

# Berlin

# 1969

## Chronology into 1969

*Updated 8 Sep 09. Links updated 25 Feb 13.*

This page provides a chronology of events that shaped the period that "Berlin 1969" describes, through the end of 1969. This page will be updated from time to time. Cut and paste link addresses.

**19 Oct 43:** Foreign ministers of the Soviet Union and Britain, along with U.S. Secretary of State open a conference in Moscow "to discuss broad principles of cooperation between the countries."

**1944:** The Allies, including the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States, plan the postwar occupation and administration of a vanquished Germany, including its capitol, Berlin.

**4-11 Feb 45:** Meeting in Yalta, the governments of the United States, United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union establish basic principles for the occupation of Germany, including adding a French role.

[Text of the Crimea \[Yalta\] Agreements via this link - \(The Avalon Project at Yale Law School\)](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/wwii.asp)  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/wwii.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/wwii.asp)

**2 May 45:** Remaining German military "units" (shattered small groups) surrender to the (Soviet) Red Army. The actual occupation had already begun in some districts. The war sputters to an end in Berlin, with journalist Curt Reiss later writing in German that the precise moment when the war ended in the *Reichshauptstadt* was when police ordered the remaining telephone operators and technical personnel to evacuate, and the power left in the unattended batteries at dial telephone exchanges dropped below 60V-- the phone system died. In the modern world, when telecommunications ceased to exist, it was The End.

[Third Reich in Ruins \[photos\]](http://www.thirdreichruins.com/)  
<http://www.thirdreichruins.com/>

**Jul/Aug 45:** The Potsdam Conference sets the framework for administration of Berlin, but also leads in unplanned directions, toward the subsequent division of the city and a quarter-century of disputes over access. This

stems from issues that were left for a later peace treaty with Germany.

[Full text of the Potsdam Protocol via this link - \(The Avalon Project at Yale Law School\)](#)

[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/decade17.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/decade17.asp)

**8 Dec 45:** First daily military train (Duty Train) sets out from Frankfurt to Berlin

**Jun 48:** The Berlin Blockade begins, coming to end in 1949.

**17 Jun 53:** Uprising in Soviet sector of Berlin results in bloodshed, brought to an end with forces including Soviet Army troops. From that point, there was little doubt in the West as to the nature of the regime in East Germany known as the "German Democratic Republic." There was also little doubt in the GDR's ruling circles, that stiff measures for internal control must be matched with material progress for the populace. The uprising in 1953 followed austerity campaigns intended to bootstrap economic development at the expense of consumer goods production.

**13 Aug 61:** The Berlin Wall begins a physical division of Berlin, recognizing that centralized control of the GDR economy is unable to deliver enough goods to match the drawing power of the West German ("Federal Republic of Germany") economic miracle. The combination of internal security measures and economic limitations had led to massive cross-border refugee movements. This was nearly stopped by the Wall. (There are numerous other websites with information on the Berlin Wall, so this site does not include extensive coverage of the subject. Please refer to the Links page.)

**10 Feb 62:** The Glienicke Brücke in southwest Berlin begins its role as the scene of spy swaps, with the exchange of U.S. U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, who had been shot down over the Soviet Union and Soviet spy Colonel Rudolf J. Abel, who had been arrested in the U.S.

[The Berlin Wall as it was.](#)

<http://www.dailysoft.com/berlinwall/index.html>

**25 Apr 64:** The Western Allies hold their first joint military parade in Berlin since the end of World War II. About 5000 soldiers marched up the Strasse des 17 Juni, as a demonstration of their united intent to remain in Berlin.

**18 Jul 64:** The 212 meter high *Fernmeldeturm* on the Schaeferberg in West Berlin goes into service, handling long-distance telephone traffic over the GDR to a companion tower in the Harz Mountains in West Germany.

**3 Oct 64:** The GDR government completes construction of their new government building in East Berlin on Marx-Engels Platz (today this street is restored to its previous name, Schlossplatz. This is considered provocative by the western Allies, as it shows the GDR's intention to claim Berlin as its capitol.

**1965:** Markus Wolf, head of GDR (East German) Foreign Intelligence gathering service promoted to Lieutenant General. For eleven years prior, he was in the same job, but at one rank lower. This symbolized the GDR's increasing interest in conducting its own foreign policy, to include secret actions in West Germany (BRD).

