

# Germans open the Brandenburg Gate

On Dec. 22, the historic Brandenburg Gate, at the center of Berlin, and the city's most famous landmark, was re-opened to citizens of both parts of divided Germany. Two sections of the hated Berlin Wall were removed, to create two pedestrian crossing points at this imposing structure, which lies in the Soviet sector of the city. The world-historic event was celebrated by joyous crowds of tens of thousands on both sides of the sector boundary.

At 1500 hours, West German Chancellor Kohl led a group of government officials through the new crossing point, and walked across Pariser Platz to the Brandenburg Gate. The enthusiasm of the East German crowds knew no bounds, as for 10 minutes, all security and order collapsed, and cheering crowds engulfed the chancellor. The opening of the Brandenburg Gate symbolizes, as nothing else could, the dynamic leading to the recreation of the German nation, united in freedom and democracy.

Three days before, on Dec. 19, Kohl paid a historic visit to the East German city of Dresden. Thousands came carrying German flags, as the West German chancellor spoke in front of the Dresden Frauenkirche, whose ruins are a memorial to the unimaginable suffering of the city during the Allied bombing raids of 1945. Kohl was constantly interrupted by chants: "Einheit! Einheit!" (unity), "Freiheit! Freiheit!" (freedom). For the first time since 1949, the head of a Bonn government was able to meet with East Germans in a free rally. Kohl delivered a speech in a very emotional tone, in which he pointed to the special quality of this 1989 Christmas, which all Germans can celebrate as one family, for the first time since 1945.

Despite the numerous obstacles and traps to be overcome and avoided (such as blocking by the Four Powers), there is still scope for considerable optimism in the New Year. Particularly in the economic sphere, the chancellor's visit put several initiatives into motion, which will improve the situation in infrastructure, food supplies and consumer goods, and industry.

After the talks in Dresden, West German Economics Minister Helmut Haussmann informed the press that a dense schedule of expert commission meetings has been agreed upon:

Kohl and East German Minister President Hans Modrow set up joint commissions of entrepreneurs, which will meet monthly starting in January and plan the founding of numer-

ous economic projects. A German-German economic commission will deal with fundamental questions like monetary policy, banking, investment in great infrastructure projects (housing construction, traffic and transport, energy, heavy industry, agriculture). The first meeting will take place in January in East Berlin; the second in April in West Berlin. A first meeting of a new panel of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs from East and West will take place in January, and a bigger conference in February. Later in the spring of 1990, a joint agreement on economic cooperation between the two governments will be signed.

Kohl and Modrow further agreed to establish a deutsche-mark-eastern mark exchange ratio of 1:3 for travel within the two parts of Germany. The measure, which considerably improves the value of the eastern mark (7 to 1 deutschemark in free bank trading now) and protects it against currency speculation, is strictly limited to travel and tourism.

## What about the railroad?

For a moment it looked like neither the chancellor nor the federal economics minister, in their statements before the press and at the Dresden Frauenkirche, would speak about the project for a high-speed rail link between Hanover and Berlin, which had been earlier referred to in Bonn as a "priority" project. Has the project been delayed, are there problems?

According to information released after the Dresden meetings, on Jan. 8 the transportation ministers of the two governments will meet again, to discuss the railway project. As an official of the transportation ministry in Bonn indicated to *EIR*, the planning phase is almost completed; what is lacking is a definite commitment by the East Germans on their share in the joint financing. The talks in Bonn between East German Minister of Transportation Heinrich Scholz and West German Deputy Minister of Transportation Wilhelm Knittel reached "substantial agreement that also the East German side will come up with a proposal on the financing . . . which we expect to be placed by the time the next meeting between the chancellor and the G.D.R. minister president takes place," at the end of January or early February.

If all goes well, construction could begin in the spring or summer 1990, said the official, adding that a special working group on transportation was formed in Dresden, which is to deal with all the other rail and transportation issues, including also air traffic, in inner-German relations at a first meeting on Jan. 9.

An official of the Bonn ministry of research declared, also in a discussion with this news service, that there once was even a plan for a magnetic-levitated train route Hanover-Berlin, but since the East Germans have a greater interest in a high-speed connection that can also be used for transport of goods, the decision went in favor of the high-speed rail/road version. The technological advantages of the magnetic-levitated train, namely transport of persons, cannot really be utilized for the transport of goods, the official said.