

# BERLIN — 1986

A photographic look at a city  
on the verge of change.



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Photographs and text  
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In 1986, one could visit Berlin, hang out at its many cafes and pubs, mingle among its punks, writers, and artists and come away with two opposing conclusions.

The first would be that Berlin was wildly in love with itself — for not only had the city been become a model of progressivism, but it had evolved into one of Europe’s major artistic centers.

At the same time, one could sense ambivalence regarding the city’s progress, or a fear that there was too much of it. Berliners were experiencing rising rents in districts such as Kreuzberg, a neighborhood to which transplants from West Germany proper had come to rely on for affordable housing. Artists groused about their quiet neighborhoods becoming tourist attractions for those wanting to experience the latest “alternative” scene.

Once among the most important cities in all of Europe, Berlin was first divided up by the Allies after World War II, and later carved in two with the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 by Soviet-supported East Germany.

In the end, Berlin was left divided, both politically and geographically. Difficult to reach by train and no longer a major financial center, the city no longer served as a draw for the typical career-oriented West German. Berlin offered subsidies to lure those wanting to move East — young people and artists looking for an alternative lifestyle. Berlin, indeed, became an alternative city, but has lost the stature of one of Europe’s great Capitals, as it had been before the war.

But as we know, in a few short years all that would change.



## THE KU'DAMM

Short for Kurfursten damm, the Ku'damm is West Berlin's downtown "Broadway" — a street where Berliners come to view the scene, join a protest, or even just relax.

*A body builder displays his physique at one of the many open spaces on the Ku'damm.*



*A young reporter  
interviews a police officer.  
The Police made an  
effort to relate to Berlin's  
outspoken youth.*



*Young Berliners  
peruse magazines on a  
Saturday morning.*



*The far end of the  
Ku'damm near the Zoo  
is a popular  
area for shopping.*



*Many Berliners hoped for a unification of Germany. Here, members of the Anarchist Pogo Party of Germany warn, sarcastically, against unification. "For a new and more dangerous East-West border in Berlin! Against reunification!"*



*Many of those who survived the city's bombing during the war still inhabit Berlin.*



