IN BERLIN, BY THE WALL WOODS, WATER, WENDS & A BEAR... OH, AND THE DAWN OF THE HOHENZOLLERNS THE STORY OF BERLIN IN THE FORM OF A BUILDING THAT NO LONGER EXISTS AND SOME OTHER BITS, SOME OF WHICH DO... THE NEW CITY AND WE, THE PEOPLE: I HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE AND IT WORKS... OR, WE COULD ALWAYS KNOCK IT DOWN AGAIN, I SUPPOSE, AND NOT KEEP THE RED FLAG FLYING HERE MORE LOW LIFE, WHERE THERE WERE JEWS, AND NOW THERE ARE HIPSTERS I, REMEMBER STANDING, STANDING BY THE WALL. A NAZI AIRPORT BECOMES THE SYMBOL OF FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD, SOME TURKS (WELL, LOTS OF TURKS)... AND DAVID BOWIE COMES TO BERLIN WEST END GIRLS... BOYS... WAR CRIMINALS... HEROES OUT OF TOWN: THE JACKBOOT ON A HUMAN FACE, AND WHERE ARE WE NOW?

IN BERLIN, BY THE WALL: A FOREWORD

Berlin lives in imagination as much as reality. Whether in its culture, history, or even its buildings, much of Berlin can only live in the mind.

I am a Londoner. In the modern city I lived in I still passed William the Conqueror's tower of London every morning. By Tower Hill tube station there is an excavated piece of the city's Roman wall. As my journey through the city progressed I passed through the centuries, physically.

At the time of writing I am planning some summer travels in Transylvania, a place where there have been Saxon communities since medieval times; these communities are famous for their medieval fortified churches. It is, I am told, like walking back into the past.

In much of Berlin, that is harder to do. In large part we have the Second World War to thank for that. In a Germany, and Europe, that was much destroyed in 1945, Berlin stood out (along with Warsaw and Budapest); much of the city was ruined. Nor, unlike many other ruined cities, was there an attempt to restore its old glory; the Cold War saw to that. And then, there were some parts of the city that seemed worthy of obliteration, usually because of the Nazi past, or another past people wanted to forget or, just as often, didn't give the proverbial monkeys about.

In that literal sense, we have to imagine much of Berlin's history; we are quite often looking at was it not there or, more accurately, what is no longer there. Perhaps, though, that fits a city that has seen so much change.

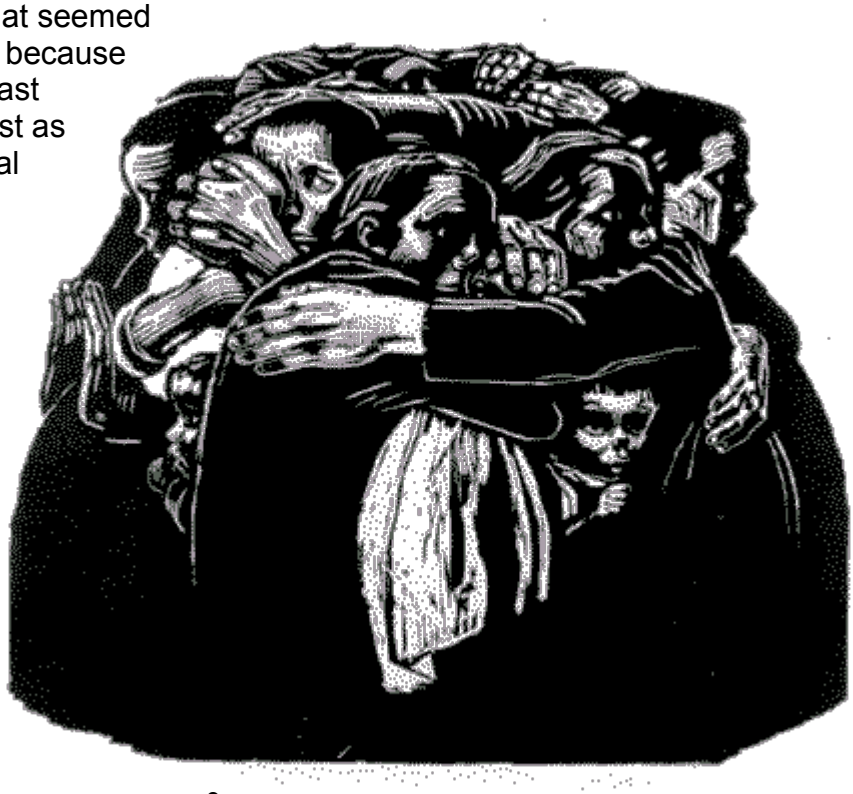
It might also be thought to fit a city that has always seemed something of an artifice, a new build, as it were. Unlike so many European cities to the west or south, it has no ancient Roman forbear, no ancient ruins. There are no great ancient churches, nor an ancient city underneath the modern. It has also always been a city of immigrants, waifs and strays.

So, what follows is neither a tour guide, nor a history. Where those elements are missing, pray forgive. Instead it might almost be described as an historical ramble through blurred memories, some often half understood history and yes, the Berlin of the imagination.

I don't really want to apologise for that. It is a city I love, and I've never written about I city I know well for one of these tour booklets before. I hope this gives you something of its flavour, and why I love it.

We are pretty much going to begin with some Saxons. But before that, how about a few Wends? I am sure you are all experts on Wends.

SET 2017 (2020, small revisions)



WOODS, WATER, WENDS & A BEAR… OH, AND THE DAWN OF THE HOHENZOLLERNS: AN INTRODUCTION

Well, let's start off with some geography. In truth, there is nothing remarkable about Berlin's geography. None of Rome or Byzantium's seven hills, nor the sweeping great river of the cities on the Danube, let alone the mighty Bosporus. There are none of the soaring mountains of a Salzburg or Sarajevo.

So what do we have? There is a river, and some charming lakes, natural and man made. And there are hills to the south and east. But, it is a city on the great North German plain itself and, fittingly, it is a city on a plain. Then, it wouldn't be German if it didn't have its woodland. Perhaps symbolically, the city nestles between the water and the trees.

Whilst this area of Europe had been long settled, and by Germanic tribes no doubt, when our story starts this part of the continent was settled by the Wends up until the 10th century. It's a pretty familiar story really. The Wends were Slavs, the peoples who came to settle all across Europe as the Roman Empire perished. Think of a great swathe of Europe from the Balkans through to Russia, from the former Yugoslavia to the former Soviet Union.

It was in the later part of the first millennium that saw the beginnings of a recovery in a Western Europe that had fragmented into myriad small kingdoms as the Roman Empire went under. The great Charlemagne, a Frankish (meaning German) ruler, established what became known as the Holy Roman Empire. There is a pretty accurate old joke about that empire: it was, in fact, neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire. It saw, importantly for our purposes, a recovery in the military and political strength of German rulers, whether emperors in title or not, and with it a militant Christianity.

I promised you Wends (and also some Saxons), featuring a Fowler, a dog and that bear I mentioned

The **Wends** were certainly not German, nor were they inclined to bend their knees to German rulers or the Christian God (unless it was temporarily convenient). And these Germans were expansionist. I promised you Saxons, and here they come. It was the Saxon king **Henry the Fowler** (great name) and his son Otto (less good), who seemed to first start attacking the Wends in the 10th century. It was not all fighting, there was marriage too: the Bohemian Good King Wenceslas's mother was a Wend (yes, that one, feast of Stephen and all that). If these German kings could expand the frontiers of the Christian world and convert pagans, they were quite likely to win papal blessing. Having been crowned Holy Roman Emperor, **Otto I** (912-73) founded the bishopric of Magdeburg, with the aim of expanding his authority eastwards and perhaps even concerting pagans. Another clash with the Wends was inevitable.

Well several clashes, in fact, but it didn't end well for the **Saxons**. The area was thus free of the Germans again for another 150 years, thanks to a Wendish prince, who sometimes goes by the splendid tag of Mistiwoi the Dog.

After the Dog, cometh the Bear. It was a Bear who led the German comeback: **Albert the Bear** (1157-70); right, another great name. It's from him we allegedly get the name Berlin (Bear-lin, or Bärlin, geddit?). In truth, German progress eastwards had continued since Otto's time, never more so than by the sword of the crusading Teutonic Knights, who were violent enough, and their even more psychopathic brothers-come-rivals-in-arms the Sword Brothers. The 12th and 13th centuries would see the great German expansion east that saw both colonisation and the establishment of great German cities such as Danzig, Riga and Tallinn (then called Reval). The notion of expansion east won by psychopathic crusading violence was a precedent some 20th century Germans would prove rather too fond of.

In truth though, that expansion was just as much marked by rather more peaceable German traditions: trade, a knack for craftsmanship and cooperation. Albert the Bear's takeover of Brandenburg (the area in which Berlin is the centre) came when he managed to make himself the heir to a Wendish ruler. It now became the **Mark of Brandenburg** (Mark is the same as the old English word March, meaning border territory). Had it just been that, Albert might just have been a yet another German ruler of a non-German territory (there have been one or two in history; ever heard of a German royal Albert, anyone?). What was significant was the fact that Albert the Bear looked not merely to take it over, but colonise it (I refer you to my previous remark about the 20th century psychos looking back the medieval precedents, though Albert's colonisation was mainly peaceful). Thus it was Berlin came into being, as one half of the twin town of **Berlin-Cölln**. These two separate towns were German; the Wends remained in their own settlements (who could blame them?).

By the middle of the 13th century, Berlin was a well-established medieval town. Three churches were built, as were abbeys, and the cities first secular public building. This was called the **Hohes Haus**, but we can't see it: the last remains of it were finally demolished in 1931. As we shall see, given Berlin's penchant for wiping out its own past, historic buildings have to get lucky if they're going to survive. Still, we can almost imagine it. Or, at least try: not that we have much choice.

Enter the Hohenzollerns, and a confusion of Fredericks and Electors (and the Alchemist)

It was not yet any sort of great metropolis, or any kind of royal residence. In truth, it was still in something like the wild east. Its rulers, the margraves, as they were first known, preferred the comforts of the more civilised west than their eastern outpost. It's not as if its ruling family were one of the big names of the German noble world. However, in 1415, the political position of Brandenburg was transformed, when another ambitious German noble family on the make took the title: we now have the first Frederick. Take care, he was **Frederick I, Elector of Brandenburg** (1415-40), right: he is not to be confused with the later Frederick III, Elector, who would become Frederick I of Prussia. In the end, he sets the rather unhappy precedent of calling everyone Frederick (or William, though that comes later). For now, though, the boring names were not yet triumphant: between 1425 and 1437 his son ruled Brandenburg as margrave, the splendidly named **John the Alchemist**. Meanwhile, back to ambitious German nobles on the make: the Hohenzollerns were more ambitious and more on the make than most, and they would rule Berlin pretty much continuously until Kaiser Bill abdicated in 1918. They would transform Berlin, and much else.

But not much, for a while yet. For now, what mattered was the title they brought with them, that of Elector, one of the great seven princes of the Empire who elected the Emperor. Berlin grew in importance: in 1432, it became one city, de facto; after a rebellion in 1442 a fortress (*burg*) was started. But before we get the idea of it being militaristic from the off, the following year the *burg* was abandoned, and converted into a *schloss* (palace). Even so, when the Electors finally settled in Brandenburg, it was not in Berlin. But when you have names as splendid as **Albert Achilles** and **John Cicero**, I reckon you should be free to settle where you want. There were many other, less excitingly named Hohenzollerns to come. But, for now, Berlin-Cölln was bigger, but still just a bigger backwater.

THE STORY OF BERLIN IN THE FORM OF A BUILDING THAT NO LONGER EXISTS AND SOME OTHER BITS, SOME OF WHICH DO...

Still, we can't see any of that Berlin, so we'll have to imagine it (for a change). But, at least we have the great Hohenzollern city, and its **Stadtschloss** (the city royal palace). Well, no: we've got pictures of it, including the one of it being demolished by the communist rulers of East Berlin in 1950. And we can see it being rebuilt (sort of). So, let's take a virtual historical tour around royal Berlin, and its main drag **Unter den Linden**.

KNOCKING DOWN HOHENZOLLERN TOWN

In one sense, knocking down the Stadtschloss was something of a tidying up measure. Many of the famous images of 1945 were of the Soviet destruction of the German past. Some of what was destroyed was pretty obvious; swastikas didn't really look right by the time Nazism was collapsing. But much more was destroyed, as German history was wiped from the map, landscape and cityscape.

The demolition of the *schloss* was the symbolic wiping of 550 years of Hohenzollern rule off the Berlin map. It wasn't the building's first misadventure. As I said, it had started life as *burg*, but the fortress was never really built as the **Elector Frederick Irontooth** (another great name) decided to, at least partially, relocate east. However, it was when the **Elector Joachim II** (boring name, though he was known as Hector, which is better) made Berlin his home that it became as *Residenzstatdt* (a royal residence, something akin to a capital).

In the way of early palaces it grew piecemeal, and there were some especially lovely bits near the water: characteristically, Kaiser Wilhelm II knocked them down (at least in his willingness to demolish its history, Kaiser Bill fitted the city well). 1943-45 was not the only time in which the city had been badly hit by war: Germany's other Great

War, the **Thirty Years War** (1618-48), saw Berlin occupied, losing half its population and one-third of its buildings.

Following the dazzling wars of unification, and two world wars, we are kind of set on the idea that what Germans habitually do is invade. Yet, for all the Teutonic Knights, or Hitler's panzers, for much of its history, Germany was the invaded rather the invader. In The Thirty Years War wave after wave of invaders (be it Swedes, Danes, Germans from the south) swept across Prussia and Brandenburg. Across the Mark Brandenburg, almost half the population died. Berlin was on its knees.

Of Immigrants, Asylum Seekers and Boring Names

Step forward **Frederick William of Brandenburg** (1640-88), left, barely out of his teens, but big into building (but not, like all his successors, interesting names; this is the end of the nomenclatorial amusement). Thanks to that, and defeating the Swedes (the big cheeses in 17th century Northern Europe) in 1675, he became known as the **Great Elector**. To encourage expansion, he also welcomed new immigrants, who could easily acquire citizenship. These included southern Catholics and Jews. Most dramatically, it also included a wave of refugee Huguenots, French Protestants fleeing mass persecution and civil war. The **Gendarmenmarkt**, with Frederick the Great's **Französischer Dom**, just south of Unter den Linden, was the centre of **Huguenot** life in Berlin. Huguenot refugees made up one-in-five Berliners in the late 17th century: Angela Merkel was not the first German leader to welcome refugees and immigrants (and we've not even mentioned the Turks).

Kings of Prussia, More Buildings, Some Prussian Militarism and Berliners on the Skive. And Freds and Wills

Frederick William's son took the title of **King of Prussia** in 1701, this becoming **Frederick I** (1688-1713), right. He united Berlin and Cölln into one city. By the early 18th century, lavish development followed in the familiar Enlightenment style; Berlin was now the capital of the new kingdom of Prussia, the rising star of 18th and 19th century Europe.

That didn't come cheap. Indeed, Frederick I had hired alchemists to try and refurbish his empty treasury. His son, **Frederick William I** (1713-40), below, set a rather different tradition of German governance:

swingeing cuts in expenditure followed, debt was not allowable. Admittedly, he did this with particular enthusiasm and in his own particular style: he sacked most of his servants and the civilian populace were introduced to the ever-familiar German work ethic (something Frederick William encouraged by striding no doubt very purposefully around the city and personally beating anyone who wasn't working, and working very, very hard).

He set another Prussian precedent. The Great Elector had built an army to be reckoned with (as he had to, given the constant warfare of late 17th and early 18th century Germany). His grandson went he whole hog: he diverted about 80% of his expenditure to his army, and Berlin became a garrison town. The Lustgarten Park became a parade ground, the Pariser Platz in front of the Brandenburg Gate was another, and **Freidrichstrasse** was built to the link the centre with Templehof (which started life as, you guessed it, another parade ground; much more of which anon). No wonder he got the nickname of the Soldier King.

Lest we now become enmeshed in visions of the entire populations of Prussia and Berlin being happy bearers of the Prussian militarist yoke, the ancestors of Bismarck's blood and iron, one detail gives us a very different story. It is one that befits a city that in the time of the Cold War was the natural destination for young West Germans dodging conscription (West Berliners were under Allied sovereignty and so could not be conscripted by the West German state). Back in his day, the Soldier King tried to introduce conscription: the city's young men fled en masse, and the king was forced to back down.

When Allied bombing flattened Fredrichstrasse, they flattened a street that had been famous for its cafes, bars and restaurants, not armies. That was as much the true Berlin as any other for most of its history.

When we talk about Prussian militarism, we ought to bear in mind that there was another Prussia, one that was found in it s capital, and one which seems to have preferred the joys of a coffee and cake to the joys of the parade ground.

HISTORY'S NOT MADE BY GREAT MEN. WELL, IT IS ACTUALLY. ANYONE FOR SOME BEETHOVEN? ANOTHER FRED (SCHILLER). AND DON'T BURN BOOKS; PLEASE, DON'T BURN BOOKS

Frederick William's son, **Frederick the Great** (Frederick II, 1740-86), right, went out of his way to avoid Berlin, and the Stadtschloss. Perhaps it was memories of his father. To say that two hadn't got on is something of an understatement. By 1730, the prince had tried to escape Brandenburg. His father intercepted his son, imprisoned him in a dungeon, and threatened him with death. His closest collaborator, Hans Hermann von Katte, was executed in full view of the prince.

He grew up to be rather fonder of his army, and war. His ambitions helped provoke the Seven Years' War (1756-63). Berlin was occupied again, but then relieved. Now, though, it needed a standing army on a grand scale to survive: the legend of the Prussian military was born. In the end, though, more building followed as the city grew. Unter den Linden became the key royal public space under Frederick; at around the same time, Museum Island was laid out, as was the Tiergarten.

When we think of the likes of Frederick the Great, we think of what we call enlightened despotism. **The Enlightenment** was an intellectual movement in 18th century Europe, associated with the scientific revolution, the 'age of reason' and the *philosophes*. Frederick the Great saw himself as the leader of the Enlightenment: he abolished torture, for example. He also believed that absolute monarchy was the political structure that would best deliver a society based upon Enlightenment principles, in contrast to the weak monarchs that had gone before: he even wrote an essay setting out those arguments entitled *Enlightened Absolutism*.

He was no intellectual dilettante, as monarchs sometimes are. He read voraciously (though not in German, a language he detested); he writings add up to 60 volumes (in French). He was an accomplished flautist (until his teeth fell out); not only that, he was also Prussia's first major historian. He had little time for religion: he dismissed Christianity with the quip 'some imbeciles actually believed it'. He may have been homosexual, bisexual or asexual (or all three at different times); his marriage may well have never been consummated.

Frederick was also a Freemason. That love of all things Enlightenment meant that when the greatest *philosophe* of them all, Voltaire, had fallen out of favour in Paris, Frederick's invited him to become part of his court. It didn't end well: the two fell out over money, and then over a book of poetry (that's *philosophes* for you).

Ah, poetry. More then the Enlightenment, the strongest cultural association we have with 18th and 19th century Germany is surely that of the **Romantics**. This was the age of Germany's greatest poet, Goethe (perhaps the closest German has to a Shakespeare). Most of all though, it was the golden age of German music.

Sometimes, the Romantics are seen as a reaction against the Enlightenment; in truth, it's more complicated than that. But, we do associate that music with the Romantic nationalism that would herald the 1848 revolutions. Haydn gave us a national anthem that would herald the Romantic nationalists of Young Germany. Much later, Wagner looked to create the music of the national soul, the *volk*.

But German music gave us so much more than that. Perhaps the greatest of all the German composers was Beethoven. His final symphony, his ninth, is now most famous for its fourth movement's setting of Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, now the anthem of the European Union. **Frederick Schiller** (1759-1805), above, was, amongst much else, a poet and (often uneasy) friend of Goethe.

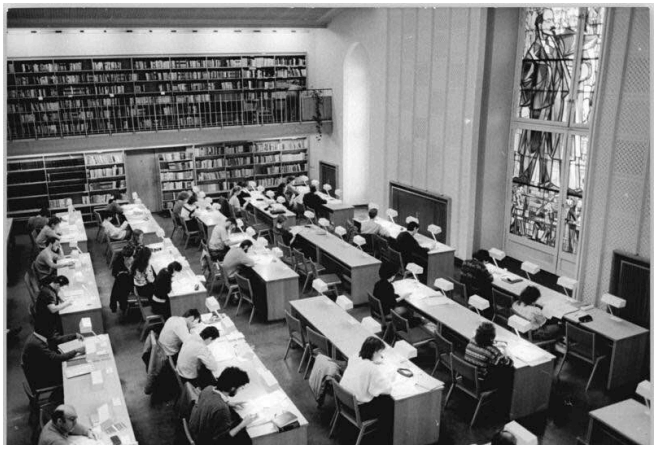
Outside Berlin's **Konzerthaus**, in the Gendarmenmarkt, there is a statue of Schiller, first put up in 1871 (though planned before).

In 1936, doubtless with unconscious symbolism, the Nazis turned the Gendarmenmarkt into a parade ground (in the great tradition of the Soldier King); the statue was taken down and put into storage. Mind you, Schiller's persistent emphasis on freedom hardly endeared him to the Nazis. Then, as Berlin was occupied in 1945, the Konzerthaus was gutted thanks to bitter fighting between Soviet forces and a remnant of the SS; the building wasn't restored until 1984. The statue did not return home until 1988 (when the East was trying to re-embrace the German past); freedom soon followed.

Then, in 1989, at Christmas, **Leonard Bernstein** conducted Beethoven's Ninth symphony, and substituted the word *freiheit* (freedom) for *freude* (joy) in the finale. He then visited the wall, below.

The Berlin of Schiller was reborn: a city of European freedom, a city of cultural freedom.

Must have been some Christmas.



Frederick the Great also built **Bebelplatz**. It was designed as a neo-classical tribute to the glory of Rome and to the glory of Frederick. Truth be told, it looks pretty nondescript. But Bebelplatz has a terrible, if important story to tell.

Over the road is the **Humboldt University Library** (whose old reading room is shown in 1989, left). Among its alumni we can count Marx and Engels; among its staff were the Brothers Grimm and Albert Einstein. Now there's a combo.

It is now best known for the memorial known as the **Empty Library**. On May 10th 1933, in front of the university, Nazi students burned thousands of books in an officially sanctioned act of cultural vandalism with brutal overtones. One of the writers whose works burned was Heinrich Heine, the 18th century poet. Prophetically, he had written: 'That was but a prelude; where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people as well.'

WHERE THE FREDS AND WILLS MEET THE WALL, JFK, MARGARET THATCHER AND THOUSANDS OF EAST BERLINERS ONE FATEFUL DAY IN 1989. AND GERMANY REMEMBERS ITS DARKEST PAST. AND HANNAH ARENDT…

As so often is the case, **Frederick William II** (1786-97), left, was the antithesis of his uncle. Vigorously heterosexual, he had at least seven bastards, two wives, two further bigamous wives and a lifelong mistress. His tight-fisted his uncle left him an impressive fiscal legacy: Frederick William blew it in short order.

