

PART I:
SOCIAL REUNIFICATION
AND
ETHNIC DIVERSITY

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED? BERLIN SOCIETY AND THE CHALLENGE OF REUNIFICATION

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Almost everyone in Germany over the age of thirty still remembers where they were and what they were doing when they heard THE news on November 9, 1989: the Berlin Wall has come down. But since this date a new generation of students has crowded into the lecture halls of German universities, and they only know of the event from history books or from stories told by older people. The Wall has vanished, and the last remnants of it are cordoned off as museum objects. Has Berlin society overcome its divisions since reunification? This is the question to be addressed in the chapter below.

In order to understand Berlin and its unity, it is necessary to look briefly into the past. The city of Berlin is approximately 800 years old; the first known document reference dates back to 1237. However, the city only came to prominence with the rise of the state of Prussia under King Frederick the Great, who ruled his country from 1740 to 1786. Along with the increasing importance of Prussia in Europe, its capital city began to take further shape.

When the Second German Empire was constituted in 1871, in which Prussia was a major component, the King of Prussia became the Emperor (with the title of William the First), the Prime Minister of Prussia became the Chancellor (Otto von Bismarck), and the capital city of Prussia (Berlin) became the capital of Germany. After victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, reparation payments flowed towards Berlin, contributing to the building of the national parliament building (the Reichstag) among others. The city also profited tremendously from industrialization, and it grew rapidly in size and population.

Berlin continued as the capital after Germany's defeat in the First World War. During the Weimar Republic (1919 – 1933) Berlin became

one of the most attractive and lively metropolises of the world.¹ This period ended with the National Socialists seizing power on 30 January 1933. Hitler's movevemnt celebrated its victory with a torchlight parade, passing through the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. (This had to be repeated the next day so that it could be recorded on film for Nazi propaganda purposes, because the light had not been sufficient for the cameras.) Berlin was the capital city of Adolf Hitler even though, having been born in Austria, he never really felt comfortable in this Prussian metropolis.

As early as 1944, when the defeat of Nazi Germany in the Second World War was becoming increasingly evident, the prospective victorious powers of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union were considering how they should approach the question of a defeated Germany. They decided to divide Germany into occupation zones: one American, one British and one Soviet zone. Later France, at the insistence of Great Britain, was included in the group of victorious powers and allocated a comparatively small occupation zone of its own. The alliance had been held together by its members' opposition to Hitler, yet mutual mistrust soon took hold. For there were very few shared ideas about the future development of Germany that went beyond the desire to crush the Nazis.

"If it had been up to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Berlin would now be in that location in which many in America assumed it to be, i.e. on the border between the Federal Republic and the GDR." So wrote the historian Peter Bender during the era of division in his book about West Berlin.² But it was not up to Roosevelt, and the postwar Soviet zone of occupation surrounded Berlin. However, since the joint administrative body for occupied Germany, the Allied Control Council, was to be located in Berlin, the city was given a special status. Geographically speaking, the city was in the center of the Soviet zone, yet it did not constitute part of that zone. On the contrary, it had the status of a jointly-administered zone, "a special Berlin area which will be under joint occupation by the three Powers," as it was phrased in the Protocol of London dated September 12, 1944.³ For this purpose the Berlin Kommandatura was founded, to which

¹ See Joseph Roth, *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin, 1920-1933* (New York, 2002); Rainer Metzger, *Berlin in the Twenties: Art and Culture, 1918-1933* (London, 2008)

² Peter Bender, *Wenn es West-Berlin nicht gäbe* (Berlin, 1987), 9.

³ "Protocol on Zones of Occupation in Germany and Administration of the 'Greater Berlin' Area, Approved by the European Advisory Commission, September 12, 1944, United States, Department of State" in U.S. State

the commanders of the four military forces belonged. In order to avoid conflicts in everyday matters, sectors were established in which each of the Allied military contingents was responsible for maintaining law and order. Thus Berlin was administered by the four Allied generals and commanders, each of whom was governor of his respective sector.

This joint administration of Berlin functioned about as well as it did for the whole of occupied Germany—that is, rather badly. In 1948 the Allied Control Council for Germany split in two. It became more and more evident that two states would emerge out of the four occupation zones. A key cause of this division was the currency reform of June 1948 in the Western zones, which introduced the German mark (*Deutsche Mark*). The Soviet Military Authority reacted by initiating its own currency reform and unsuccessfully attempting to have their East mark (*Ostmark*) accepted as the currency for all of Berlin. Now there were two currencies in the city. Another sign of increasing division in 1948 was the action of a group of professors and students at Humboldt University in eastern Berlin, who left the Humboldt and founded the new “Free University” in the western part of the city.

The western zones of Germany controlled by the US, Great Britain and France were developing into a Western-oriented parliamentary republic, while the eastern zone under the Soviet Union was becoming a Stalinist state. As the division grew apparent, Berlin itself became a problem. Because of its location in the Soviet zone (rather than on a border between East and West), it was not possible for each developing state simply to annex “its” contiguous part of Berlin and leave it at that.

In 1948 the Soviet Union attempted to force the Western powers out of Berlin. To this end it used the agreements about provisions for the city, which stated that each occupying power was to supply its own sector. This made the western sectors entirely dependent on deliveries of food and goods from western Germany, which had to be transported through the Soviet zone of occupation. On June 24, 1948 the Soviet Union blockaded all the access routes to Berlin over land and by inland waterway, with the result that West Berlin was cut off from food supply deliveries. The Western Allies, in particular the Americans, reacted to this by instituting the famous Berlin Air Lift (in German: “Air Bridge”), which supplied the western sectors with food, coal and other necessities. The Air Lift enabled economic survival for eleven months up to the end of the blockade on May 12, 1949.