[Biographical outline of Markus Wolf \(in German\)](#)

<http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/biografien/WolfMarkus/>

**Winter 1966:** West Berlin U-Bahn routes are renumbered in recognition of the former network having been scrambled by the division of the city.

[Chronik der Berliner U-Bahn-Linien \(in German\)](#)

<http://www.kibou.de/gozer/U-Bahn>

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**1967:** Herbert Marcuse of University of California at San Diego teaches as Visiting Professor at the Free University in Berlin's American Sector. He was born in Berlin, but had emigrated in 1933. Marcuse was the author of work synthesizing Marx and Freud (*Eros and Civilization*; 1955) and in 1964 had published his main work, *One Dimensional Man*. It attacked consumerism as a logical result of advanced industrial society and explained that freedom and democracy did not actually exist in capitalist societies. In 1965, he wrote further, with an essay portraying democratic capitalism as totalitarian and repressive. As with other philosophers, his work was used to rationalize radical behavior.

[Herbert Marcuse Archive \(in English\)](#)

<http://igw.tuwien.ac.at/christian/marcuse/bio.html>

[Herbert Marcuse \(1898-1979\) Official Homepage maintained by his family.](#)

<http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/index.html>

**Jan 67:** Letters exchanged between West German (BRD/FRG) and East German (DDR/GDR) governments regarding direct talks between the two Germanies. There was no immediate result, but this was the first time such an exchange had occurred.

**2 Jun 67:** Berlin Detective Sergeant Karl-Heinz Kurras shoots leftist demonstrator Benno Ohnesorg in what appears to some to have been an over-reaction in the heat of a day of angry protests against a visit by the Shah of Iran. To the political Left, Ohnesorg's death, documented in moving photos, was a symbol of post-Fascist state repression. It became the "reason" for violent clashes with police and for attacks on police and political figures in West Berlin and West Germany. [*rwr note: In 2009, researchers working with the Ministry for State Security files in Berlin (Stasi files) found that Kurras had an extensive record as an agent of the East Germans. Further adding to the questions about the incident was the fact that the news photographer most convenient to the shooting was Juergen Henschel, under contract to Wahrheit, the official*

organ of the West Berlin counterpart of the East German Socialist Unity Party (a merger of Communists and Left-Socialists). He took the most reproduced photos of the dying Ohnesorg.]

**3 Jun 67:** Major General Robert G. Ferguson takes charge of U.S. Command Berlin, a diplomatic, as well as military, assignment. Ferguson, a rare Californian at the two-star level, is a polished officer known since his cavalry days for his ability at dealing with civilians. In the late 1930's the Army assigned Captain Ferguson as a technical officer for the filming of a Western that starred rising young actor Ronald Reagan. (Photo in the Presidio of Monterey museum.)

**Dec 67:** NATO governments issue the Harmel Report, which recommends that NATO seek detente in Europe, while continuing its security role.

**Feb 68:** "Vietnam Congress" held in West Berlin raises student awareness for the anti-Vietnam War movement.

**Easter 68:** Shooting of student radical leader Rudi Dutschke leads to bloody student unrest in West Germany and West Berlin.

**27 May 68:** Occupation of the Germanistic Seminar of the Free University in West Berlin by leftist radicals, in protest against the BRD/FRG government's pending legislation proclaiming a State of Emergency. The Germanistic Seminar's interest in classical German literature is beyond irrelevant in the occupiers' view. The failure of the curriculum to focus on the importance of the class struggle is undermining its value. They rename the occupied facility the Rosa-Luxemburg-Institut.

**30 May 68:** Unsheathing by the BRD of the State of Emergency regarding terrorism in West Germany.

**20 Jul 68:** Opening of Stauffenbergstrasse Memorial and Education Center, in the former Army High Command headquarters, to house the permanent exhibition *Resistance to National Socialism*.

**12 Oct 68:** For the first time, the GDR picks its members for its own team in the Olympic Games. Previously, it engaged in years of struggle, with the Soviet Union backing it, to avoid being forced to compete in a single German team.

**16 Nov 68:** Unknown Person killed in shoot-out while trying to escape into West Berlin. [rwr note: This turned out to be the final "original Wall" shooting, as replacement of the tossed-together barriers of 1961 with the scientifically thought out system of obstacles known as the "modern Wall" -- which lasted until 1989 -- was underway, making escapes clearly riskier than ever.]