The **Brandenburg Gate** was built under his aegis. Unfortunately, the nephew did not inherit his uncle's ability to rule (the abiding flaw in absolute monarchy: what do you do if the monarch is useless?). After his death, Prussian decline met Napoleonic vigour.

Napoleon took Berlin, marching through the Brandenburg Gate's triumphal arch in 1806 (something Hitler was to mirror when doing the same through the Arc de Triomphe in 1940). Back in 1806, so unpopular were their Hohenzollern masters, that some Berliners welcomed Napoleon as their liberator. Symbolically, the **Quadriga** (the Goddess of Victory on her chariot) was removed from atop he Brandenburg Gate. However, the French occupation also saw the birth of German nationalism: Berlin was not to be left out. The Quadriga was restored, and the revolutionaries of 1848 and 1918 would gather beneath it.

The Brandenburg Gate would, of course, become a symbol of the Cold War, nestled just behind the Berlin Wall as it was. Perhaps nowhere, even Checkpoint Charlie, better illustrated the divided city. JFK used it as a photo opportunity in 1963, above; so did Margaret Thatcher, and the sight brought forth tears form the Iron Lady. The East Germans didn't tear the Brandenburg Gate down (for once); though they did remove the iron cross (it has since been replaced). It was a different symbol, but the symbolism remained.

On 9th November 1989 (everything happens in German history on November 9th), when the East Berlin party chief announced that East Germans would be allowed to go west, the people of east of the wall didn't wait for the requisite papers. As the crowds gathered at the Brandenburg Gate grew, the East German border police simply gave up. The wall was falling.

Something else fell, at least for some: scales from eyes. In 1948, Stalin promulgated a purge in the Soviet Union, which soon spread across the states trapped behind the Iron Curtain: there were many thousands of victims. One of the primary groups victimised were Jews, or 'rootless cosmopolitans' as Soviet propaganda had it. What came with that is a peculiarly Soviet slant on the Holocaust. The victims were not acknowledged as Jews, merely as the 'victims of fascism'.

There was not the same denial in the west, but there was a forgetting of sorts. The main camps liberated by he west were the concentration camps. By 1944, the only death camp surviving was Auschwitz, and the Russians captured that. Even in the west, the Holocaust was only half spoken.

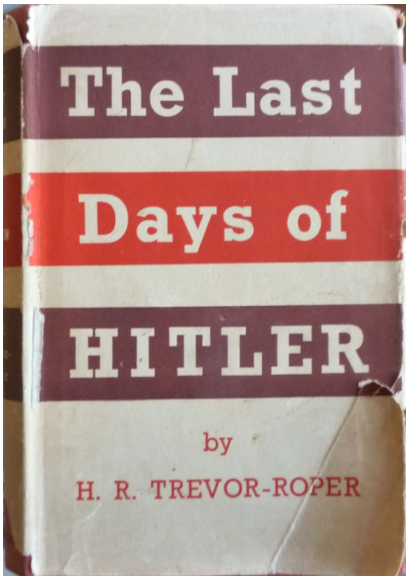
In the west, and especially in West Germany, that changed in the 1960s. Gitta Sereny described those who had lived through the war as 'the generation that forgot'. What made West Germany remember first of all was the Eichmann trial, in 1961. Adolf Eichmann was one of the architects of the Final Solution, but he had escaped after the war. In 1960, Mossad (the Israeli secret service) kidnapped him and brought him to Jerusalem. His trial laid bare the true nature of the Nazi death camps, and the scale of the Holocaust.

The other change was the new post-war generation who began to question their forefathers. Thus, West Germany came to terms with the darkest hour of its past. The **Holocaust Memorial**, just beyond the Brandenburg Gate in the old East was designed to be a kind of final acknowledgement of that fact. The controversy it caused (and still causes, having been bitterly criticised by one reprenstative of the far right group AFD recently) perhaps shows us that process is not over yet.

There is another irony. The stones are coated in anti-graffiti paint manufactured by the chemicals firm Degussa; their mother company is IG-Farben, who were heavily implicated in the Holocaust and manufactured Zyklon-B, the gas used in some of the death camps.

Just across the road is the **Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted by the Nazis**. Some 54,000 people were convicted of homosexual acts under Nazi rule; over 8,000 died. The most recent of the memorials is the **Gypsy Holocaust Memorial**. The Nazis murdered something around half a million to a million Roma and Sinti too.

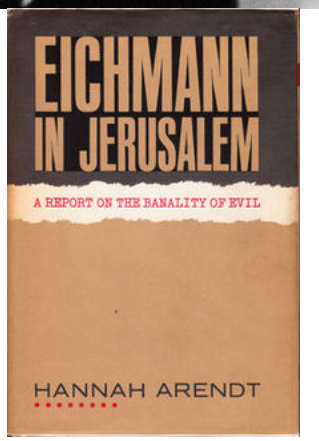
With no little irony, just down the road from the three memorials is the site of **Hitler's bunker** (overleaf). After the invasion of the Soviet



Union, Hitler was holed up in the Wolf's Lair, far out in East Prussia. As the Russians closed in he retreated to Berlin, and sought safety from Allied bombing in his famous bunker beneath the Reich Chancellery. It was here he oversaw the catastrophic end of the war, married Eva Braun and shot himself. It's also where Goebbels murdered his six children. His last days were famously examined in Hugh Trevor Roper's *The Last Days of Hitler* (1947).

Berlin is a city of missing buildings. Along from here was Albert Speer's **New Reich Chancellery**, the new 1938 heart of Nazi government. It survived Allied Bombing, but not Soviet occupation. After Soviet soldiers had torn it down its stone was recycled in the building of the great Soviet war memorials in the Tiergarten and Treptower: fittingly, one might suppose.

East Germany's misery was by no means over. The all-pervasive *Stasi* (the East German secret police, much more of which anon) are remembered in an exhibition on **Hannah Arendt Strasse**.

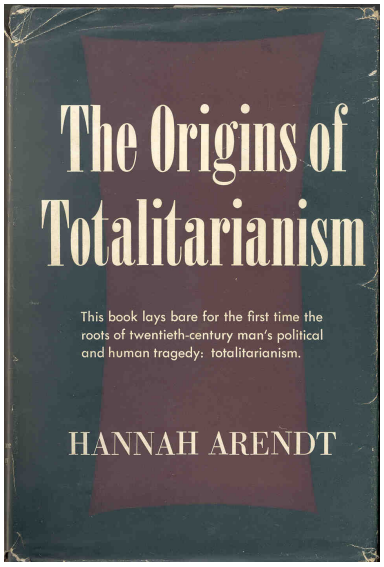


This is both ironic and fitting. **Hannah Arendt** (1906-75), below, grew up in Königsberg, the city of the Teutonic Knights that the Nazis sought to emulate. At the University of Marburg she studied philosophy. One of her teachers was **Martin Heidegger**, one of Germany's most prominent philosophers: they had a brief affair. Heidegger went on to support the Nazi regime.

Arendt was Jewish, and having been arrested and briefly imprisoned by the Gestapo, she fled Germany. By 1940, she was in France; and married to the Marxist poet and philosopher Heinrich Blücher: the couple escaped to the United States. After the war, she became a naturalised American. She also defended Heidegger, portraying him as naïve; they began another affair.

She is perhaps best remembered for her account of the Eichmann trial, ***Eichmann in Jerusalem*** (1962): in it, she coined the famous phrase, 'the banality of evil', to describe him.

She was also a strident critic of Soviet totalitarianism, its obfuscation of language, its systematic denial of truth and its misuse of history. Her book ***The Origins of Totalitarianism*** (1951) was one of the most important works of political philosophy of the 20th century. With more unhappy irony, her name is currently being mentioned constantly in reaction the rise of Trump, the new right, and 'post-truth politics'. In East Germany there would be plenty of that.



WHAT DO WE WANT? REVOLUTION. WHEN DO WE WANT IT? UM, MAYBE NOT. YES, IT'S BISMARCK TIME!

Meanwhile, back in 1813, the Napoleonic Empire was collapsing, and the Hohenzollerns were back in business big time: for **Frederick William III** (1797-1840), left, it was back to the future: absolutism ruled. The post-war settlement saw Prussia rewarded with lands to the west in the form of Westphalia and the Rhine province: it would prove Germany's economic powerhouse. In the years that followed, Prussia's influence over the rest of northern Germany increased (including through its customs union, the *Zollverein*). And as Prussia grew, so did Berlin.

But change was in the air. The Napoleonic era saw the creation of a new German nationalism; after Boney was gone this manifested itself in the Romantic nationalism of **Young Germany**. For the old Prussia of the Hohenzollerns, this was anathema. But Young Europe was to have its day (though it didn't last much beyond a hundred or so days). In 1848, there was another revolution in France (the third, if you're counting). This time though, it was as if the great royal houses of Europe were a set of dominoes. One after the other fell, capital after capital; it was the year of revolutions.

Berlin was no exception. Protests broke out into violence, and **Frederick William IV** (1840-61), right, retreated from the city. Famously, as the revolutionaries vacillated, so did the king, appearing in the city clad in colours of German nationalism, the black, red and gold. It seemed he was with the revolution.

He wasn't, and the revolution was supressed. In 1861, Frederick William had gone insane and his brother became **King William I** (1861-88), left; he appointed **Count Otto von Bismarck** (1815-98), below, as chancellor. Bismarck was a conservative, naturally opposed to the idea of a united Germany; however, he was most concerned with maintaining the power of the old Prussian order. In the end, he decided, this would be best guaranteed by unification on his terms. The Iron Chancellor transformed Germany, winning dazzling victories against Denmark (1864), Austria (1866) and France (1870). In doing so Prussia created a unified German state in 1871. Berlin became capital of the new German Empire. We now had Kaiser Wilhelm I (seems to sound better in German, so I'm sticking with it).

THE TIERGARTEN, ANGELS, RUSSIANS, PLUS A NAZI SEX JOKE

Royal parks were the big things once for any self-respecting 18th or 19th century European monarch (as anyone who knows London will be grateful for). The **Tiergarten** was the work of Frederick the Great and Frederick William III. It was, as would be such a big thing all across Germany, an English garden. It became the place of recreation, and then with the coming of empire, along with Unter den Linden, imperial show. And, for once, it survives. The **Victory Column** was first sketched in 1864, after the defeat of the Danes; however, it was not finished until 1873. Prussia had won a lot more by then.

It was then crowned with the **Angel of Victory**. The Nazis moved both, and made the column over 6 metres higher. Perhaps that inspired the joke told at the time had something to do with that fact (I know it probably didn't, but it should have). The Nazi propaganda chief, Josef Goebbels was a notorious womaniser. He was also only 5 foot 4 inches tall:

> Why is the angel on top of the column of victory the only virgin left in Berlin?
>
> Because Goebbels is too short to get up there.

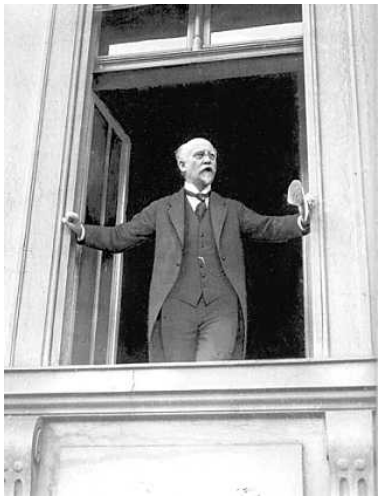
Leading up to the Victory Column, Kaiser Wilhelm II (showing his characteristic good taste and lack of bombast) had 32 statues built of his ancestors along the **Siegesallee**. For Kaiser Bill it was the Ahnenallee (Avenue of Ancestors), for many Berliners, the Puppenallee (Doll's Alley). The Nazis moved them to less prominent part of the Tiergarten; the Allies had them removed altogether, as forbidden monuments to the Prussian militarism upon which the British laid the blame for Nazism.

The Tiergarten had its *schloss* too, **Bellevue** (now the residence of the President). It had never amounted to much. The Nazis turned it into a guesthouse. In 1940, Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister, stayed there. It seems pretty certain he would have passed the Victory Column and been driven along the Siegesallee.

A year later, they were at war. Five years later, aside from the Victory Column, the post-war Tiergarten was pretty much a ruin. The Siegesallee had just one other monument, and that was built in 1945. It is pretty instructive that the first bit of post-war construction undertaken was the **Soviet War Memorial** to the 80,000 Soviet soldiers who lost their lives in the 1945 Battle of Berlin. In 1945, below, it stood there almost alone in the rubble. In pride of place there is its tomb of the Unknown Soldier; to Berliners, sotto voce, it was the tomb of the unknown rapist, after the systematic rape of German women and girls carried out as Soviet forces took eastern Germany (much more anon). Ironically, being in the British sector, and then in the West, every day Soviet soldiers crossed into West Berlin from the East to guard it. Cold War Berlin was never absolutely divided.

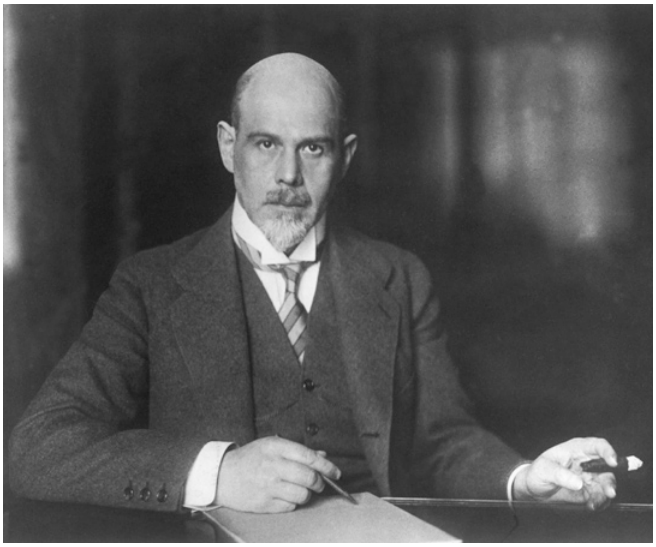
THE REICHSTAG, AND THE STORY OF GERMAN DEMOCRACY (OR NOT, AS THE CASE WAS USUALLY)

Just by the Siegesallee had been the neo-classical Palais Racynski. It was, of course, demolished, in this case to make way for the new **Reichstag**. Its story is a pretty decent parable of the history of constitutional politics in the *Kaiserreich*: first proposed just after unification in 1872, not started until 1884, and its final inscription *Dem Deutschen Volke* (For the German People) was finally installed in 1916, just before Germany became a de facto military dictatorship and just two years before the Kaiser fled. It was never much loved as a building (again perhaps symbolic). Even Kaiser Bill called it an 'Imperial monkey house' and the 'pinnacle of bad taste'.



On November 9th 1918, it was from the balcony of that little-loved Reichstag that **Philipp Scheidemann** (1865-1939) proclaimed the end of the Kaiser and the foundation of a republic (left); his fellow SPD leader, **Frederick Ebert** (1871-1925), below, would become its President.

Meanwhile, from the balcony of the Stadtschloss, the far-left leader of the Spartacists, Karl Liebknecht, proclaimed a socialist revolution. With the very violent cooperation of the far right *Freikorps* (recently demobbed army officers in the main) the uprising was crushed; Liebknecht and his fellow Spartacist leader, Rosa Luxemburg, were shot. Shooting socialists and democrats was to prove an all too popular pastime for some.

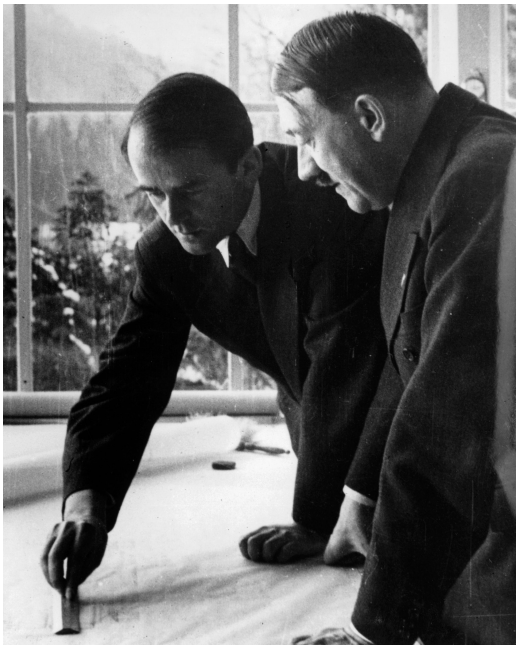


Back in the days of the war, the head of AEG, **Walther Rathenau** (1867-1922), above, had compared the Reichstag to a sickly sweet confection. After the war, he came to terms with the Weimar Republic and democracy. Unfortunately, in 1922, he was assassinated (one of over 300 to be so murdered by right-wing extremists). Ironically, laid was out in state, there in the Reichstag building he so detested, a fallen hero of democracy. He was not to be the last.

11 years later, just weeks into Nazi rule, the Reichstag was set alight by a Dutch loner. That very night, the Nazis formulated the **Reichstag Fire Decree** in the guise of an emergency law. It took away basic human rights and introduced 'protective custody' (meaning arbitrary arrest); it formed the basis of their police state for the next 13 years.

When the Reichstag reconvened after the (fiddled) 1933 election they met (minus the communists, all of whom had been arrested, as had a few socialists too) in the **Kroll Opera House,** on the other side of the Königsplatz. It wouldn't have been there but for the First World War: Kaiser

Wilhelm II had planned to pull it down in 1914. Ironically, the late 'twenties saw it reach artistic heights under the great Otto Klemperer. Need less to say, the Nazis didn't approve of that, and Klemperer fled into exile in 1933. It was in the opera house that the **Enabling Act** was passed, which along with the Reichstag Fire Decree formed the basis of the Nazi dictatorship. The Reichstag was now a rubber stamp. It only met another 18 times: one of those, in 1939, saw Hitler threaten the annihilation of the Jews.



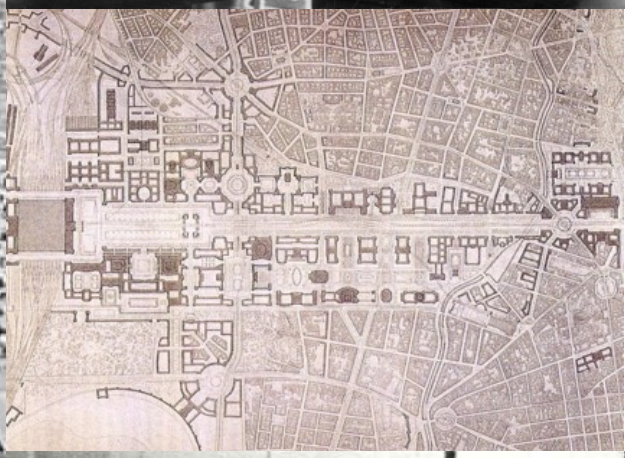
Hitler planned to redevelop most of Berlin as **Germania** (meaning, demolish much of its centre first). His pet architect, **Albert Speer**, above, planned to flatten the Kroll Opera House to make way for a new palace for the Führer. As it was, the RAF and Russian artillery did pretty much half the job for him, in 1943. Not that that affected the Reichstag much, as it met for the last time in 1942 to rubber stamp absolute powers for Hitler. Military defeat saw Germania bite the dust, as Hitler spent his last days in the bunker dreaming of what might have been (overleaf). Among the rubble of the opera house, an inn in the park was opened; the remains of the building, and with it the inn, were demolished in 1951, just for a change. A plaque remains.

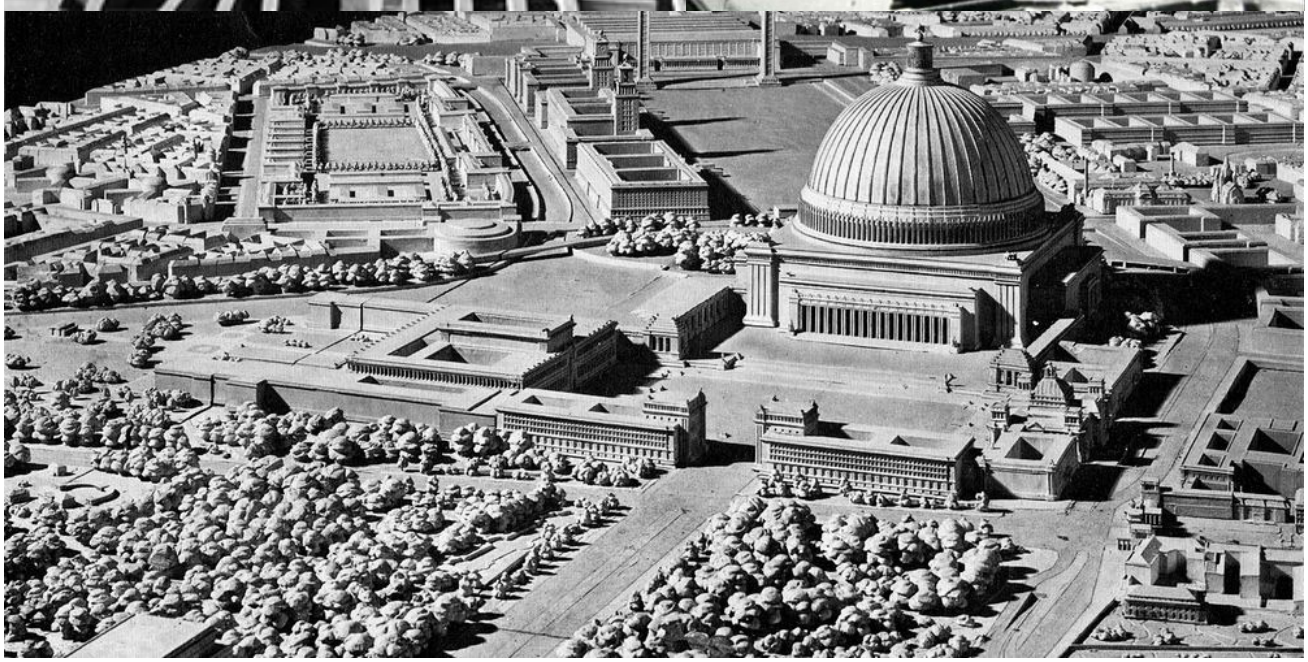
The Reichstag building was of huge symbolic importance when the Red Army

captured Berlin in 1945. When two Soviet soldiers raised the Red Flag over the shattered hulk, and one of the most memorable photographs of the war was taken: the symbol of the defeat of Nazi Germany by the Soviet Union. The Reichstag was then nothing more than a relic of Imperial window-dressing, a failed democracy, and Nazism, in the shadow of the wall. The capital of West Germany would be the sleepy western backwater, Bonn.

It is perhaps easy now to imagine that, in 1990, the whole world looked upon the idea of German reunification with enthusiasm. Not so. Famously, Margaret Thatcher looked upon the prospect with a deep unease. Some of that unease can be seen in the passionate and close run debate about whether to return the capital and Reichstag of a reunited Germany to Berlin, the capital of Prussia and Nazi Germany. It is perhaps ironic, but fitting, that the Norman Foster designed glass dome has now turned it into an iconic building: the symbol of the new Germany.

