The Rennaissance of Jewish life in Berlin after the fall of the Wall. *Page 8*

The Berlin Times

A global local newspaper

2014

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FREEDOM!

Let's drink a toast, let's have a party, let's light 25 torches of freedom! 25 years ago on November 9, the Wall that imprisoned Berlin died, and freedom was reborn. *This is a birthday party in print. You're invited!*

Photographer Paul Glaser recalls the moment he took this picture on November 12, 1989 at Leipziger Strasse close to Potsdamer Platz: "It was nothing short of a festival atmosphere! People from East and West turned the horrible Wall into a stage for their happiness. And the GDR police had to allow people to approach the wall unhindered."

Berlin bliss on November 10, 1989: A young girl cradles a white dove of peace in front of Brandenburg Gate.

LARGE PICTURE: DPA/PETER GLASER; SMALL PICTURE: REGINA SCHMEKEN/SZ/LAIF

Welcome to The Berlin Times

Over 32 pages, we reminisce about the glorious night of the fall of the Wall. We take a look back and also shine a light on nowadays Berlin.

Firstly, we immerse ourselves once again in that jubilant night and recall: How a badly prepared media conference made history; how the most important players in East and West experienced events that night; what was happening at the Central Committee of the ruling SED at the time; how the Mayor of (West) Berlin found out that the Wall was crumbling; where the celebrations took place; who was trembling with excitement and who was sitting in the sauna (prepare to be surprised).

Read the great story of the night that changed the world on pages 2 to 5.

How did the fall of the Wall affect Berlin? Initially, the people changed. Millions of hopes and dreams were realized. Berlin became a place of love without borders. Divided families and separated friends embraced again. So much happiness longed for but not expected. Right from the outset, the unified city was more than just the sum of East and West Berlin. Unity night was the night that saw the creation of a completely new Berlin. Today, the city that has experienced it all is the prototype of the modern metropolis: International, non-ideological, egalitarian and libertarian. A 24-hours-everything-is-possible kind of city.

Creative young businesses established themselves in the ruins of East Germany's command economy and turned Berlin into Europe's Silicon Valley (pages 22 and 23).

How much Stasi ideology still remains in Berlin? Have we really done enough to clear up and process the sinister legacy of their activities? And what lessons can a functioning democracy learn from life under a dictatorship? Germany's Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records, Roland Jahn, himself a prisoner of the Stasi, speaks about GDR nostalgia, old boy networks, yes-men and why the Stasi shouldn't be compared with the NSA. Please read pages 10 and 11.

As Berlin is a city in constant flux, realities and illusions always go hand in hand. Bernd Eichinger, Germany's only true movie tycoon, made films that had a greater impact on the image we have of Berlin politics and history than many history books or television news bulletins. From "Christiane F." to "Downfall" through to "The Baader Meinhof Complex," he presented the city as a backdrop where dramatic destinies are played out.

Sometimes balloons are more powerful than weapons and walls. Nena's global hit "99 Red Balloons" packed all the 1980s yearning for freedom into a very simple song. Writing for us in this special edition (page 16 and 17), she describes how (pleasant) it was to live as a pop star in a city that no longer felt inclined to idolize heroes. And Wolfgang Joop (pages 30 and 31), Germany's most famous fashion designer, answers the crucial question: What is the special style of Berlin all about? It's clear, proud, curious and modest. It is in this manner that we have tried to write and design the following pages.

Willkommen in Berlin!

SIX OF OUR FINE CONTRIBUTORS

*Former dissident **Roland Jahn** on the GDR's Stasi then and now*

*Singer **Nena** tells the story of how "99 Red Balloons" became a worldwide smash*

*Author **Katja Eichinger** on her late husband Bernd Eichinger and his Berlin movies*

*BZ's Editor-in-Chief **Peter Huth** tells Berlin's story in headlines*

*Fashion designer **Wolfgang Joop** explains the phenomenon "Berlin Style"*

*Novelist **Thomas Brussig** describes how good triumphed over the past*

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THE NIGHT THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Who was celebrating?

Who was trembling?

Who was in the sauna?

Nobody could anticipate how quickly events would unfold. A chronology of the historic hours that turned Berlin into the world's happiest city.

By Ralph Grosse-Bley

1 *Freedom Run: East Berliners surge over the border at Bornholmer Strasse into the West Berlin district of Wedding.*

2 *Man of the Moment: Gunter Schabowski was the SED's Central Committee spokesman. His news conference on the evening of November 9 made Schabowski, now 85, famous.*

This map from 1989 shows East Berlin from the GDR regime's perspective. It depicts West Berlin, on the other side of the Wall, as a patch of green without houses and streets. Forbidden territory.

3 *Lady-in-Waiting: On the evening that the Wall came down, Angela Merkel had been relaxing in a sauna. Afterwards she drank a celebratory beer at the "Zur alten Gaslaterne" pub.*

4 *Demob-happy: This East German border guard at Invalidenstrasse realizes after midnight that the time is up for his country.*

5 *Unbridled joy: These East Berliners returning from West Berlin's main shopping boulevard poke fun at SED chief Egon Krenz on the morning of November 10. Writing on their car: "Egon! We are reporting back from our trip to Ku'damm".*

6 *Gay abandon: In East Berlin's Cinema International on Karl Marx Allee, the first East German gay film, "Coming Out," premières on November 9 with two sold-out showings at 7 pm and 10 pm.*

7 *"Berlin, now you can rejoice!" When Walter Momper, 44 at the time, stood on a table at the Invalidenstrasse border post on November 9, 1989 and addressed East Berliners through a megaphone, he'd only been Mayor of the city for eight months. He led a Social Democrat/ Green Party coalition, his trademark was his red scarf which he was wearing on that historic evening when he attended the Golden Steering Wheel award ceremony at the Axel Springer publishing house. He was sitting with Friede Springer and the CEOs of the nation's biggest car manufacturing concerns when a bodyguard told him what Schabowski had just said. Momper left immediately and became world famous. His coalition broke down just one year later and Momper was voted out of office.*

8

ANDREAS SCHOELZEL/FREELENSPOOL;THOMAS LEBIE (2); ULLSTEINBILD (4)

It had rained that morning in the city which had been divided for 28 years, but the sun had been out since midday. The West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) was on a state visit to Warsaw. The Bundestag was in session in Bonn, where members of parliament were discussing pension reform. Soccer fans were looking forward to the next round of the German Cup – Stuttgart versus Bayern Munich – on public broadcaster ARD.

Berlin society was getting ready for two big parties – the awarding of the Golden Steering Wheel for the best cars of the year

continued on page 4

ULLSTEIN, CARO KAISER

Hello Trabi! Many East Berliners, receiving a warm welcome at border crossings, took their cars (mainly a Trabant, sometimes the four-door Wartburg or occasionally a Lada) on a first jaunt to West Berlin on November 10.

Berlin's biggest party. Was it really unity after all this time? Had the division been done away with? Or was it just some crazy dream? One had to celebrate every day to actually realize it was true. Here are the first unified New Year's Eve festivities 1989/1990

The night that changed the world started with a badly prepared press conference

continued from page 3

It had rained that morning in the city which had been divided for 28 years, but the sun had been out since midday. The West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) was on a state visit to Warsaw. The Bundestag was in session in Bonn, where members of parliament were discussing pension reform. Soccer fans were looking forward to the next round of the German Cup – Stuttgart versus Bayern Munich – on public broadcaster ARD.

Berlin society was getting ready for two big parties – the awarding of the Golden Steering Wheel for the best cars of the year at the Axel Springer publishing house – and star director Ulrich Schamoni's ("It") 50th birthday celebrations; among the guests were the Western Allied commanders.