One can hardly overstate the significance of this event for the development of German-US relations. Enemies during the war, the two nations became allies in opposition to the obvious threat from the East. Even small gestures during the Air Lift played a part in changing the emotional landscape. An American pilot, Gail Halvorsen, began at first on his own, then with the help of other military personnel and civilian helpers, to tie candy to homemade parachutes and drop these on his approach route into Tempelhof airport. This military operation, “Little Vittles,” increased to as many as 6000 drops per day, and it was the only chance that many Berlin children had to obtain a piece of chocolate.⁴ The “Candy Pilot” is a fixed part of the city’s cultural memory and has done more for German-US relations than many a high-powered public relations campaign launched by an American president. The hero of the Air Lift was General Lucius D. Clay, then the military governor of the US zone of German occupation. Interestingly, Clay himself did not believe that the Air Lift could succeed. In vain he demanded from his government, as a token of its military determination, that they initiate an armed convoy to drive through the Soviet zone.⁵ When the Air Lift finally broke the Soviet blockade after all, the Free University awarded General Clay an honorary doctorate, and he was given the key to the city. There is still a main boulevard after him.

By the end of the blockade, the situation in Berlin had changed radically. In an autonomous action on November 30, 1948, the elected deputies of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), an eastern Communist party kept on a short rein by the Soviet authorities, had completed the administrative division of the city. In an unauthorized session of the city parliament at which only members of the SED were present, the party declared that the existing administration of the city, the Magistrat, was no longer in power. Of course the authority of this decision, which is known as the City Hall Putsch, only reached as far as the protection of the Soviet Union. Thus beginning in November 1948 there were two city administrations, each of which claimed authority over the entire city but were de facto restricted to their “own” sectors. Yet although the city was now politically divided, people could still move freely from West to East and vice versa. Many East Berliners were working in the West, and there were also cases where the reverse was true.

⁴ Ann and John Tusa, *The Berlin Blockade* (London, 1988), 268 ff. For another view of the Airlift’s significance, see Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 149 ff.

In 1949 the two German states officially came into being. The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) was founded on May 23 and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) on October 7. The GDR incorporated East Berlin as its capital. This was to a large extent authorized by the Soviet authorities, although they kept for themselves their own rights as well as those of the other Allies. So, for example, military patrols (*Patrouillenfahrten*) by American, British, and French personnel took place in East Berlin until 1990.⁶ For geographical reasons, incorporating the Western sectors into the Federal Republic was more difficult. Moreover, the Western Allies did not desire complete incorporation, because they wished to maintain their rights with respect to Germany as a whole and to Berlin specifically.

Indeed up until 1990, when Germany was united and Allied rights and responsibilities ceased, West Berlin was only treated *as if* it were one of the states of the Federal Republic—a small, but juridically significant difference. In fact, West Berlin was no such thing, and the Allies reinforced this special status, as a number of examples demonstrate. When official state visitors arrived by airplane in West Berlin, they were greeted first by Allied officers and then by the Governing Mayor. Berliners had no normal personal identification cards like other West Germans, but rather “provisional identity cards” (*behelfsmäßige Personalausweise*) without any state insignia or coat of arms. The Federal Interior Ministry issued passports to West Berliners that were stamped with the words “In accordance with the Four Power Agreement on Berlin” (*In Übereinstimmung mit dem Vierseitigen Abkommen über Berlin.*) Men were exempt from West Germany’s compulsory military service. Finally, because the FRG’s laws did not apply automatically to West Berlin, each one had to be passed again by the city parliament. These examples notwithstanding, West Berlin was supported financially by the Federal Republic.

Berlin was a politically and economically but not *physically* divided city after 1948. Two members of the West German Bundestag even lived in East Berlin. The physical division only occurred when the Wall was built in 1961. Each year prior to that, hundreds of thousands of GDR inhabitants had been leaving their country, simply because they could see

⁶ The Western Allies drove through East Berlin in military vehicles and in uniform. They never did anything actively beyond occasionally taking photographs, however, as the purpose was merely to show their presence. The Russians did the same thing in West Berlin, sometimes joining official motorcades (e.g. during visits from the FRG’s president), whereupon the Western military police carefully pushed them away again.

no future for themselves in the socialist dictatorship. The least dangerous way to escape was to travel from East Germany to East Berlin and then to cross the sector boundary on foot or by railway. When Soviet demands that the Western side keep people from crossing over failed to produce a reaction, the GDR authorities, with Soviet approval, slammed on the emergency brakes and erected a barrier wall with military enforcement against their own citizens. The building of the Wall commenced early on Sunday, August 13, 1961.

Even though many people were still able to escape from East to West during the following few weeks, East Berliners were now no longer able to visit West Berlin legally. More than 50,000 people in the East were cut off from their jobs or places of work. Families were split up, and friendships ceased. Anger towards the Soviet leaders and their GDR puppets was tremendous; so was disappointment over the American reaction. Three days after the Wall's construction began, Willy Brandt, Governing Mayor of West Berlin, wrote a letter to President John F. Kennedy to criticize Allied inaction, which he said aroused "doubt about the ability to react and the determination of the three Allied Powers."⁷ Indeed, the triumphant reception that welcomed Kennedy to West Berlin in June 1963 was by no means a matter of course. In an excellent speech Kennedy spoke directly to the hearts of the Germans—without making any promises—and gave them confidence. His declaration of solidarity, "*Ich bin ein Berliner*," has remained a standard idiom in the country to this day.