The old Germany is never far away, however. When the wall went up in 1961, the Reichstag was right beside it: round the back are as series of memorials to those who were killed trying to cross into West Berlin. Just in front is the **Memorial to the Murdered Members of the Reichstag**: the 96 deputies who were killed between 1933 and 1945. German democracy, and with it European freedom, was hard won. The Reichstag is its heart. It matters actually, and symbolically.





BACK TO THE STADTSCHLOSS, AND IT'S KASIER TIME

The Stadtschloss also tells the story of Imperial Germany. When King Wilhelm became **Kaiser Wilhelm I**, he inherited a far more lavish palace. He was another that didn't take to it, and chose to live in a smaller palace (also gone, of course) down the road on Unter den Linden, along which he was famous for riding. As mentioned, he left much of the business of government to Bismarck. That done, Bismarck mostly stuck to a recipe of caution and statesmanship (leavened with a cheerful bout of anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism known as the *Kulkturkampf*, and regular rows with the Reichstag). Wilhelm I's grandson, **Kaiser Wilhelm II** (1888-1918), below, was one of the more

complex figures to rule late 19th century Europe (complex is a euphemism for useless, dangerous, childish, bombastic and plain bloody awful, by the way). He was deformed at birth, and possibly brain damaged: his withered arm meant that he was unable to cut up his own food, or dress himself. He was known for his love of cruel practical jokes. Even by the standard of late 19th century monarchs, he loved uniforms. Vain, thin skinned and shallow, he was the Donald Trump of 19th century Europe (not that I wish to worry anyone, and at least he was nowhere near as orange).

Whereas his grandfather had the wit to leave most of the business of government to Bismarck, Kaiser Bill sacked the great chancellor. Whilst still a believer in absolutism, he was by no means willing to do the hard work or able to exercise the judgement that actual day-to-day rule required; he was, however, more than happy to intervene all of a sudden (often making a right royal mess of months of painstaking work). When he took up archaeology, and disappeared to the Middle East each year, his government heaved sighs of very genuine relief. One wag remarked that he took the advice of all, and acted on the advice of the last voice he heard; another that he approached every issue with an open mouth.

Back to the Stadtschloss. Perhaps surprisingly, Kaiser Bill did relatively little to its grand exteriors. The interior and inner courtyards were less fortunate. Some of its finest interiors were ripped out to create the grand space in which he would gather the Reichstag's deputies on August 4th 1914, telling them 'I recognise no more political parties, only Germans.'

Four years later socialist revolutionaries occupied it. Once the Spartacist rising was put down, the now abdicated Kaiser was allowed to ship a few bits of personal property to his exile in Holland (by a few, I mean 80 railway wagons worth). The building now became a museum, housed some academic buildings and (bizarrely) housed a museum of PE (bet that was fun). Characteristically of their attitude to the Prussian and German royal heritage, the Nazis largely ignored it. Then, in February 1945 it suffered the fate of much of urban Germany: it was gutted by fire thanks to Allied bombing.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, AND WHAT WAS

The oldest building on Unter den Linden is the **Zeughaus** (the Arsenal). In 1848, a revolutionary attempt to seize it (to look for non-existent arms) was used as an excuse to send the troops in to suppress the revolution. By 1943, it was the home of a military museum. On March 21st of that year, Hitler was due to visit it for Heroes Day. By this time traditional conservative opposition was fermenting a variety of plots against Hitler that would culminate in the ill-fated 1944 July Bomb Plot (much more anon). The Prussian Minister of Finance, Johannes Popitz, would open secret talks with Himmler with a view to replacing Hitler. On that day in 1943, a plot to blow up Hitler (by means of a suicide bomber) was stalled by Hitler's decision to spend only two minutes there. Those plotters got away; Popitz, having been kept alive by Himmler, was hanged in 1945.

One of the greatest works of the great architect of early 19th century Berlin, Schinkel, is generally held to be the **Neue Wache**. Originally a guardhouse, then a police station, in 1931 it was converted into a war memorial. In 1960, the East German government renamed it as the **Memorial to the Victims of Fascism and Militarism**. There, the National People's Army formed a guard of honour; and when they changed the guard, they still goose-stepped. Tasteful, eh?

Perhaps not surprisingly given the two world wars, Germany has always found war memorials, and remembering war, problematic. The great artist and sculptor, **Kathe Kollwitz** (1867-1945), right, who has a museum in her honour just off Ku'damm, lost her son Peter in the First World War. It is said she never really recovered. Her grandson was then killed in the second war. Her great statue looks over the German First World War cemetery in Dixsmuide, near Ypres in Belgium. Since reunification, the Berlin memorial has been restyled the **National Memorial to the Victims of War and Tyranny**. An enlargement of another Kollwitz statue sits atop the memorial stone.

The Wilhelm Cathedral was hit badly by Allied bombing; ironically, it was not demolished. The Nazis had largely ignored it. The same could not be said of the Catholic cathedral, which had been initially built by Frederick the Great. In the Second World War, **St Hedwig's Cathedral** was the seat of **Bishop Konrad Graf von Preysing**, who preached openly against Nazi ideas of race; **Dean Bernhard Lichtenberg** openly prayed for Jews and the victims of concentration camps. His protests against the killing of mentally handicapped people led to his arrest and death en route to Dachau in 1943.

SCHINKEL, SCHINKEL, LITTLE STAR… WELL, QUITE BIG ONE ACTUALLY

Just off Unter den Linden is **Schinkelplatz**, with its statue of **Karl Frederick Schinkel** (1781-1841), left, the architect of much of Hohenzollern Berlin.

Fittingly, it sits beside his **Schlossbrücke** (the bridge that connected the two parts of the Stadtschloss). Here was where he built what many regard as his greatest building, the **Bauakademie**, below, his architectural school. This building was one of modern architecture's ancestors, rejecting neo-classicism for brick and new methods of construction Schinkel was very impressed when he visited Manchester in 1826. The Kaiser hated it; so did the East German regime. And that's why we can no longer see it: they pulled it down to replace it with a prefab foreign ministry and the rather nondescript green space of Schinkelplatz.

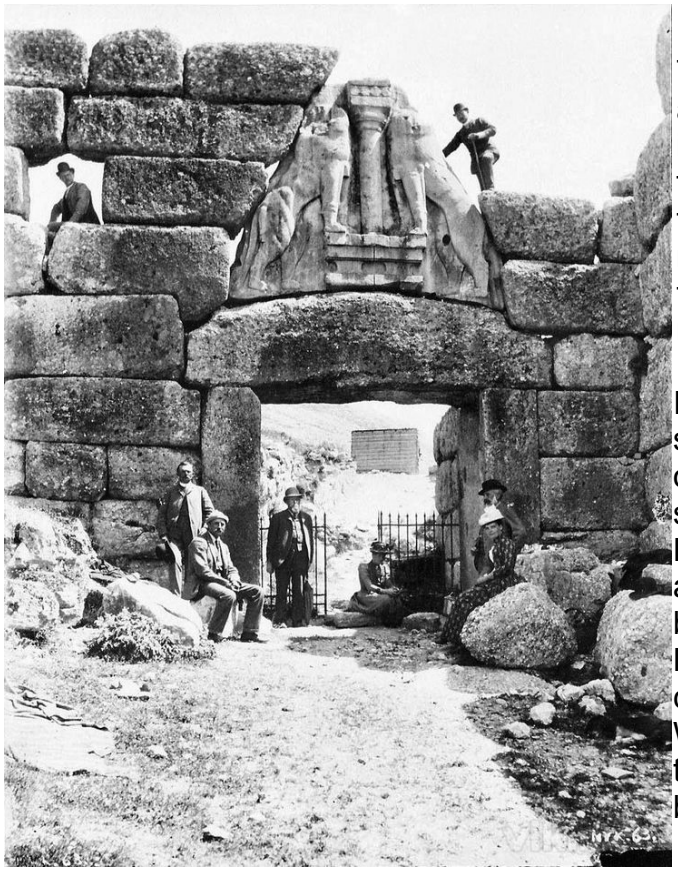
Beside is the modern Foreign Ministry, attached to which is one of Nazi Germany's surviving buildings, the **Central Bank** built in 1938. It went on to be the headquarters of the East German SED (the communist party). Of course, the SED isignia was torn down in its turn.

Across the Schlossbrücke is **Museum Island**. Its south was the site of the Stadtschloss, but in the 19th century (as all good 19th century rulers did) the Hohenzollerns added a museum quarter. Heading up to it, north of the Schlossbrücke is the **Berliner Dom**, below, the Hohenzollern attempt to give Berlin its own equivalent to Rome's St Peter's.

Instead, as befits an early 20th century commission of Kaiser Bill's, Berlin got a lumpen hymn to Imperial Germany. Naturally, being one of Berlin's lesser buildings, it survived war damage and East Germany. It does, however, contain various Hohenzollern sarcophagi, including the Great Elector, and a grandiose marble staircase. Fun.

Fittingly, for Kaiser Wilhelm II, the church is beside the **Lustgarten**. Why fittingly? Because it started life as a parade ground: he'd have liked that. It also served as a political space: it was used for an anti-Nazi demonstration in 1933 (after which demonstrations were banned by the Nazis); something around a million saw Hitler speak there too. After the war, it became Marx-Engels Platz (below). It is now Lustgarten again.

Anyway, museums are what Museum Island is all about, logically enough. The first, the **Altes Museum**, was built for Frederick William III, in 1810 (by Schinkel, of course). It was stymied somewhat by the fact the king had very little to put in it. However, archeology was about to come to the rescue. For much of the 19th century, archeology by and large added up to posh people doing a bit of digging and then nicking all the good stuff (Kaiser Bill was, as noted above, a keen amateur archeologist). The **Neue Museum** was built to house Carl Richard Lepsius' collection of ancient Egyptian treasures gathered in the 1840s. The **Pergamonmuseum** was built to house the treasures **Heinrich Schliemann** (1822-90), brought back from Mycenae (below).



Come the war, these treasures were hidden. Most were, in time, recovered and returned, with the notable exception of Schliemann's greatest find. Schliemann believed that, at Mycenae, he had found **Priam's Treasure**, above, the booty from the siege of Troy (famously cabling Kaiser Wilhelm to claim that he had 'looked upon the face of Agamemnon'). Eventually, after years of denials, it resurfaced in Moscow, having been looted by the Red Army back in 1945.

The Neue Museum, sensitively renovated after being bombed in the war (why wasn't it demolished, I wonder?), has spaces left for them (and some replicas, but given the current state of Russo-German relations don't hold your breath waiting for their return any time soon. Biter bit, mayhap?

In their absence, the Neue Museum's stand out object is the 3300-year-old Bust of Queen Nefertiti, discovered in 1912 and, surprise, unveiled in Berlin in 1924. The Pergamonmuseum contains many great antiquities from ancient Greece and Rome, but also from the likes of Babylon and the Middle East. It also has a major Islamic collection; something in whuich Kaiser Wilhelm II, who built a great monument on the site where Saladin was believed to be buried, took a particular interest.

Museum Island also gives us two galleries. The **Alte Nationalgelerie** is the home of a considerable collection of 19th century art. Apart from the usual impressionists (what major European capital doesn't have them?), of more interest here are the German artists. There are the so-called German Romans; there are images of Berlin on the cusp of modernity; the Galerie der Romantik speaks for itself. Fittingly, given that this is yet another Schinkel building, it is also the home of a collection of the great man's paintings, often of a neo-Gothic medieval world. Schinkel looked to the medieval to morally revive the modern world. He was hardly alone in this: in Britain think of Sir Walter Scott, or the Pre-Raphaelites. A similar harking back is found in the work of **Caspar David Friederich** (1774-1840), left. It was the 19th century *Back to the Future* (with sequels).

The **Bode-Museum** (below, 1945), mostly sculpture, at the northern end of Museum Island, was due for demolition in the late 'forties but, just this once, was spared and rebuilt after popular protests to save it. Why this building, one wonders? And when did concepts such as what the people might want begin to bother the government of East Germany, I wonder?

BACK TO THE STADTSCHLOSS, IN EVERY SENSE… AND MORE DEMOLITION, OF COURSE

The East Germans finished of the demolition of the Stadtscholss pretty well (right). It, and the site of Schinkel's Bauakademie, were left as open ground (below).

That was until the communist showpiece **Palace of the Republic** was opened in 1976, (below). Notably, this housed the *Volkskammer*, the East German equivalent to its parliament. By name, communist East Germany was the DDR: the German Democratic Republic. Unlike the Holy Roman Empire, it at least had two-thirds of its name right. It was German (in a Russian sort of way) and it was a republic. It was only democratic in the communist sense, what was known democratic centralism. This time, half-right: it was centralist, the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany, as the communist party was officially known) controlled everything; once more, the use of the term democratic made up for its absence in reality.

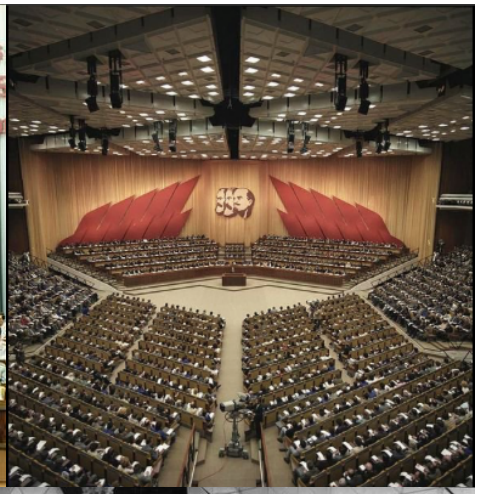
If the Palace of the Republic was a bold statement of the communist future, which it was, it also did a pretty uncanny impersonation of British municipal architecture of the 'seventies.

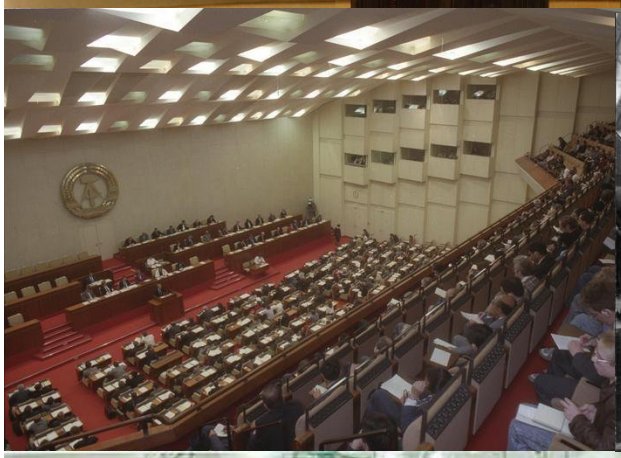
We can see that building now, but only on film or in photographs. It, in turn, was demolished (and with it the at galleries, restaurants, bowling alley, post office and disco that made up the rest of the complex). Once more, Berlin demolished a history it wanted to forget (see overleaf).

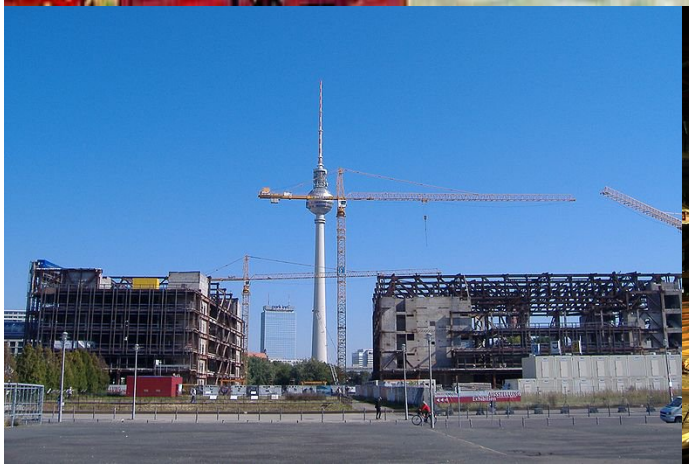
It was not just the communists. Many of the great buildings of Berlin had found themselves in the hands of leading Nazis. Goebbels gutted Schinkel's **Prince Leopold Palace**. Hitler gave the one of the oldest buildings, the **Presidential Palace** of the Weimar Republic: he knocked it down. In his time Bismarck had pretty much wrecked the city's oldest schloss, the **Schwerin**: Hitler and American bombers did the rest. The **Prinz-Albrecht Palace** was taken over by the SS-Gestapo: in 1949, the Americans blew it up. In truth, we should be grateful that there's any Schinkel left.

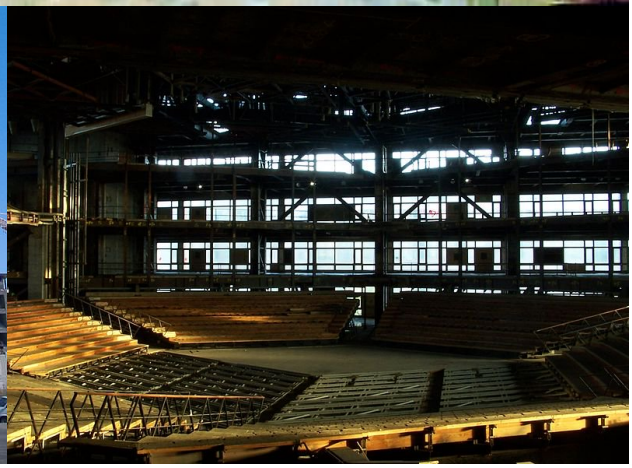
What now? In 2006, the decision was taken to rebuild the old *Stadtschloss*. Well, not quite. Two-thirds of its façade will be an exact replica of the original; the waterside will be modern, as will its interior. It will contain art galleries and museums, as well as restaurants, a theatre and cinema (what about the bowling alley?). A great building reborn or kitsch hotchpotch? Wasn't the original a bit of both anyway? Who knows? Wonder who'll knock this one down?


Leistungen
Volkes
Vorwärts
der
Einheitspa









THE NEW CITY AND WE, THE PEOPLE: I HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE AND IT WORKS… OR, WE COULD ALWAYS KNOCK IT DOWN AGAIN, I SUPPOSE, AND NOT KEEP THE RED FLAG FLYING HERE

How often is it true that the west end is the posh side? As an east ender, the west of London was where THEY lived. The same has often applied in Berlin.

SO, GO EAST. THIS IS THE MODERN WORLD…'70S STYLE

Meanwhile, the East was where the huddled masses rocked up. **Alexanderplatz** reminds me strongly of the Britain of the '60s and '70s in which I grew up. All across Britain councils knocked down what they saw as Victorian eyesores, replacing them with modern concrete, glass and the future. Intended to be another Eastern showpiece (like the Palace of the Republic), Alexanderplatz reminded Giles MacDonogh of London's 1970's vintage monstrosity, Elephant and Castle. It reminds me of Harlow, where I went to school.

It had replaced a poor and down at heel area of winding and crumbling narrow streets: the old medieval Berlin. Like many areas around a big station, it had been pretty rough: there, Nazis had fought communists, and there had been a Jewish trading area (God, this sounds like my native East End of London). In it, around it, and beyond it lived the great unwashed.

And the great unwashed got Bolshie. In 1848, the revolutionaries put up barricades there (medieval streets were good for that; no wonder the communists wanted rid of them). In 1918, sailors occupied its police station and helped ferment revolution. In 1989, it became the focal point of million strong protests against the SED.

Under communism all that was supposed to change, the bright new future would be proclaimed by socialist gigantism. Of course, to do that, the old medieval heart would have to go. But then, in Berlin, what's a bit of demolition between friends? Or enemies, come to that.

For connoisseurs of 1960s socialist brutalism, Alexanderplatz has got the lot. I love it. For a start, it's got a proper station (a 'sixties rebuild that didn't make it any better at all, brilliant), and serves as one of the U-Bahn and S-Bahn's major interchanges. To get to it one passes through two pre-war buildings, but in this case Peter Behrens pre-Nazi modernist classics, **Alexanderhaus** and **Berolinahaus**. In front of the Berolinahaus is the communist-era World Clock (world domination here we come, one supposes). Its **Television Tower** (like London's futurist Post Office Tower) offered a vision of the DDR that was modern and go-ahead (and '70s cool, as the interior of the TV Tower shows, below). Above, and overleaf, the photomontages of Dieter Urbach from 1972 proclaimed a bold new socialist architectural dawn. Reality? It is often windswept, cold and can feel intimidating. As I said, it reminds me of Harlow. It's even got a Primark (my Mum would have been proud). Yes!

HOW THE OLD CITY WAS THE NEW CITY, THEN THE CITY OF RUBBLE, AND THE STORY OF THE WOMEN OF 1945

In one sense, Berlin has always been a new city. In 1680, following the Thirty Years War, its population had fallen below 10,000. By 1700, its population had reached 30,000. A century later there were over 170,000 Berliners. By 1850 there were over 400,000, by 1870, twice that. By 1880, there were over a million people living in the city; in 1905, the population had doubled again.

For the Berlin of the turn of the century, think of the likes of Chicago or New York: no European city grew as fast. This spawned large working class districts, such as Wedding. Here came the flotsam of Germany and Europe, the chancers on the make, the low life and the high life. We've done the high life: time for the rest.

Areas such as Alexanderplatz also teemed with prostitutes. In the 18th century, worthy complaints about the number of prostitutes in Berlin were commonplace. By the mid-19th, estimates go as high as 15,000. Each successive economic crisis saw more women and girls take to the streets. Beneath that lay an abiding tragedy, as generations of girls were prostituted by their parents. With it, naturally, came crime and disorder.

Even without that, the Nazis were always going to be determined to clean the city up. Street prostitution and the common brothels were closed down, and the only brothels remaining were semi-official ones, such as the Foreign Office one provided for Japanese diplomats and the likes of the Indian nationalist Subhas Bose. The post-war East would inherit the Nazi's prudery, unless one counts the communist elite (Erich Honecker, the SED leader, was a great connoisseur of western porn).

In truth, Berlin had always been known for its loose morals, and the West Berlin of the 'sixties and beyond was no exception.

The new city that grew in the 19th century was, perhaps, best personified by the **Rotes Rathaus** (the Red Town Hall, left, so called because of its red bricks, not its politics). As soon as we cross the Spree, it is as if we have left royal Berlin behind: this was now the people's Berlin. Built in the 1860s, it has something in common with the grandiose municipal city halls we all associate with, for example, industrial England (not in style, just in size of statement). Naturally, they knocked down a lot of medieval buildings first. After all, there is such a thing as tradition, you know.

Like so much else, the Rotes Rathaus was badly damaged in the war, but unlike much it was restored in the 1950s, becoming the home of East Berlin's city government. Outside is the statue to Berlin's famous rubble women, who are said to have cleared up the 1000 million tons of rubble left by Allied bombing and Russian artillery while waiting on the tender mercies of the Russians. In truth, the rubble womens' role is something of a myth, rather like tender mercies of Russians turned out to be.