A normal Thursday.

But there were rumors in Berlin. Rumors that the routine press conference of the Communist Party Central Committee would include the announcement of an important decision. A decision on new travel provisions which the East German regime hoped would stop the mass exodus of its citizens to the West.

But were they just rumors?

At 5:30 pm Communist Party General Secretary Egon Krenz pressed two A4 pieces of paper into the hands of the SED's Central Committee spokesman Günter Schabowski – the proposed resolution for the new rules to be announced the next day. They were to come into force over the weekend, giving the regime time to prepare the border guards.

Krenz had worked out the resolution that day with Interior Ministry officials and members of the secret police. The politburo rubber-stamped it and Krenz explained it to the Central Committee – but at that moment, Günter Schabowski was not in the room.

That was pure chance – a lucky break for world history.

Schabowski did not read the resolution. He was in a hurry to get to his press conference to be broadcast live at 6:00 pm from Mohrenstrasse. The room was packed. The rumors ...

That press conference went down in history. At 6:57 pm, Schabowski stumbled over a question as to when the new freedom to travel would begin – the most beautiful stumble in German postwar history: "It begins, to the best of my knowledge… ummm, straight away, immediately."

At 7:02 pm the Reuters news agency reports: "Departure via all East German border crossings permitted immediately."

At 7:08 pm a security official informs the mayor of West Berlin of the situation. Mayor Walter Momper (SPD) was at the Golden Steering Wheel ceremony. He made his apologies to Friede Springer, saying he had to go, the Communist Party was opening the Wall. Everybody smirked – whatever would Momper come up with next?

> "The Wall is coming down.
> From tomorrow.
> Or perhaps today?
> Practically now?
> Right this moment?"

A police escort whisked Momper to the broadcaster Sender Freies Berlin. On the evening news, he says of the new travel provisions: "The Wall will divide us no longer. It will start practically tomorrow."

From tomorrow. Or perhaps today? Practically now? Right this moment?

Hundreds of East Berliners are already waiting at the Bornholmer Strasse border crossing. Many of them are in their Trabi cars. They want out. To freedom. Now.

The official responsible for the crossing, Stasi lieutenant-colonel Harald Jäger, had watched Schabowski's press conference on television. His comment: "That's utter bullshit!"

West German broadcaster ZDF briefly reports the opening of the border at 7:17 pm on its evening news. ARD begins its news program at 8:00 pm with the Schabowski press conference. After that, more and more East Germans head for crossing-points. Helmut Kohl hears the news of the Wall's opening at a state banquet in Warsaw from his confidant Eduard Ackermann. "Are you sure?" he asks. The Chancellor cuts short his visit but cannot fly to Berlin until the next day.

8:15 pm. ARD is running the soccer match in Stuttgart. The spectators in the stadium watch live footage of the Berlin Wall on a huge video screen.

8:30 pm. Angela Merkel has gone to the sauna at the Ernst-Thälmann-Park public baths as she does every Thursday. She has seen Schabowski on television and has already phoned her mother to say: "Mom, if the Wall falls, we'll go and eat oysters at the Kempinski Hotel in West Berlin." There will be time enough for that later.

After the sauna, the physicist allows herself a small beer at the pub. Then she too goes to the Bornholmer Strasse border crossing. And at 7:00 am the next morning, the woman who will be Chancellor 16 years later is at her desk at the Academy of the Sciences and Humanities.

9:05 pm. The Bundestag is still in session. Members of parliament are singing the national anthem: "Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit" (Unity and Justice and Freedom). The head of the Chancellery, Rudolf Seiters (CDU), has broken the news. "Applause surges up from all four parliamentary blocs," notes the transcript.

10:00 pm. Egon Krenz tries to phone Mikhail Gorbachev. But at the Kremlin, nobody is putting him through.

Thousands of people are pressing in on the Bornholmer Strasse border crossing. Around 11:00 pm, the barrier is lifted – and everybody can go West. Lieutenant-colonel Jäger reports: "We are swamped!" He fears for the lives of his border guards.

The mayor of Berlin orders his driver to take him to the border crossing at Invalidenstrasse. Momper climbs up on a table and takes a megaphone: "Berlin, now you can rejoice!" – a direction which goes round the world.

11:30 pm. East Berliners crash the film director's birthday party at a pub in Neukölln and dance on the stage in front of the Allied Commanders.

By midnight, even the last crossing-point – Invalidenstrasse – is open. Tens of thousands of East Germans are streaming into the western part of the city; long lines of Trabant cars are rattling down the Kurfürstendamm boulevard. Perfect strangers are walking arm-in-arm through Brandenburg Gate. The first "Wallpeckers" are chipping away at the hated concrete to get Berlin Wall souvenirs.

At 12:20 am, leaders of East Germany's National People's Army order the border regiments in Berlin to make ready for combat. But then there are no more commands. We will do nothing, the commanders decide.

The peaceful revolution has won. At 4:30 am the last border police withdraw from Brandenburg Gate.

The woman who was in the sauna when the Wall came down said later – as German chancellor – of the night that changed the world: "What unimaginable happiness."

■

Ralph Grosse-Bley (54) experienced the fall of the Wall as a political editor at the central editorial office of the Rhein Zeitung newspaper (Koblenz). From 1991, he worked for BILD in the former East Germany. He later served as Editor-in-Chief of the Swiss tabloid newspaper BLICK. Grosse-Bley has been working as a freelance journalist and consultant in Zurich and Berlin since 2013.

At 6.57 pm, the Wall was history

A former reporter for the East German ADN news agency recollects how the border was finally opened

By Frank Losensky

There are times you won't ever forget, your whole life through. 6.57 pm is one such time. 25 years ago today I looked at the clock and made a note of this time, as well as the words "immediately" and "without delay." This was all I wrote on that particular day.

It had been a leaden start to the evening at the East Berlin media center on Mohrenstrasse. A dank wind blew through the somber streets around the Gendarmenmarkt. Inside the muggy and windowless movie theater on the first floor, it was cozy and warm. There was a low clink of cups in the coffee bar and now and again a smoker scurried through the heavy wooden doors.

Günter Schabowski, the SED's Central Committee spokesman, was lulling the world's media to sleep with endless monologues on the GDR's new travel regulations. His reading glasses were perched on the end of his nose, his eyes darted along the rows of seats.

Some colleagues had already left, others dozed in the glare of the spotlights. Just as the conference was drawing to a close, Riccardo Ehrman from the Italian agency ANSA took the microphone and posed the question of all questions: "When does this come into effect?"

Schabowski gave his answer – at 6.57pm – and inadvertently opened the border.

I snapped my notebook shut and jumped to my feet. The entire room was in flux. Television crews pushed their way towards Schabowski, we agency reporters ran and jostled at the door of the room. This was about seconds and meters, about who could file the first breaking news report. Don't forget that mobile phones were an unaffordable luxury at the time – there wasn't even a network in the eastern part of the city.

So it was down to the ground floor, where there were three public telephones. I just managed to grab one and in tremendous excitement, dictated the headline to my desk editor at ADN:

"Schabowski: Travel permits for everyone!".

It was seven o'clock on the dot!
Reuters put the report out on its news ticker at 7.00 pm, the first short dpa report followed at 7.04 pm, then AP and AFP. But what about ADN, where was my breaking news? It could have been the first report on an event of global historical significance.

ADN, East Germany's official news agency, feigned death and went offline – for the entire jubilant night of November 9.

More than three hours after those words had changed the city, the nation and the world, I walked over Bornholm Bridge from Prenzlauer Berg to Wedding for the first time.