After the Wall was erected, the two parts of the city developed with their backs to one another. Admittedly, some infrastructural elements could not be completely severed, but mechanisms were created that enabled inhabitants to stay out of each others' way as much as possible. For example, two subway lines and trains on the light transit railway traversed East Berlin territory to get from one part of West Berlin to another. In the eastern part of Berlin, however, it was not possible to board these trains, and stations were boarded up and guarded by the special forces of the GDR transport police. Occasionally during the 1960s, there were brief periods when West Berliners were given special transit passes to visit their relatives in East Berlin. The reverse process was not permitted at all. Thus family get-togethers of East and West Berliners frequently took place in Prague or Budapest.

Many interpersonal, informal contacts between West and East Berliners continued. After the Four Power Agreement on Berlin came into

⁷ Quoted in Eckart D. Stratenschulte, *Kleine Geschichte Berlins* (Munich, 2000, second ed.), 103.

force in 1972, visits from West to East became somewhat easier, although they were still complicated enough. It took more than ten years to reach even this agreement which only became possible within the framework of the European detente policy. Now West Berliners could apply for a one-day visa which they could obtain two days later. At the checkpoint they had to exchange a certain amount of West German money into East German "Mark". Since they were not allowed to change this money back (at the end 25 DM per day), they were supposed to spend it in East Berlin. Every year after the agreement, there were more than 2 million such visits; from a statistical point of view every person in West Berlin went over to the East once a year. In fact, a number of Westerners visited the other half of the city frequently, while at the same time a whole generation was growing up in the West who had no contact of any kind to the eastern districts. Moreover, there were no official contacts between East and West Berlin. Matters affecting the city were either addressed by the two German states in negotiations; or the Senat of West Berlin (the public administration) dealt with the government of the GDR. At the local or city levels, negotiations would fail before they started, merely because it was impossible for both sides to agree on the status of Berlin. Whereas the West did not accept the claim of East Berlin to be the capital city of the GDR, the authorities in East Berlin insisted on treating West Berlin as a separate political entity—that is, as a third German country distinct from the Federal Republic. As late as the Gorbachev era of the late 1980s, an agreement on inland waterways between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union failed to come into existence because the USSR declared that West Berlin vessels must fly the flag of Berlin, while the FRG insisted they fly the Federal German flag. This is a particularly ironic example of the tortuous and absurd situation, because on inland waterways there is no requirement to fly any flag at all!

The first official contacts between West and East Berlin occurred not long before the Wall came down, in May 1989. In that month the Governing Mayor of (West) Berlin was invited by the Lord Mayor of (East) Berlin to attend a concert given by the (West) Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in East Berlin.⁸ Although there was no provision for political discussions to take place between these two official representatives, the visit, which consisted only of the concert followed by a reception, was a sensation.

⁸ See Peter Pragal and Eckart D. Stratenschulte, *Der Monolog der Lautsprecher und andere Geschichten aus dem geteilten Berlin* (Munich, 1999), 162 ff.

After the Wall came down, several politicians and political scientists appeared on talk shows and stated that they had known it was about to fall. In actual fact no one in Berlin or Germany had counted on the Wall's end. Admittedly, the political situation in the GDR had sharpened dramatically in the course of 1989 following the decision of the Hungarian government to cease acting as jailers on behalf of the GDR leaders and to open their country's borders with Austria for people with an East German passport. The leaders of Czechoslovakia, although far less liberal than their Hungarian counterparts, also no longer felt like continuing to sort out the GDR's problems. Following negotiations between West and East German leaders, the Czechs permitted GDR citizens who had been occupying the FRG embassy in Prague to leave for West Germany. The GDR government insisted that this emigration take place through East German territory. However, they did themselves no favors with this stipulation. During the transit many GDR inhabitants came to the railway line and wanted to board the train.

These escapes of 1989, and the lack of will in their neighboring socialist governments to prevent them, forced GDR authorities to take action. In October 1989 the long-standing head of state and the SED, Erich Honecker, was forced by his own government to step down. He was replaced by his deputy or "crown prince" Egon Krenz, who had previously distinguished himself by his loyalty to Honecker. Krenz believed that the situation might be brought under control by allowing those citizens to flee who were already on their way or who had chosen to escape through neighboring countries. During internal discussions, however, it became clear that it was not feasible to allow citizens to leave the GDR for good while simultaneously prohibiting short-term visits of a few days.⁹

Thus on November 9, 1989 the GDR government, acting upon a request from the SED, passed a motion to authorize "private journeys to other countries" without the stipulation that the travellers had to demonstrate compliance with certain conditions. The Party spokesperson, Günter Schabowski, announced this decision during an international press conference in the early evening of November 9. Due to Schabowski's unprofessional and bureaucratic manner, even many of the journalists failed to recognize the dynamite nature of this announcement. Nevertheless, from 8 PM onwards all German news broadcasts were reporting that the GDR intended to permit its citizens to leave the country.

⁹ For detailed description and documentation of the Wall's end, see Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Chronik des Mauerfalls: Die dramatischen Ereignisse um den 9. November 1989* (Berlin, 1996).

