

'Hauptstadt' Berlin can help all nations

Renée Sigerson reports on a recent visit to the new German capital, a scene rich with history and full of promise for the future.

The June 20 vote by the German Bundestag (Parliament) to restore the great northern metropolis Berlin as the capital city stands out as one of the only actions recently undertaken by a leading Western government which benefits economic development and the interests of every nation on this planet. As early as 1988, American statesman Lyndon LaRouche and the Schiller Institute, the political-scientific academy founded by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, proposed that Berlin be renamed the *Hauptstadt* (capital) of a reunited Germany, as a measure pointing in the direction of reversing the world economic depression.

The importance of Berlin is both strategic and cultural. Berlin is geographically located in the center of the European continent, if one includes the Scandinavian Peninsula and landmass encompassing the Baltic Sea. For that reason, prior to World War I, Berlin was the "gateway" that linked particularly the eastern and western halves of Europe, in respect to commerce, diplomacy, and, notably, the spread of scientific knowledge.

A needed crossroads

Today, Europe desperately needs a scientific-cultural crossroads, where world leaders can deliberate on the challenge posed by the tremendous changes under way, especially in the East. For this reason, it is hardly surprising that the most uninhibited outburst of joy shown on German television following the Bundestag vote for Berlin, came from none other than the mayor of Vienna, the neighboring capital city of Austria. During the decades that Germany and Berlin were divided between western and communist governments, it fell upon the much smaller nation of Austria to house much of the diplomatic and economic bargaining that occurred between East and West. As a result, Austria became the target of heavy-handed brow-beating from both the Anglo-American and Soviet sides, which, because of its minor economic weight, it had little means to counter.

By contrast, united Germany is a formidable economic influence, potentially on a world scale. By moving the capital from the provincial western Rhineland city of Bonn to Berlin, the German government has taken what amounts to an irreversible step towards greater responsibility for the world economy. The Schiller Institute has proposed that this commitment be "set in stone," so to speak, through the naming of "economic quarters" in the city, each devoted to a part of the

world which requires trade and economic development. For example, corporations, as well as museums, in a single district would inform the general public variously about Asia, Africa, eastern Europe, and Ibero-America—an idea that echoes the original concept of Berlin's role advanced by Germany's great 18th-century statesman Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

This proposal, of course, is an elaboration of the basic Schiller Institute platform for Europe, to launch an "economic miracle" in the newly liberated East by building a super-modern rail system for the transport of industrial products in an area enclosed by Paris-Berlin-Vienna. This design for the "Productive Triangle" has been distributed to thousands of European government agencies.

Culture and statecraft

The importance of *Hauptstadt* Berlin goes beyond its geographic location. It is no small matter that Berlin is a truly beautiful city, the impressive physical appearance of which is a lasting mirror of the work and aspirations of some of Germany's finest statesmen and scientific personalities.

For anyone who had the experience of being in Berlin when it was still a hostage enclave divided by a militarized zone, seeing the city now is inspiring. What is occurring might be compared to archeology. Buildings that were blackened during the 1940s Allied bombings, and were kept in a half-stained and ill-repaired condition in East Berlin for 45 years, are now being washed and sanded. Where in former times visitors to East Berlin barely made the effort to study these unhappy black-streaked hulks, today one joyfully loses all sense of time walking through the plazas and squares in which these buildings are being brought out of hiding. Facades of yellow stone, light-green domes, and brick-red church steeples—colors that soak up the sun and complement the eye—are modestly reappearing after decades, contrasting simply with a sky frequently graced with a completely clear blue hue.

Gone are the Soviet tanks, watchtowers armed with gunmen, barbed wire fences, and checkpoints run by foreign troops, which broke up the city into small units. One can walk unimpeded along the proud boulevard Unter den Linden, and until the late hours of the night, visitors from all over the world are now seen respectfully observing the Brandenburg Gate, the stately 18th-century entrance to Unter den Linden, the view of which was marred for 30 years by the concrete barricade of the Berlin Wall.



Dean Andromidas

The Brandenburg Gate was built in the 18th century, according to principles adopted from classical Greece. On the left, the Gate as seen in October 1988, on the occasion of a visit by Lyndon and Helga LaRouche to Berlin. Below, the same Gate in 1990, after the Wall had been ripped down. Renovations, including cleaning, are still under way.



René Sigmund

‘Athens on the Spree’

The history of Berlin is an unusual story, in which generations of political leaders have aimed to unify statecraft and aesthetics toward a noble purpose.

Berlin developed slowly as a transit point for Europe. The oldest church in the city dates back to approximately 1300, and the first noteworthy clusters of inhabitants gathered there, along the Spree River, around the mid-1400s. Relative to many other leading European cities, Berlin was a latecomer to the system of “Carolingian urban settlements” which form a chain of Christianized civilization along Europe’s great rivers.