The Berlin of 1945 had very few men: most were either elsewhere, or dead. For most Germans, the hardships of war did not really begin to impinge overmuch until the military tide turned. Germany's women took much of the brunt of that. In an every day sense, it was shortages and rationing that really began to impinge by 1942-43. But that was the least of it.

By best estimates, over 5 million German men were killed fighting in the war. What always seems to be ignored in the annals of war is the impact that those deaths had on those left behind, and most of all upon the women that were left behind: mothers, wives, sweethearts, sisters, daughters.

Then there was the Allied bombing campaign. In some ways, Berlin got off relatively lightly: best estimates are that something over 20,000 people were killed. This is in part because of the distance Berlin was from the North Sea coast; it was perhaps also better defended than some. Nonetheless, the dislocation caused by that bombing was immense. The largest single raid of the war on Berlin came of February 3rd 1945, when 1000 US B-17s. Symbolically, Unter den Linden, Wilhemstrasse and Freidrichstrasse were left looking like heaps of rubble. On the bright side, the Reich Chancellery, Gestapo HQ and the People's Court were badly damaged.

It was, of course, ordinary people that bore the brunt of all this. By the time the Russians arrived, half of the city's houses were hit, about one third uninhabitable. In just two weeks the Russians let Berlin have the equivalent of two thirds of the ordinance Allied air forces had dropped on the city in the previous two years. At the end of the war, it has been estimated, as much as 16 square kilometres of the city was simply flattened, and there were 30 cubic metres of rubble for every single inhabitant. And women bore the brunt of that too.

But that was not even the worst of it; nowhere near. News travels, even in the chaos of collapse and defeat, and the appalling fate of the German women and girls overrun by the Red Army in East Prussia and Pomerania was soon heard of in Berlin. In truth, what happened in the city was less violent, wild and sadistic than what had been experienced in the east. It was still bad enough.

Rape has been used as a weapon of war, and has been regarded as one of the spoils of war, since time immemorial. It happens with all armies. It happened in Vietnam; it happened in western Germany as the Allies advanced there. When it happened then, however, it was illegal and, sometimes, severely punished; also, it was relatively rare.

The soldiers of the Red Army had raped their way across eastern Germany in early 1945. In part, to them this was of a piece with the looting they were also notorious for. The Russian soldiers, workers and peasants, knew little but dire poverty. They'd never seen anything like the wealth of ordinary Germans. They had a thing about wristwatches, for example. In one sense, they regarded German women as another form of property and, as such, legitimate game.

Then, there was revenge. Millions of Soviet soldiers, and many millions more civilians, had been killed in the German's brutal racial war. The rape of their women was about revenge. It was also related to the fact that Russian men had fought without leave for four years: this was their reward. When asked, by one of his aides, about the rape of Germany's women by his men, Stalin said they deserved some fun (yes, he actually said that). Then, there was the other great love of the Russian soldier; drink. When drunk, and how they drank, many observers noted how they became wildly unpredictable.

But, most of all, it was statement of conquest, of the violation of the vanquished, as it has been by armies through the ages. To put it bluntly, they raped anything female that was not recognisably very young (they could, ironically, be very kind and sentimental towards small children). 'Frau ist Frau' was the watchword. It is estimated that somewhere between 100-130,000 women and girls from Berlin were raped, most of them many times. Some 10,000 were killed: either murdered, or committed suicide. There were many children born later, and countless abortions.

The rubble women had more than simple bomb damage to come to terms with.

IN WHICH MARX AND ENGELS DON'T GO MISSING, THEN GO MISSING, WHILST STALIN AND LENIN ARE GONE FOR GOOD… AND A POTTED ANALYSIS OF THE JOYS OF COMMUNISM (PART ONE)

Diagonally across from the Rotes Rathaus is the **Marx-Engels Forum**. As I'm sure you all know, **Karl Marx** and his financial backer **Frederick Engels** were the founders of modern communism. *The Communist Manifesto*, their first statement of their theory of revolution, was published in 1848, the year of revolutions.

Unfortunately, the year of revolutions were a miserable flop, for the revolutionaries that is, and before long the old guard were back ruling the roost. At length, Marx ended up in London, pondering that failure. It was from those reflections that Marxism was born, a theory of history (no less) that pointed to the inevitable triumph of socialism and revolution.

To paraphrase *Blackadder*, as a theory, it had one tiny flaw: it was bollocks. For Marx, revolution would come first in the advanced capitalist states, by which he really meant his native Germany and Britain; a flood tide of workers would overthrow the hated capitalists and herald the triumph of the proletariat.

You can't but think that the proletariat didn't quite get the script. What they wanted was more tangible. The working class I grew up in wanted to own a Ford Cortina, go on holiday on the Costa Brava and build porches on their newly purchased council houses (which they all did, and very nice they were too). My socialist grandfather thought Marxism was dangerous foreign nonsense, and those that adhered to it were unpatriotic and 'bloody stupid'. That's not to say there weren't some proper communists. My friend's dad was a proper hard line Stalinist to his dying day; he was from Govan, mind.

The centrepiece of Marx-Engels Forum is a five times life-size statue of the two. The last lot didn't get to see it, well not in the bronze, so to speak. You guessed it: it's wasn't there. However, this time it's not gone for good: Marx and Engels were merely taking a break whilst the extension to the U5 line was built (you can see Karl being moved below). I believe they're back.

As I said, Marx thought communism would come to somewhere like Germany first. Instead, communism came to Russia: thanks to a Tsar 'not fit to run village post office', a war they were losing by 1917, the chaotic aftermath of the first February Revolution that overthrew the useless Tsar, and what amounted to a military coup by radicalised Soviet soldiers and sailors led by the son of a minor nobleman. There we are, the story of Lenin's revolution in one overlong sentence. And that's the point: the October Revolution was Lenin's revolution, not Russia's.

That's not to say some people didn't like it. As it crosses the Spree the royal Unter den Linden suddenly becomes **Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse**.

Before the First World War, Germany's largest political party was the SPD (the Social Democratic Party). Originally a Marxist Party, by 1914 most of its leaders and members were moderate socialists, as shown by their support for the war. However, some were passionately opposed to that war, seeing it is a capitalist war that divided worker from worker (the same happened to the British Labour Party). However, the two Russian revolutions of 1917 further radicalised the German radicals. Those socialist radicals were now known as the Spartacists. **Rosa Luxemburg** (below) and **Karl Liebknecht** (above) were their leaders.

And, of course, when revolution came to Germany in 1918 some of the **Spartacists** thought a Russian-style revolution was nigh. In fact, neither Liebknecht nor Luxemburg were convinced that the time was ripe for the full-blown revolution. However, when some of their followers had a go at starting one away, it seemed churlish not to join in. Both Liebknecht and Luxemburg paid with their lives.

Communism did come to Germany in the end. Well, half of it. Well, somewhat less than half to be exact, but you know what I mean. After the war, East Germans became communist rather in the way that Winston Churchill achieved greatness: they had it thrust upon them.

And very kind it was of the Red Army too. So well did the people of East Germany take to it that the Russians only had to actively encourage them once or twice, or three times. Still what's a mass Stalinist purge, the shooting of protestors and the building a wall through the middle of a city to imprison its people between friends?

Therein lay the irony, of course. The revolution of the people Liebknecht and Luxemburg dreamed of was never anything of the. In Russia, it turned out to be one of the most brutal dictatorships of them all (and boy, there's some pretty hot competition). In the Europe occupied by the Red Army, it was little more than Russian and communist imperialism. Little wonder that it depended on the threat of Soviet force to survive. The Red Empire was a grim reality.

The first chance they got, the people of East Germany dropped the joys of Marxism-Leninism like a stone. Well, a very big piece of stone, in fact. You may have noticed on the way that post-communist Berlin has been pretty keen on wiping out its communist past (and, of course, being Berlin, they've been bloody good at it too). A walk or a tram ride from Alexanderplatz (I prefer the tram, I love trams) is the anonymous sounding and looking **Platz der Vereinten Nationen** (United Nations Platz)**.** From early 1950 until re-unification, it was known as **Leninplatz** (above), and from 1970 featured a 19-meter high statue of Vladimir himself. Now, all that's left is a plaque, and some more delightful Socialist modernism (to comfortingly remind me of the Elephant and Castle, or Harlow).

The next *platz* down is Strausberger Platz. From there, you can stroll down the handsome **Karl-Marx-Allee**. It wasn't always called that. Originally Grosse Frankfurter Strasse, it was renamed **Stalinallee** (right) in 1949, and became East Berlin's (and East Germany's) flagship street. In 1951, a delegation from *Komsomol* (the Soviet Youth Movement) kindly presented their East Berlin comrades with a 4.8 metre high statue of Stalin: lucky them.

The 1953 Uprising (of which more below) began in Stalinallee, when workers on East Berlin's prestige construction project, downed tools, marched by to Strausberger Platz, shoved the police out the way and headed for the city centre.

Stalin had died a few weeks before. His successor Khrushchev finally admitted the Great Helmsman had done some pretty terrible things (well, Krushchev only admitted only some of them, as he was very much implicated some of the worst). De-Stalinisation was now the watchword. It took a while for it to catch on in Berlin. However, as if by communist magic, in 1961 the statue of Stalin disappeared overnight (now there is an irony) and the street was renamed after Marx instead. It is, in truth, a handsome boulevard (above): communism could do good stuff. It just didn't do very much of it.

Back in communist times you could have strolled from Karl-Marx-Allee back up to Leninplatz, admired his statue and all that socialist modernism, then caught a tram along **Leninallee** (above). You can still get the tram, but now it goes along the street it once did, boring old Lansberger Allee.

Perhaps you get the idea now. Karl Liebknecht is allowed his street (and Rosa Luxemburg her *platz*, by the way); Marx and Engels can have their forum, and Marx his showpiece boulevard. We came across Liebknecht and Luxemburg's fate earlier. The leader of the KPD (German Communist Party) when Hitler came to power was **Ernst Thälmann**. He was arrested in 1933 and held in solidarity confinement until executed on Hitler's orders in 1944. He is commemorated too (quite a way out of town), by a park and a strikingly modernist socialist realist statue (below).

You will find no Soviet leaders commemorated, nor leaders of East Germany. They are beyond the pale.

WELCOME TO STASITOWN. ANYONE FOR SOME *OSTALGIE*?

Back in the days of communism, if you had continued on that tram beyond Leninallee, you would have ended up in the Hohenschönhausen area. Mind you, unless you worked there, you wouldn't have wanted to go near the place. The **Hohenschönhausen** was the Stasi prison. The usual means of transport for those unfortunate enough to be visitors was to be bundled into a locked up prison wagon and be driven around for a long time, thus when you finally found yourself inside you didn't have a clue where you were.

It is best understood by being taken round, usually by an ex-inmate, as you will be. So for now, I'll just add two things. The surrounding apartments were, at the time, a kind of Stasitown; still now, a lot of old Stasi live nearby. And I once met a man who'd been held here. Amongst his crimes were the ownership of a samizdat (illegal) copy of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum,* and a cassette copy of The Rolling Stones classic album *Beggar's Banquet*. The man has taste: he got 14 years. He now works in the

Stasi Museum, (the old Stasi HQ, above), in the suburb of Lichtenberg. When the wall came down the Stasi were busy shredding the documents that incriminated them, and their informants. For some twenty years, so-called puzzle women laboured away trying to put them back together. It would have taken them, apparently, the best part of four centuries to solve the puzzle of the 16,000 sacks, until the invention of the E-puzzler. They are now on the way to being reassembled, and many are now publicly accessible.

All this *Ostalgie* can be relived in the **DDR Museum**, back on Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse. Here the joys (insofar as there were anyway) of communism can be relived, whether it is pioneer camps, East German fashion (they did the '70s look really well; ie, really badly), sport (and performance enhancing drugs), or what seems to have been something of an obsession with nudism. Then, of course, there was always the Trabant, the people's car of East Germany with its minimal controls and its two-stroke engine reminiscent of a souped-up lawnmower.

Ostalgie, the term for nostalgia for the East, is a kind of mini-industry in Berlin. It can be ironically amusing (see the section on music below, or note the organised Trabant tours). It can be genuine for those who look back with some fondness to the lost world of communism (and there are some). It can also add up to the posthumous glossing over of a regime whose few shards of light hardly made up for the grottiness, petty diktats and brutal repression of a regime that had to, in effect, imprison its own people. Part of the DDR Museum might play to that *Ostalgie*, the other part reminds us of some grim realities, as does the Hohenschönhausen itself.

IN WHICH THE DDR GOES ALL MEDIEVAL ON US, AND THE GERMANS GO TO THE PUB

The East Germans didn't entirely ignore their medieval past. Well, they mostly did, until the 1980s when, as mentioned above, they suddenly re-embraced the German tradition. Just along the Spree from the DDR Museum, is **Nikolaiviertel** (above). This old district was pretty much flattened by Allied bombing in 1944, and remained so until the decision was taken to try and recreate it. In truth, it was more like a replication than a restoration, and some of the buildings look particularly unconvincing. It's more the fact that it exists at all that is the interesting bit.

At its centre is the **Nikolaikirche**, a restored 13th century church, from which the Lutheran Reformation was proclaimed in Berlin. Past it runs Propstrasse, on which was housed the original **Zum Nussbaum** pub (right). For a change, this is not the original; that was, surprise surprise, flattened by bombing. The one we have now is a copy, but the original was actually on the other side of the Spree. How many pubs can you name that have crossed a river?

Anyway, why this pub is of more interest than most (though as some of you may realise, for the current author that means it is extremely interesting), is because it was where the great Berlin artist **Heinrich Zille** got most of his stories (there is a Zille Museum, but when I went everything was in German and I couldn't understand a word of it). Zille's specialty was Berlin low life (above), and his satirical sketches of it are much loved by connoisseurs of Berlin's legendary seedier side: and Berlin has had plenty of that seedier side in its time, and plenty of connoisseurs of it.

At the top of Poststrasse, is the **Gerichtslaube**, Berlin's medieval courthouse. Well, no, it isn't. It's a replica. The original was taken down to make way for the Rotes Rauthaus (naturally), and then was reassembled, but in Potsdam rather than Berlin. So this, in fact is another replica, and it's in the wrong place. Don't you love this city?

At the other end is the more interesting **Knoblauchhaus** (and no, not just because of its name). Yes, it's the posh home of the Knoblauch family, and it actually survived the war. However, two things about it really interest me. In the first place, part of it is now the *Historische Weinstuben*, where the likes of the playwrights Gerhardt Hauptmann, August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen hung out (drinking wine, one assumes). Well, actually, it is a recreation of the *Historische Weinstuben*, not the original at all. The Knoblauch family was, in any case, more associated with beer: Armand Knoblauch founded one of the major Berlin breweries (and anyone that knows anything about the Germans would realise that that meant it mattered a great deal, therefore).

However, by the 1890s, German beer and German pubs were undergoing a revolution.

Until then, the dominant styles of beer were local, like Knoblauch's, and might have had more in common with the English style. The other dominant style was Bavarian *Weissbier* (wheat beer). In the 1890s, though, new developments in refrigeration made by the Munich scientist Carl Linde made lager beer easier to produce.

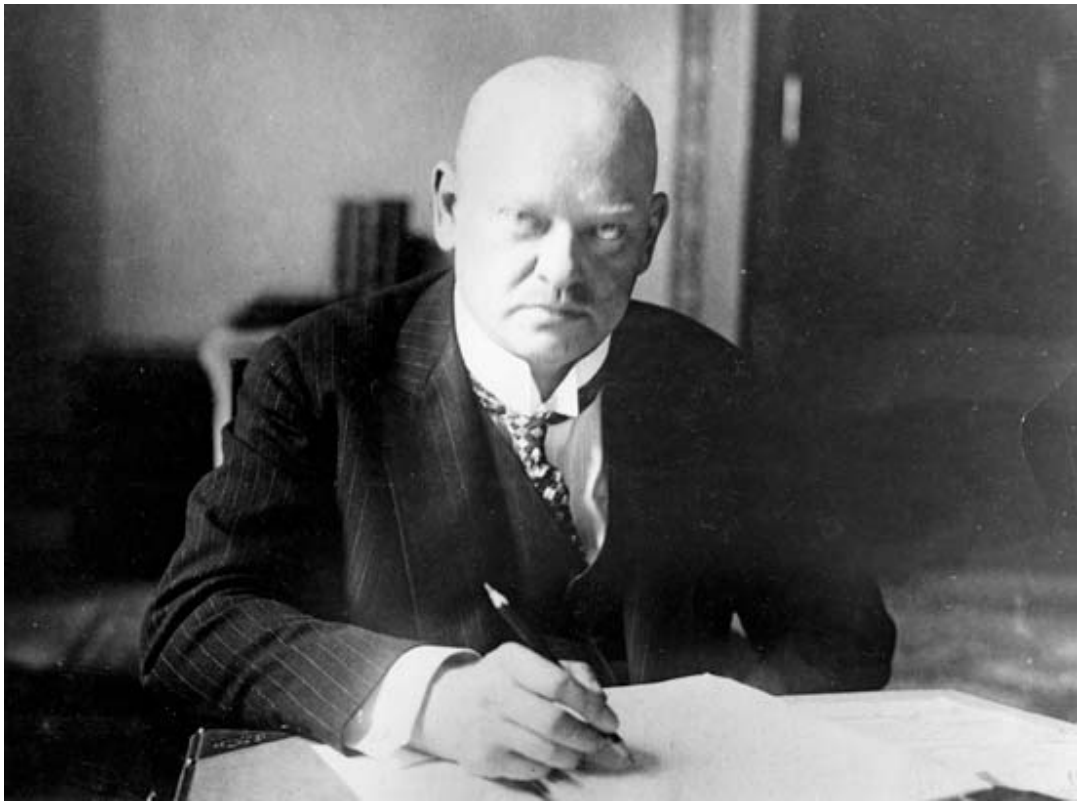
Meanwhile, in 1882, Carl and August Aschinger had opened their first *Bierquellen* in Berlin, a kind of fast food beer hall. For them, lager beer was the way forward, being easier to keep, light and refreshing, and soon proving massively popular. By the 1930s, they had 46 branches in Berlin alone. The age of the bier hall had come to the capital. Such changes were anathema to the son of one Bavarian brewer, an economist, who had indeed written a doctorate about the brewing industry:

What a difference between the old Berlin *Weissbier* pub and the famous beer palaces created by Aschinger in the last few years! In the one, almost venerable citizens installed at a simple table united behind their great globular glasses, either reading the newspaper or conversing peacefully or complacently. In the other, an eternal toing and froing, hustle and bustle, individuals scarcely giving themselves enough time to find a seat, but standing up, eating one of the obligatory rolls or tossing down a measure of proper beer with an eye on the clock, then rushing off after a few minutes to make room for others who, just like themselves, want the chance to enjoy a little something without making a dent in their schedules.

But Berlin low life and dingy old Berlin boozers were definitely not their thing. Under the Nazis, beer consumption by working class Germans fell by 59% (and meat consumption by 18%). Now, that's an attack on German culture if ever there was one.

The man who was lamenting the demise of the old Berlin pub and the old Berlin beers? The regime Schultheiss had to kowtow to would have been anathema to this man too. His name? Dr **Gustav Stresemann**. Who he? The man who led Germany towards democratic stability in the late 1920s, that's who. Had he not died in 1929, who knows what. Prost, Dr Stresemann!

On the back of these changes one brewing firm became Berlin's biggest, brewing lager beer. By 1943, Schultheiss were celebrating their centenary in a lavish party in the Kroll Opera House. It being 1943, of course, several leading Nazis were a preening presence, as they were at all such society functions. Therein lays the irony. Of course, the Nazis had a bit of previous with Bier Kellers.



THE CRIMINAL CLASSES, THE KLEPTOMANIAC REICHSMARSHALL AND THE CRIMINAL CLASS WARRIORS

With big cities comes crime. By the late 19th century, Berlin (like that other rapidly growing metropolis, New York) was notorious for its criminal gangs. The most notorious were the ***Ringvereine*** (right). They started life as groups of men into bodybuilding and boxing: soon, they realized that gave them a business opportunity in the protection racket business. The Wilhelmine and Weimar authorities seemed powerless against them. It wasn't until the Nazis, who were somewhat less worried about legal norms, that their power was broken.

The Weimar years were a golden age for German crime, in part as a consequence of the hyperinflation that gripped Germany in 1923. In a city where a U-Bahn ticket cost RM100,000 by August that year, normal business was impossible. Foreigners lived like kings. Hard currency, or gold, could by anything for a song: the finest food, the best apartments and the prettiest girls (or boys). There were live sex shows, and naked dancers (the most famous being **Josephine Baker**, below, who became a star). If you had it, you spent it: post-war Berlin went wild.

To be a criminal seemed to fit just fine, whether it was conventional criminals like the Sass brothers (who robbed banks) or confidence tricksters like Max Klante (who left thousands broke). The most famous crooks of Weimar Berlin were the **Skalrek brothers**, originally Polish Jews. They made their money through municipal corruption, crookedly supplying the city at inflated prices. In so doing, they became prominent figures in Berlin high society with a villa in the west of the city and a hunting lodge in the country. In 1928, Leo Skalrek's horse won the German Derby. All this was possible because they had prominent figures in the municipal government in their pocket. All sides, including communist bosses in flash cars, but most of all one, **Gustav Boss**, took kickbacks.

Once more, it was the Nazis who ended Boss's career. When it came to low-life criminality, they morally disapproved: most of all though, one suspects, they disapproved of the competition. In the early years, their hallmark was pretty low-level corruption. However, it was when they occupied territories to the east and west that the real nicking spree kicked off. The criminal in chief was the art-lover-come-kleptomaniac **Hermann Goering**.

Back in Berlin, the early part of the war saw something of a return to Weimar's wild days, with naked dancing (again), jazz and hit US movies. That all changed with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, and the coming of total war. Until then, the Nazis were wary of the way in which people would react to shortages. Now, they had no choice. The cafes in Ku'damm began to close. There were queues. The old joke from the previous war returned. The real thing was replaced by the *Ersatz* (a substitute, even fake); the *Ersatz* was replaced by the *Ersatzersatz.*

Then came the bombing (right). Just as it did in London's Blitz, bombing sparked a crime wave. People came home to bomb-damaged houses that had been robbed of their better clothes, booze and cigarettes. As things settled down, sex and cigarettes became virtual currencies that, once again, enabled foreigners to live like kings and German women to live: this time the foreigners were American, British, French and Russian soldiers. I mentioned looting in the context of mass rape. But there was a lot of looting too, remember the wristwatches. They also had a particular fondness for drink and bicycles (and unfortunate combination in the first place, but one made comic by the fact that most of them couldn't even ride bikes to begin with). The there was the Soviet state, which organised the largest theft in history of some two-and-a-half million works of art and the like, most of which, like Priam's treasure, have never been returned.

The real criminals had become the state, whether Nazi or communist. The people were the small league stuff, or even accessories to the fact.