Then something amazing happened: inhabitants of East Berlin went to have a look. As the crowds streamed to the border crossing points, they attracted more and more people. Guards met them at the border and reported in panic-stricken tones to their commanding officers that people were standing in front of them and demanding to pass through. The GDR authorities were in no way prepared for this flood, and after a short time they issued instructions that the people who were insisting most forcefully were to be allowed to leave, but that their identity documents should be invalidated. These “belly-achers” would thus lose their citizenship without even realizing it. However, when the waiting crowds saw that some of their number were passing through, pressure and dissatisfaction mounted. At 10:30 PM the border crossing point at Bornholmer Strasse in Berlin was the first to open completely. There was no longer any checking or holding back. The Wall had in effect come down.

Among the GDR leaders, chaos reigned. They had imagined the border opening in such a way that inhabitants would apply for a passport, collect the document weeks later, and then apply for permission to emigrate. Now they had been overtaken by events. Egon Krenz likes to claim that it was he who opened the Wall.¹⁰ What is true is that he had no idea what he was doing—and a good thing this was, too! The minutes of the SED Central Committee meeting that took place at the time is a tragi-comic document of contemporary history. SED members resumed their meeting on November 10, 1989 as if nothing had happened. Using standard Party gobblede-gook, they discussed the (miserable) economic situation in the GDR, related the mistakes that had been made (mostly by other people), switched one or two official positions within the Politburo, and proposed drawing up an action program.¹¹ The real “action” was not taking place in their meeting room any more, but outside in the streets. In the days that followed, anyone from the GDR or East Berlin was able both to leave and to return. Border checks remained, but there was absolutely no comparison to those that had taken place before November 9. And in a matter of days, additional crossing points had been set up.

The city was in a state of euphoria. Hundreds of thousands of East Berliners and GDR inhabitants travelled to West Berlin and received a warm welcome there. West Berliners stood by the crossing points and greeted anybody coming from the other side with hearty applause. The Senat paid a “welcome” premium of 100 marks to East Berliners. The

¹⁰ Egon Krenz, *Wenn Mauern fallen—Die friedliche Revolution: Vorgeschichte—Ablauf—Auswirkungen* (Vienna, 1990).

¹¹ Hans-Hermann Hertle and Gert-Rüdiger Stephan, eds., *Das Ende der SED: Die letzten Tage des Zentralkomitees* (Berlin, 1997), 380 ff.

Philharmonic Orchestra under its conductor Daniel Barenboim gave a free concert for those with GDR identity papers. Ordinary members of the public made coffee and stood at the roadside with thermos bottles and cups to host East Berliners. This was a welcome refreshment for these people who had only a very small amount of Western currency.

However, this euphoria soon began to give way to a certain degree of irritation. The “Wessis” became annoyed by these “Ossis” who were standing around, in the way, without any sense of direction and holding up traffic, especially because they could not understand so many things that were quite natural to Westerners. The Ossis reacted unhappily to the fact that all the Wessis were taking it upon themselves to explain the facts of life to every Ossi. Soon the term “Besserwessi” was coined, which was a play on the German term *Besserwisser* or “know-it-all.” West Berliners started to refer to *Jammerossis* (“complaining Easties”), because they had the impression that East Germans were only interested in complaining that they had had a worse time of it. “After all, we had a hard time and did nothing but work for 40 years”—this was the tone of the West Berlin man in the street’s pronouncements, as if the East Germans had spent the last forty years lounging on the beach.

Behind these minor malicious remarks loomed on both sides huge disappointment over the very fact that the others were *other*, i.e. different. The Wall that had separated people for 28 years had also, in a manner of speaking, kept them together. Through highly ritualized forms of encounter—the Westerners came to visit the Easterners, they brought presents with them and needed to be back at the crossing points before midnight—a feeling of intimacy had been maintained, yet bit by bit it had lost all substance in reality. When the Wall was built, it divided brothers and sisters. With its collapse, Germans were reunited who had been socialized in very different ways. As a political cabaret group sang in 1990, “What unity we had when we were still divided!” (“*Was war das für ‘ne Einigkeit, als wir geteilt noch waren!*’”)¹²

Even after the Wall fell in November 1989, many Germans failed to predict that the two German states, and with them the two parts of Berlin, would rapidly unite. For example, when GDR border guards in one district of Berlin set about demolishing the Wall and replacing it with a metal mesh fence in January 1990, the local press and other commentators, including Governing Mayor Walter Momper, interpreted this not as an

¹² Quoted in Peter Bender, *Deutschlands Wiederkehr: Eine ungeteilte Nachkriegsgeschichte, 1945-1990* (Stuttgart, 2007), 269.

absurdity (which it was), but as a major step of progress.¹³ A border between East and West, between the two states with differing economies and currencies, was still thought to be necessary and normal; and most envisioned reunification as a long process. Not even Chancellor Helmut Kohl realized how fast it would happen. His Ten Point Program called for a gradual progression from cooperation to a federation of the two states, with unification as the last step.

In March 1990 the first free elections since the Weimar Republic were held in the GDR. The Christian Democratic Party (CDU) gained the most votes and named the lawyer Lothar de Maiziere Prime Minister of East Germany. The most important item in his political program was the rapid dissolution of the state that he headed. This ended efforts to develop the country into a second democratic German state that could remain independent instead of being absorbed into the much larger and more affluent Federal Republic. The majority of the citizens, in voting for the CDU, had voted for German unity.

Local elections took place in East Berlin on May 6, 1990. As a result the West Berlin city government now faced a democratically elected, Social Democratic government of East Berlin. Because it was obvious that when the two German states were reunified, the two halves of Berlin would merge, the West Berlin Senat and the East Berlin Magistrat met from this time onwards as one body (soon known as the “Magi-Senat”) and tried to harmonize their policies. The term “Magi-Senat” caused some amusement, because Maggi is the brand name of a soup and food seasoning manufacturer.