It was here that at 10.30pm, Major Manfred Sensor capitulated to the masses at the barrier and with the words "we're flooding now!" opened the border after 28 years of division.

Elsewhere in the jubilant city, people were celebrating their own personal Wall hero: Riccardo Ermann. Passersby had recognized the gray-haired Signore at Friedrichstrasse station and carried him on their shoulders throughout the night

So I had helped bring about the fall of the Wall. But no one was celebrating at ADN, my last employer in the East, because what is not allowed simply cannot be. I was to see that time and time again on this intense night of the 9–10 November.

• 9pm. I got home. Everyone's asleep. My wife, the kids. I'm exhausted and shut my eyes. The doorbell begins to ring and ring. A neighbor: "You're a journalists! They are standing at the Wall, they say it's going to open!"

• We get dressed. The kids stay home. Our street is Isländische Strasse, around the corner from the [border crossing at] Bornholmer Bridge. We get there as the border guard commander, empty-eyed, orders the barrier to be lifted. I think: "He has spent his whole life trying to stop this. Tonight of all nights, no one is telling him what to do. For the first time in his working life he has to make the decision himself." He decides: Raise the barrier!

• I am to see him again the next morning. The East Germans are all coming back and he is in tears. Later I hear that he has opened a currywurst stand – an honest trade in both East and West.

• I came straight back that night. Everyone else was pushing West while I went East. It was a gut feeling. In those hours, Russian tanks were running hot all around Berlin. It could have ended quite differently for me.

■

In 1989 Frank Losensky worked for the East German news agency ADN. Today he is Managing Editor for BZ and Bild in Berlin.

BERLIN – 1989 AND NOW

The corner of Charlottenstraße and Zimmerstraße

The former Landtag of Prussia

No one was expecting the fall of the Berlin Wall

In 1989, former German Chancellor Willy Brandt predicted that East and West Germany would "grow together because they belong together." Have they? | *By Peter Brandt*

I was always convinced that the division of Europe and of Germany would not last. And I consistently maintained that the entire German nation ultimately had the right to national self-determination. But no one was expecting the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the division of Germany in 1989-90. We were astonished by the total capitulation of the Soviet Union in Europe, right down to the USSR's dissolution.

Of course, it had been becoming ever more obvious that "real existing Socialism" was failing economically. In addition, détente and the Helsinki Accords – particularly on human rights – meant that the Warsaw Pact countries could not continue to isolate themselves. This placed a limit on repression. But at that point the military position of the Soviet Union was still unshaken. And few thought it possible that Mikhail Gorbachev, recognizing the disastrous state of his country, would do what he did – almost casually, he accepted the future united Germany's membership of NATO. It appears he wanted to avoid a conflict with the US at all costs – and the US could only accept a united Germany within NATO.

It was considered unlikely for a united Germany to be created by the accession of eastern German states. The more realistic choice appeared to be a pan-German constituent national assembly. But the majority of East Germans did not want to wait that long. They gave the Christian Democrat-led Alliance for Germany a surprise victory in the East German national elections of March 18, 1990. There is no doubt this was due to the East Germans' desire for immediate incorporation – among other reasons, to stop the ongoing collapse of the political and social order in East Germany and to stem the enormous flow of people to West Germany.

I was not prepared for this historic earthquake, even though I had maintained close ties with East Germany well before 1989 – and had contact with Socialist Party members, conformists and above all with dissidents. But of course, I was overjoyed that the Wall fell in my home town Berlin and that the division of my country – a result of World War II and the East-West conflict – had been overcome. The fact that the East German democratic grassroots movement was soon to be usurped by West Germany – possibly due to its own inner weaknesses – made no difference to the fact that the clear will of the majority of Eastern Germans had to be respected.

Yet doubts soon arose over the plans to replace East Germany's command economy and the creation of economic unity – for example, the decision to form a currency union by exchanging Ostmarks for Deutschmarks at a rate of 1:1; and the principle of restoration instead of compensation in property disputes. Although there may have been good reasons for these strategic decisions, they also made the process of "growing together" contradictory and laborious. Helmut Kohl did not see unification as a common project involving the entire German nation – a new foundation of the Republic via a new, jointly drafted and agreed constitution. On the contrary, Kohl's policies preserved and ingrained the differences in thinking which had arisen during 45 years of separate existence.

Despite this, virtually none of eastern Germany's political class now wants to reconstitute the East German state – not even those who oppose capitalism on principle; and among the eastern German public in general, only a small but tenacious minority would support such an unlikely goal. Representative democracy as a form of government is virtually unchallenged.

Also unchallenged is Germany's arguably most important national symbol, the black, red and gold flag. The German tricolor is historically linked with the nineteenth-century push for a pan-German student fraternity; demands for national unity, freedom and sovereignty at the 1832 Hambacher Fest; the revolutions of 1848; and the (largely underrated) Weimar Republic (1918-1933), Germany's first democracy. German citizens today consider the country's current political borders to be more or less identical to the geographical limit of the German people. Even the eastern border with Poland is no longer controversial. This was not the case during the Weimar Republic and the first twenty years of the Federal Republic in West Germany.

Looking back on the material and social achievements of a quarter-century of reunification, the balance sheet is mixed. Clearly, the economies of eastern and western Germany are still far from being on the same level. Despite great efforts, the increase in manufacturing has not even come close to making up for the massive deindustrialization in the first years after reunification – regardless of whether it could have been avoided. From the point of view of West German industrial capital, East German producers were largely superfluous and destined to be shut down in an economy that had no use for them.

Consumer spending in the East has only approached Western levels on the back of enormous transfer payments by the state. The same is true of rising life expectancy in eastern Germany. On the positive side, the region has seen the installation of the latest transport and communications facilities, as well as the impressive restoration of historical towns and villages – even as populations dwindle in many parts of the East. The East-West difference in assets is even greater

Potsdamer Platz Square

Corner of Chausseestraße and Boysenstraße

PICTURE ALLIANCE/ZB/DPA-ZENTRALBILD/JÜRGEN RITTER (8)

than that of income. Huge numbers of East Germany's skilled workers temporarily or permanently lost their jobs, as did a whole layer of ousted political leaders – although overall, the managing elites were mostly able to maintain their social status.

The differences will erode over time (in decades rather than years) – but the eastern Germans' feeling of a separate identity will remain in place. That should not be a matter for regret – it is the expression of a specific set of issues and does not necessarily stand in the way of the parallel development of a pan-German, democratic patriotism. In the German empire of 1871, southern Germany maintained a strong awareness of its own identity, particularly in the countryside, yet that did not lead to a breakup of the nation-state when the monarchy was abolished in the revolution of 1918.

As more and more eastern Germans take leading roles in politics, business, media and culture, the clearer it will become that the joining of the two German states – even the simple accession of East Germany into the Federal Republic – has brought forth a new and different Germany. That has already meant changes in the political landscape: the appearance of a force to the left of the Social Democrats that is not merely an eastern regional party; the waning influence of Bavaria's CSU within the CDU-CSU bloc; and the decline of the pro-business Free Democrats. Even within the tighter borders of 1945/1990, Germany is more than just Greater West Germany.

Germany's more open and mobile young people are visibly and increasingly overcoming the mental East-West dividing line; this puts the country in a better position to tackle the other major area of domestic integration – that of incorporating immigrants, many of them from very different cultures – and to play a constructive role of solidarity in the processes of European integration and global cooperation.

■

Peter Brandt is Professor emeritus of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Hagen. He is the son of Willy Brandt.

