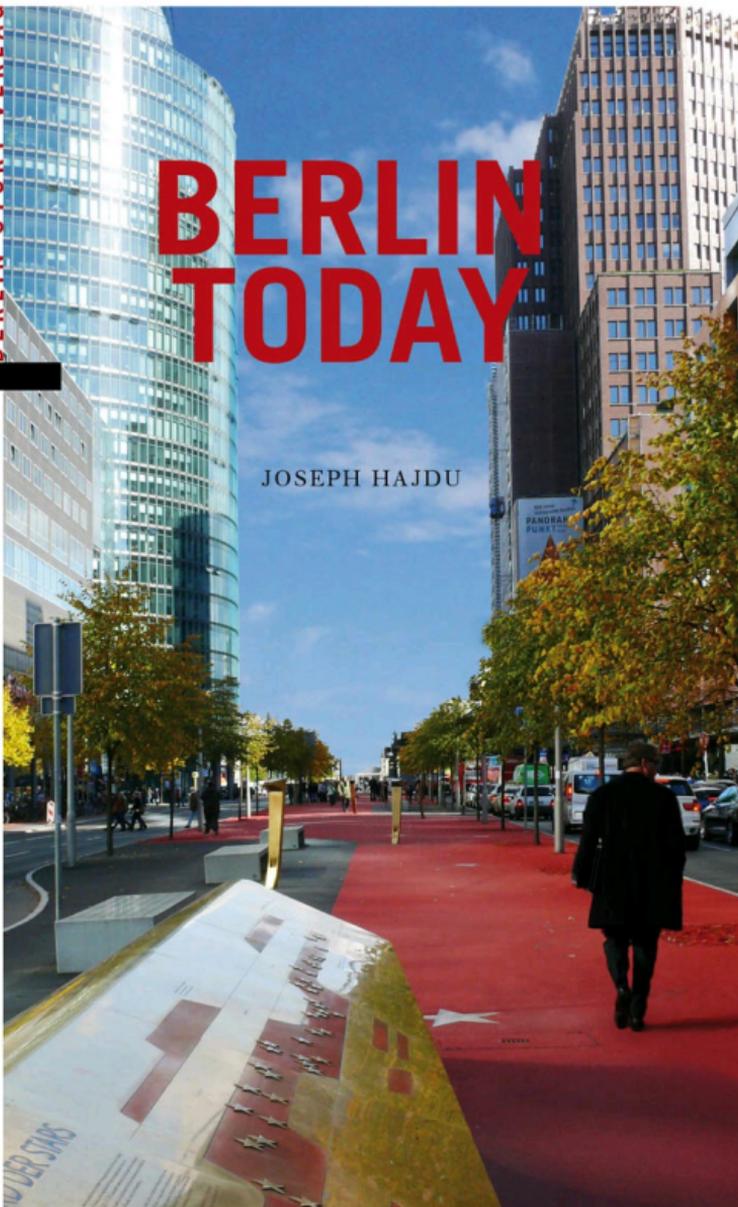


BERLIN STORY VERLAG

# BERLIN TODAY

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democratically elected government in the western military sectors of Berlin was matched by the appointment of a municipal authority controlled by German communists in the Soviet sector in the eastern part of the city. The Brandenburg Gate fell just to the eastern side of the demarcation line. Between 1956 and 1958 the East German authorities took it upon themselves to repair the Gate in a rudimentary fashion. However the West Berlin authorities saw the Gate as very much the symbol of a Berlin united and indivisible. They wanted to show this by being involved with its restoration and management. So they assumed responsibility for the restoration of the Quadriga, but by the time the repairs were finished official relations between the two authorities had collapsed. There was no official handing-over ceremony. The sculpture was simply loaded onto the back of a truck in West Berlin, driven to a vacant bomb site near the

Brandenburg Gate and left there for collection by the communist East Berlin authorities.

The Wall was built on the 13th of August 1961, and this sealed the fate of the Brandenburg Gate. From then on it found itself in the no man's land in the middle of the divided Berlin. It was geographically in communist East Berlin, but became part of the death strip behind the Wall. It just stood there gaunt and isolated. If at the beginning of its existence the Brandenburg Gate stood for Prussian neo-classical aesthetics, then later German glory and self-confidence, and during the Third Reich aggressive German militarism, then for the forty five years after the end of the Second World War the Brandenburg Gate was left in a kind of pathetic isolation. It became symbol of a Berlin that was no longer. Everybody knew it was there and official policy in the western part of the city clung to it as a symbol of a Berlin that had been the proud

metropolis and capital city of a united Germany. But the everyday lives of the Berliners had turned away from it. The Brandenburg Gate had been in the middle of the old Berlin, but now the two halves of the divided city were turning their backs to each other, and what had been in the centre of the city was now an increasingly peripheral wasteland. Life in west Berlin was now centred around the Kurfürstendamm. The West Berliners path to the Gate was bared by the Wall, behind which hovered the Brandenburg Gate. For East Berliners it became a distant silhouette against the setting sun somewhere behind the end of the Unter den Linden to which they were not allowed to go.

As before 1945, the Brandenburg Gate stood for something profound about the city, only this time more and more people were finding it too painful to think about. At best a reminder of the self-confidant, booming pre-

War Berlin, and at worst a reminder of the catastrophe that had befallen the city as a result of the Second World War.

Nevertheless the German Federal Republic (West Germany) and its American, British and French allies held fast to an official policy of German reunification with Berlin as the capital of the reunited country. This meant regular visits by Western presidents, prime ministers, and other political figures to West Berlin. This always included a look at the Wall and a stop near the Brandenburg Gate. All US Presidents made this pilgrimage. The two most memorable were the visit of President Reagan, and much earlier, on the 26 June 1963, the visit of JFK. President Kennedy's stop at the Wall near the Brandenburg Gate was recorded by dozens of photographers. It showed him against the backdrop of the Wall with large black drapes covering the archways of the Brandenburg Gate. These had been hung there

by the East German authorities, no doubt to stop Kennedy from seeing the wasteland of the deathstrip around the Gate and to shut-out any awareness of his presence among the people of East Berlin. However the Wall came down much quicker than anyone had expected.



*A reporter at the Wall surrounded by milling*