WE, THE PEOPLE

One thing I was very lucky in was in the two men who taught me German history. The first was **David Blackbourn**. It was from him that I got my first taste of a modern German history that wasn't just a story that went from Bismarck to Belsen. The other teacher was **Richard Evans**.

The story I want to tell sounds like it's a story against him: it's not. After one pretty heated seminar, a group of us retired upstairs to the college bar to continue the debate. What, after all, could be more fitting than to argue over some German history whilst drinking beer? It was during that discussion that Professor Evans firmly insisted that he didn't expect to see the Berlin Wall come down in his lifetime. That was in the spring of 1989.

The point is this: no one expected it, least of all the throngs of ordinary people who made their way into the West after, in the words of one man, '28 years and 91 days'. One wag pinned a note on the wall: 'Stalin is dead, Europe lives.'

Why did it happen when it did? One answer is the brutal absurdity of the wall itself: how on earth did it last so long? The answer was, of course, brutal repression and the impossibility of opposition in *Stasiland.*

Behind that oppression was Soviet power. Soviet forces had put down the East German people in 1953, had crushed the Hungary Rising in 1956 and (with their Warsaw Pact satellites) ended Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring in 1968. The East German constitution proclaimed the DDR was 'for ever and irrevocably allied' with the USSR. By 1989, something had changed.

For many in modern Russia, **Mikhail Gorbachev** is man reviled. In the rest of Europe, though, he deserves to be remembered as a hero. There might be number of reasons why de serves to be so regarded, but we are concerned with one. On October 7th 1989, Gorbachev visited East Berlin to mark the 40th anniversary of the DDR's birth. It was during that visit that Gorbachev told the East German leader, **Erich Honecker** (pictured with Gorbachev, above), that the Soviet forces would no longer be used to suppress protests in the DDR. Just as importantly, that fact was (deliberately) leaked to western news sources (Gorbachev also encouraged other communist leaders to get rid of Honecker too).

Meanwhile, something else was happening in Hungary. Back in May, some Hungarians had begun (literally and metaphorically) cutting the wire that sealed off the border with Austria. Hungary was common holiday destination for East Germans. In the summer of 1989, some began to take advantage of the new order by escaping across the opening border. By early autumn, East Germans were massed in Budapest. It was then that the new reform-minded Hungarian government decided to let the Germans leave officially. The East German prison had a hole blown in its virtual wall. By October, some 50,000 had escaped.

Not that the prison guards, the SED and the *Stasi*, were minded to give up the communist ghost any time soon. Local elections in May had been rigged as usual. When the Chinese regime brutally suppressed protests in Tiananmen Square, the East German government applauded loudly. Protests in East Germany were still met with arrests and police violence.

Up until October, that is. Already, in Leipzig, there had been Monday prayer meetings in the Church of St Nicholas, which were in fact protests against the regime. By late September, they had become crowds of thousands; the week before Gorbachev arrived those crowds were perhaps 20,000 strong.

The regime had been unwilling to do a Tiananmen Square before Gorbachev came, or had simply been unable to cope with the crowds that now gathered on Karl-Marx-Platz, by St Nicholas's. On October 9th, estimates had it that 70,000 gathered. Either some party bosses told their forces not to intervene, or their forces lacked the will, or they simply felt overwhelmed. Whichever, the protest went ahead peacefully. Soon, those demonstrations attracted crowds of 300,000.

Honecker was dead meat. His replacement, Egon Krenz, who some argue was responsible for the fact that the East German regime did not resort to force, was in the concessions business. The border with Hungary was opened.

By then, though, the flood tide was up. On November 4th, a massive demonstration was parading through East Berlin: 'We are the people' was the chant. Five days later, mired in chaos, the wall, as if by some miracle, opened.

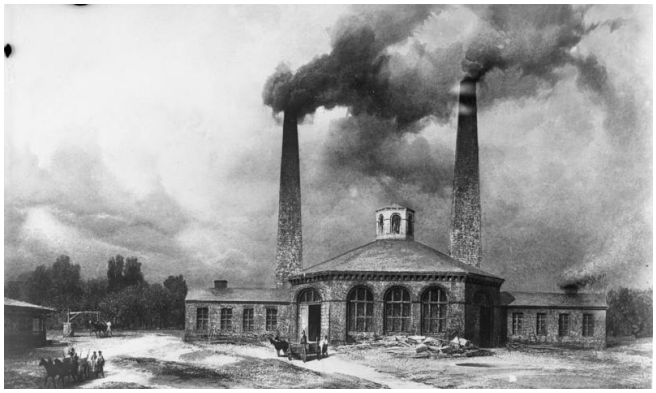
The irony is that many of the first protestors didn't want reunification. But, the people did, and the tide of history was not for stopping. This was most graphically illustrated in Berlin. Well before formal reunification, U-Bahn trains that had once sped through empty, ghost-like East Berlin stations now stopped, and took passengers West. The gates had opened and Berliners were uniting: Germany followed. The people, finally, won.

MORE LOW LIFE, WHERE THERE WERE JEWS, AND NOW THERE ARE HIPSTERS

The **Spandauer Vorsdadt** is the area north of Alexanderplatz and Unter den Linden. Before re-unification it was a run down area few ventured into; since, it has become decidedly hip, if also a tourist magnet.

It all starts with the **Hackescher Höfe**. These courtyards were what much of pre-war Berlin was about, a maze of commerce conducted beneath the view of the better sort (except when they deigned to descend, because that was where the fun was to be had). We mentioned Zille (left): this was his Berlin.

This is, though, a part of the city hunted by ghosts. This was a Jewish quarter. The first hint comes around the Hackescher Höfe, in the form of brass pated blocks: memorials of the victims of Nazism laid all over Germany. The area around was beyond the city walls, and thus became a port of first call for immigrants. It also saw one of Berlin's first great industrial developments, the **Borsig Werke** (below), making steam locomotives. Typical of the big cities of the industrial revolution, **Scheunenviertel** became one of Berlin's worst slums and a home to left-wing activism. That activism saw the great strike of 1868 and the general strike that saw the defeat of the **Käpp Putsch** (an attempted right wing coup in 1920). Between the wars, it began to attract artists and writers, including the likes of **Berthold Brecht** and **Marlene Dietrich** (if those names mean nothing to you, it means it was a seriously hip part of what was then the hippest city on earth).



Jewish, radical, and hip: what was there for the Nazis to like? In fact, the Great Depression had already weakened it. When Franz von Papen's short-lived right-wing government of 1932 shut down Prussia's SPD-led state government, there were no protests; the same applied when the Nazis seized power, banned the communists and the socialists, and the trade unions.

The Nazis took advantage, pulling much of it down along with the respectable Jewish areas nearby. But some of its heritage survives. The splendidly named **Handwerkervereinshaus**, on **Sophienstrasse**, saw the foundation of the Spartacists in 1918. The **Sophienkirche**, the only central Berlin church to survive the war intact, was built in 1712 on land donated to cash strapped by Protestants by the city's Jews.

Where Sophienstrasse meets Grosser Hamburger Strasse we find the site of the city's oldest Jewish cemetery: it dates from 1672, but in 1943 it was destroyed and is now just open grassed land. There was once its first Jewish old people's home. The Nazis used it as a detention centre, and some 55.000 were held there before being deported east to the camps.

Nearby was the wealthy Jewish area off Oranienburger Strasse. The growing wealth of the city's Jewish community saw the building of its **Neue Synagoge** (below). The respectability of the 'better sort' of Berlin's Jews might be best illustrated by the fact that when the synagogue was inaugurated in1866, Bismarck himself was present.

As mentioned above, there had been Jews in Berlin since its earliest days. Throughout the history of medieval and early modern Europe, Jews were subject to persecution. Berlin was no exception. Persecution came with the plague in 1349 and 1446. In 1510, fifty Jews were burned or tortured to death. Then, and again in 1573, Jews were thrown out of the city. They returned in 1671; by 1712, Berlin had its first synagogue. It was an order of 1737 that concentrated Jews in Scheunenviertel. Over the next hundred-odd years the rights of Jews increased until, in 1869, they had full rights as citizens.

Berlin was the most Jewish of Germany's cities: Jews made up about 4% of the city's population (they made up about one third of Germany's Jews). Anti-Semitism underwent a revival in the late 19th century. In part that was due to its revival in France following a stock market crash in 1871, which was blamed upon Jewish financiers. Most of all, though, it was a response to a new wave of immigration as Jews fled pogroms (organized campaigns of persecution) in the Russian empire. These ***Ostjuden*** stood out.

In 1880, **Adolf Stöcker** won a seat in the Reichstag in Berlin on an anti-Semitic ticket, becoming known as the 'uncrowned king of Berlin'. However, both Kaisers Wilhelm I and Wilhelm II viewed him with suspicion (though in Kaiser Bill's case, only after initial support). The historian **Heinrich von Treitschke** believed the Jews to be 'Germany's misfortune', teeming over the border from 'their inexhaustible Polish cradle'. This hardly made Germany unusual: Jewish immigration from the east aroused anti-Semitism in much of Europe and the United States. Anti-Semitism was far more serious in both Poland and France.

Germany's long-established Jews were assimilated: they spoke German, saw themselves as German Jews and the better-off ones had become part of the German establishment.

When Walther Rathenau ('goddam son of a Jewish sow') was murdered by right wing extremists; however, massive crowds attended his funeral, appalled and horrified (above). Jews like Rathenau were well off, highly assimilated, and very German.

The Nazis were violently anti-Semitic and hatred of the Jews was a dark passion for many of the Nazi faithful (none more so than Hitler himself). It's also true to say that many Germans were anti-Semitic (though probably in the same way that most people in 1970s Britain were lazily, and even unthinkingly racist). There is, however, little evidence to show that the 37% of the electorate who voted Nazi in July 1932 did so because of anti-Semitism, (many probably did so despite).

In the first couple of years of their rule, the Nazis soft-pedalled their anti-Semitism in the main. They did the same for the Berlin Olympics in 1936. However, in 1933, they banned Jews from the civil service, teaching, universities and judiciary. In 1935, they went much further. The **Nuremburg Laws** deprived all Jews of German citizenship and banned them from marrying non-Jews.

In the years after the Olympics, the Nazi regime radicalised itself. By 1937, Jews were being forced to sell of their businesses for a song (the so-called **Aryanisation** process). But things took a turn for the far, far worse with ***Kristallnacht***, the Night of the Broken Glass (9th-10th November 1938; the 9th agauin). In Berlin, 36 Jews were killed and 23 of the city's 29 synagogues were destroyed. One example was the Fasesenstrasse Synagogue, in the west of the city (off Ku'damm). Closed in 1936, it was finally destroyed in *Kristallnacht*.

The Neue Synagoge was broken into, and some precious objects (including the Torah) were set alight, but a local police officer **Lt Otto Bellgardt** took his gun out and put a stop to them.

After, Jews were forced to pay fines for the damage caused by the Nazis. Aryanisation was now completed. Jews were banned from the remaining professions, given a curfew, made to take the names Sarah or Israel and wear a yellow Star of David. Deportations would soon follow.

The Neue Synagoge was finally closed in 1940. The old building (below) was wrecked by Allied bombing.

By then, only a few highly skilled armaments workers were left of Berlin's Jews. Most had been sent east: few survived.

I, remember standing, standing by the wall… Nazi airport becomes the symbol of freedom around the world, some Turks (well, lots of Turks)… and David Bowie comes to Berlin

Everywhere you go in the centre, you are never far from the ghost of the Berlin Wall. Looking from the south of the city, the wall came from the Spree in the East, near where we are staying. Just beyond there, on the old East Berlin side of the city, but on the western side of the Spree, is **Treptower Park**.

To understand modern Russia, the Cold War and modern Europe, you need to go to Treptower

That's certainly what the German Army think. All new soldiers, as a part of their education, visit, amongst other things, a concentration camp and a **Treptower Soviet Memorial**: it was the main Soviet memorial in East Germany and is one of the great Soviet war memorials.

It commemorates the soldiers who lost their lives in the battle for Berlin in April-May 1945: five thousand Soviet soldiers are buried there. Earlier, we thought about the dark side of the Soviet invasion. There is another side. I suspect almost all historians would agree that were it not for the war with Soviet Union, Germany might never have lost the war (and certainly would not have lost it in 1945). Knowing, as we do, the scale of German ambitions in the east, many millions of lives were saved by the Red Army.

The price the Soviet Union paid was almost beyond belief. Something around 25 million Soviet citizens died in the war. The racial war embarked upon by Germany in 1941 was like no other in history, when we combine its barbarity, its ambition and, simply, its scale. For sure, Stalin and his commanders were way too careless of human life. Regard for human lives was hardly Stalin's long suit, nor communism's come to that. The battle for Berlin cost far more Soviet lives than it need have done, primarily thanks to Stalin's decision to force his rival army commanders to turn it into a competition to see who could get there first. Nonetheless, that should detract from the scale of sacrifice made by ordinary Russian soldiers in that battle, let alone the four years of the bloodiest campaign in military history that preceded it. And that's not even taking into account the Soviet civilians who gave, and lost, and suffered so much.

The memorial, the work of Yakov Belopsky, is a masterpiece of early Soviet memorial architecture and socialist realism (the Soviet style especially associated with Stalin). It was opened in 1949, the same year as the DDR was created; it was created from granite and marble taken from the demolished Reich Chancellery.

OF THE CANDY BOMBER, CHALKY WHITE AND THE START OF THE COLD WAR

Heading back from Treptower, on the eastern side of the Spree, is the **East Side Gallery**. This is an extant part of the Berlin Wall, which was covered in political and satirical murals created just after the wall fell. The most famous shows the then leaders of the Soviet Union and East Germany, Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker, locked in a passionate kiss: God, help me survive this deadly love, it says.

From near there, the wall left the Spree, and headed to Checkpoint Charlie. South of there is **Templehof** (below, in the Nazi era). Built in 1923, it was Berlin's major airport. The Nazis built the buildings we see there now between 1936-41 (they are one of the most important surviving examples of Nazi architecture). The great eagle that resided above it was moved, but much of it has remained intact (for once).

In defeat, the Allies divided Germany into four zones. By 1948, the three western zones had been united; the Russian controlled eastern zone remained separate. Germany's Western Zone was gradually acquiring political institutions, and the new generation of leaders were emerging (the likes of **Konrad Adenauer**, the conservative leader who as chancellor did most to create post-war West Germany, or the socialist future major of Berlin and later Chancellor, **Wily Brandt**). It was becoming possible to envisage some kind of future statehood for Germany, perhaps.

But therein lay the problem: what sort of state? It's not often you'll find me saying Stalin had a point, but this is one of those occasions where you can kind of see where he was coming from. In both world wars Russia had been invaded by and lost huge swathes of territory to the Germans (think of Treptower). That the Russians might be nervous about a resurgent Germany was, thus, pretty understandable.

By 1948, the Cold War was pretty much underway. The states of what was now being called Eastern Europe were either under Stalinist dictatorships, or about to be, behind what Churchill called the **Iron Curtain**. To add to that, that year saw Stalin launch a new purge in the Soviet Union, which soon spilled over into the East. Paranoia was hardly in short supply in Moscow. Meanwhile, US a policy had become markedly more hostile to the USSR. In 1947 the **Truman Doctrine** made that official policy. It

promised that the US would stop any further advances by communism. In 1948, the **Marshall Plan** gave economic help to European economies in return for those states committing themselves to open economies and democratic politics. When Stalin refused to allow his Eastern European satellites to participate, the Marshall Plan in effect defined Western Europe.

This brings us to Germany. The Western allies wanted the German economy to recover, thus enabling Germany to pay its own way. Attempts to get the Russians on board had got nowhere. Thus, the Western allies wanted Germany to get Marshall Plan money: to do that, if the Soviets weren't going to play ball, necessitated separate economic arrangements in the west. Then there was the problem of the old Reichsmark, now a discredited currency. The solution was a new currency. The problem with that was political. The right to issue currencies was, around the world, the preserve of independent states: the creation of a new West German currency might be seen as tantamount to a declaration of statehood (the Soviets would take it as such). Furthermore, it was also tantamount to a declaration of the separation of East and West Germany. Once again, the Soviets would take it as such.

They did. The question for Stalin was how to react. The obvious target for retaliation was Berlin. Just like Germany, Berlin was divided into four zones in 1945. The fact was, though, that Berlin was wholly inside the Eastern zone. In retaliation to the new Western currency, the Soviets created an alternative in the East. They now demanded that the western zones of Berlin used their new *Ostmark*. When the West refused, Stalin decided to impose a blockade on Berlin. The West would either be compelled to hand Berlin over to the Soviets, or back down.

To try and supply the city by land might provoke war. Thus it was the British and Americans decided to supply the city by air. There were two dangers. In the first place, some kind of incident could arise (such as the shooting down of plane) that might provoke war. The other was that an airlift wouldn't work.

It did. It was tough on West Berlin, but the city just about got through it. It was Templehof that became Berlin's lifeline. In the process, the relationship between the Western allies and the Berliners (and at one remove, the Germans) began to be transformed. The occupiers were no longer that, but allies: 78 airmen were killed supplying West Berlin, as the former occupiers became West Berlin's defenders; star airmen like the **Candy Bomber** (as the US airman, above), who dropped sweets attached to little parachutes was known, or Britain's own Squadron Leader Lt Chalky White, became popular heroes. And, in the process, views of Germany changed. West Berliners were now the plucky westerners on the front line of freedom.

WELCOME TO STASILAND: THE ANTI-FASCIST PROTECTION BARRIER, THE DEATH STRIP, THE STORY OF MIRIAM & DOWN IN THE BUNKERS… AND A POTTED ANALYSIS OF THE JOYS OF COMMUNISM (PARTS TWO AND THREE)

In *1984*, one requirement the Party has of its members is the practice of doublethink. Orwell's satire on totalitarianism was never more telling than in East Germany.

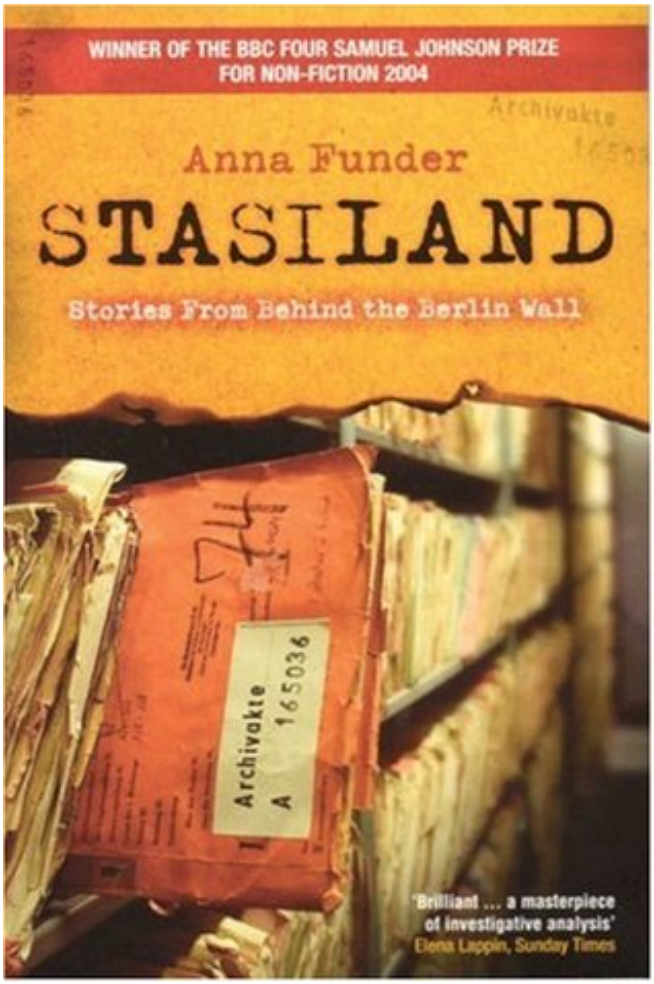
The people of East Germany did not, in the end, universally embrace the joys of socialism. If you head north of Checkpoint Charlie along Freidrichstrasse, you cross **Leipziger Strasse**. For two days back in 1953, Leipziger Strasse was the focal point of a wave of protests that had begun back in Stalinalle. The immediate cause was a changed in 'work norms': shorn of the Orwellian newspeak that meant longer hours for the same pay.

By the time the protesters were in the city centre, they were demanding to speak to their leaders. Minions emerged, but by then the protesters wanted more: they wanted freedom. By the time the government made concessions, it was too late. All over East Germany workers rose up: a crowd of 100,000 gathered on Leipziger Strasse the next day. Then, Soviet tanks appeared. After fighting for much of the day, 267 protesters, 116 policemen and 118 Soviet soldiers were dead. In the aftermath, 92 Berliners were shot without trial,14 tried and executed, and thousands arrested and imprisoned. 18 Soviet soldiers were executed for supporting the demonstrators.

The reality of East Germany wasn't hard to work out. Its border with the West was heavily fortified. The only way out for East Germans who didn't want to live under tyranny, or who wanted the chance of a better life, was to escape via Berlin. Between 1949 and 1961 three million citizens of East Germany fled west, 20% of the population. As migrants always are they were among the brightest and best, many well educated professionals. The people of the socialist state were voting with their feet.

The East German leadership knew this couldn't last. They put pressure on Moscow to allow them to seal off East Berlin. Khrushchev, the Soviet leader, believed that the new president of the United Sates could be forced to get out of Berlin. When he was proved wrong, he finally gave permission for the wall to be built.

Overnight, on August 13th 1961, barbed wire fences were erected, and U-Bahn and S-Bahn lines or stations were shut. There was little people could do. In those early days, some escaped to the West, even jumping out of windows or breaching the wire. In the months and years to come, after many escapes, the wall became a fortress: impenetrable to all but a lucky few. The wall itself became permanent. It was, in effect, two walls: the space between it became commonly known as the death strip. Patrolled by border guards and dogs, watchtowers and guns, anyone attempting escape was liable to be shot on sight. Between 1961 and 1989, over 200 people were killed attempting to escape.



One of the best books about the old East Germany is ***Stasiland***, by the Australian journalist Anna Funder. In it, she traced the stories of those whose lives were blighted by the East German secret police, the ***Stasi***, and those who served. The old DDR was, in essence, the ultimate surveillance state. The *Stasi* watched, bugged, intimidated and, most all, had informers. In the end, it is thought hand something like one in every seven East Germans were somehow working for them.

One woman who ended up in the nightmarish world of the *Stasi* was Miriam Weber. Well, she wasn't a woman at first; she was a schoolgirl. She was only 16 when, with a friend, she made leaflets using a child's printing set, attacking the lack of freedom of speech in East Germany. Both were arrested, and put in solitary confinement for a month. Upon her release, she took a train to Berlin and on New Year's Eve, 1968, tried to get across the wall. She was almost across when a trip-wire caught her. She was given 18 months. For the rest of her until the Wall came down she was, in effect, blacklisted by the *Stasi*.