THE JEWISH MIRACLE

The post-Wall rennaissace of Jewish life in Berlin

Germany currently has Europe's third largest Jewish community – but is everything "normal" now? | *By Leeor Engländer*

If we are going to talk about Jewish life in Germany after the fall of the Wall, we have to get two things straight. Firstly – without the immigration of the "Russian Jews" from parts of the former Soviet Union there would be hardly any Jews in Germany today. Secondly – we are still a long way away from actually having the oft-evoked flourishing Jewish life in this country, and even further from having a normal relationship. The latter cannot exist and probably never will.

But let's start at the beginning. We'll take a trip back to my childhood and youth in Heilbronn on the Neckar, a city off the beaten track in the region of Swabia. My grandparents – Polish Jews – had survived the Holocaust and had made their future there, of all places. That was nothing unusual at the time. German survivors were drawn to Israel, the United Kingdom, and to the United States, while Polish Jews were drawn to Germany. The main thing was to get away from one's persecutors back home, and in Germany you could get compensation. My parents stayed here, and I was born in 1982.

The nearest intact Jewish congregation with a synagogue, a kindergarten, a school and a kosher restaurant was in Stuttgart, 45 kilometers away from where we lived. We are not pious Jews. We made the journey to attend services on important religious holidays. For our weekly religious instruction, the Stuttgart community sent a teacher to Heilbronn. There was a grand total of three of us, plunked in together from different classes and different schools. I was the only Jew at my high school. There was no question of Jewish community life in Heilbronn.

In the entire state of Baden-Württemberg at that time there were only around 700 Jewish residents. Among West Germany's less than 63 million inhabitants there were fewer than 30,000. The members of our community were mostly survivors, Polish Jews who had fled. The proportion of German-born Jews who had survived the Holocaust and remained in Germany was vanishingly small. The situation then was comparable in Hamburg, Munich, Cologne and Berlin.

Germany's small number of Jews and their public representatives were present in West German media and political parties; their voice had weight and was heard. Their significance however was never related to their tiny numbers or even their social relevance; it was solely due to the historical responsibility of German politics. There was no question of any intact Jewish life. It was life in an exiled community, an exotic minority, probably the smallest minority in the country.

There was no future in sight. That was to change at the end of the 80s. German Jews had come to terms with the situation just as the fall of the Berlin Wall opened the way for Jews from the former Soviet Union to enter the Promised Land. In this case, it was not Israel but Germany. Jewish congregations began to grow – at a previously unimaginable rate. The "renaissance of German Jewry" has been much talked about; and such as it was, grew out of politically-desired immigration, initiated by Helmut Kohl, spurred by his successor, and welcomed by the representatives of the Jewish community.

Membership in some congregations had grown threefold. The established Polish-German-Jewish minority had the task of integrating a Russian-Jewish majority into its ranks. That was the case in Berlin and elsewhere. Immigration in the 90s saw the Jewish congregations in the reunited capital become the fastest-growing in the world. At the time the Wall fell, the West Berlin congregation numbered 6,400. East Berlin had just under 200 Jews. Today nearly 12,000 Berliners are members of the city's Jewish community. Within two decades the number of active members across Germany has grown from less than 30,000 to more than 100,000. In some years, more post-Soviet Jews moved to Germany than to Israel.

90 percent of today's members are recent immigrants and their offspring. Many of them came from Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan or Moldavia – but even today, they are all lumped together as "Russians." While the more conservative Polish Jews in particular had set down roots in Germany since the 1950s, now it was the liberal congregations which were growing rapidly – the very kind of liberal Jewry for which Germany was famous before World War II, and which never recovered after it because there were simply not enough of its members left. The more liberal congregations made it easier for the mostly atheist-raised immigrants to find a way back into the fold.

Let's keep it short. Germany has benefited. You can see that in Berlin. Now, more than ever since 1945, the capital is home to a wider and more varied Jewish life. New communities have been founded, old synagogues renovated, new ones built. Today nearly all the major strands of Judaism are represented in Berlin – from the liberal congregation in Oranienburger Strasse, which has a female rabbi – to the new, strictly orthodox Kahal Adass Jisroel, with more than 250 members, in Prenzlauer Berg. All of them are growing and flourishing. After France and England, Germany now has Europe's third largest Jewish community.

After reunification, Berlin has emerged as one of the world's most exciting cities – not just for artists, intellectuals and entrepreneurs, a steady stream of which are arriving in the capital today. Young Israelis are also coming – and ensuring that Hebrew is a feature of life on the streets of districts like Mitte and Kreuzberg. According to the Israeli embassy, 15,000 Israelis are currently living in Berlin. Some estimates put that figure much higher. A new treaty makes it possible for Israeli students to live and work in Germany for a year without having to leap bureaucratic hurdles. As a result, it is now no longer the assimilated migrant "Russian" Jews behind the development of Jewish life in the city – it is primarily Israelis, along with American and British Jews.

GETTY IMAGES

The New Synagogue at Oranienburger Strasse in Berlin-Mitte. One of the main religious and cultural centers for the Jewish community. Built in 1866 it was almost destroyed in World War II. The GDR government started rebuilding it in November 1988.

GETTY IMAGES; DPA

Jewish schoolchildren attending class at the Or Avner traditional Jewish school on Spandauer Damm in Berlin-Charlottenburg.

On September 14, 2014, Berliners assemble in front of Brandenburg Gate to demonstrate their solidarity with Jews in Germany under the slogan: "Stand up! Never again anti-Semitism!".

But does all this lead to a normalization of relations? Are Jews in Berlin, Munich, and other German cities an integrated part of daily life? Is this really a rebirth of Jewish culture?

The answer is no. Jewish life is not part of everyday life in Germany. I know of no branch of any big supermarket chain in all of Berlin which has a shelf of kosher products, even though that is the norm in London and Amsterdam. Friends regularly ask me where they can go for a kosher meal in Berlin. They mean they are looking more for the type of basic restaurant in which you can eat food cooked the way a Yiddish mother would make it, with the typical Jewish dishes, the chicken soup, gefilte fish and cholent. There are none.

My favorite café, the Meierei, was home to the Davidson kosher cheese shop before the war. Apart from some painting on the walls, not much of it is left. Sometimes when I am there on a Saturday I watch the pious members of the Adass Jisroel congregation strolling down Kollwitzstrasse with their wives and many children. Some of the men wear the traditional black hats, beards and gartels visible at their waistbands. A few years ago this would have been unthinkable. But here, among the baby-carriages of the local eco-bohemians, they look like tourists passing through.

And yet Jewish institutions, community centers and synagogues are still guarded by police. Most Germans still know almost nothing of Jewish life or Jewish customs. Germans are still walking on eggshells around the word "Jew." And there are always affected or exasperated looks when talk turns to the Nazi period, and a tangible bias arising from the fear of saying something wrong in front of Jews – all that is something we are still confronted with today.

There can be no doubt that the fall of the Wall was not only good for Germany, it was also a tremendous boon for the Jewish community here. But in spite of the growth of congregations, there are still only just 200,000 Jews among Germany's 81 million inhabitants – and that is a generous estimate. As a result, the vast majority of the population has never encountered a Jew and is unlikely to ever do so in their lifetimes. That was true before reunification and remains so today. So anyone who talks about Jewish life and normality, with regards to Jews returning to Germany, is only telling half the truth.

The normality for Jews in Germany is that of a minority – one of the smallest in the country. With its advantages and disadvantages, its reality is similar to that of other minorities – with the difference being that out of the dark past, such a bright light is shone on the Jews that they are seen to be more significant and numerous than they actually are.