**Mid-Dec 68:** West Germany (BRD) calls for the assembly to select a Federal president for 5 Mar 69 in West Berlin. Soviets and the East Germans (GDR) strenuously protest this as a "great provocation" since

they do not consider West Berlin to be a part of the BRD. TASS, the Soviet news agency, reports that east bloc military maneuvers will take place in March, involving the Soviet and GDR armies. The GDR Interior Minister (in charge of police and internal security) says that he will ban Federal assembly members from the surface routes to West Berlin. Traffic is stopped on the Berlin-Helmstedt *autobahn*. The Soviets threaten the air routes. The western Allies assert their rights to protect West Berlin's integration with the legal, commercial and finance systems of West Germany.

**1969:** Markus Wolf, GDR foreign intelligence boss, awarded the "Fatherland Order of Outstanding Merit" in gold.

**1969:** Herbert Marcuse publishes "An Essay on Liberation" having been impressed by the new radicals.

**20 Jan 69:** Richard M. Nixon inaugurated as President of the United States. His appointment of William P. Rogers as Secretary of State is a key step leading to negotiation of the subsequent Four Power Treaty (see below). Rogers is overshadowed in the media by colorful National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, but the nuts-and-bolts work of the treaty development goes the traditional diplomat technical route, under Rogers' administration.

**10 Feb 69:** West Germany (FRG) and the Yugoslav government sign an agreement for cooperation in commerce, industry and technical fields.

**26-27 Feb 69:** State visit by President Richard Nixon in the FRG and West Berlin.

**1-7 Mar 69:** Soviet and East German (GDR) troops hold maneuvers in the central and western parts of the GDR. On those grounds, traffic is disrupted between West Berlin and West Germany. Western observers see this as a protest against the following event.

**5 Mar 69:** Gustav Heinemann (SPD) becomes Federal president, with the assembly held in West Berlin. Uproar over this event underlines to everyone the unsettled status of Berlin.

**5 Mar 69:** West Berlin police raid the headquarters of Left radical *Kommune 1*.

**2-15 Mar 69:** Soviet and Chinese troops fight in border skirmishes. This results in personnel movements in the Soviet Army in Germany, and eventually becomes a source of pressure on Soviet leaders to reduce their commitments in Europe. [*rwr note: By Jun 69, Americans down to my level were aware of Soviet soldiers being transferred from Germany to the Chinese border. At Marienborn, one Soviet officer joked that someday we would meet at a checkpoint on the Ussuri River.*]

**14 Mar 69:** Attacker of student radical leader Rudi Dutschke sentenced to a seven-year prison term.

- 17 Mar 69:** State and party chiefs of the Warsaw Pact states meet in Budapest to discuss a Conference on Security and Mutual Cooperation in Europe.
- 19 Mar 69:** The Presidium (governing body) of the FRG's Social Democratic Party (SPD) shuts off its subsidy of the Social Democratic School Federation (SHB), as the youth group is increasingly veering from the party platform and is more often following the lead of the radical Socialist German Student Federation (SDS).
- 20 Mar 69:** End of the visa requirement between the FRG and Yugoslavia.
- 21/22 Mar 69:** Congress of the "National Front of Democratic Germany" meets in East Berlin, declares its support for the "socialist community of mankind."
- 26 Mar 69:** The West German government (*BRD*) withdraws the federal subsidy for the Union of German Students (*VDS*), declaring that it increasingly is a "revolutionary struggle group".
- 3 Apr 69:** An uproar in West Germany over the disappearance of *Bundeswehr* (FRG Army) Major Hans-Joachim Kruse. He turns up in East Germany (*DDR*), having defected in opposition to what he feels is right-wing extremist influence of the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) in the *Bundeswehr*. He is quoted as wanting to send a signal to "...fill in the trench between the two German states."
- 6 Apr 69:** Massive demonstrations over the Easter weekend in the US, against the war in Vietnam, are reported widely in Germany.
- 8 May 69:** Cambodia opens diplomatic relations with the GDR (East Germany) as the first "non-communist" government to do so. In the course of the next few years, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, the Democratic Peoples Republic of Yemen, and the United Arab Republic (Egypt) took up diplomatic relations with the GDR.
- 3 Jun 69:** Editor of this website arrives at *Lichterfelde-West Bahnhof* in West Berlin, assigned in U.S. Army to Rail Transportation Office, Service Company, Berlin Brigade.
- Mid-Jun 69:** Klaus Schuetz (*SPD*), Governing Mayor (Lord Mayor in British terminology) of West Berlin, journeys to neighbor Poland for the first time in his life.
- [Biography of Dr. Klaus Schuetz \[in German\]](http://www.luise-berlin.de/Historie/Spitze/zukap5/KlausSchuetz.htm)**  
**<http://www.luise-berlin.de/Historie/Spitze/zukap5/KlausSchuetz.htm>**
- 27 Jun 69:** Klaus Schuetz, publishes "Our Policy towards Poland" in the weekly *Die Zeit*. He lays out the need for new types of agreements, as compared to the "obsolete" classical peace treaty assumed by the Potsdam Conference. "We must proceed from the facts which have become history." By taking small steps, a big goal will eventually be reached.