By 1980, she was married to Charlie, who was also on the Stasi's list. Neither was allowed to go to college, or get decent jobs. Their home was regularly searched, but they coped. In the Orwellian police-bureaucracy of East Germany, it was legal to apply for an exit visa, but applying could see people arrested for libelling the state. They had applied to leave the DDR. In 1980, Charlie was arrested for this: Miriam never saw him again.

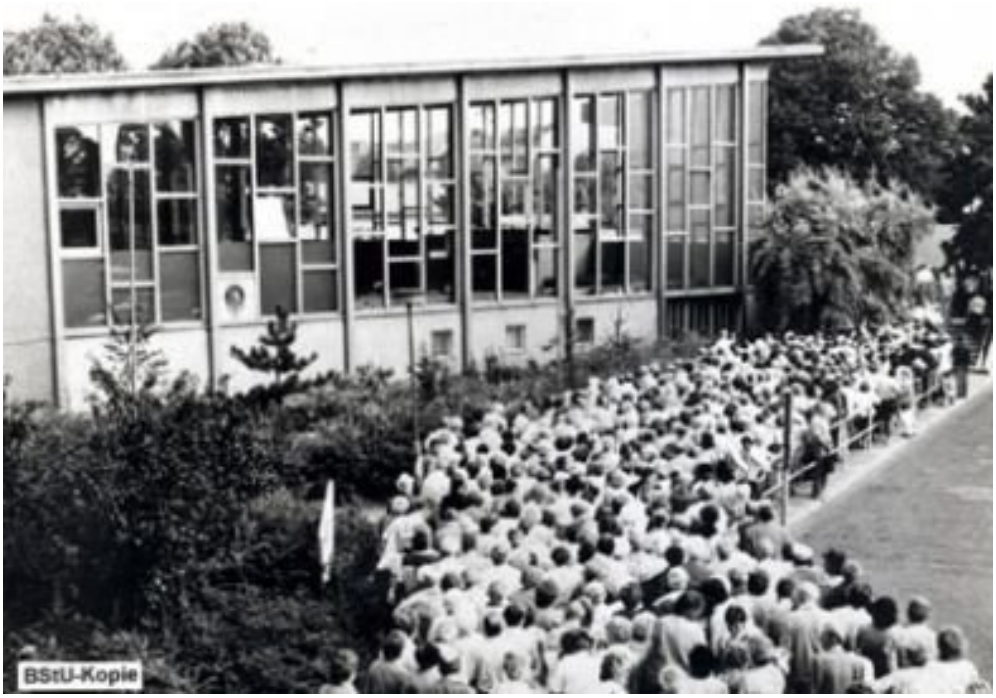
She was told that he had killed himself. His funeral and burial were even watched over by the *Stasi*, and then she found out that it might not have been his body at all: records said that he had been cremated. The Wall, and the *Stasi*, blighted her life. That was life in East Germany.

The Wall followed the demarcation between East and West with a cold precision, even cutting through houses (quite a few East Berliners were evicted; others had their windows boarded up). To the north of the city, it divided **Bernauer Strasse**, below, down the middle. There, the **Berlin Wall Memorial** preserves a short strip of the wall as it was, death strip and all, and the **Wall Documentation Centre** preserves the bitter memory of it.

Along with the tragedies that came with the Wall, there were some absurdities too. The transport, water and fuel systems for the city were not built along Cold War lines. Thus, up until the 1980s, the S-Bahn system in West Berlin was actually run by the East. The Orwellian absurdity of this system was never more evident than on the southern side of the Spree at **Bahnhof Freidrichstrasse**, left. It was, for all the years of the Wall, the main crossing point for Western visitors to the East; regular trains crossed into West Berlin. To stop its own people getting the wrong trains, it was pretty much the most heavily guarded railway station in Europe, the western bound stations sealed by an array of guards and checkpoints. Beside the station was what Berliners called the **Tränenpalast** (the **Palace of Tears**), below, the scene of many farewells, where travellers to the west presented their travel documents.

Heading north, around Gesundbrunnen S-Bahn and U-Bahn stations, are series of underground bunkers and passages known as the **Gesundbrunnen Bunkers**, run by Berliner Unterwelten. There is a large World War Two public bunker, used as a bomb shelter; it was also the scene of the suicides of women who felt they would rather die than be raped by Russian soldiers. It is full of artefacts (including an Enigma machine), none more poignant than what was left in the pockets of two *Volksturm*: an old man of 69, and a boy of 15. There too are the remains of an anti-aircraft tower that withstood the final Soviet assault. A different World War Two bunker leads on to some Cold War bunkers and tunnels, designed as a shelter for West Berliners in case of a nuclear attack, and routes blocked off by the East Germans to prevent escapes underground. The last set of tunnels were ones dug under the Berlin Wall by East Germans desperate to escape: around 300 people escaped to the West in this way. Others were less fortunate.

One simple fact never fails to hit home when I think of the Berlin Wall: the brutal absurdity of a state that was so hated by its people that one in five fled until, in desperation, that state turned itself into a giant prison. That was the reality of East Germany.

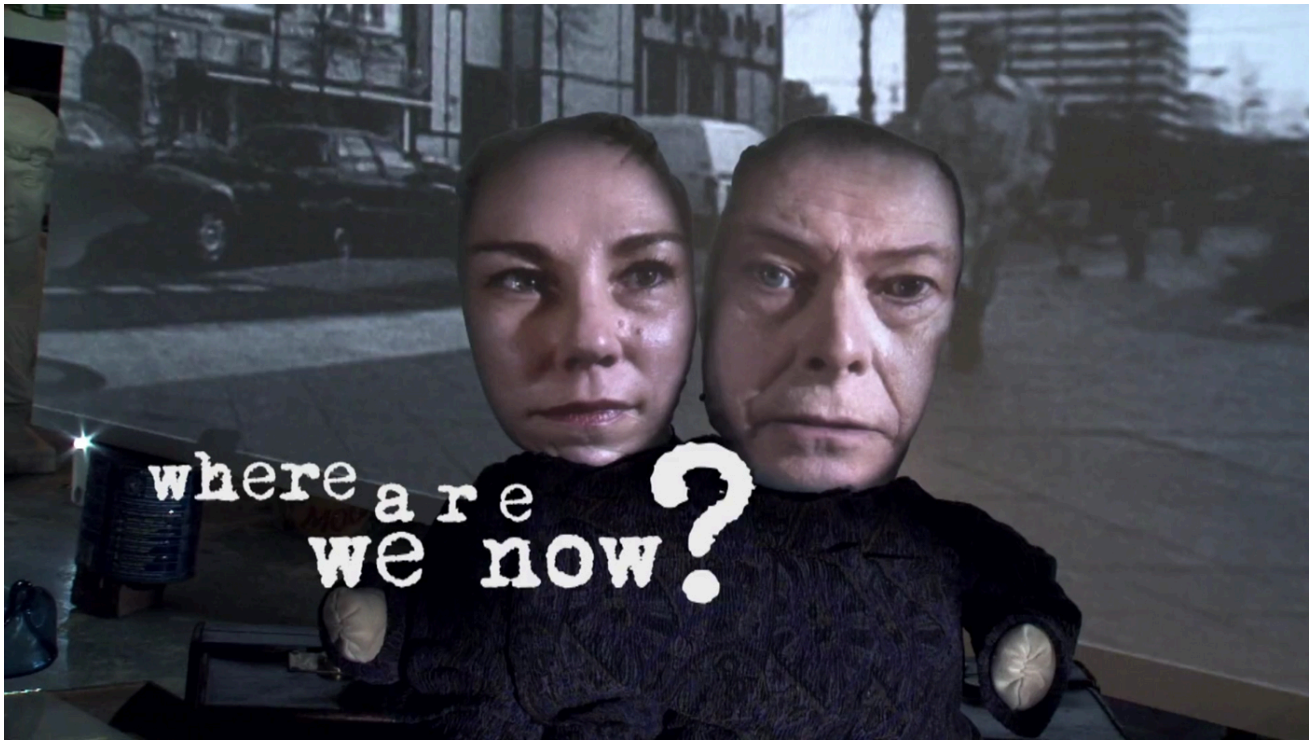


CHECKPOINT CHARLIE, ICH BIN EIN BERLINER & MR GORBACHEV, TEAR DOWN THIS WALL

If the Berlin Wall was the symbol of the Cold War, the symbol of the divided city was **Checkpoint Charlie**, the main gateway in the wall, famously emblazoned with the words YOU ARE NOW LEAVING THE AMERCAN SECTOR. As such, it became indelibly associated with the intrigue and espionage in both fact, and in fiction. It was also the scene of several border incidents, the most serious of which was in October 1961 (below), as tanks on both sides faced each other down with genuine menace. The border post you now see is a replica of the original and the scene of more selfies per square foot than just about anywhere else in the world. There is a museum, but in truth it's a bit of a mess as I recall.

The symbolism of the wall was, of course, a gift to western propaganda. Two famous visits by US presidents make that point better than most. In 1963, **President Kennedy** visited Berlin, receiving a rapturous reception and hailing West Berlin from the Schöneberg Rathaus as the front line of freedom, famously claiming free men around the world would proudly state, like him, '*Ich bin ein Berliner'*. Over twenty years later **Ronald Reagan**, famously challenged the Soviet leader, calling upon him in a ringing phrase: 'Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall'.

West Berlin also acted as a showcase for the joys of capitalism, with its well-stocked shops, ironically for a city that attracted the dissidents of West Germany. Just as powerful as its words was its TV, and perhaps most of all its adverts, which at least enabled East Berliners to dream the Western dream.



AND WE KISSED, AS IF NOTHING COULD FALL: BOWIE COMES TO BERLIN. ACHTUNG BABY!

Of all the weapons wielded in the Cold War, perhaps the only one as close to being as powerful as the consumerism the East Germans saw on their TV screens was what we used to call youth culture. If one drew Easterners to the lure of the capitalist mainstream, the other offered the allure of dissidence, and just being plain different.

The irony was that the Western culture that is most associated with Berlin was, in its origin, something of a rejection of the mainstream western consumer culture that came across West German TV's airwaves. However, as such alternatives often do, it would set a different agenda that would permeate culture in the East too.

In some ways it all centres on **David Bowie**. When Bowie made his surprise comeback, it was with a song called ***Where Are We Now?*** that looked back to Bowie's own past in the city. But Bowie's time in Berlin turned out to matter much more than that.

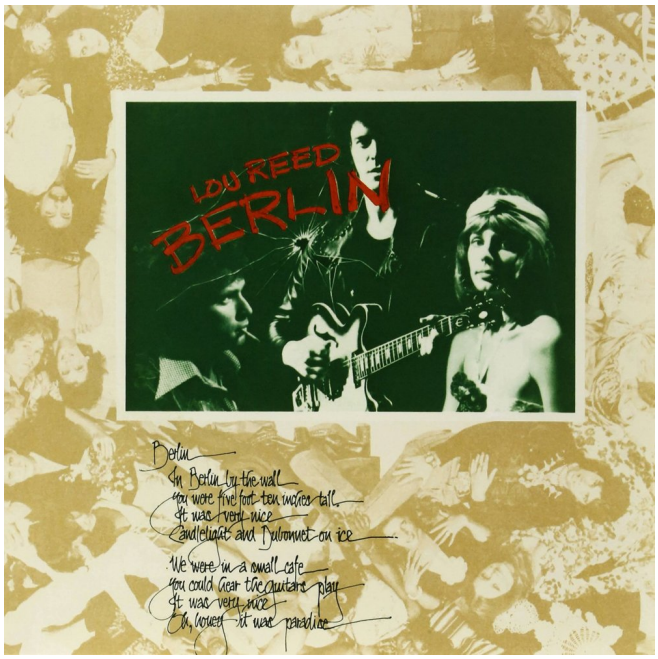
By 1976, Bowie had made it in every sense. He had become an icon in the UK, and by now was a big star in the States too. And we do mean mainstream success: duetting with the man himself on *Bing Crosby's Christmas Show* (for those of a certain age, Bing Crosby was a big time singer and movie star much loved by my parents' generation). That success had come at a price, however, in the form of a serious cocaine habit and the empty life of Hollywood royalty in the Los Angeles Bowie memorably described as 'a shithole'.

In truth, Bowie had always been somewhat outside of the mainstream. His breakthrough in Britain had coincided with his public declaration of bisexuality (and, believe me, that was a hell of a claim to make in the rabidly homophobic Britain of 1972). Musically, he owed a great deal to some American music that was definitely not mainstream.

By 1973, Bowie had made it big in Britain. Now he felt able to repay his debt to his influences. By then, **Lou Reed**, the founding father of the seminal New York band The Velvet Underground had hit on hard times: financially, musically and personally (a heroin addiction hardly helped). Bowie produced his album *Transformer*, which gave us *Perfect Day*

and *Walk on the Wild Side*. The later, a kind of hymn to the New York of Andy Warhollow life, gays and transsexuals provided a bridge to what was to follow.

When he made ***Berlin***, Reed had never even visited the city. In one sense, he didn't need to have done so. This was the Berlin of the imagination, the Berlin of cabaret, of the high Weimar days, transplanted to the 'seventies. And that Weimar Berlin, famous for its clubs, cabaret, Jazz, open homosexuality and artistic experimentation, has held a powerful sway over the imagination of artists, writers and musicians since Christopher Isherwood went there to escape the stultifying Britain of the late 'twenties (more of which anon).



The other artist Bowie had leant a helping hand to in 1973 was **Iggy Pop**. Whereas *Transformer* gave Reed a hit and helped relaunch his career, Iggy and the Stooges' *Raw Power* was not a success (though it is the better album). Nor did it get Iggy out of the mire of heroin addiction. But, he and Bowie struck up a friendship.

By the mid-'70s there were a few artists seriously experimenting with electronic music. Some came out of progressive rock, as it was known. One of those bands

was German: **Tangerine Dream**. Meanwhile, the Dusseldorf band **Kraftwerk** made electronic pop, having a 1974 hit with *Autobahn*. The sound was robotic, Germanic and indelibly cool. There must have been something in the waters of Dusseldorf, because at the same time **Neu!** were producing their famously industrial and minimalist **krautrock** with its motoric drumbeat.

Brian Eno had been a member of the other great act of the glam rock era, Roxy Music. His experimental use of synthesizers and electronics were a hallmark of their first two albums. After, he began to serious experiment with what he called ambient music and with innovative working methods. The result was heard in 1974's *Another Green World* and *Discreet Music.* By 1976, Bowie was listening hard.

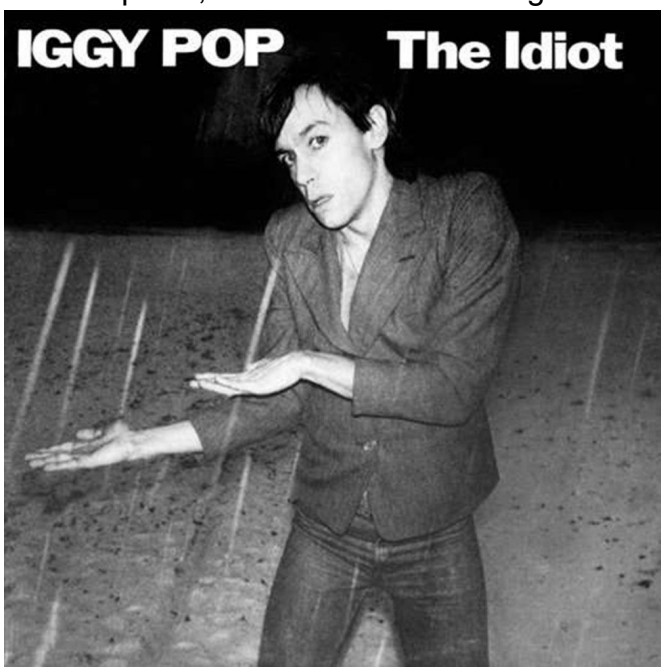
The result would be what is often known as Bowie's **Berlin trilogy**. In truth, only one was recoded pretty much entirely in Berlin, but the influence of German electronica and Berlin were certainly ever-present, particularly in the two masterpieces he released in 1977: *Low*, and *Heroes*.

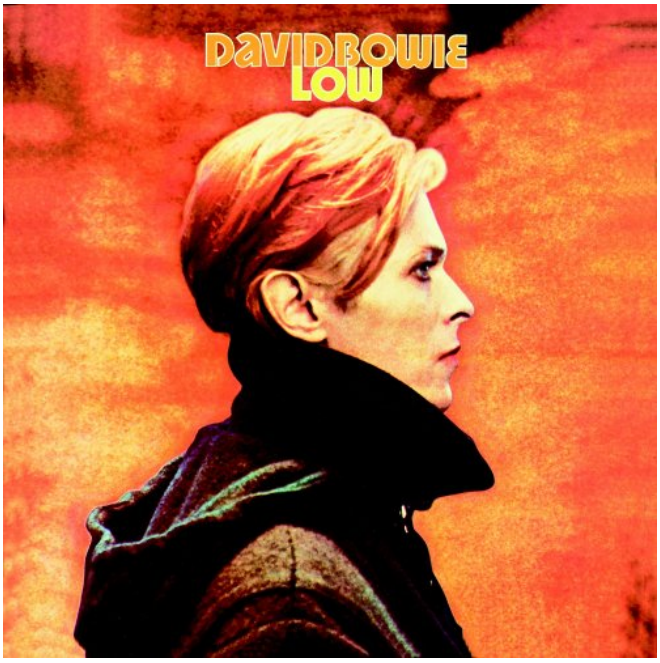
Low was, in fact, mostly recorded in France. It was at this time that Bowie, to escape the excesses of LA stardom,

moved into an apartment in Berlin's leafy Schöneberg (more anon). The idea was to clean up his act, and live a real life again in a city where no one bothered him or treated him a star. As Bowie was to put it later, live somewhere where he had to buy his own groceries.

If cleaning up his act was really the idea, he went a pretty strange way about it at first. At the same time as his new electronic music was germinating, Bowie was also producing another Iggy Pop album, similarly influenced by electronica and krautrock, *The Idiot*. So, in an attempt to clean up Bowie moved into an apartment in Europe's capital of heroin with the famously addicted Iggy Pop. And it didn't start well, as the two lived it up in its gay and transvestite bars, went clubbing at the **Dschungel** and Unlimited.

But, strangely, it did work. Bowie relished in the anonymity Berlin gave him, as he wore ordinary clothes and walked the streets unmolested. His musical reinvention had already begun. Iggy's ***The Idiot*** was itself something of a masterpiece, but that was as nothing to





Low. Bowie's one great film was Nicholas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. The original idea had been for Bowie to produce the soundtrack. The music he came up with was electronic and experimental, and was rejected. Those ideas would now return.

To make his new music Bowie teamed up with Eno, whose methods inform much of the record, especially the second side, which is most commonly seen as the more revolutionary. In truth, both sides were.

In many ways, the dominant sound of the first side was its electronically treated drum, the likes of which had never been heard before (the invention of the album's producer, **Tony Visconti**). That first side gave us recognisably popular music, influenced by krautrock, dance music and rock, except in that it had been cut up into pieces. There were instrumentals, other songs seemed like mere fragments. And then there were the lyrics, such as they were, which seemed throwaway hymns to isolation. Even its most conventional song, *Be My Wife*, has as its key line 'Sometimes you get so lonely'. Its big hit, *Sound and Vision* crooned:

> Stay, blinds drawn all day
> Nothing to do, nothing to say.

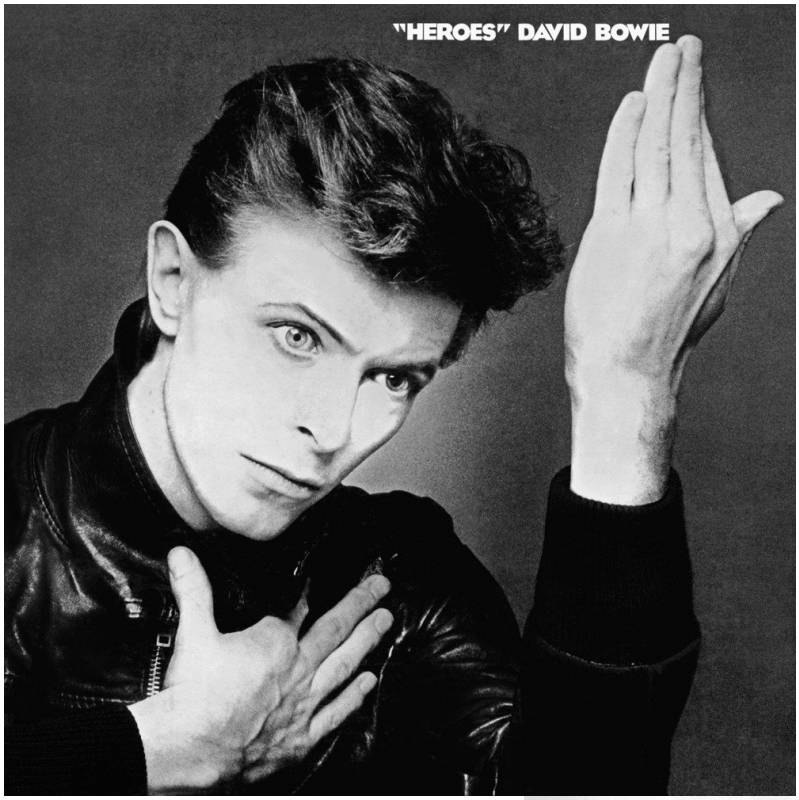
And then there was side two, in which there was nothing like songs at all. And here was Berlin's influence, in *Warszawa*, mostly written by Eno (based upon a four note loop played by Visconti's infant son), Bowie added a vocal in a strange invented East European language, that seemed redolent of war and Cold War. *Subterraneans* seemed to be the electronic ghost of the clubs Christopher Isherwood would have frequented almost 50 years previously, of the Cold War bunkers that lay beneath.

Back to Berlin for a moment. In the days of Isherwood, **Potsdamer Platz** (above) was one of the vibrant hearts of the city, known for its shopping, cafes and clubs. Badly battered by the war, in the early days of the divided city it formed the meeting point of the British, American and Soviet zones: as such, it became the black market's heartland. East and west even mounted rival billboards: fittingly, for this story, the Western one was electronic.

But then came the Wall. The Eastern side was cleared entirely, and only a couple of battered relics of buildings survived in its Western half. Five minutes south of Potsdamer Platz is a former theatre, the **Meistersaal**, above, which by 1977 was better known as **Hansa Studios**. By the summer of 1977, Bowie was recording there with, once more, Visconti and Eno.

By now, he was on a creative high. Once again, side two of the album was dominated by instrumentals, which were heavily influenced by the city. ***Neukölln*** hymned the suburb occupied by the Turkish 'guest workers', the great wave of post-war immigrants who came to solve the city's labour shortage and who never left (a musical influence that would feature strongly on the third part of the trilogy, *Lodger*).