This distorted perception even extends to Jews themselves. When I came to Berlin in 2002 out of a desire to spend my time as a student in a place with an intact, vital, colorful Jewish life, I too was caught up in the wishful belief in a flourishing Jewish community and a city in which being Jewish attracted as little attention as having red hair. Yet I soon found myself back in the situation I had fled at home – regardless of whether I was at university, among friends, or in everyday life, I was always the only Jew.

Back then, I could never have imagined what would happen in my city of Heilbronn. Twenty-five years after the fall of the Wall, it is now home to enough Jewish residents – Russian immigrants – to make a tentative community life possible. A small synagogue has been set up, services are held, and funerals once more take place at the old Jewish cemetery.

■

Leeor Engländer is a staff writer of the German daily "Die Welt." In his fortnightly column "Schmonzes" he reviews the insight and philosophies of his Jewish "Mamme."

HOW MUCH STASI IS STILL AROUND?

Understanding the forces of dictatorship

ROBA PRESS/CHRISTOPH MICHAELIS

His job is to shed light on a dark past and drive away the shadows. Roland Jahn is the German government's chief official responsible for the archives left by the East German secret police, the Stasi. We spoke to him about the fates of Stasi victims, repentant and unrepentant oppressors, and the individual's duty toward freedom.

Mr. Jahn, in 1989 you had been exiled from the GDR for six years. Where were you the night the Berlin Wall fell, and what were your feelings?

ROLAND JAHN: I was in West Berlin at the Sender Freies Berlin broadcaster and I was co-producing and reporting a TV program for national German public television. It was very satisfying to be able to provide commentary on the first pictures of the Wall opening. I saw the Wall as something that had split up my family because I had been forcibly thrown across it six years earlier. It was a relief when it came down. That night I went against the tide – which was flowing East to West – and went from West to East. The enormous crowds flowing West ensured that I could cross the border without being checked. Then I went home to Jena, the place I had been forcibly removed from six years earlier.

And 25 years later – how much Stasi, how much GDR, do we still have in Berlin, in Germany?

Not too much is left of the GDR, buildings and citiscapes, but nothing is left of the Communist Party's dictatorship. But of course many people who lived under it are still around. And therein lies an important task – to treat the people who spent much of their lives in the GDR with respect and to work together with them in a unified Germany to shape our united society today. The Federal Republic of Germany ensured during the process of unification that the old elite has no more political power than the people are willing to give it. One particular way in which this was achieved was by reviewing files from the Stasi archives to check the history of government employees. People who did clandestine work for the secret police were not allowed to continue in government service, and that raised confidence in the public service. In total the files of 1.7 million people were checked and many of those people were removed from government service. Many stayed but the secret was out and talked about. In that regard, there has been a valuable reappraisal. There are no exact analyses of the extent to which people who worked for the Stasi – particularly those who were fully employed by the secret police – remain in contact with one another and have support systems. In any case, as long as their activities remain legal, that would be a legitimate outcome. That is the nature of the rule of law in a democracy – it means that those who were once representatives of a dictatorial system can make use of the rule of law today even if they repressed it previously.

> "GDR secret service files underline the fragility of human nature – and of freedom itself."

What did we do right and what did we do wrong in appraising and redressing the injustices of the GDR?

Many things were put on track, particular among them, the securing of the Stasi files. It was the first time world-wide that the files of a secret police force were secured and made available to the society at large. It is an amazing achievement. Of course there are always things you can do better. For instance, it is important to examine everyday life under the dictatorship more closely and not to focus the reappraisal of the East German dictatorship on the Stasi alone. In looking at the complete picture of the GDR there is also the question of individual responsibility. Many have through their personal behavior and the various ways he or she conformed to the system also supported the stability of it. This type of reappraisal is only just beginning. Until now, analyzing the system was often limited to stereotypes or followed the broad characterization of "victim, perpetrator, conformist." We now face the challenge of examining the system as a whole, while asking: How was it possible for this system to exist for forty years? And why did so many people conform to its demands?

Do you personally feel that you are the victor in this history?

The word "victor" sounds a bit arrogant. I do feel a certain sense of satisfaction that history turned out the way it did, and that the people were able to overcome a dictatorship. It is a message to future generations: Society can be changed if people overcome their fear and do their bit to change things. That is very reassuring.

When did you read your own Stasi file? Were you surprised, shocked even?

I read my file very early on, even before the archives were opened to the public, because I had been a journalist covering the dissolution of the East German secret police. We conducted a first inspection of the archives with the citizens' committee in 1990 and looked at files. Because I had been the subject of Stasi activity I agreed that we should look at my records first. It was distressing. Of course I knew about the fact that the Stasi followed my life. But reading it in black and white really hit home. The intrusion into your family life – that is something that crawls under your skin. You see that in their thinking they spared no one – not your parents, not your children – they would use anything available to try to break us. The Stasi targeted me even after I was thrown out of the GDR into the West. When you see a sketch of the apartment where you lived

DPA

Above. One of the biggest tasks facing the authorties: Torn or shredded Stasi documents in around 15,000 boxes and sacks waiting to be pieced back together and decrypted.
Left: Roland Jahn, Germany's most senior official in charge of processing the archives of East Germany's state security apparatus.

in your secret police file – complete with the furniture as it was arranged in each room, with photos of the stairwell and your letterbox, and even reports of the route your eight-year-old daughter took to school – that does come as a shock and gives you an idea of what must have gone on.

In all the files, with all the fateful and terrible stories you have been able to read, what have you learned about human nature? How do you prevent yourself from despising the human race as a whole?

These files document what human beings are capable of – repression, contempt for their fellow man. Yet in these files I have also learned about the human will to freedom; I have seen that people don't let themselves be defeated, that they also managed to resist. From that point of view, the files have dual significance. They show us how human beings are capable of committing injustice, but also that human beings are capable of fighting this injustice and of defeating it in the end.

Can a whole population be divided up into heroes, villains, traitors and conformists? Or are all of those things in each of us?

Examination of the files shows us that we can't easily pigeon-hole people in broad strokes – they challenge us to look closer. What pressures were applied forcing people to conform and give in and why did they participate? Not every unofficial collaborator to the Stasi is alike. One did it out of conviction, another for financial reasons, yet another was forced into it and saw no way out except to cooperate with the Stasi. For instance, he may have pledged to inform as a way to get out of jail. So it is our job to use the files to do justice to the people, not to categorize them into stereotypes.

What is the difference between a conformist and a free man?

A conformist is free to choose to conform. That is also a question of individual responsibility. But it is important to cast light on the kinds of duress he or she may have been under, what types of pressure led to a decision to conform. It is important to me that we examine much more closely the issue of conformity in a dictatorship – without making accusations, without passing judgment on anyone straight away. It is foremost a question of enlightenment, of understanding the facts, about revenge. This is how I see the way to understand how the dictatorship worked.

Should the East German Communist Party or today's Left Party have been banned?

I'm not a fan of banning things. I stand for political reappraisal. Bans do not change the way people think. At the heart of the matter is that we as a society commit to a common principle: The principle of human rights. Once we agree on that, we can argue formidably about the rest.

Have you subsequently met any of the Stasi officers who gave you such a hard time?

I have met several Stasi people who had interfered directly with my life. That wasn't too easy. The important thing to me is that they take a critical look at what they did in the service of a dictatorship. Once they do that, I find it also very important that they have a chance to arrive in this society and find their place in it. There are former Stasi officers and collaborators who have shown honest regret. I reach out to them. I am prepared to work together with them to face the past. Unfortunately, there are very few of those who were in positions of responsibility at the time that make the effort today and face their actions critically. Not many seek to empathize with the feelings of their victims. Everyone though has to find the path alone. I feel sorry for those who don't manage it because all their lives they will have to carry the burden of what they did back then.