**20 Jul 69:** First men walk on moon. "A small step for a man..."

**Sep 69:** Federal elections bring a change: a coalition government of the *SDP/FDP* (Socialists/Liberals) under Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt, with *FDP* leader Walter Scheel as Foreign Minister. [--rwr note -- The exciting election night offered a breath of fresh air. As a young Berlin SDPer and I attended his party's Berlin victory celebration and then watched election night coverage in the SFB studio, we experienced the sensation of having been on a train that has stopped for a long time in the middle of nowhere, then begins to roll again.] This launches a period in German politics sometimes known as the Social Liberal Era (1969-1982). In foreign affairs, this is the period of *Ostpolitik*, with various negotiations involving West Germany, East Germany and the parties to unresolved World War II boundary issues involving the Germans. During this time, Brandt also copes with his party's Young Socialists, who want to take a more militant line in the domestic economy and against the capitalist United States.

**3 Oct 69:** The Berlin Television Tower, on the Alexanderplatz in East Berlin, is opened to the public with great ceremony. As a symbol of the new GDR, it is designed to be seen, as well as to distribute television signals. It becomes known as the "Ostfinger" to some Berliners, or as "St. Walter's Cross" to others. The latter is a cross-reference between GDR party boss Walter Ulbricht's name and the unplanned phenomenon which causes the shape of a cross to appear above the "capitol of the German Democratic Republic" on the landmark when the sun shines on it.

**8 - 16 Oct 69:** Under the leadership of the Soviet Defense Minister Marshal Grechko, the war game *Westen* is held. It involves all branches of the armed forces of the Soviet Union (military districts of Germany, Bellorussia [Belarus], and Carpathia. Forces of the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Czechoslovakia participate. As stated by *Generaloberst* Kessler of the *Nationalen Volksarmee* (NVA) in his **23 Oct 69** report to the GDR Defense Ministry, the Ruhr was the objective to be reached by the NVA's Third Army (headquartered in Leipzig) and the 5th Army Corps (headquartered in Neuruppin) with the exception of the 1st Motorized Guards Division). They would have faced the skilled professionals of the British Army, as well as major elements of the *Bundeswehr*. The plans assumed that an agreement not to use nuclear weapons had been reached. What is significant is that there is an internal discussion [controversy?] over leaving the powerful Guards unit out of this plan in order for it to be set aside for the invasion of West Berlin. This is a classic dispute-- the "General U.S. Grant style" attack on the opponents' economy and transportation, versus the political attack on a thorny symbol (in the American Civil War, politicians wanted Grant to attack Richmond, the Confederate capitol city -- he chose to successfully attack nearby Petersburg, the rail hub). The only military justification for diverting resources to attack West Berlin would have been to shut down our radio monitoring operations.

The compromise was that the 1st Motorized Guards would join with second echelon units in West Berlin to flatten the three Western brigades and

the West Berlin police, then turn west to join the assault on the Ruhr. The work of occupying the city would remain for the paramilitary border units of the NVA, the militarized units of the *Volkspolizei*, and the Watch Regiment Felix Dzherzinski of the Ministry for State Security (*Stasi*). The latter were modeled after the uniformed units of the KGB, wearing NVA-style uniforms, but with distinctive red collar tabs. They were stationed in Berlin just east of the Wall. Also included in the glorious victory were to be the motorized units of the Combat Group Battalions of the Combat Groups of the Working Class. Military honor decorations were prepared for the victors. These were to be followed up by security units to imprison the appropriate people.