On July 1, 1990 the Deutschmark of the Federal Republic was introduced in East Germany, and everyone exchanged their East marks for it. This spelled the political end of the GDR at the same time as it destroyed in one stroke the ability of East German industry and commerce to survive. On the same day, border controls between East and West Berlin ceased. On the evening of October 2, 1990, privately, quietly, and without ceremony, GDR flags were taken down from the governmental and public buildings of this deceased state. At midnight the German flag was solemnly raised on the flagpole in front of the Reichstag building. Germany was now united in the Federal Republic, and Berlin was once again a single city.

Berlin continued to face unique problems, however. Before reunification the GDR Chamber of Deputies had passed an act by which

¹³ See Walter Momper, *Grenzfall: Berlin im Brennpunkt der deutschen Geschichte* (Munich, 1991), 267 ff.

the former governmental regions were subsumed into five federal states. This led to a problem for unified Berlin. Since the GDR had no control over West Berlin—in fact, they had none over East Berlin either, but such questions of status no longer played a part in their deliberations—it was not possible to combine Berlin and its surrounding region into one federal state. Thus the state of Brandenburg came into being in the territory encircling the metropolis. Since unification Berlin has also been one of the 16 constituent states of the Federal Republic. It has no historical tradition as a city-state, and it only became separated from its hinterland through the division into occupation zones that the Allies initiated. In 1996 an attempt to change this status by fusing the two states of Berlin and Brandenburg came to nought, because the majority of Brandenburg's inhabitants voted against it. In subsequent years the question of uniting the two federal states remained on the political agenda. In 2006 Brandenburg's Minister President, Mathias Platzeck, declared that his state would no longer pursue the idea due to the city's desperate financial situation.¹⁴

When Berlin was united, it was the only town or city in which East and West were rejoined. Naturally, specific problems arose from this situation, because people in the city were not prepared to accept forever the differences between the two sides. Furthermore, although Berlin was now one city, it still had two different police forces, school systems and administrations. All these bodies needed to be united. And since infrastructures had been established in different ways, there were better roads in the western part, and the chances of surviving a heart attack there were also greater. To give just one example among many health-related discrepancies, eastern ambulances, known by their appellation of “bone-shakers,” were not fitted with refrigerated cabinets and were thus unable to transport certain medications.

Following city-wide elections in December 1990, the Berlin Senat was again led by the Christian Democratic politician Eberhard Diepgen as head of a Grand Coalition with the Social Democrats. The new Senat approached its task with the slogan “reconstruction in the east takes priority over expansion in the west.”¹⁵ In the first place, however, the city

¹⁴ According to a survey of 2,000 citizens of Berlin and Brandenburg carried out by Forsa for the Free University in spring 2008, only 17% of respondents in Brandenburg were in favor of fusion, compared to 29% in Berlin. “Jeder neunte will die Mauer wieder,” *Tagesspiegel* (11 July 2008).

¹⁵ Diepgen describes his years leading the city government from 1990 to 2001 in detail in his memoirs. Eberhard Diepgen, *Zwischen den Mächten: Von der besetzten Stadt zur Hauptstadt* (Berlin, 2004).

needed to restore the economic and political functions that it had lost in the preceding decades. In the years from the end of the Second World War to reunification, industry had left West Berlin. For industrial concerns, access routes to the city had at first been uncertain and later became too long and expensive. Politically, West Berlin was no longer a hub; rather it had been reduced to a symbolic entity. It was an advertisement for Western capitalism, a test case for the containment policy of the 1940s, a battleground of the Cold War in the 1950s and 1960s, and a training ground for détente policies in the 1970s and 1980s. By contrast, East Berlin had had crucial political and economic functions. It was the capital city of the GDR and one of that country's economic and academic focal points. Following the disappearance of the GDR, however, these functions, now obsolete, transformed themselves into the burden of mass unemployment.

The 1990 treaty of unity between the two German states specified Berlin as the capital city. An absurd discussion soon commenced over what this actually meant. Whereas Berliners assumed that the federal government and the parliament would move to their city, many West Germans argued that the treaty had merely allocated a title to Berlin and that federal institutions should nevertheless remain in Bonn. It was not until June 1991 that the parliament decided by a narrow margin that the federal lower house (Bundestag) and government would relocate to Berlin; and it was not until 1998, after much construction and renovation work, that this decision was put into effect. A major part of the federal government's public administration is still located in Bonn. More than 10,000 government employees work there, while only 8,800 are in Berlin. As a member of the Bundestag calculated in early 2007, this situation results in 132,000 official journeys back and forth between Berlin and Bonn per year.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Berlin as the capital city of the largest European Union member state once again has a part to play, without which a city of this size could not survive.

Prior to 1990 the Federal Republic had not really anticipated German unity (even if one chooses to believe then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl's statement that he had always longed for it to happen). Thus there was no blueprint for planning and financing unification. Kohl played down the problems, presumably because he feared that West German citizens might vote against unification if they were presented with the bill.

¹⁶ A ddp press announcement quoted by the yahoo news service, March 18, 2007, at de.news.yahoo.com/08032007/336/westerwelle-komplettumzug-bundes-berlin.html.