Side one, this time, did feature songs, though they were radical in their instrumentation and structure. The brilliance of the whole record in part revolved around the clash between Eno's innovative, but very methodical approach, alongside Visconti's willingness to place Bowie and his musicians in challenging new artistic situations. For example, the technically brilliant guitarist Robert Fripp (with Bowie and Eno at Hansa, left) was asked to make his contributions on the first take, never having heard the music before and without sight of any notation; an industrial rhythm sound turned out to come from a metal ashtray. And then there was Bowie's inspiration.



a simultaneous industrial drone and yet soaring wall of electronic music. While Bowie sat with his lyrics, Visconti set up three microphones: one 20cm from his singer, one 6m away and one a full 15m away across the echo laden natural and theatrical space. As Bowie's volume increased, the more distant mikes would open in turn, forcing him to sing up and out (listen, you'll see what I mean).

Hansa was on Köthenstrasse; alongside it ran the Berlin Wall:

I, I can remember
Standing by the wall.

Having set up, Visconti went outside and walked along the street with his girlfriend. There, from the control room, Bowie saw the couple kiss, by the wall itself:

And we kissed
As though nothing could fall.

Two hours later, the song was finished. It became the unofficial anthem of Berlin, of the divided city:

We can be heroes,
Just for one day.

This is never better illustrated by the genesis of the album's most celebrated song, its title track, ***Heroes***. It was one of the album's first recordings. At the start of one particular day, it was an instrumental until, sat at the piano. Bowie came up with a title and sketched a few words. The instrumental sound was very much the sound of Bowie's 1977,

Years later, as the Wall was coming down metaphorically and then actually, **U2** would come to Hansa with their producer, Brian Eno. It was in part homage to *Heroes*. It was also an attempt to recapture their mojo and, as Bowie had done, remake themselves that led them there. The spirit of Berlin and 1977 suffuse ***Achtung Baby!*** from direct references such as *Zoo Station* to the album's very own rock anthem, *One*. It was *One* that broke the artistic logjam, and it was in substantial part written in Hansa. It was, in fact, an embittered love song about a failing relationship. But, by the time it was being played live, it had become an anthem of the new Europe. The live show itself was also suffused with the Berlin experience, from the Trabants strung up on the lighting rigs, to its live reports from besieged, divided and war-torn Sarajevo, or its innovative and post-modernist use of electronica, TV and big screens (it even featured a virtual Lou Reed singing on a version of the *Transformer* song *Satellite of Love*).

If Potsdamer Platz, shorn of its electronic billboard and all, was a forlorn sight in the divided city, so was **Leipziger Platz**. What had once been a beautiful early 18th century landmark was destroyed, first by war, and then when it was levelled to make the death strip of the Wall. Perhaps the fact that it is now a place of drab, modern offices is symbolic of something. Meanwhile, Potsdamer Platz is born anew. It has U-Bahn and S-Bahn stations, a whole new infrastructure. Of the two buildings that survived, the Weinhaus Huth has gone and the emblematic Hotel Esplanade is incorporated into a modern restaurant aimed at the corporates and mega-rich that now populate the area. Global capitalism it is, then

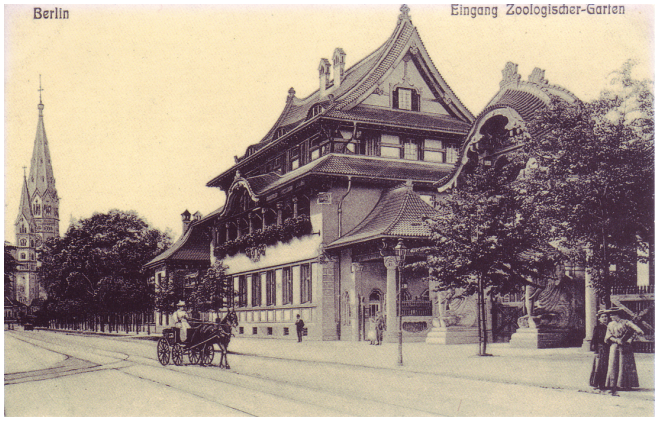
WEST END GIRLS… BOYS… WAR CRIMINALS… HEROES

The west was always the posher bit of the city and, in part, perhaps less interesting (though there are some lovely places to live). But, it still has its stories to tell. You will head out to Schöneberg, where JFK told us he was a Berliner from its Rathuas; or the Hauptstrasse where Bowie lived.

ZOO STATION, KU'DAMM AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM (IT'S ALRIGHT, IT'S ALRIGHT)

The **Bahnhof Zoo**, like many a station area, was pretty rundown at the time when U2 recorded *Zoo Station*. From thereon, though, the west quickly went upmarket.

In the west, the great villas of Berlin's wealthy were joined by the embassies of the great nations (few survived the war). And, if all great 19th century houses needed a royal park, they also needed a zoo: like all the great zoos, **Berlin Zoo** (below) became a fashionable haunt in the Wilhemine period and thereafter.



Beyond the zoo had become the haunt of the rich, and houses on the 'English model'. Prime sites such as Grunewald and beyond to the lakes and forests were the home of a number of rich Jews; by 1938, almost all had sold up and emigrated. It was the Nazis and their fellow travellers who moved in. Most notably, Goebbels lived in some style out west. It was there that Goebbels and Goering held lavish parties to mark the 1936 Olympics.

In the war, the west of the city wasn't always so much of a target, though the zoo was hit. The first British bombs came in 1941; in 1943, 700 animals were killed. By 1945, rumours abounded of escaped tigers and crocodiles. The Russians shot the last gorilla. The last elephant was driven mad by the bombing.

Close by the Bahnhof Zoo is Breitscheidplatz (left), home of the **Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche**. This was one of Berlin's great landmarks, until the RAF came in 1943.

The church now stands as as memorial, as does Breitscheidplatz, the site of the 2016 terrorist attack on a Berlin Christmas market. As such, this place is very much on the front line of civilisation.

Civilsation itself began with markets, where people traded, talked and drew up common laws, measurements and currencies. By attacking a market, the terrorists made clear, it seems to me, that they are opposed to the very essence of civilisation.

Just off here we find **Ku'damm** and **Tauentzienstrasse**, these days Berlin's main shopping drag. In the days of the Cold War it was making a statement about the joys of capitalism, now it's making one about civilisation itself. At the northern end of Tauentzienstrasse is **KaDeWe** (below), the largest department store in Europe.

It was opened in 1907 and became the symbol of the modern city. Before coming to power the Nazis had a distinctly anti-capitalist element, and big department stores were very much in their sights. KaDeWe was Jewish owned, and as such an obvious target. Under their policy of Aryanisation it was seized; then, in 1943, an American fighter plane crashed into it. When it was rebuilt in 1950, almost 200,000 Berliners came to its official reopening. If any building became the symbol of the joys of Western capitalism in West Berlin, KaDeWe was it.

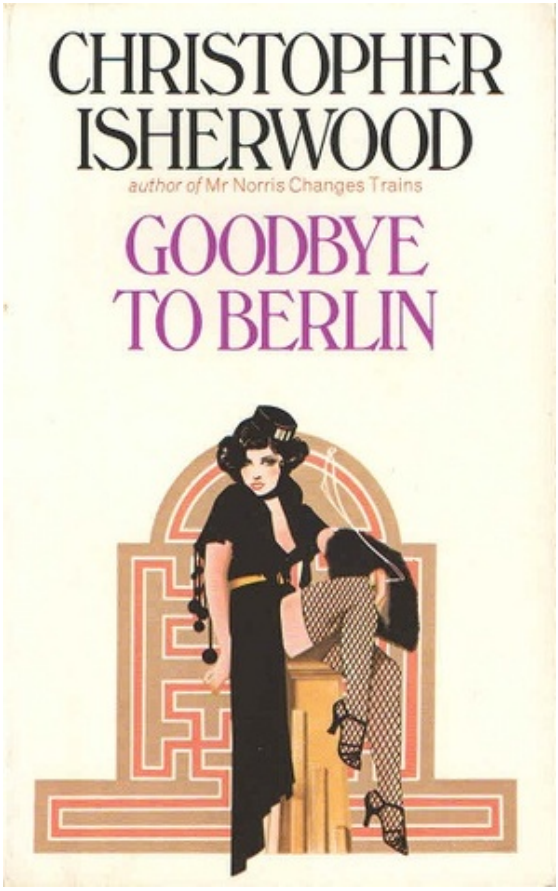
Outside the store is **Wittenbergplatz U-Bahn station**, a restored mix of neo-classical frontage and 'twenties kitsch; off Ku'damm is **The Story of Berlin** museum, which gives us an introduction to the city. Under the museum is a Cold War nuclear bunker.

THE JOYS OF HYPERINFLATION, THEN GOODBYE TO BERLIN AND ALL THAT

Christopher Isherwood came from a conventional enough upper middle class family, but after public school and Cambridge he soon became attracted to writers and artists: notably WH Auden (with Isherwood, left) and Stephen Spender. He was also homosexual, at a time when homosexuality was illegal if hardly unusual in the circles within which Isherwood moved. He had had a causal liaison with Auden, and it was to join him that Isherwood first went to Berlin.

The Berlin of the last days of the Weimar Republic was the homosexual capital of the world. There were around 40 bars and clubs around **Nollendorfplatz**. There were plays that openly explored what we would now call gay life, nightclubs and brothels, even gay workingmen's clubs. For Isherwood, who lived at 17, Nollendorfstrasse, it was a sexual and artistic liberation in what he would call Berlin's 'sexual underworld'.

When the Nazis came to power, Isherwood was forced to flee Berlin. His experiences would form the raw material for his 1935 novel *Mr Norris Changes Trains* and his 1939 novella *Goodbye to Berlin*. The second formed the basis for a 1951 play *I Am Camera*, filmed in 1955. In turn, Isherwood's book formed the basis of the smash hit 1966 musical *Cabaret*. In 1972, the movie version, starring Liza Minnelli and Michael York, with a mostly different score, was an Oscar-winning smash.



century Berlin. With the gallows humour Germans are rather fond of, *Kabarett* became part of Weimar Berlin's cultural allure, then and now.

Not that Weimar Germany was necessarily a haven of tolerance. Weimar Berlin had inherited the old Prussian legal code, and the old Prussian judges. The painter George Grosz had numerous run ins with the law. But we are talking bans, and fines, for the likes of obscenity and blasphemy: Grosz was able to pursue a successful career.

The Nazis, who persecuted homosexuals, destroyed the Berlin that Isherwood hand found so liberating: thousands were imprisoned, and many murdered in the camps. Cabaret was killed off.

Cabaret was a distinctively French form of entertainment which, by the late 19th century, was associated with the bohemians and artists the left bank of Paris was famous for (for those who know their opera, think of *La Bohème*). Its mix of political satire, the erotically charged, comedy and the macabre made the form a natural for early 20th

Given that homosexuality was illegal in the Allied countries, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals was not mentioned in the Nuremberg trials that saw leading Nazis tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It remained the war crime that the remained unspoken of right up until the 1970s.

PEOPLE'S COURTS, PRISONS AND PENSIONS (OR LACK OF)

Doubtless, the persecution of homosexuals was either of no interest to or even tacitly approved of by many Germans. Of course, there was opposition to the Nazis, but what is most notable is perhaps the lack of opposition the regime faced. This was, of course, in part thanks to the Nazi police state. Indeed, in **Schöneberg** itself is **Kleistpark**, alongside which is the **Kammergericht**: the home of the **People's Court** that was at the apex of Nazi repression.

The court was presided over by Roland Freisler (above, centre). Some estimates put the number sentenced to death by the court at over 30,000, but we have evidence for 12,891 (12,212 of them after 1940, again confirming the way in which war propelled the Nazis further into barbarism). The trials were a formality. As Goebbels had once said: 'Don't bother yourself about the law; just decide if the man has to go'.

If some opponents were arrested, imprisoned and even executed for political crimes, others were simply sent to the camps; many others were surely intimidated by this. But it also engendered a sense of helplessness on the part of many: if opposition was impossible then there was no point in it. However, the fact must also be faced: many, perhaps most Germans either supported or went along with the Nazi state. Once again, in the face of seemingly overwhelming support, what was the point in opposition?

That there was genuine support cannot be doubted. In the nearby ground where once stood the **Sportpalast**, where Hitler delivered many of his speeches, we are reminded of the fact that many Germans did support the regime, and would continue to do so, even until the end. Indeed, in 1948, an American survey found that a majority of Germans still agreed with the proposition that Nazism was a good idea, improperly applied.

For some patriotic Germans, the coming of Nazism to power presented them with a dilemma. Should they continue to serve their country? Many of the old German elite decided to do just that. However, as the regime radicalised and became more and more barbarous, some of those began to question their previous decision. For some, it was their religious faith that began to change their minds.

In 1933, a former U-boat commander from the First World War, **Martin Niemöller**, below, a patriotic conservative, had been supportive of the new regime. However, when the Nazis took over control of Germany's Protestant churches by uniting them in the so-called **Reich Church**, he joined the **Confessional Church**, which rejected the Nazi takeover. He was arrested in 1937, and from there set out on the path that would lead to him comprehensively repenting his past and the element of unthinking anti-Semitism that so many of his type had once been guilty of. His most famous words come in many versions:

> First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out
> Because I was not a Socialist.
> Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out
> Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
> Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out
> Because I was not a Jew.
> Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak for me.

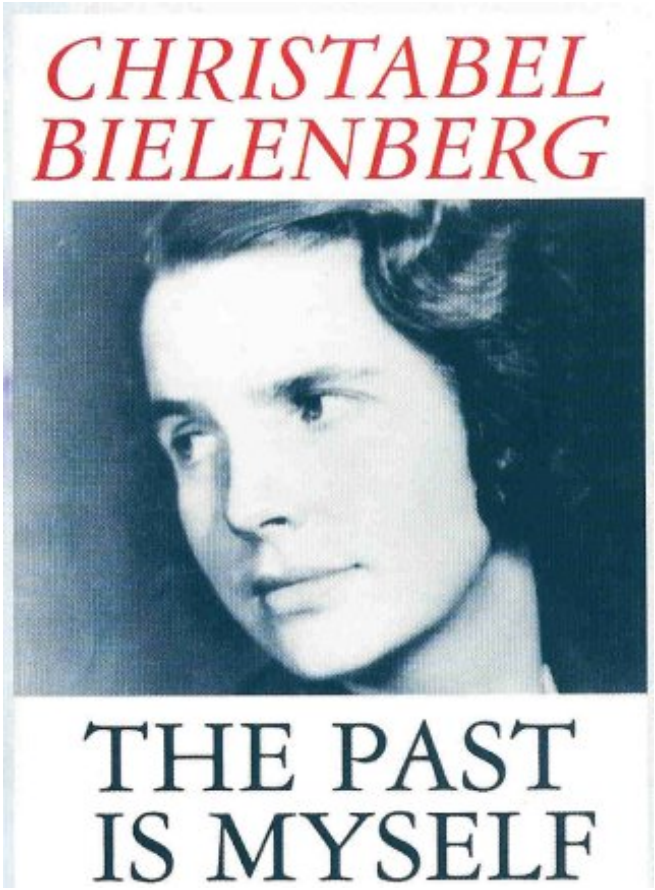
By the 1950s, he was a pacifist and a prominent campaigner for peace and nuclear disarmament. He was even arrested by the West German authorities on one occasion, and controversially went to visit Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam at the height of the Vietnam War.

Religion played a part in the aristocratic opposition to Hitler associated with the **Kreisau Circle**. However, their primary motives were patriotic: to put it simply, Hitler was leading Germany to destruction. That opposition only became genuinely dangerous when enough high-ranking serving officers came to believe that Hitler was leading Germany to defeat and destruction. By 1943, any realistic analysis indicated that was true. It was then that a genuine conspiracy was afoot.

After previous attempts (notably at the Zeughaus), the moment when history failed to turn was when, on July 20th 1944, **Colonel Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg** smuggled a bomb in his brief case into Hitler's Wolf's Lair (his wartime HQ in Poland). The bomb went off, and Stauffenberg was convinced, seeing the force of the explosion, that Hitler and everybody else in the room would be dead. He was wrong. Protected by the heavy table, a shaken Hitler had sustained nothing but minor injuries.

In truth, the events that followed showed how badly organised the plotters were, and by that evening the **July Bomb Plot** was over. The plotters, surrounded by the SS, were shot in the courtyard of Supreme Command HQ, and buried in **Sankt-Matthäus-Kirchhof**, off Kleistpark (where the Brothers Grimm are buried), until Nazis dug them up and burned their bodies a few days after.

Their immediate death saved them a worse fate endured by many others. In the weeks and months that followed, thousands were arrested, tortured and executed. Many were tried by Freisler. They included the friends, relatives and colleagues of the conspirators; in other cases the Nazis were simply settling old scores, or assuming guilt by association. Many, after a show trial, were hanged at the Plötsenzee Prison.



Christabel Bielenberg was from a well-connected Anglo-Irish family (her mother was a Harmsworth, the owners of the *Daily Mail*), who went to study music in Germany; in 1934, she married Peter Bielenberg. Her husband had connections with the aristocratic Kreisau circle. In the aftermath of the July Bomb Plot, he was arrested and sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp (had he been arrested in Berlin, he might well have been hanged, as his close friend Adam von Trott zu Solz was). Remarkably, she demanded an interview with the Gestapo, and harangued the Gestapo officer in charge to such an extent that he promised to release her husband and he, thus, survived the war.

By 1948, she was the Observer's correspondent in Germany, and her husband became the first German to get a British visa since the war. After that, the family settled in Ireland. It was in the 'sixties that Bielenberg was persuaded to write her memoir, *The Past is Myself*: it was a smash hit, and a TV film in 1988. Christabel lived on to the ripe old age of 94, and was occasionally seen in my family church (some of her family lived close by). Even in old age, between drags on the ever-present cigarettes, her formidable character shone through.

The **Plötsenzee Prison Memorial** is further north in the west of the city, consisting of the buildings where the executions took place: over the course of the Third Reich, some 2,500 people were hanged or guillotined here. Over the course of the Third Reich **Pastor Harald Poelchau** ministered to them. He left us a gruesome, if compelling account, of the judicial and quasi-judicial executions. Initially, victims were beheaded by a heavy axe in the old German way, until the Nazis ordered a job lot of 20 guillotines; others were shot. Again, war had its impact. Bombing damaged the guillotine, as the prison itself was hit. Now, victims were hung, often eight at a time.

Hitler liked hangings, seeing it as a peculiarly degrading means of execution. This was certainly true of many of those executed at Plötsenzee: they were hanged by thin cord from meat hooks, so they died slowly. The deaths of some of those associated with the plotters were filmed, so Hitler could enjoy the show at his leisure.

After the war, the reckoning for the leading Nazis came at Nuremberg. Those who were spared found themselves in Spandau prison, on Berlin's outskirts. In 1933, the prison had been used to house, and brutally torture, the communists and socialists arrested after the Reichstag Fire. Now it was the Nazis turn to be inside. Seven Nazis escaped death. Six were released in the end. The last was Hess, who hanged himself in Spandau prison, aged 93, in 1987.

They were the lucky ones. In the last few days before the end, the Nazis indulged themselves in one last orgy of savagery. A wildly avenging SS summarily hanged anyone even suspected of not fighting to the last; *Volksturm* hung from the lampposts. Remaining political prisoners were shot.

The *volk*, even if one wholly different from the one dreamed of by Hitler and his ilk, would live on.

One of the last to be killed was the intellectual **Albrecht Haushofer**, another who found himself in prison thanks to some vague connections with the July Bomb Plot. He thought he was being released, and gathered up the poetry he had written in captivity. The poems were cast like leaves littered round his corpse as he fell:

> We all know far too well that our little lives
> Are as cheap as dirt – the German gibbet,
> Sudden impact of a Russian bullet,
> British bombs are our fate, none of us survives.

As Hitler's body burned, Haushofer's strewn words give us the epitaph of Nazi Berlin:

> What required whole centuries to construct,
> Now in a bare instant is destroyed.
> Misused, evil science creates a void.

Most of those killed left behind relatives. Roland Freisler was killed by Allied bombing. His widow took her husband's pension for the rest of her life. Not so the widows of these men. There really the was a generation that forgot.

Yet we remember. One of the things that Nazism sought to do is wipe out memory. To erase all but one identity. Yet, in 1945, the Third Reich and its Führer were on the verge of extinction.

A CODA OUT OF TOWN: THE JACKBOOT ON A HUMAN FACE, AND WHERE ARE WE NOW?

As we all know, the Nazis did much that was far worse. About 35km north of Berlin was **Sachsenhausen** concentration camp.

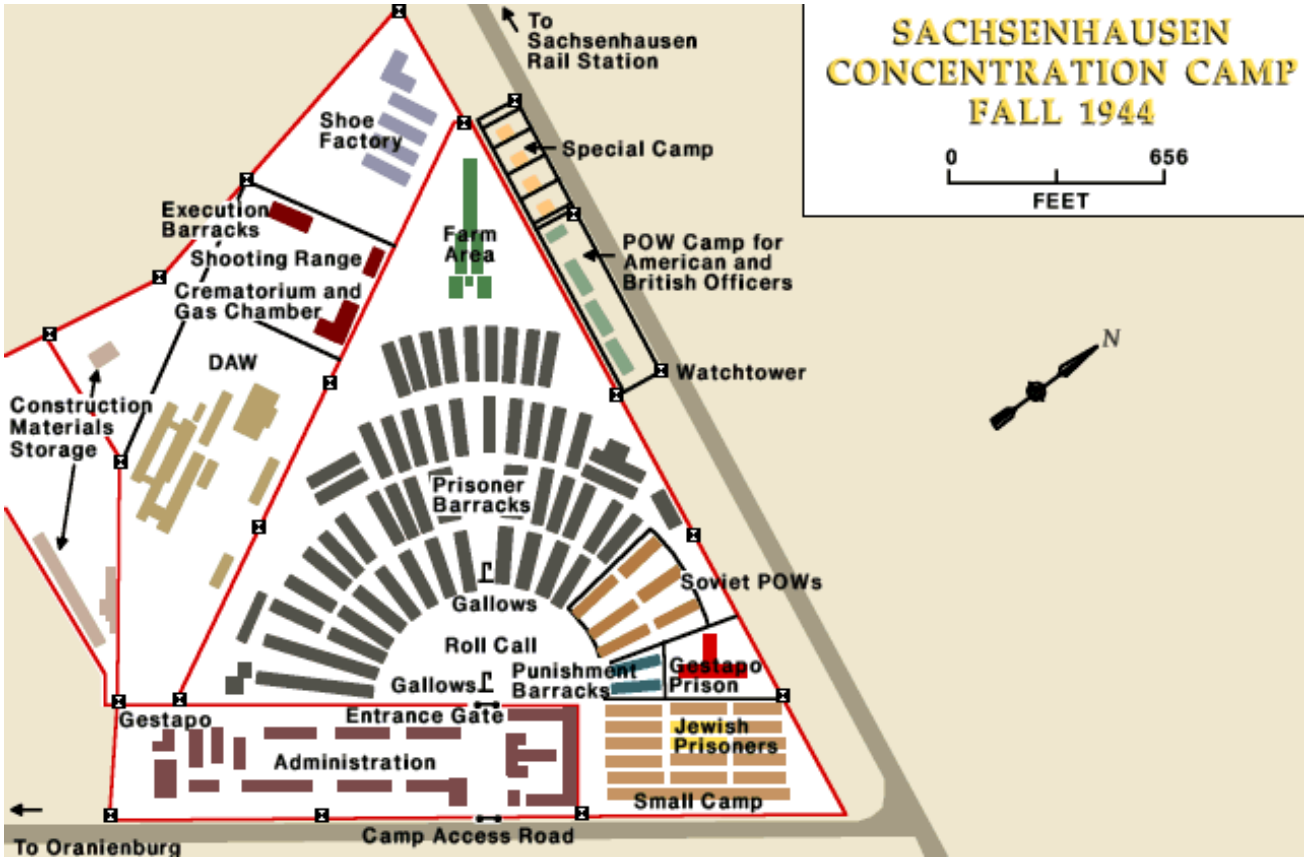
The brutal irony is that a place as terrible as this was, in terms of simple numbers, a detail in the story of Nazi terror and genocide. Timothy Snyder makes a key point: here, in Germany, there were restraints on the Nazis freedom of action, often framed by law (or the legacy of law; Freisler's People's Court employed the framework and pretence of legality). In the east, where the machinery of state and the restraints of legality had been eroded by war, occupation, civil war, communist terror and famine, the Nazis allowed themselves freer rein.