The northern German territory surrounding Berlin was desolate for centuries. It was not until 1650, at the conclusion of the Thirty Years’ War, that Berlin began to grow. From that point on, the growth of Berlin was influenced more by movements for ecumenicism and European-wide scientific collabora-

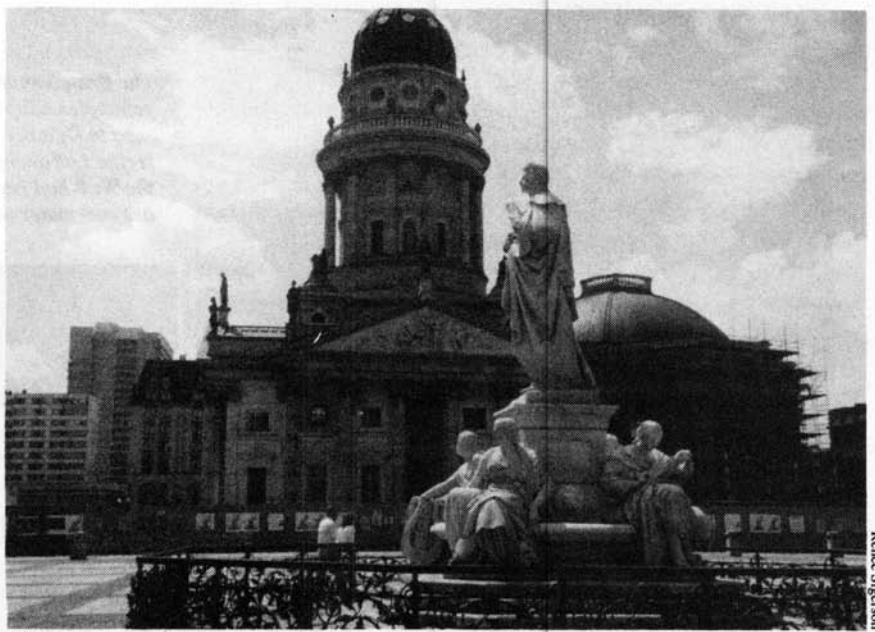
tion, than by the biases of North European Protestantism.

For example, in 1650, the Great Elector Friedrich Wilhelm, who had been raised in Holland as a Dutch Calvinist, launched the project to build up Berlin from the ravages of the Thirty Years’ War. His outlook was quite different from the Berlin Calvinists of the previous century who had burned precious Catholic art works, an act of intellectual terrorism which even the Berlin Lutherans resisted, as evidenced by pre-Reformation paintings preserved in their churches to this day.

The work of the Great Elector shows the influence of Christian ecumenicism in overcoming particularism. Beginning in 1650, Dutch and Swedish engineers in his employ were commissioned to reconstruct Berlin as a classical fortress, surrounded by urban settlements. The building projects sparked growth of the population, which rose from 6,000 to 17,500 by 1685. To encourage this population growth, laws were passed providing for religious tolerance. A 1671 edict



Dr. Frederick Guggenbuehl



Randee Sjerson

The Deutsche Kirche (German Cathedral) is one of a group of three impressive structures on a common square, all designed by the excellent 19th century architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel. The photo on the left was taken in 1963. The Communist regime had done virtually nothing to restore the building. Subsequently, restoration of the square, which also includes the famous City Theater, was undertaken, but as the 1991 photo on the right shows, that effort is only now finally being brought to completion.

invited Viennese Jewish families to seek asylum from persecution, and in 1685, privileges were offered to persecuted French Huguenots. Free wood was given to newcomers to build homes, and new residents were allowed 10 years of tax exemption. The Great Elector's wife planted the first orchard of linden trees at exactly the spot where, a century later, the world famous boulevard would be constructed between them.

The outlook of Christian ecumenicism was consciously expressed in a plan put before the Great Elector by Benedikt Skytte, his top Swedish engineer: The purpose of Berlin, he wrote, should be "to resituate the mid-point and capital of the entire European world to these Brandenburg states, as a University of All Peoples' Sciences and Arts."

The proposal that Berlin become a *scientific* capital was realized in the second phase of its development. In 1700 (by which time the population was 50,000), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Germany's leading philosopher, was invited to run the political affairs of the government. His impact upon policy was so enormous that, after four years, powerful enemies from as far away as Britain ran a massive campaign to drive him out of the city. Yet, his influence over Berlin lives on to this day.

The launching of his work, which occurred in collaboration with his student, the Electress Sophie Charlotte, was based on the founding of the Berlin Academy of Sciences. The Academy was organized with the express intent of training qualified educators to be sent to China. The Berlin Academy also maintained ties with the Czar of Russia and King of Egypt. From Berlin, Leibniz originated the idea, now adapted in the Schiller Institute proposal, that every country of

Europe adopt a "partner" nation to promote economically, on some other continent. Leibniz's influence is physically preserved in the Charlottenburger Palace, named after his student. Built in the mid-1800s, it was designed by an Italian architect to bring to northern Europe the knowledge of Italian Renaissance principles.

