

## ***Heroes***

The closest thing to a traditional pop song to come out of the Berlin trilogy was the title track of its second 1977 instalment, "Heroes." A love song between a West Berliner and East Berliner, the track had an unusual amount of political significance. Bowie was never apolitical, but direct commentary on Cold War politics was new to him.

But true to form, the geopolitics serves mostly as an impediment to and distraction from the micro-scale dramas of daily life that really interested Bowie. When his lovers yearn for freedom — "I wish you could swim / Like the dolphins, like dolphins can swim" — it's simply the freedom to live their lives and have their love, not freedom to resist or to fight for ideals or otherwise actively struggle.

The sheer modesty of the desire adds to its power and humanizes the suffering Europe's division created. And there's an argument to be made that Bowie helped end that suffering: When he performed the song in Berlin in 1987, it sparked riots in the East, and a week later Ronald Reagan would demand that Mikhail Gorbachev "tear down this wall."