One perverse scenario for spending cuts was enacted in Berlin. In rapid strokes, Kohl's government reduced the subsidies that had long supported West Berlin and the industrial and commercial enterprises based there. The consequence was a two-fold loss of funding—first of direct budget support from the federal government, and second of the tax revenues paid by companies that now left Berlin in order to make their products for less in other locations. The latter development has contributed to massive unemployment in the city. At the time of writing in spring 2007, Berlin still has an unemployment rate of 16.5% and is ranked twelfth among the sixteen federal states for the rate of employment.¹⁷

Not only was the reunified city suddenly forced to fall back upon its own resources in managing economic problems, but it was also exposed to considerable spite. Many eastern Germans found it quite fitting that the city that had always received preferential treatment from the GDR government was now in trouble. Many western Germans who had been influenced by arguments over the capital city were also quietly satisfied. Whereas beforehand it had not been permitted to speak badly of Berlin in either part of Germany, now at last one could really let one's feelings rip. For many people Berlin was, and still is, too disturbing, too big, too hectic, too raucous, too contradictory, too wild, too dirty—and, last but not least, too loud-mouthed. This may well be the reason why a majority of Brandenburg's inhabitants voted against the fusion with Berlin in 1996, even though all the rational arguments were in favor of making common cause.

The feeling of no longer enjoying the support of the whole country was new for Berliners, who had borne the burden of division most directly, but who had also been the spoilt children of the nation. This feeling became intermingled with an identity crisis. Eastern Berlin was now part of the western political system, yet the whole of Berlin was now de facto an eastern German city. Emotionally, nobody in Berlin was in the place where he or she had been before reunification. In that place they had felt safe and protected, even if the limitations and restrictions of the situation had undoubtedly been clear to all.

All of these problems notwithstanding, Berlin is in a good position at the beginning of the 21st century. Six million tourists visit the city every year, many of whom are annoyed that they can hardly find anything of the

¹⁷ Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Technologie und Frauen, *Zur wirtschaftlichen Lage in Berlin, 1/2007* (Berlin, 2007), 5. In May, 2008, the national rate had fallen to 7.8%, and the rate in Berlin was 14.1%. See www.n24.de/news/newsitem_939015.html and www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/Arbeitsmarkt-Arbeitslosigkeit;art270,2540079.

famous Wall where it used to be. In front of the House of Representatives there is a small section, but it is surrounded by a fence to prevent fragments from disappearing into collections all over the world. Today the remaining sections of the Wall that, once upon a time, was built to the Soviet area of control must be protected from souvenir hunters. But what irritates visitors when they are looking for traces is a real pleasure to inhabitants. The division of the city has been overcome. East and West have grown together. The days are long gone when it was possible to speak of the poverty-stricken east or the affluent west. In both former halves of the city there are some affluent and some problem neighborhoods. Wages and incomes, social structure and rents have been similar for many years. Not all of the various districts can even be clearly attributed to one side or the other any more. Since a zoning reform in 2001, Berlin is now composed of twelve administrative districts, and two of these, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg and the central district of Mitte, have mixed together former East and West Berlin districts.

Fig. 1.1. At Potsdamer Platz subway station, formerly in the no man's land of the divided city, people view remnants of the Wall.

Admittedly, differences between east and west are still perceptible, for example in voting behavior. The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the successor party of the SED, received votes mainly in the east. In the meantime PDS merged with a West German leftish group into Die Linke. Nonetheless, their political support in East Berlin continues to be much stronger than in West Berlin. Its share of votes in the most recent election of 2006, despite considerable losses compared with previous elections, amounted to 28.1%, whereas in former West Berlin the PDS won 4.2%.¹⁸ The print media market is also split. While people in the west subscribe to the *Tagesspiegel* and the *Berliner Morgenpost*, in the east the *Berliner Zeitung* is the daily newspaper of choice. The fact that the latter is owned

¹⁸ Der Landeswahlleiter in Berlin, "Berliner Wahlen 2006: Endgültiges Ergebnis zu den Wahlen zum Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin und zu den Bezirksverordnetenversammlungen sowie zur Volksabstimmung über die Neuregelung von Volksbegehren und Volksentscheid in der Verfassung von Berlin am 17. September 2006," www.statistik-berlin.de/wahlen/framesets/aghbv-2006.htm.

by a British investor is not considered relevant.¹⁹ Those with sharp hearing can detect minor linguistic differences as well. Traditionally, the Berlin dialect was more pronounced in the eastern part of the city, but this is becoming less and less the case.

One factor that has blurred distinctions is the influx of many new residents who only know about the east/west dichotomy from reading history. Many others have left the city. Between 1991 and 2006, Berlin gained 1.8 million new inhabitants and lost 1.7 million. This means that in 12 years, there has been a turnover of almost 50% of the population. Such distinctive fluctuation is a sign that Berlin's isolation has been overcome.

Whereas immediately after the Wall's collapse Berliners were amazed and disappointed that "people on the other side" were different, by now residents are no longer bothered by these (diminishing) differences. The same lack of concern applies to political divisions into two camps. The times are long past when the successor to the GDR's communist party, the PDS, was considered by other political parties to be unacceptable in a democracy.²⁰ After the 2001 elections to the Berlin House of Representatives, the PDS governed in a coalition with the Social Democrats without this being anything for others to get irritated about. While it is true that two of the three cabinet office-holders for the PDS are from the west, an elite of eastern German PDS politicians is slowly forming. Since the Berlin elections of 2006, several members of this party have become heads of administrative divisions in the city government. Another result of these elections is that the Christian Democrats have been sent into opposition. For a short time, the CDU had an east Berliner as its party head. The fact that eastern Germans are by now occupying leading positions in politics is strikingly demonstrated by the accession of new federal Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Berlin is not only embedded in a Germany without internal borders; since 2004 it has also been part of a much larger European Union. Eighty kilometers to the east is merely the trace of a border with a new EU member state, Poland. There are numerous and varied political and economic contacts with this neighbor. The Poznan trade fair is an important point of contact for Berlin companies, and the Berlin Airport

¹⁹ On the general differences in media use in western and eastern Germany, see the public opinion survey carried out by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *15 Jahre nach dem Fall der Mauer: Die Entwicklung der Zeitschriftennutzung in den neuen Ländern* (Allensbach, 2004), www.ifd-allensbach.de/pdf/akt_0408b.pdf.

