

The world's bankers gather in Berlin next week, coincidentally marking the 40th anniversary of the historic airlift. They will meet in the West, sleep in the East and find touches of Orwell in both places

## Working the Wall in a divided city

**W**hy would American bankers slip through the Berlin Wall every night to bed down in the Communist half of the city? Why pay outrageous capitalist rates at the Grand or Metropol, where ordinary denizens of the "worker and peasant state" are shown the door—only hard-currency owners need apply? Though close as the crow flies, these hotels are a world away from the International Congress Center in West Berlin, where 10,000 money masters gather next week for the 43rd annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Word has it that lack of hotel space in the West isn't what prompts the nightly exodus of Wall Street's finest. For once, the police state looks just right, and the reason is a banker's favorite: Security.

The handwriting has been on the Wall for months. "No Dialogue with World Bank Murderers," proclaims one of the graffiti on the Western side. The message is flanked by a five-pronged star, the symbol of terrorists from Lima to Londonderry. Authorities in West Berlin have been bracing for violence ever since the bankers chose the Western enclave deep inside East Germany for their meeting.

**Waiting to protest.** To sundry leftists and Third World-firsters, the World Bank and especially the IMF are monsters, bred to recolonize the poor of the Third World under the guise of fiscal discipline and free-market development. Some 80 groups will gather in nonviolent protest: Peace activists, ecologists, even the West Berlin branch of the East German Communist Party, whose handlers will provide quarters for the cream of capitalism.

But others, self-styled "anti-imperialists" and "street fighters," have vowed direct action. For that reason, the 10,000 money mavens will be protected by 9,000 of the city's policemen and 2,500 brought in from West Germany. Statistically, every delegate

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is assigned 1.15 men in forest green packing pistols or submachine guns.

What has happened to the city where John F. Kennedy proclaimed a quarter-century ago: "Ich bin ein Berliner!"—where 40 years ago the U.S. Air Force flew mercy missions for 322 days to break Stalin's blockade? Thanks to the airlift of 1948-49, which fused victors and vanquished into a democratic alliance, West Berlin is free. Today, the city is like any other Western metropolis, violent, traffic choked and smog plagued. On the other hand, it is like no other city

Wall are now routine. But the passage past tank traps and steel barriers is still Orwellian, especially the trip back. Does the border guard poking a rod in your gas tank really expect to find an escapee curled up inside?

The city is also grappling with the aftermath of the long struggle against Moscow. Paradoxically, decades of pressure strengthened Berliners, a plucky group that made even Hitler uncomfortable. They had found a role as forward bastion of the cold war. Now the pressure is off and détente is on, and they are adrift in between.

The vast majority of the 1.7 million West Berliners are proud to play host to the World Bank and the IMF. But among them is an assortment of not-so-ordinary burghers. Because the Western powers are formally in charge, West Berlin youth need not serve in the West German Army. Hence draft dodgers, dreamers and radicals flourish in a subculture that has found an easy living in Subsidy City.

They are a reserve army of radical politics and protest, with occasional sprees of window bashing and car smashing. Berlin, therefore, suffers from a split sociology neatly reflected in public opinion. While 80



A message from West Berlin's left: "Down with the fascists"

percent of the population regards the Allies as guarantors of their security, that number drops to 26 percent among the *Alternativen* (the Alternatives) and Greens.

There may be more social decay in Walltown than elsewhere in well-ordered West Germany. But the city is not a latter-day version of "Cabaret." In the 1930s, street battles between the Nazis and the Communists were for real, as were the decadence and the frenzy. But if there is a real problem now, it is boredom, not hate. Comparing the threat to the Olympics in South Korea with that to the World Bank-IMF conclave in West Berlin, Interior Minister Wilhelm Kewenig (who directs security) has it right in stating more than the obvious: "Berlin is not Seoul." ■

Today, there is at least a veneer of normalcy. Unimaginable in the 1960s, telephone calls and trips through the