So your impression is that the majority of Stasi perpetrators hide behind a wall of self-justification?

I haven't talked to enough of them to make any generalizations. But the small number of former Stasi members who come forward and talk is a good indication of how the vast majority deals with their share of the past: Through silence and on occasion self-justification.

But I would also argue that society is not very open to listening to someone who wants to go down a path of critical self-examination. We need a climate of openness and respect for that.

At the moment in Germany, the Stasi is being compared to the NSA with its digital surveillance systems gathering all sorts of information. Can you clarify this?

I don't think you can put the NSA and the Stasi on equal grounds. To do that is an insult to the victims of the Stasi. It must be repeated loudly and clearly – the fundamental difference is built into the system under which each operate. The Stasi, as a secret police force, existed to suppress human rights in order to secure power for one party. Intelligence services in a democracy exist to protect human rights. If, in doing so, they go too far, if they infringe upon the basic rules of democracy, then it is up to the democracy to come up with solutions to ensure that rules aren't broken.

But I am convinced that democracy is strong enough and has the necessary instruments in place to keep a democratic check on its secret services and to ensure that they are used as intended. In that regard, the current discussion is certainly also a litmus test for any functioning democracy, to see whether the US resolves conflicts in the matter of the NSA.

In light of the mass atrocities being carried out for instance by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, the GDR is beginning to be cloaked in a cozy nostalgia. What can we do about that?

Tell the unvarnished truth. Educating people about what made East German society what it was. Educating about what a communist dictatorship really means. Education about dictatorship heightens our sensitivity of today, our understanding of when freedom is in jeopardy here and now. Freedom and self-determination are not to be taken for granted, that is the lesson from looking into the past. We are able to better recognize dangers to freedom when we understand how dictatorships work.

Now the big questionhat is freedom?

Freedom is something you have to actively take, it's not a gift given to you by someone. But your freedom ends at the point where the freedom of the other begins. ■

Roland Jahn was born on July 14, 1953 in Jena (Thuringia). The journalist has been head of the Stasi records authority in Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse in the Berlin district of Mitte since 2011. As an opponent of the ruling SED and civil rights campaigner, he was active within the opposition movement and in 1983 he co-founded a dissident peace group in Jena. Roland Jahn's East German citizenship was revoked that same year and he went to live in the West.

Ullsteinbild

A young Roland Jahn reading the communist daily paper "Neues Deutschland".

THE MISHMASH OF BERLIN IN MOVIES, SONGS AND HEADLINES

When the Baader Meinhof Gang met the "Valkyrie" cast at Borchardt

Bernd Eichinger made films that had a great impact on the image we have of Berlin politics and history | *By Katja Eichinger*

In the summer of 2007, during the filming of "The Baader Meinhof Complex," my husband Bernd and I were at our usual table at Borchardt restaurant. We were joined by the film's director and Bernd's best friend Uli Edel, and the male lead Moritz Bleibtreu aka Andreas Baader, founder of the terrorist group Red Army Faction. It was a night like any other: intense discussions and lots of Chateauneuf Du Pape. We didn't know that we were about to experience an extraordinary collision of movie magic, history and modern politics. A collision as it can only happen in Berlin.

"The Baader Meinhof Complex," the story of the Red Army Faction and the birth of modern terrorism, was Bernd's second film about Germany's violent history. His first had been "Downfall", set in 1945, about the last days of Adolf Hitler in his bunker and the collapse of the Third Reich.

"The Baader Meinhof Complex" was mostly shot in Berlin. On the first day we had created traffic gridlock in West Berlin by shooting a mass demonstration on one of the city's main roads. The Berliners didn't mind. Many came to watch as the crew recreated history down to the last minute detail.

Borchardt restaurant had become our quasi-living room. We were away from home, staying at the Adlon Hotel and most nights we would eat and sit around Borchardt, which is located halfway between Brandenburg Gate and Checkpoint Charlie. The restaurant had been one of the first new eateries to open in East Berlin after the fall of the Wall and had quickly become the place to be for both the newly emerging creative and political scenes alike.

Our "Baader Meinhof" gang weren't the only ones who'd hang out at Borchardt. The place had also become a favorite haunt of the "Valkyrie" cast, most prominently Tom Cruise. Like "Baader Meinhof," "Valkyrie" was also a film about German history and was currently being shot in Berlin. Cruise was playing Claus von Stauffenberg, one of the heroes of the German resistance and the driving force behind a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler.

"The Baader Meinhof Complex" (2008) with Moritz Bleibtreu and Johanna Wokalek as terrorist couple Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin.

DPA (3)

"Run Lola Run" ("Lola rennt", 1998) with main protagonist Franka Potente. Playing second lead: Berlin!

"Valkyrie" (2004) with Tom Cruise and Carice van Houten as would-be Hitler assassin Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg and his wife Nina

> "And then she lifts the machine gun out of the pram and goes Boom, Boom, Boom and shoots into the car"

That night Cruise wasn't at Borchardt, but many other "Valkyrie" cast members were. All of them sporting Wehrmacht haircuts. I could see them as I looked over Moritz's shoulder. Moritz was wearing his own clothes but other than that he was in full terrorist mode: his hair was long and died yellow-blonde, he'd grown 70s sideburns and he wasn't eating because in the next couple of weeks he would have to shoot scenes of Andreas Baader on hunger strike. It was so poignant and yet so surreal to have these two looks so close to each other: the Nazi and the left-wing terrorist. After all, the Baader Meinhof Group had been the children of the Auschwitz generation. Historian Jillian Becker called them "Hitler's Children." They had wanted to be so very different from their parents' generation and yet they'd lost themselves in the cause. That night the two faces of two very different and yet related tragedies of the 20th century were right in front of me. Drinking wine, enjoying life and taking time out from history.

Uli was leading the conversation. He was explaining to Bernd how he was going to stage the kidnapping of the industrialist Hans Martin Schleyer, one of the key moments in the history of left-wing terrorism in Germany. "And then she lifts the machine gun out of the pram and goes boom, boom, boom and shoots into the car," Uli exclaimed, giving us an animated demonstration by holding an imaginary AK47 and shooting at the wine bottle in front of him.

Heads turned at the table behind us. I noticed a man in a black suit, who'd been hovering near the stairs, coming closer to the table, keeping a close eye on Uli. Only then did I see his earpiece and the wire going down his neck. A bodyguard. I looked over to the entrance and saw another man in black exactly like him. With all this movie talk I hadn't realized that a political heavyweight must have entered the room. I checked out the

other tables. The back of the head of the man behind Bernd seemed familiar. It was no other than the German Secretary of the Interior.

This was simply too bizarre to comprehend. The man in charge of fighting terrorism in Germany was sitting only an arm's length away from Moritz Bleibtreu, the man personifying Germany's former number 1 enemy of the state and the founder of what would pave the ground for modern day terrorism. History, past and present, was melting into one in a Berlin restaurant.

Moritz had been part of movie history when he played the male lead in Tom Tykwer's "Run Lola Run." It's the movie that captures perfectly the spirit of 90s, post-wall Berlin: Hugely dynamic and exciting, breaking down boundaries of traditional narrative structure, freely mixing real life action with animation, and most of all irresistibly romantic. Audiences around the world fell in love with it.

DPA, ULLSTEINBILD

Left: Christiane F. ("Christiane F." – We Children From Bahnhof Zoo", 1981), the true story of drug addicts and prostitutes in downtown Berlin, directed by Bernd Eichinger.