²⁰ In June of 2007 the PDS fused with Work and Social Justice—The Alternative (WASG). The new party calls itself The Left (*Die Linke*). Co-chairs are Oskar Lafontaine and Lothar Bisky.

Authority posts advertisements on Szczecin city buses to entice vacationers from western Poland. About 33,000 Poles are now living legally in the city, and the Polish Social Council estimates that there are about 20,000 more living illegally. When EU transition regulations limiting freedom to live and work in another country expire in 2011, the legal position for these people will improve and the proportion of Polish citizens within Berlin's population will increase.

One in eight of every single euro earned by Berlin comes from trade with countries in central and eastern Europe. Many employees in administration and the economy are working to increase this share by a considerable margin in the future. Yet the city is not yet the transport hub between east and west and between north and south. The airports at Tegel and Schönefeld are termini, not transit stations like Frankfurt or Munich, and the new mega-airport called Berlin-Brandenburg International will not be completed until 2011. When the new central train station was inaugurated in 2006, overland rail connections to Berlin became more attractive. However, this is not so positive as long as connections have not been modernized to keep pace. The fact that the rail trip of 580 kilometers from Berlin to Warsaw still takes six hours is mainly due to the lack of modernization of the track within Germany. There are many things one would like to see changed here.

Nevertheless, Berlin is the flavor of the month or year in Germany. Since the 1990s this metropolis on the river Spree has been undergoing a transfusion with the arrival of many new residents, who are rejuvenating the city and doing it good. Moreover, Berlin has become a "young" city. More than 45% of inhabitants are under 35 years old, making it considerably younger than Munich or Hamburg. Berlin is undergoing a new upsurge that is similar to the one it experienced when the German Empire was first constituted. While high cultural institutions are struggling to obtain subsidies (and ideas), the young and non-conformist cultural supporters of tomorrow are coming in droves. They want to live here, to try something new, and to be part of a cultural explosion that is not to be found anywhere else in Europe. And whereas large industrial enterprises are leaving the city because they think they have found more economical locations somewhere between Berlin and Kiev, small, smart businesses that provide services needed today or tomorrow are starting up.

In fact, the unfinished character of the city, the sense of upheaval that is evolving day by day, attracts people who have confidence in their own capabilities and want not to manage old things but to shape new ones. In 2003 nearly 8,000 service sector companies were established anew in Berlin, and this trend has continued. Many creative artists, musicians,

designers, and writers see it as the only place in Germany where they personally can continue to develop. Small enterprises bring along bigger ones in their wake. More and more European or even world premieres for new films are held here. Hollywood stars are jostling with one another to be seen in Berlin. MTV and Universal have moved to be beside the river Spree; the German “Oscars” are presented here; and Popkomm, the largest pop music fair in the world, is now at home here. The fact that more and more publishing houses and music businesses are moving to the capital is quite annoying to city fathers in other municipalities. For Berlin this is all of great economic benefit. Despite crises in the media sector and in the general economy, this field known as the culture economy provides some 110,000 jobs.

Youth culture is thriving. Since the second half of the 1990s, the Love Parade has brought as many as one million young people to Berlin’s central park, the Tiergarten, to dance away the day.²¹ There is a multiplicity of night clubs, bars, and “in” locations that often only exist for a short time, and whose addresses are sometimes only passed on from person to person or by text messages. Way-out parties are held in empty houses. The scene is open to all people who take an active part. And if an international pop star is turned away by the bouncer at a club, as happened recently to Britney Spears, this prompts only in an indifferent shrug of the shoulders.

In Berlin a new attitude to life is flourishing, one based on independence and love of life. Leisure opportunities abound. Along the Spree, new beach bars with sand imported from the Baltic Sea are appearing, while anyone in need of peace and quiet can opt for the attractive and sparsely populated surroundings, which abound with lakes and other leisure opportunities. Not only the long-preserved treasures of the museums, but also newer institutions such as the German Historical Museum and the Jewish Museum, attract visitors from all over Europe.

After 1989 the city had both the need and the opportunity to re-design its downtown area, which had been largely deserted because of the division. For many years after reunification, the city was the biggest construction site in the world, and experts in city marketing offered guided tours to see the holes in the ground. In the meantime there is more to look at. Pariser Platz on one side of the Brandenburg Gate is now completely reconstructed; a number of new hotel buildings, from the Adlon Hotel to the Ritz Carlton, are fully booked; and Potsdamer Platz is finished and has become an attraction for visitors and locals alike. Not every new building

²¹ However, it has grown too large for this venue and did not take place in 2007.

there is a work of art, but they all proclaim the message that the city has changed at a rapid pace.

Fig. 1.2. Potsdamer Platz viewed from the Tiergarten.