*A punkified youth recovers from a rough night.*

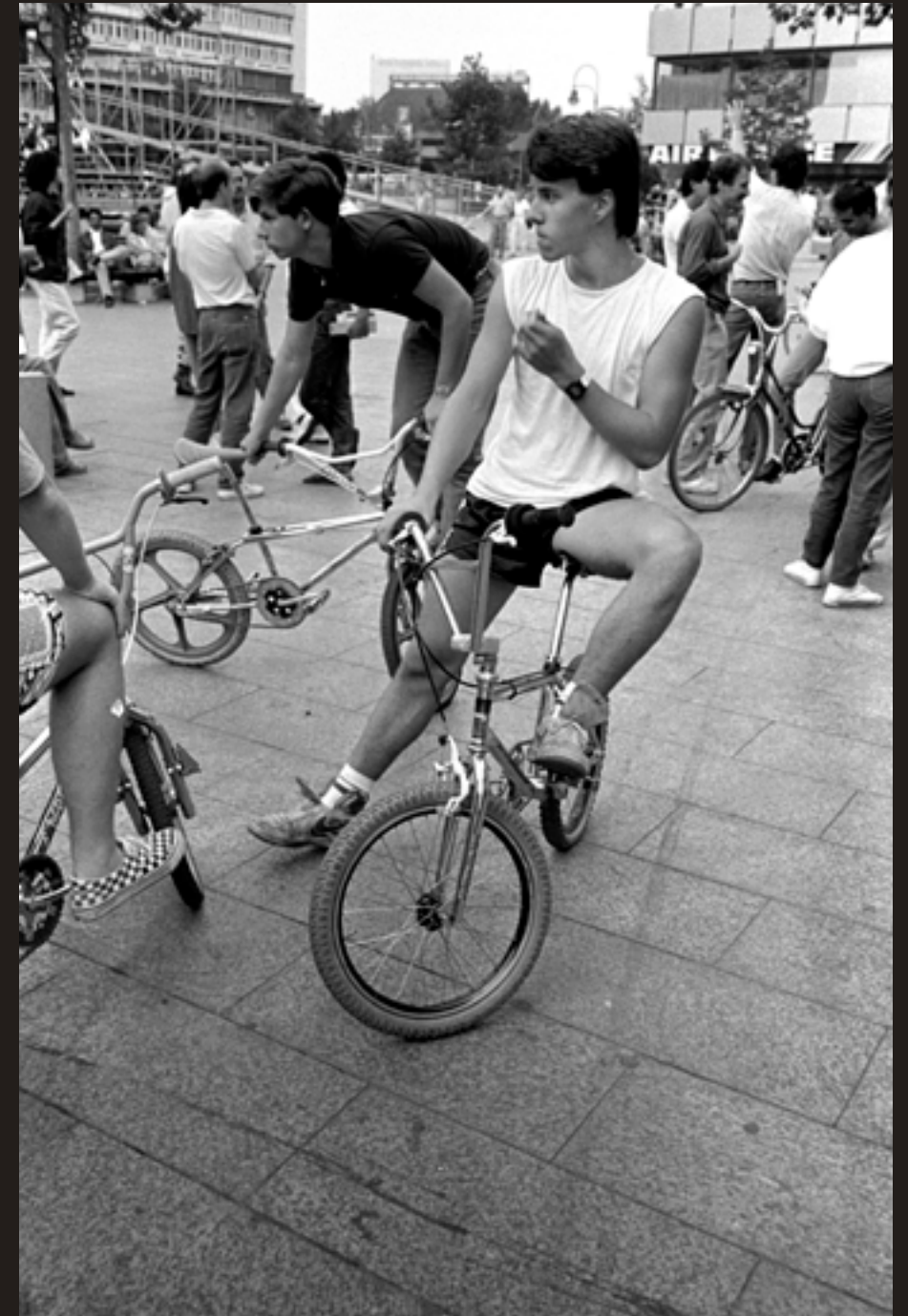




*In the 1960's immigrants came to Berlin looking for work. These men are most likely from Mozambique or Angola.*



*A counter-style food kiosk just off the Ku'damm.*



*BMX cyclists gather at several spots along the avenue.*



*Iranian immigrants protest their country's oppressive regime.*



## KREUZBERG

Located along Berlin's wall, Kreuzberg was initially inhabited by Turkish workers imported to rebuild the city after the war.

Eventually, the lure of Kreuzberg's alternative lifestyle attracted young Germans fleeing from what they felt was a bourgeois, capitalist existence in "mainland" Germany.

*A street kid performs dives into Kreuzberg's Paul-Linke canal hoping to earn a few Deutchmarks from onlookers.*



*Many neighborhoods in West Berlin hugged the wall. In the distance, the East's huge radio tower, Funkturm Berlin, broadcasts the East's signal freely while radio from the West is blocked in the East.*



*Late night at the Gorki U-ban station. A billboard exclaims "Let's Go West!", an effort to secure The West's existence in a city surrounded by the East.*



*An elderly woman  
waits outside a Kneipe,  
the German version  
of a pub.*



*The Zoo Palast Theater, lavishly restored in 2013, is Berlin's most beautiful and popular movie theaters*



*Many of Kreuzberg's residential buildings have small manufacturing companies occupying the bottom floors.*



*A couple stand arm-in-arm under the steps of the U-bahn, Berlin's efficient rapid-transit system.*



*A worker repairs windows at the Kottbusserdam station, located near the center of Kreuzberg.*





*A man relaxes on the Paul-Linke Ufer, the bank of Kreuzberg's main canal.*



*Young women enjoying exercising in a Kreuzberg back yard.*



*A Berliner peers out from his squat. Rent-free living in abandoned buildings became a major attraction for young people wishing to relocate to Berlin.*



*Turkish people often suffered from racism in Germany. A man points to graffiti demanding rights for Turks.*



*Oranienstrasse was the center of Kreuzberg's nightlife and protest. Though empty by day, at night it became the destination for a wide variety of artists and activists.*



*An abandoned building exhibits some of its original interior decoration.*



*The building was likely inhabited by squatters.*



*The Berlin wall carved a path through the entire geography of the city: residential, commercial, parks, even through the Grsse-Glienicker See, one of Berlin's recreational swimming lakes.*

# EAST BERLIN

East Berliners lived difficult lives under a Communist system. They were prevented from passing into the West by the heavily guarded wall. Despite this restriction, life in the East continued as usual in many ways.

*A typical street scene in East Berlin.*





*A nicely-dressed couple stroll down an East Berlin boulevard. Fashions in the East were often out-of-date, a contrast to the materialist culture encouraged the West.*



*East Berliners hanging out in front of a fish sellers.*





*Automobile traffic near  
Alexander Platz.*



*The East's  
huge radio tower,  
Funkturm Berlin.*



*East Berliners and  
tourists crossing  
a downtown street.*



*Boys playing a game of hide-and-seek.*



*These two kids were very proud of their bicycles, and insisted on showing a few of their bike tricks.*



*Three young teens running down a boulevard, having fun.*



*Boys engaging in manual work.  
When their school resumes in  
the Fall, their labor will be  
substituted with studying.*