Below: On the set of the movie "The Baader Meinhof Complex": Actor Jan Josef Liefers and Producer Bernd Eichinger.

Tykwer's production company X-Filme also produced "Goodbye, Lenin!", still one of the most poignant films about the absurdities of the Wall. "Goodbye, Lenin!" made a very important contribution to German reunification in that it got both sides – East and West – laughing about the intense, often traumatic and sometimes farcical changes they had both been through.

This wasn't Bernd and Uli's first Berlin movie together. In 1980 they had made "Christiane F." – a film about the true story of a teenage girl who becomes addicted to heroin and turns to prostitution to finance her habit. The film features a wall-to-wall David Bowie soundtrack and a performance by Bowie which Quentin Tarantino has called the best concert scene in movie history. "Christiane F." became a Europe wide hit and was the first time that a German post-war film had reached a wider, international audience. "Christiane F." encapsulated the zeitgeist of 1980s Berlin like no other film: dark, dangerous and highly addictive.

"Christiane F." showed audiences the Hades of Berlin, the hell of Cold War depression. In contrast, Wim Wenders' "Wings of Desire" from 1987 gave viewers a piece of heaven called West Berlin. With "Wings of Desire," Wenders – who like Bernd and Uli had gone to film school in Munich – declared his love for the divided city, which was floating like a lonely satellite above Cold War Europe.

"Christiane F." and "Wings of Desire" – they are polar opposites and yet two sides of the same coin: Stories about people trying to come to terms with a harsh reality and a city that makes no sense. Since the fall of the Wall, German filmmakers have been inspired by Berlin and its history of extremes. Apart from "Run Lola Run" and "Goodbye, Lenin!," there's the Oscar-winning "The Lives of Others" or "Herr Lehmann," "Sun Alley," "Summer in Berlin," "A Woman in Berlin" and "Atomized" to mention just a few. More recently, "A Coffee in Berlin," a charming portrait of Berlin slacker life, made it into US cinemas.

Since the Wall came down, Berlin has even developed its own cinema movement called the Berlin School. An art house movement characterized by stark images, storylines about the lives of ordinary people and a slow, yet strong narrative drive. Director Christian Petzold is considered the Berlin School's most prominent member. His films include "The State I Am In," "Yella" and more recently "Barbara," which was celebrated on the international film festival circuit.

Back at Borchardt, the night ended around midnight, which was early for Borchardt standards. Uli had to be back on the film set in the morning and Moritz' hunger strike diet was not conducive to excessive partying. However, some days later Bernd and I were once again sitting at our table in the early hours of the morning. Suddenly Tom Cruise walks in and sits down with his crew. The strange thing about him is that even in real life he appears so radiant and perfect, it's like he's got a key light illuminating him at all times. Cruise spots Bernd, comes over and asks to sit with us. He's telling Bernd how much he admired "Downfall" and he's clearly enjoying his time in Berlin. And after a while he looks Bernd in the eye, like only Tom Cruise can, and asks: "Wanna make a movie together?"

■

Katja Eichinger is the widow of Bernd Eichinger, whom she married in 2006. The producer and director, who died in 2011, was regarded as one of the most productive and influential filmmakers in Germany. In 2012 K. Eichinger published "BE" a biography of her late husband.

THE MISHMASH OF BERLIN

From Bowie to Berghain, the sounds of Berlin

By Sebastian Zabel, Editor-in-Chief of "Rolling Stone," German edition

Schöneberg's main street is not an attractive street. It's not even strikingly ugly. It just has four traffic lanes and facades straight out of a movie set in the post-war era. Yet David Bowie spent the best months of his life here. "In Berlin," he later reported, "I started enjoying life again for the first time in years. It's so easy to lose yourself in this city, but also easy to find yourself. It's cheap there. And for some reason the Berliners aren't interested in you – at least not in a British rock singer."

38 years have passed since the great rock star David Bowie lived in this drab street and recorded the legendary album "Heroes" in Kreuzberg's Hansa studios. And the legend lives on to this day. Berlin, this is the sound of the walled city, kisses and gunshots and heroes for one night. The sound of the city is the timbre of the thin, formerly drug-addicted singer from London. Even more so since one of the most beautiful exhibition spaces in this city devoted a large-scale retrospective to the man and his work.

But of course, the sound of "Heroes" has disappeared, just like the Bahnhof Zoo junkies. What remains is the image of the young Nadja Brunckhorst as Christiane F., running through the rachitic Berlin night to one of the greatest ever Berlin songs; just like Franka Potente as Lola, albeit to a different sound, in an equally seminal Berlin movie a good dozen years later. What does remain is what Bowie described as liberating: A city that, in its degenerate nonchalance, permits a great deal. It sounded like the anticipated punk rock movement in the early 1970s when the anarchist band Ton Steine Scherben issued a call to revolution. It sounded like the revolution itself in the early 1980s when Blixa Bargeld and his Einstürzenden Neubauten performed an infernal noise. And in the early 1990s, it sounded like a huge, generally-oblivious boooom when DJs cranked up the volume in the techno clubs of the reunified city. Berlin seldom sounded harmonious.

It's no different today either, when wise guys roll their eyes theatrically at any mention of Berghain. You know: the most famous club in the world. Massive, with a bouncer covered in tattoos, oversized images of penises and open for 38 hours at a stretch. But now that it's in every travel guide, it is of course passé again; even though it's still the place where the city's most interesting music has been played for over 10 years now. But is this also Berlin's sound? Is it possible to sum it up exactly? Is it not, in all honesty, a great cacophony?

> "the ideal sound of a sophisticated, glamorous, libertarian Berlin"

Yes it is. Because barely have you left Berghain with its technoid elves and thundering bass lines, its cavernous halls and craggy corners, before you most certainly hear an acoustic trio performing on some tiny stage somewhere. Because folk is the perpetual backdrop of this city, a place where yet more guys with beards and guitars slung over their shoulders are blown in on a daily basis. Like the Mighty Oaks, for example. Three men who could not have been more perfectly conceived for the new Berlin: One American, one Brit and one Italian guy sporting long hair and beards, guitars and mandolins, friendly and good-hearted, meet in the German capital and put a few songs out into the ether via the exceedingly successful Berlin startup Soundcloud, eventually ending up in the German top 10 and being featured on an arts and culture program on public television. The rather unspectacular sound of a strumming majority; wholesome and far removed from all hedonistic promises. But it is the promises – alongside cheap rents and the pleasant, shoulder-shrugging basic mentality of its residents – that continue to attract artists from all over the world to Berlin. The Californian Julia Holter, a captivating electronic songwriter; Gonzales, a gifted Canadian entertainer and piano virtuoso; the Detroit techno DJ Richie Hawtin, the Scotsman Fran Healy, lead singer with the band Travis, who's been living in Prenzlauer Berg for many years and who recorded a benefit CD for his son's – of course! – bilingual school. With a – of course! – bilingual band drummed up especially for the purpose, including Steve Malkmus from the American indie rock band Pavement on bass and Herbert Grönemeyer on piano. Berlin, enthuses Healy, is the most liberal city in the world, a place where things are possible that wouldn't be elsewhere.

The Berliner likes hearing this. And he proudly points out that world famous bands such as U2, Depeche Mode and R.E.M. have all recorded albums here. Michael Stipe, the former frontman of the latter US rock band, even stayed. He resides in Mitte, strolls through exhibitions, takes Cameron Diaz out and is a regular in smoke-filled bars. Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe, otherwise known as the Pet Shop Boys, live seven kilometers away as the crow flies on the Ku'damm [a West Berlin boulevard]. This allows the city to feel just a little bit like London or New York, and typically, without even trying.