When they invaded the Soviet Union, there was no restraint from the off. The Einsatzgruppen Order explicitly called upon German forces to commit war crimes against those deemed to be the enemies of the new order. This was also, explicitly, a racial war. Worst of all, the Nazi **Hunger Plan** envisaged the starving to death of millions of Slavs and Jews in the first winter of Nazi conquest.

It was in that context, as the Nazis occupied Lithuania in 1941, that the killing of Jews began. It started as a pogrom (a campaign of violent persecution and murder) against Jews, initiated by local Lithuanians and then Nazi officialdom. Soon, that turned into a campaign of mass shootings and genocide known as Operation Reinhard (after the SD leader, Reinhard Heydrich). As early as September 29th-30th 1941, at Babi Yar in Ukraine, 33,000 Jews were murdered by Germans and Ukrainian collaborators. In all, over 100,000 were murdered there.

Shooting was messy, and difficult, and was perhaps impermissible on this scale further west. Furthermore, the requirements of war that the Nazis hadn't won now meant that some Jews were required for slave labour. What then to do with the 'useless eaters': those too young, old or ill to work? And what of the teeming ghettos established by the Nazis in occupied Poland? And of the Jews of the western and southern Europe the Nazis either occupied, or which were controlled by their often violently anti-Semitic allies?

The 'Final Solution to the Jewish Problem in Europe' began on the ground in eastern Poland as Nazi officials began to experiment in industrialised mass murder. Just outside Berlin is the Wannsee, an attractive lake that acts as Berlin's equivalent of the seaside. The **Wannsee Villa**, below, is where, on January 20th 1942, Nazi ministers and officials led by Heydrich and recorded by Adolf Eichmann, rubber-stamped and arranged the systemisation of the mass murder of Europe's Jews. The result of this **Wannsee Conference**, and the process from below, was the horror that saw the building of the death camps: Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.



Missing from that list is Auschwitz, which became the primary death camp once the others were closed as the Red Army advanced. The scale of the crimes committed in those camps and further east still beggar belief, in what we all too lazily suppose to be a civilised world.

Sachsenhausen, and the camps like it, were not built as death camps. The first concentration camp, the model camp as Dachau was known, was on the outskirts of Munich. Sachsenhausen was built in 1936. Its location gave it a primary importance in the Nazi camp system. It housed political prisoners and other undesirables, and by 1938 that increasingly meant Jews.

It was always a place of cruelty, torture and execution, but in 1942 Jewish prisoners were being sent east to slave labour and death. However, Soviet prisoners of war were executed here. In 1943, the gas chamber and crematoria were built. By 1945, thousands and thousands had died there or en route as a consequence of the death marches, as prisoners were marched, many dying or murdered, from Auschwitz and the other places out east into Germany; in turn, they were marched west from Sachsenhausen itself. In the end, about 220,000 people had passed through Sachsenhausen; about half of them never left.

There were only around 3,000 prisoners left when the Soviets arrived. Then, by a bitter irony, it became a Soviet camp, initially to imprison Nazis. By 1948, **Special Camp Number One** was as much a camp for political opponents of communism as Nazis. By the time the camp was closed in 1950, the Soviets had imprisoned 60,000 people there at some point. Some 12,500 died, mostly children and the elderly.

I don't know how you will react to this place; neither do you. I do know it will have an impact, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with finding it all too much and needing to step away from it all. I first came to think seriously about the Nazi camps as a teenager, when I saw the extraordinary episode of the great series *The World at War* on the subject: *Genocide*. It was along time before I got to visit a camp: Sachsenhausen.

As a kid, I grew up in rural Essex. At the end of a hidden path in the village was an old World War Two storage facility; we weren't far from the aerodrome from which the Lancaster bombers used to fly above my dad's head, perhaps off to Berlin, who knows. It was all long grass and old brick buildings: us kids used to play war games there.

Most of the old huts that housed the prisoners at Sachsenhausen are gone. At the top of the camp are some that were built late on, in 1944. I remember going round the camp. I was disturbed, angry, moved. But I was in control. I walked up to that far end of the camp. It was a beautiful summer's day. The birds sang (yes, they do sing). There were wildflowers in the long grass. And there were brick buildings. Suddenly, I was reminded of that place of my childhood.

It was then that the inhumanity hit me, precisely because my humanity and the humanity of those I love and had loved, or even just known, was suddenly there in memory, as if in front of me.

I didn't read books once upon a time. Then, in 1974, David Bowie made an album, *Diamond Dogs*, loosely based around George Orwell's *1984*. It was then I read the novel. At one point, when Winston Smith is being tortured and interrogated, his inquisitor, O'Brien, gives his victim an image of the totalitarianism his party is wedded to. It was a simple image: a jackboot, stamping down on a human face forever.

In the 20th century Berlin had too much of the jackboot. But, as you travel back to the modern city you might reflect, as I did, that the closest thing I was likely to see to a jackboot in modern Berlin outside of a museum or memorial or gallery or cinema was on a punk, or fashion victim, or someone off to gay club.

It's that Berlin that the Prussian conservatives, the Nazis, the Communists

and the Islamist bombers of today have always hated.

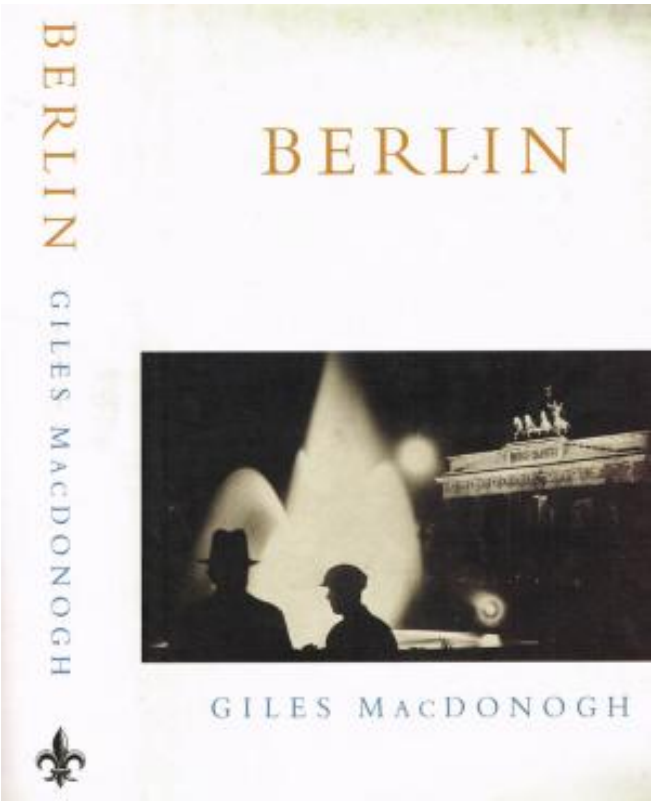
The old Berlin is mostly no longer there. We can still see the Berlin of Prussians, or the kaisers. Weimar's ghosts still linger. The shadows of Nazism and the Wall linger still. That's Berlin. But so too is the modern city, the young city, the city of clubs and parks and cafes and shops and all human life.

What those ghosts should remind us of is the fact that the civilisation modern Berlin so epitomises, the liberal order it personifies now is never inevitable, and can be snatched away in what are, in historical terms, moments. In a world increasingly replete with little Hitlers and paranoid demagogues, Berlin does well to remind us of that. In the words of the man himself:

> Fingers are crossed
> Just in case
> Walking the dead
>
> ***Where Are We Now?***

A WORD ABOUT MODERN BERLIN IN WORDS, FILM AND MUSIC

Acknowledge your sources, as they say. I'll try and stick to Berlin, but fail…



Anyone who has read **Giles MacDonogh,** ***Berlin*** (1997), will straight away see where a goodly bit of what follows come from. It may be 20 years old, and the city 20 years different, but it's still my favourite book on the city. If I've got any bits wrong, blame it on my garbled memory, not MacDonogh. Another general history, **Rory MacClean,** ***Berlin: Imagine a City*** (2015) gives us the history of the city through 15 lives.

I said the Berlin of the imagination. For me, that started with music. **David Bowie**'s ***Low*** and ***Heroes*** (both 1977) remain the great Berlin albums. Bowie produced **Iggy Pop**'s ***The Idiot*** (1977), another Berlin suffused classic. **Lou Reed**'s *Berlin* (1973), made by a man who had never even visited the city, is a slit-your-wrists masterpiece. **U2**'s ***Achtung Baby!*** (1990) saw in the new Europe.

And what of movies and TV? Feeling like a Nazi classic? **Leni Riefentsahl**'s ***Olympia*** (1936), her film of the Berlin Olympics, is a cinematic work of art, *and* Nazi propaganda to boot; likewise ***Triumph of the Will*** (1934). ***Cabaret*** (1972) is a musical set in Weimar Berlin. ***Downfall*** (2004) sees a brilliant performance form Bruno Ganz as Hitler in the last days. Two films look back at East Germany: one with comic nostalgia, ***Goodbye Lenin*** (2003), the other with claustrophobic unease, ***Lives of Others*** (2006). **Matt Frei**'s three-part documentary, ***Berlin*** (2009), is brilliant. So was **Deutschland '83** (2015).

In literature, **Len Deighton,** ***Winter: a Berlin Family 1899-1945*** (1987) traces a family saga. **Christopher Isherwood,** ***Goodbye to Berlin*** (1939) remains an atmospheric classic; **Alfred Döblin,** ***Berlin Alexanderplatz*** (1929) is another one with a seedy Weimar Berlin at it heart.

The history of Weimar Berlin is found in **Otto Frederich,** ***Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s*** (1972); **Alex de Jong,** ***The Weimar Chronicle*** (1978) looks at Weimar Germany, and especially the arts in Weimar Berlin; **Ronald Taylor,** ***Berlin and its Culture*** (1997) is especially strong on Weimar Berlin's literature and culture.

Christabel Bielenberg, ***The Past is Myself*** (1968) is a classic. **Hans Fallada,** ***Alone in Berlin*** (1947), is set in the Nazi Berlin of 1940, and looks at the quandaries of resistance. **Antony Beevor,** ***Berlin: the Downfall 1945*** (2003) is a compelling account of the end of the war. **WG Sebald,** ***On the Natural History of Destruction*** (1999) is a meditation upon the impact of Allied bombing on Germany, Germans and German culture. **Hugh Trevor Roper,** ***The Last Days of Hitler*** **(**1947) is the classic account of the last days in the bunker.

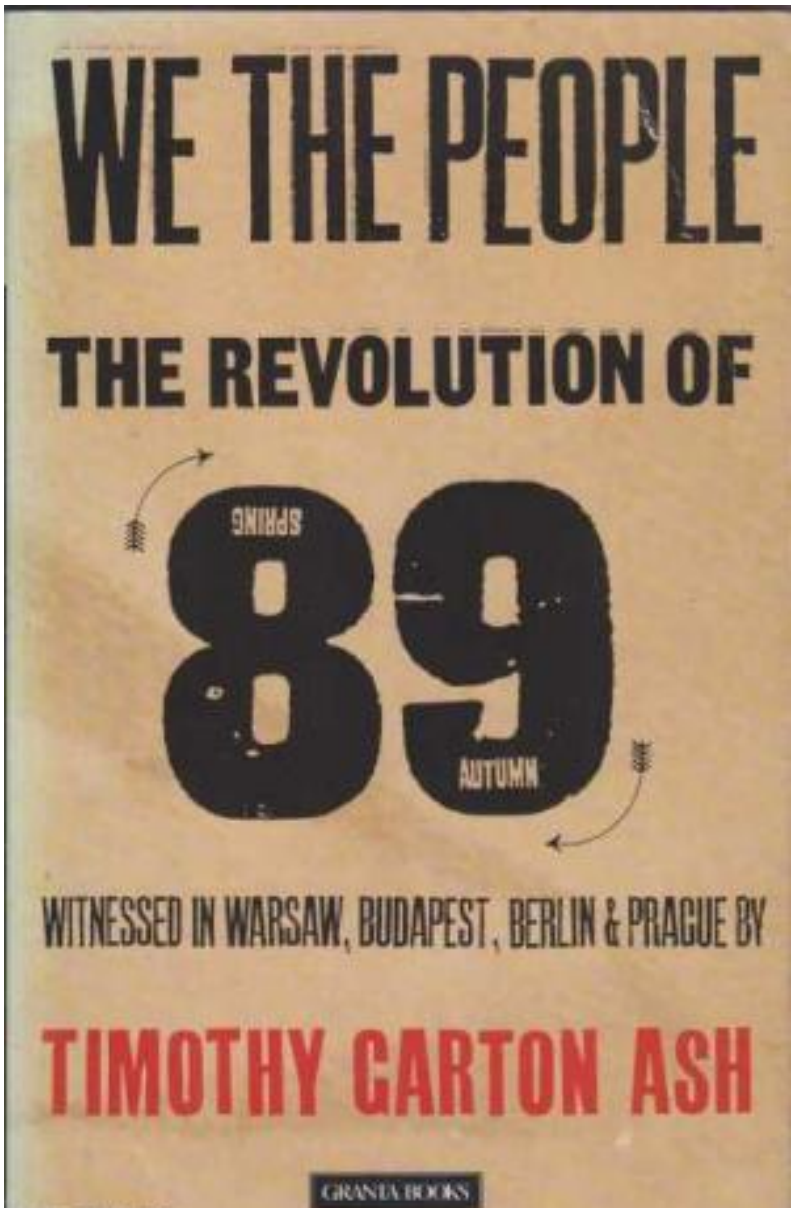
Philip Kerr, ***Berlin Noir*** (1994), a compendium of three novels: ***March Violets, The Pale Criminal*** and ***A***

German Requiem are set in Berlin before, during and after the war. **George Clare, *Berlin Days 1946-47*** (1990). In 1946, Clare was posted to Berlin where he worked as a British intelligence officer and is a portrait of the city at its lowest ebb. ***A Woman in Berlin*** (1959) was originally published anonymously in 1953, this memoir of 1945 wrote openly and with a cold eye about the rape of German women by Soviet soldiers: at the time, it was seen as somehow dishonouring German womanhood and wasn't published again until 2003, when it was revealed to be the work of the journalist **Marta Hillers**, who had died in 2001. This time it was bestseller. Antony Beevor edited a new English edition, and the book was an important influence on his own book on 1945 (above). A film was made in 2008. **Giles MacDonogh, *After the Reich*** (2008) brilliantly looks at the history of post-war Germany (and Berlin) until the Berlin airlift.

Ian McEwan, *The Innocent* (1990) is set in the Berlin of 1955. **John le Carré, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*** (1963), depicts the dark world of espionage, starting in Cold War Berlin and ending at the Wall: the 1965 movie, starring Richard Burton, is pretty good too. **Len Deighton, *Funeral in Berlin*** (1964) is another spy thriller; it was made into a movie starring Michael Caine in 1966. **Robert Harris, *Fatherland*** (1991), starts in the Berlin of 1964, still ruled by an ageing Führer. **Christiane F: *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*** (1979) is the account of the life of a teenage prostitute and drug addict in West Berlin; there was a film in 1981. **Ian Walker, *Zoo Station*** (1987) looks at Berlin in the '80s; **Norman Gelb, The Berlin Wall** (1987) looks at the Wall then.

Anna Funder, *Stasiland* (2003) is a brilliant non-fiction *Lives of Others*. **Anne McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*** (1993) is a look at East Germany. Stalin once said that 'Communism fits Germany as a saddle fits a cow'. **Timothy Garton-Ash, *We the People*** (1990) an eyewitness account of the fall of the Berlin Wall (and another source from which I have drawn heavily); ***The File: a Personal History*** (1997) is his account of his Stasi file, and what it tells us. **Hugo Hamilton, *Surrogate City*** (1990) is set in a divided Berlin; ***The Love Test*** (1996) in the reunified city.

Now, I'll just put ***Low*** on...



INDEX OF PLACES

Alte Nationalgelerie, 26
Altes Museum, 25
Alexanderhaus, p 31
Alexanderplatz, 30-33
Angel of Victory, Tiergarten, 18
Bahnhof Freidrichstrasse, 57
Bahnhof Zoo, 66
Bauakademie, 24, 27
Bebelplatz, 11
Bellevue, 18
Berliner Dom, 24
Berlin Wall, 10, 12-13, 46-48, 55-65
Berlin Wall Documentation Centre, 56
Berlin Wall Memorial, 56
Berlin Zoo, 66
Bernauer Strasse, 56
Berolinahaus, p31
Bode Museum, 26
Borsig Werke, 49
Brandenburg Gate, 8, 12-14, 58
Breitscheidplatz, 66
Central Bank, 24
Checkpoint Charlie, 57-58
Dschungel, 62
DDR Museum, 40
East Side Gallery, 53
Empty Library, 11
Fasesenstrasse Synagogue, 51
Französischer Dom, 7
Freidrichstrasse, 8, 34
Gendarmenmarkt, 7, 10
Germania, 20-21
Gerichtslaube, 42
Gesundbrunnen Bunkers, 57
Gypsy Holocaust Memorial, 14
Hackescher Höfe, 49
Handwerkervereinshaus, 50 Hannah Arendt Strasse, 16
Hansa Studios, 63
Hitler's Bunker, 14-15
Hohes Haus, 5
Holocaust Memorial, 14
Hohenschönhausen, 40
Humboldt University Library, 11
KaDeWe, 66-67
Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, 66
Kammergericht, 69
Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse, 37, 40 Karl-Marx-Allee, 38
Kleistpark,
Köthenstrasse, 64
Knoblauchhaus, 42
Konzerthaus, 9
Kroll Opera House, 19-20, 43
Ku'damm, 23, 45, 51, 66
Leipziger Strasse, 55, 65
Leninallee, 38, 40
Leninplatz, 38
Lustgarten, 8, 24
Marx-Engels Forum, 36
Meistersaal, 63
Memorial to Homosexuals, 14
Memorial to the Murdered Members of the Reichstag, 20
Museum Island, 24-26
National Memorial to the Victims of War and Tyranny, 23
Neukölln, 63
Neue Museum, 25
Neue Synagoge, 50-51
Neue Wache, 23
New Reich Chancellery, 14
Nikolaikirche, 41
Nikolaiviertel, 41
Nollendorfplatz, 67
Palace of Tears, 57
Palace of the Republic, 27-29
Pergamonmuseum, 25
Platz der Vereinten Nationen, 38
Plötsenzee Prison Memorial, 71
Potsdamer Platz, 63-64
Prince Leopold Palace, 28
Prinz-Albrecht Palace, 28
Presidential Palace (Weimar), 28
Reichstag, 19-20
Rotes Rathaus, 33
Sachsenhausen, 73-75
St Hedwig's Cathedral, 23
Schinkelplatz, 24
Schlossbrücke, 24
Schöneberg, 62, 69
Schöneberg Rathaus, 59
Schwerin, p28
Scheunenviertel, 49
Siegesallee, 18
Sophienkirche, 50
Sophienstrasse, 50
Soviet War Memorial, Tiergarten, 18
Spandauer Vorsdadt, 49
Sportpalast, 69
Stadtschloss, 6, 9, 19, 22, 27-28
Stalinallee, 38, 55
Stasi Exhibition, 16

Stasi Museum, 40
Story of Berlin Museum, 67
Tauentzienstrasse, 66
Television Tower, 31
Templehof, 8, 53
Tiergarten, 18
Tränenpalast (Palace of Tears), 57
Treptower Park, 52-53
Treptower Soviet Memorial, 52
Unter den Linden, 6-29
Victory Column, Tiergarten, 18
Wannsee, 73
Wilhemstrasse, 34
Wittenbergplatz U-Bahn station, 67
Zeughaus, 23
Zum Nussbaum, 41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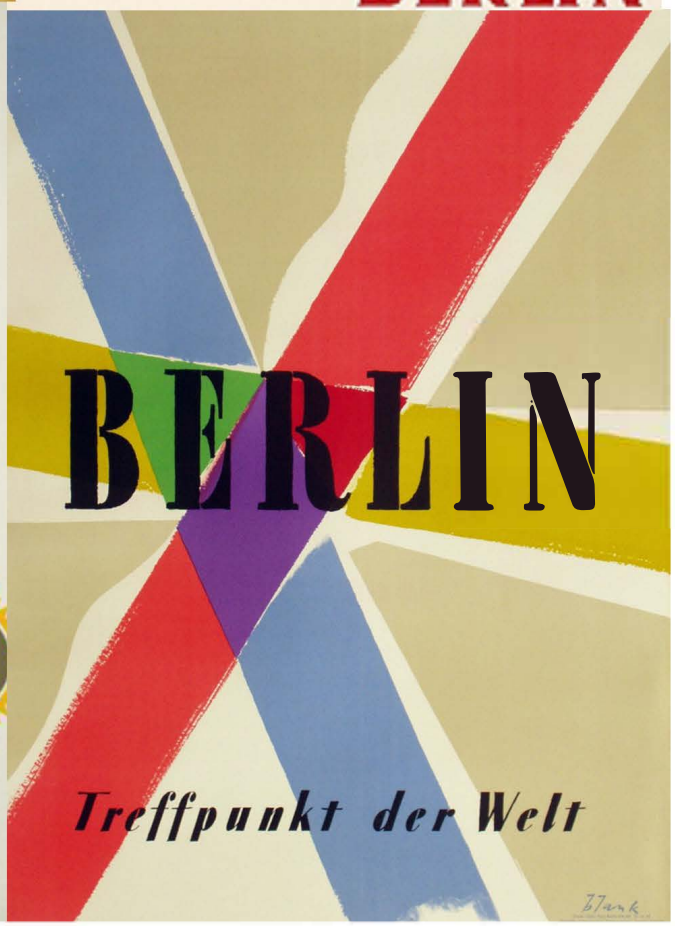
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