Maothai Stammhaus

Mayday · Maothai 1994

Until 1989, the area around the Maothai Stammhaus (headquarters) near Kollwitzplatz was mainly inhabited by workers and intellectuals. The buildings belonged to the Prenzlauer Berg municipal housing association. With the end of the GDR, the battle for real estate began. By around 1998, most of the residential buildings had been privatized and sold to new owners. Kollwitzplatz became one of the most expensive inner-city areas in Berlin. This process took years. Those who wanted to acquire the buildings and knew about the local intricacies had an interest in keeping the purchase prices low. Thus, it is certainly no coincidence that around the time the buildings were to be sold, unrest broke out on Mayday, not only in the notorious districts of Kreuzberg and Neukölln, but now also here, in East Berlin. As a result, the purchase prices remained low for the initial buyers. Most of the activists involved in these protests did not come from the ranks of East German residents. After most of the residential buildings had been privatized, the Berlin police chief could report that the situation was now calm, as there had been no major clashes in Prenzlauer Berg since 1998.

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The founder of the Maothai had invested more than DM 1.2 million in refurbishing the building. The new management of the Prenzlauer Berg municipal housing association, which originated from the SPD-owned estate trust „Neue Heimat“ in Hamburg, sold the building not to the operator but to the heirs of the pre-war owners via a property management company based in Hamburg as well. The former owners quickly resold the property and reaped a good profit.