*On a street in East Berlin, a toddler lifts their head from their carriage to take a peek.*



*The S-Bahn, the underground train shared by East and West Berlin, has checkpoints at its East-West borders. Here, a young man sells newspapers at a station.*



*Visitors ponder the Friedrich Engels Guards Regiment, once the site of Nazi rallies leading up to the war. The words on the wall read “Memorial for the Victims of Fascism and Militarism.”*



*A visitor leaving the regiment, its Eastern guard in the background.*



*The heavily gated entrance to the Regiment.*



# FLEA MARKET

Each weekend a vast flea market erupts near Potsdamer Platz, not far from the Berlin wall. Once Berlin's historic center, this area became a no-man's land — a perfect place for Berliners to buy things for cheap.

*Both old and current versions of the American flag can be spotted all over the flea market.*





*A seller gives a stretch  
at a stall he shares with  
friends.*



*A well-dressed African man  
inspects a pair of slacks.*



*It's likely that this seller is unaware of the meaning behind the Confederate flag.*



*Three generations work together to sell an assortment of belongings.*



*On a warm day, a woman sits among a wide range of goods she hopes to sell.*



*A group of women pass the time at their stall.*



*Young men team up to sell some of their unneeded junk.*



*A young man scans  
the flea market under the  
watch of an American flag.*



*A man selling a collection of knickknacks gives a salute.*



*Two shoppers look into the distance as their toddler does the same.*



*Children and elders take to the shade as the day warms up*



*Turkish women sell plumbing fixtures from the family's supply.*





*Two boys take turns watching over their family's table.*



*Abandoned boots, for the taking.*



*Kids meander through a collection of goods for babies.*

# SWIM CENTER

The swim center at Prizenstrasse in Kreuzberg was created after the war as a bathing spot for the many Berliners who lacked plumbing. Today these centers have become destinations for rest and fun.

*Berliners enjoying  
one of two pools  
at the swim center.*





*A couple opts  
for shade on a  
particularly  
warm day*



*Floaties are great fun  
in the pool, as well as for  
taking naps.*



*A mother rests,  
while her infants do  
their own thing.*



*As the day grows long,  
a couple takes in the  
remaining sun.*



*Two teens choose  
to ignore the toddlers  
playing nearby.*



*A broken leg is not enough of a reason to stay indoors on a nice day.*



*Boys squeeze out their swimsuits and wrap themselves in towels before heading home.*





*The swim park begins to thin out as the day nears its end.*



*After a long swim, a boy warms up on the stone walkway.*



*A mother and child  
play quietly after a long day  
at the park.*



## BERLIN FUNERAL

A man who lived under the Kottbusser Damm bridge died one night. He was often quite drunk but cheery, and part of the fabric of Kreuzberg.

What made his funeral special was his deep relationship with Kreuzberg's "alternative" crowd. How this man was known to his followers was unclear, but when it came time for his burial, everyone showed up.

*Family and  
friends gather  
at the gravesite*



*The casket rests in the chapel, covered in roses and some graffiti.*



*Drinking and smoking are part of honoring the fallen loved one.*



*Emotions run high at times — these two men exchange some strong words.*



*As mourners make their way to the gravesite, the mood is dour.*



*State undertakers  
prepare the grave  
for burial.*



*At the gravesite,  
mourners listen  
to the eulogy.*



*A woman with a candle stands listening to the eulogy.*



*Mourners of many ages attend the funeral.*





*After the funeral ends, mourners head home.*



## THE TURKISH PEOPLE

Thousands of workers from Turkey were imported after the war to rebuild Berlin and other cities. Today, many have returned home, but in 1986 Turkish people were still a major presence in Berlin.

*Turkish women gather by the canal in Kreuzberg.*



*Many gather to shop at this market.*



*A pregnant woman decides where to shop next.*



*A Turkish girl helps  
her father at the weekly  
Markt am Maybachufer  
in Kreuzberg.*



*Since not everyone in Berlin had home telephone service, public phone booths became an important gathering point.*



*A mother laughs  
as her son flops  
on top of his  
younger sibling.*



*Using a crate as a  
chair, a boy sit down to  
read the paper.*



*Teens and elders  
outside a shop  
selling Italian ice.*



# OUT OF DUST, A FUTURE

No one could have guessed that Berlin's future would soon change so completely and so rapidly.

The breakup of the Soviet Republics — and the resulting unification of Berlin — led to a rebirth for a city that had been divided for over a generation.

*Drivers speed through an undefined, dusty area near Potsdamer Platz. This land would soon become the headquarters of some of Germany's wealthiest companies.*







*A billboard reminds  
Berliners that their freedom  
is not a given: "Freedom is  
not something you are, but  
rather something you do!"*

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