krieg: Berlin-Steinstücken* (Potsdam, 2005).
  21. Peter Bender, *Wenn es West-Berlin nicht gäbe* (Berlin, 1987), 28.
  22. Sir Christopher Mallaby, comments in panel discussion on "The Fall of the Berlin Wall," Allied Museum Berlin, *The Windsor Park Seminar*, 46–52.
  23. John C. Kornblum, interview with author, 22 March 2007, Berlin.
  24. R. M. F. Redgrave, "Berlin: How Long Can It Go On?" 11 December 1975 (report to Oliver Wright), TNA, FCO 90/26.
  25. Steve Sestanovich and Jeremy Azrael to Thomas Niles, 2 October 1981, NARA, RG 59, Lot 91 D341, Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs, Office of Central European Affairs, Berlin Desk, Records Relating to the Four Power Talks and Quadripartite Agreement, 1961–1987, Box 5, POL 39: Four Power Talks on Berlin 1981.
  26. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Background Brief, "Berlin – 25 Years of the Wall," August 1986, TNA, FO 973/471; Lapp, "Transitwege."
  27. Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry Kissinger, 7 November 1972, in Geyer, ed., *Foreign Relations*, 40: 1090.
  28. John C. Kornblum, interview with author, 22 March 2007, Berlin.
  29. *Ibid.*
  30. John C. Kornblum, "Why Are We in Berlin?" unpublished memorandum, 7 November 1980.
  31. On the Allies in Berlin after 1972, see Udo Wetzlaug, *Die Alliierten in Berlin* (Berlin, 1988); Robert P. Grathwol and Donita M. Moorhus, *American Forces in Berlin: Cold War Outpost, 1945–1994* (Washington, DC, 1994); idem, *Berlin and the American Military: A Cold War Chronicle* (New York, 1999); Gabriele Heidenfelder, *From Duppel to Truman Plaza: Die Berlin American Community in den Jahren 1965 bis 1989* (Hamburg, 1998); Friedrich Jeschonnek, Dieter Riedel, and William Durie, *Alliierte in Berlin 1945–1994. Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der militärischen Präsenz der Westmächte*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 2007); David E. Barclay, "On the Back Burner – Die USA und West-Berlin 1948–1994," in *Deutschland aus internationaler Sicht*, ed. Tilman Mayer (Berlin, 2009), 25–36; and the publications of the Allied Museum Berlin.
  32. Heidenfelder, *Duppel*, 25.
  33. Kerstin Schilling, *Insel der Glücklichen. Generation West-Berlin*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 2005), 119.

34. For example, see J. Richard Bock to John C. Kornblum et al., memorandum on "In-City Training," 11 February 1980, "Senat Contacts between Allies and Berliners," 11 April 1980; idem, "Schoeneberg Debate on U.S. Troop Training," 22 May 1980, NARA, RG 84, US Mission Berlin, Subject Files 1945–1990, Senat Liaison Officer, Sent Chrons August–December 1979 to Sent Chrons November–December 1981, Box 1.
35. J. Richard Bock to Franz Amrehn, 23 June 1980, *ibid.*
36. See the court documents filed with the US District Court on 29 September 1978 in Washington, DC, in NARA, RG 84, US Mission Berlin, Political Affairs Division, Office of the Legal Adviser, Significant Jurisdiction Cases, 1957–1990, Freedom of Information Act to Miscellaneous Court Papers 4/17, Box 1; also [www.berliner-verkehrsseiten.de/wub/Die\\_Projekte/Tunnel/Die\\_Burger\\_und\\_das\\_Fenn/die\\_burger\\_und\\_das\\_fenn.html](http://www.berliner-verkehrsseiten.de/wub/Die_Projekte/Tunnel/Die_Burger_und_das_Fenn/die_burger_und_das_fenn.html) (accessed 14 February 2010).
37. "Allied Decision on Tree-Felling Action at British Military Airbase in Gatow," 14 November 1979, NARA, RG 84, US Mission Berlin, Subject Files 1945–1990, Senat Liaison Officer, Sent Chrons August–December 1979 to Sent Chrons November–December 1981, Box 1.
38. See the transcripts of the hijacking proceedings, NARA, RG 84, US Mission Berlin, Political Affairs Division, Office of the Legal Adviser, Significant Jurisdiction Cases, 1957–1990, Freedom of Information Act to Miscellaneous Court Papers 4/17, Box 1; cf. Grathwol and Moorhus, *Berlin*, 148–49.
39. Sir Michael Burton and Sir Christopher Mallaby, comments in panel discussion on "The Fall of the Berlin Wall," in Allied Museum Berlin, *Windsor Park Seminar*, 41–52.
40. John C. Kornblum, interview with author, 22 March 2007, Berlin.
41. Klaus Schütz, interview with author, 27 February 2007, Berlin.
42. Claus Christian Malzahn, *Über Mauern. Warum das Leben im Schatten des Schutzwalls eine sonnige Sache war* (Berlin, 2009), 8.
43. *Ibid.*, 22.
44. Jürgen Scheunemann and Gabriela Seidel, *Was war los in West-Berlin 1950–2000* (Erfurt, 2002), 83; Olaf Leitner, ed., *West-Berlin! Westberlin! Berlin (West)! Die Kultur – die Szene – die Politik. Erinnerungen an eine Teilstadt der 70er und 80er Jahre* (Berlin, 2002), 16.
45. Rudolf Lorenzen, *Paradies zwischen den Fronten. Reportagen und Glossen aus Berlin (West)* (Berlin, 2009).
46. Henryk M. Broder, "Hysrerisch, klein und zugeschissen," interview in Leitner, *West-Berlin!*, 390.
47. Peter Schneider, "Eine Vereinigung wie bei Daimler und Chrysler," interview in Leitner, *West-Berlin!*, 39.
48. R. M. F. Redgrave, "The Future of Berlin," memorandum (31 December 1975), TNA, FCO 90/26.
49. John Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation* (Cambridge, UK, 1992), chap. 8.
50. Horst Bosetzky, *West-Berlin. Erinnerungen eines Inselkindes* (Berlin, 2006), 97–102.
51. Author's interviews with West Berliners; Nicholas Pegg, *The Complete David Bowie*, 4th ed. (London, 2006), 90–93; Thomas Jerome Seabrook, *Bowie in Berlin: A New Career in a New Town* (London, 2008), 159–87.
52. David E. Barclay, "Benno Ohnesorg, Rudi Dutschke, and the Student Movement in West Berlin: Critical Reflections after Forty Years," in *Berlin: Divided City, 1945–1989*, ed. Philip Broadbent and Sabine Hake (New York, 2010), 125–34.

53. Borneman, *Belonging*, 260–62; Rott, *Insel*, 328–36.
54. Klaus Hübner, *Einsatz. Erinnerungen des Berliner Polizeipräsidenten 1969–1987* (Berlin, 1997), 335–74; Rott, *Insel*, 345–47.
55. Rott, *Insel*, 313–21, 338–41, 377–84.
56. Though note the somewhat more positive assessment by Hermann Rudolph, “Das Glitzerding. Abschied von der geteilten Stadt (1): West-Berlin, ein Lebensgefühl, das (vielleicht) weiterlebt,” *Tagespiegel* (Berlin), 30 August 1999.