Also in step with the Leibnizian tradition, both Fredrick the Great and his son introduced classical Greek architecture to this colder northern city. The Brandenburg Gate was built following the first translation into German of how the Greeks built the Acropolis, based upon geometric principles borrowed from astronomical studies. Once the Gate was built, Berlin earned the nickname "Athens on the Spree." It was in this period, also, that the boulevard Unter den Linden was expanded, around the Gate.

The Prussian reformers

Another critical phase in Berlin's development came after the French Emperor Napoleon I conquered Germany, in the early 1800s. In panic, a German nobility whose corruption had failed to stop the invasion mobilized the best minds to draw up reconstruction programs for defeating Napoleon. Wilhelm von Humboldt and the Prussian Reformers Circle around Baron vom Stein were permitted, for a few years, to define the economic and political agenda for Prussia.

In 1810, Humboldt issued a proclamation entitled "On the Internal and External Organization of the Scientific Establishments in Berlin," putting Leibniz's work at the center of the reorganization. For decades following, Berlin University, in

many fields, became the leading scientific capital of the world, particularly beginning in 1820, when persecuted scientists from France's Ecole Polytechnique took refuge there.

Architecturally, the Humboldt-Prussian reform movement was represented by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, whose numerous, classically designed buildings contrast with the earlier Baroque period, and include the beautiful plaza around the City Theater. Flanked on either side by the French and German churches, and marked by a tall statue of Germany's greatest poet, Friedrich Schiller, the City Theater is one of the cultural centers.

Throughout the 19th century, visitors to Berlin were struck by the degree to which the scientific roots of the city were mirrored in the transportation and residential facilities constructed for the benefit of the general population, including the industrial labor force.

Architectural planners repeatedly intervened on behalf of the city's residents to upgrade conditions. Peter Josef Lenne, designer of the internal transport and sewage system, insisted on building parks and walkways along the canals extended to bring traffic off the main route of the Spree. Such areas, he said, were necessary not only for the "pleasure, but also the health" of the general public. Master carpenter James Hobrecht fought with city ordinance officials to upgrade health standards in respect to the numbers of square feet required for apartment units, including window size and air circulation. An original designer of multi-dwelling, affordable working class apartment units, Hobrecht wrote: "The primary postulate is . . . that more air and more light are to be given to the buildings. Away with cellars which are good for barrels, and potatoes and vegetables, but not for human beings! Space for the courtyards! The fourfold of dimensions which the Berlin Police Orders demand, eightfold the space which remains for the Stettin Houses, is not too much . . . if we want to maintain for our backrooms sun, light, and air in sufficient quality and measure."

A city built for human beings

Although deep economic depression hit Berlin more than once in the last century, constant efforts were launched by individuals such as these to bring to reality the city's tradition of recognizing the dignity of human life. The results impressed many visitors. The following description of Berlin was published in 1900 by Jules Huret, a French writer who could hardly be accused of blind Prussian pride, considering French-German competitiveness in that period:

"I wanted to get to know the entirely miserable corners of Berlin, but no one could identify any for me. Even the far outlying quarters, which sprang up recently, are far from bearing that stamp of poverty such as stand out in English or French industrialized areas. Prenzlau Alley, for example, has splendid workers' houses lining broad streets, with tall windows, flower-bedecked verandas, just like in the prosperous districts. . . . These streets of 40-50 meters breadth have



An East German watchtower on the wall in 1986. The guards in these towers shot hundreds of Germans, who attempted to swim or run away from the East. All of these installations have now been ripped down.

on both sides a seven to eight meter wide causeway for pedestrians, which is enclosed with flowers, and on each side a vehicle and horse path . . . the new quarters are exceedingly pretty. For me, these houses, in which one is hardly the same as any other, are a true joy. Sometimes, a portion of the facade arches out in the manner of a jutting balcony, while the other portion has something of an Italian *loggia* (gallery) to it with golden trellis works, over which a fullness of masterful flowers is pouring. . . . From this manifoldness, out of this lack of orderliness, results an exciting, lively picture, that I, for my part, prefer to the monotoneness, stiffness of our streets and plazas. . . . And here, I claim, could our fearful, menial architects learn something about the desire to be enterprising and original."

In sum, Berlin is a kind of statement about a proper relationship between science and government. German members of the Schiller Institute noted that during the recent Bundestag debate preceding the vote for Berlin, the tradition behind the city was repeatedly referenced by both proponents and opponents of moving the capital. Perhaps most revealing, was a speech given by Social Democrat Peter Glotz from Hamburg, a member of the pro-British camp in German politics which opposes any international role for a united Germany. The choice between Bonn and Berlin, he stated, was nothing less than a choice between two pathways for all Europe: either a Europe of economic regions governed by supranational agencies, or, as Charles de Gaulle would say, a Europe of the Fatherlands. There is no question that whatever the individual motivations may have been behind the way German delegates voted, those who voted for Berlin and won, cast the right vote.