Yet development in Berlin continues to be hampered by the financial situation. In strict economic terms, the city is bankrupt. The city debt in 2007 amounts to about 62 billion euros, i.e. about three times the entire annual budget.²² Every single Berliner is running about the city, on the Kurfürstendamm or at Alexanderplatz, carrying about 18,000 euros of the city's public debt. At least the city has managed to stop increasing the deficits, but interest rates are enlarging the debt every day. The sources of this disastrous financial situation are not only to be found in Berlin's post-1989 mistakes, but also in the economic impact of the division itself and in special regulations that were made in order to keep residents in the divided city. Governing is not a pleasure, as it consists primarily of cutting back on expenditure. Inhabitants get to feel the city's indebtedness every day in the local swimming pools, in schools, in public libraries, and in the subway. The fact that a governing coalition of socialist parties is making the red pen their trade mark, and that cutting back is virtually the only aim of the socialists' period in office, is surely one of the ironies of history.

Fig. 1.3. The Sony Center canopy at Potsdamer Platz, designed by Helmut Jahn.

One crucial reason for this financial plight is the disappearance of industry. Approximately 200,000 jobs were lost between 1991 and 2006 in the fields of manufacturing, trade, and energy production alone; and the number of industrial companies fell by at least one-third. Now these enterprises are absent in their capacity as revenue payers, and the 16.5% of the working-age population that are unemployed—about 300,000 souls—are a drain on the social support system. Berlin will not be able to prevail on its own in the race against its debts and the mounting interest burden. The Senat thus announced in 2002 that there was a severe budget emergency situation and applied to the Federal Constitutional Court to compel the federation of German states to provide assistance. In 2006 the

²² See Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen, Daten und Fakten zur Haushaltslage, www.berlin.de/sen/finanzen/haushalt/basis/index.html.

Court rejected this application. The judges declared that Berlin was not in such a bad position; it merely needed to make more of an effort.

Of course, neither the federal government nor the other states are pleased to hear these calls for financial support. That the federal capital needs help is, however, a point of agreement throughout the republic and among all political parties. The functions as capital city have been laid down in the Basic Law, that is to say, in the German constitution. The text of Article 22 paragraph 1 states, "The capital of the Federal Republic of Germany is Berlin. The representation of the whole country in the capital city is a duty of the Federation. More precise details are regulated by means of federal laws." This constitutional provision has not created a completely new situation; nor can Berlin base immediate financial demands on it. Even so, the federal government has already assumed responsibility for several organizations ranging from the Berlin Festival (*Berliner Festspiele*) to the House of World Cultures in the Tiergarten and the mounted section of the city's police force.

Berlin has now reached a state of normalcy. This is a situation that everyone in the city has desired for many years, but one that is not free of pain. If one casts one's gaze back in history to the time of the Blockade and the Airlift, to Mayor Ernst Reuter's desperate appeal to all peoples of the world, to the construction of the Wall and the misery that it caused, to the tortuous bureaucratic regulations in the Four Power Agreement and the multiple daily peculiarities that had to be dealt with in the divided city, then one realizes that Berlin is doing better now than it did for many years in the past. It is facing a future that will be the envy of many other municipalities. Current difficulties do not vanish if one takes this perspective, but they become more relative. Current Governing Mayor Klaus Wowereit explained the situation to his counterpart in Moscow with these words: "Berlin is poor, but sexy!" Since those words were uttered, they have become a quotable quote in Germany.

The historian Peter Bender defines five elements that kept people in the two Germanies apart until 1989: the division into two nations, the separation between people, the enmity resulting from the Cold War, estrangement, and unequal development.²³ Although in the remainder of the Federal Republic the last two points still occupy people's minds and efforts, one can say of Berlin that all five of the listed elements have vanished. The German metropolis is once again a single entity, a united whole. The following conditions enabled the process of reunification to succeed there:

²³ Bender, *Deutschlands Wiederkehr*, 269 ff.

1. In spite of the estrangement that resulted from 28 years of physical division, contacts between people in East and West Berlin were still much more common and intensive than those between East and West Germans more generally. Furthermore, their common identity as Berliners persisted.
2. Although the reconstruction of eastern Berlin's infrastructure added to the municipal debt, social tensions between east and west were prevented and economic disparities reduced.
3. The readiness of inhabitants on both sides to accept difference in others led to a situation in which these differences are tolerated very well.
4. The demographic balance between East and West Berlin was considerably more even than that between East and West Germany. Approximately 40% of all Berliners lived in East Berlin, while only 20% of all Germans inhabited East Germany. Since reunification this has ensured that eastern Berlin's needs and wishes are represented in politics more strongly. No coalition of parties is able to govern without the support of the city's eastern part.
5. Human contacts, due in no small degree to inner-city labor migration, have led to better acquaintance with one another and to numerous "mixed" marriages and other partnerships.
6. The movement of population between Berlin and the rest of the Federal Republic has meant that many people have come to the city who only know of its former division second-hand. They do not think in the categories of east or west.
7. In its role as capital city, Berlin has once again a central political part to play, even if economically it is not in good shape.
8. Many attractive residential areas are located in former eastern districts. Here too are found most of the "in" night clubs. For these reasons many young people do not perceive the city as being divided.
9. Through development of the heart of the city where the Wall used to run, locales such as Potsdamer Platz have been reborn. These areas represent neither West nor East Berlin but rather the new, reunified metropolis.

The economic emergency in which the city finds itself persists. Yet this is a problem for the whole of Berlin, and if anything it binds the Berliners together rather than driving them apart. The rest of the Federal Republic is only reluctantly helping them to manage their problems. But wounds opened by the arguments about the capital city have healed over.

Even many of those who voted for Bonn in 1991 are today happy that they have a “real capital city” that glitters. On March 19, 2007 the most important German news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, had as its cover story “Berlin: The Comeback of a Metropolis.”