These planning and mobilization exercises continued into 1988. [For the armchair military strategist, they leave behind the "what if" questions. For example, the degree that West Berlin resisted would have affected the participation of the 1st Motorized Guards in the fight against NATO forces in the Ruhr. For the historian, they show the obsession with West Berlin on the part of the GDR government. For me, this material confirms rumors that I heard during 1969-71, that it would be "German" troops liberating West Berlin, not the ubiquitous Soviets. This, in turn, raises the question of how much NATO knew about these plans, as I could hear of them at my low level. **The timing of this planning raises the alternative to the coexistence policies developing at the same time in Moscow and the NATO capitals.**]

**13-25 Oct 69:** U.S. President Richard Nixon orders a nuclear-level alert of U.S. forces, reportedly for reasons unrelated to the Warsaw Pact maneuvers around Berlin. Berlin units went on alert. [Further for the armchair geopolitical strategist: there are some big disconnects here. In December 2002, an advance version of the January 2003 issue of a *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* article explained that U.S. alerts in October 1969 were part of an administration plan to push the Soviet Union to order North Vietnam to the bargaining table in the Paris Peace Talks. This plan was discussed in the White House in Summer 1969. According to the AP account (26 Dec 2002), the military alerts were a failure because the Soviet Union ignored them in relation to Vietnam. The report omits mention of the fact that five days earlier, Warsaw Pact troops began to move on Berlin and positioned themselves for an attack on the West in their training exercise.

Until more information from the former Soviet archives is available, we are left with the ironic possibility that due to the coincidence of the two super-powers' timetables, that the Soviet military may have interpreted our alerts as a response to their maneuvers. The AP report is full of smug hindsight, focusing entirely on the Vietnam aspect and stating that the Nixon plan "... may have backfired." Actually, it may have inadvertently signaled the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic to keep hands off Berlin and possibly helped in the subsequent negotiations by implying that Western willingness to deal on the German Question was not from a position of weakness. After October 1969, the Warsaw Pact exercises never again named West Berlin as a target, although other GDR cities were portrayed in exercises as being



occupied by foreign troops at brigade strength.]

**28 Oct 69:** Chancellor Willy Brandt states his policy on the status of Berlin to the Bundestag (Federal parliament) and the world.

**8 Nov 69:** The Children's Matinee at the Outpost Theater (on Clayallee, today the home of the Allied Museum) features *One Spy Too Many*, starring Robert Vaughn and David McCallum.

**Nov 69:** TWA and Pan Am advertise \$260 round-trip air travel for military personnel and dependents between Frankfurt and New York City. Air France offers a different suggestion: a weekend round-trip to Paris from Berlin for DM461 (about \$115 at that time).

**Dec 69:** Bob Hope visits West Berlin in the first stop on his round-the-world holiday tour for the USO. Photos of his show, which include singer Connie Stevens, were available on-line. *The author of this chronology was at the show, but not in the photos. Seeing Bob Hope and his troupe really made it "official" that we were overseas in a difficult place.*

**Dec 69:** Beginning of West German discussions with the Soviet Union and Poland.

**Dec 69:** Deadly flu outbreak hits Berlin, lasting through the winter. Tens of thousands seriously ill, 142 died. Although young and relatively healthy Allied soldiers did not worry too much about this on their own behalf, among them were parents of young children who faced serious concerns, and the effects on the local community were readily apparent. Service on the bus system was curtailed and a low-ridership segment of the U-Bahn system was shut down due to the staff shortages.

**7 Dec 69:** West Berlin's Europa Center hosts an exhibition on "Export Goods from Poland." *[rwr note: Berlin's natural trading area includes parts of Poland, regardless of where the boundary happens to fall.]*

**Dec 69:** *The author of this chronology celebrates his birthday in Paris, on leave from the island city of West Berlin. It is a different world, with people preoccupied with issues remote from those in Central Europe.*

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Your AFTV Program.

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[Central Library in Berlin includes reproductions of East Berlin newspaper front pages.](http://www.zlb.de/)

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[http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_xv/zb.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xv/zb.html)

[Richard Huffman's Baader-Meinhof pages focus on German terrorists.](http://www.baader-meinhof.com/)

<http://www.baader-meinhof.com/>

[Return to Berlin 1969.](http://www.berlin1969.com)

<http://www.berlin1969.com>

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