Nevertheless all these great people don't really characterize the sound of Berlin. In any case not the sound that you hear when you walk through the streets. Besides all the guitar strumming folkies, the dominant flavor is that of the innumerable Turkish and Arab musicians, rappers and DJs that can be heard in the many shisha cafés, bars, clubs and rear courtyards, in trains and on street corners.

What Bowie and Berghain characterize is the idea of a sound, the ideal sound of a sophisticated, glamorous, libertarian Berlin. And of course, everyone likes to hear that. Even if the truly extant Berlin street sound is just as unglamorous as Schöneberg's main drag. ■

DPA, DAVID BOWIE BERLIN

Right: Adoptive Berliners Iggy Pop and David Bowie with Bowie's assistant Coco Schwab in 1977 at an East Berlin café.

Below: Berghain – Berlin's world famous nightspot, where (almost) anything goes!

Jim Rakete/photoselection, dpa

Out of Nothing: The glittering heart of Berlin

Nena (left) in No Man's Land in 1987. Her former manager, Jim Rakete, who later became a famous photographer snapped her in Potsdamer Platz, the empty zone between West and East Berlin, laid waste during WWII and left desolate during the Cold War era when the Wall bisected its location. Since German reunification, Potsdamer Platz has been the site of major development projects. It's now a busy district in the middle of Berlin housing the headquarters of Sony, plus big shopping malls, luxury hotels, restaurants and clubs. Lit up in the foreground is the Philharmonie (see page 27).

MY NAME IS NENA

99 dreams I have had

I had the scent of the big wide world in my nostrils and an irresistible yearning for an adventurous, self-determined life. It was 1978 and I was 18. I'd left my first band The Stripes - I'd already released an album with them and gained plenty of experience performing live – and I took the decision to leave my West German suburban home behind.

And so, one day, I really did climb into my old beige-colored Simca with my guitar, my Stones, Blondie and Ramones LPs and a few favorite bits of clothing on the back seat, and hit the road. Along the motorway, over the borders, always following the pull of my heart, a few hours later, I ended up in the walled city.

West Berlin received me with open arms. It's true that people were rather arrogant, but at the same time really open and curious. The energy that flowed through the streets, clubs and minds went something like this: Hey great that you're joining us…Cool, let's see what you've got!

Through Spliff, the former Nina Hagen band, I met the photographer Jim Rakete. Because his assistant happened to be on holiday, I covered for her for three weeks. I looked after his studio, a converted factory loft in Kreuzberg. I fielded phone calls, sorted out the post and met pretty much all the West Berlin bands coming in and out of the studio every day. It was a brilliant acclimatization for me. I was right in the middle of things, albeit still in camouflage with the telephone receiver in my hand and wearing a sweater I'd knitted myself. And there was music everywhere. I bathed in neon light, drifted through the never-ending sky, and in the shadow of the Wall and the Hansa Studios built castles in the sand on Potsdamer Platz.

"Gib mir die Hand, ich bau dir ein Schloss aus Sand, Irgendwie, Irgendwo, Irgendwann" (Give me your hand, I'll build you a castle out of sand, somehow, somewhere, sometime).

It's strange how you felt so bound up with everything, although you were actually cut off from the outside world.

Not long after Mick Jagger released thousands of balloons at the end of a Stones concert in Berlin. They were all picked up by the wind and carried in the direction of East Berlin, over the Wall. I'll never forget

99 Red Balloons

Have you some time for me,
then I'll sing a song for you
about 99 balloons
on their way to the horizon.
If you're perhaps thinking about me right now
then I'll sing a song for you
about 99 balloons
and that such a thing comes from such a thing.

99 balloons
on their way to the horizon
People think they're UFO's from space
so a general sent up
a fighter squadron after them
Sound the alarm if it's so
but there on the horizon were
only 99 balloons.

99 fighter jets
Each one's a great warrior
Thought they were Captain Kirk
then came a lot of fireworks
the neighbors didn't understand anything
and felt like they were being provoked
so they shot at the horizon
at 99 balloons.

99 war ministers
matches and gasoline canisters
They thought they were clever people
already smelled a nice bounty
Called for war and wanted power.
Man, who would've thought
that things would someday go so far
because of 99 balloons.

99 years of war
left no room for victors.
There are no more war ministers
nor any jet fighters.
Today I'm making my rounds
see the world lying in ruins.
I found a balloon,
think of you and let it fly (away).

"Through all the years, Berlin was always there for me, my anchor"

that image. That was the moment when my friend and guitarist Carlo Karges wrote the first lines of the song "99 Luftballons" (later English version: "99 Red Balloons"). He completed the lyrics the same day and from that moment we were propelled into a different dimension. Suddenly we were rock stars and flew all over the world with our "99 Red Balloons."

Through all the years Berlin was always there for me, my anchor, my rock in turbulence and my home. And then when the Wall fell, I was in Zurich and I recorded the song titled: "Wunder Gescheh'n." (Miracle Happened.) I went straight to Berlin to see this miracle with my own eyes.

"Wunder gescheh'n. Ich hab's geseh'n." (Miracle happened, I've seen it.)

And now?

Now the sky's still there, it still goes on forever. And on Potsdamer Platz, the sandcastles have been replaced with concrete blocks. I live in Hamburg but I love visiting Berlin, which will always be close to my heart. And whenever I'm there, it receives me with open arms and says: Hey it's great that you're back! Cool, bring it on! ■

Privat; DPA

Gabriele Susanne Kerner (born March 24, 1960), better known by her stage name Nena, rose to international fame in 1983 with the New German Wave song "99 Red Luftballons." In 1984, she re-recorded the song in English as "99 Red Balloons." Nena is mother to five children, grandmother to three – pictured with her youngest grandson, Victor.

The original cover of the "99 Red Balloons," US-version.

THE MISHMASH OF BERLIN

Puhdys forever

East Germany's best-known rock band will go on its final tour next year – reminding loyal fans of the lost country they grew up in

By Thomas Winkler

DPA

East German Band the Puhdys in existence for 52 years – longer than the GDR was as a country

Admittedly, the Rolling Stones are even older – as a band, they have been around for 52 years. But the Puhdys are right behind them. The East German band is only seven years younger – and is now celebrating 45 years of performing. "Looking back, it beggars belief," says the Puhdys' front man Dieter Birr. Birr, 70, was nicknamed "the Machine." "Amazing that people still want to hear our music," he says.

Now the best-known band from the faded communist state in eastern Germany is back on tour. In the run-up to a big birthday bash at a large arena in Berlin at the end of October, the Puhdys are touring with other elderly rock legends from the era of "real existing socialism" – City (founded in 1972) and Karat (1975). East Germany may not have attained its greatly-desired world status very often outside of the Olympic Games. But 25 years after the end of the East German regime, it has left a legacy long-playing rock bands.

This endurance is partly down to historical factors. East German bands and especially the Puhdys were successful in their homeland because the regime's culture officials reduced access to the international competition to a minimum. Western bands were very rarely allowed to play in East Germany and their records were virtually unavailable. The powerful state record company Amiga alone did not decide which bands went into the recording studio – the censor had the final say. Not every musician who would have liked to make a record was allowed to.

Yet the Puhdys recorded 17 albums as well as songs for the soundtrack of "The Legend of Paul and Paula," (1973), an East German cinema classic. Two songs, "Wenn ein Mensch lebt" (When a man lives) and "Geh zu ihr" (Go to her) were major hits and made Dieter Birr's deep whiskey voice famous even outside of East Germany. From 1976 the Puhdys were permitted to perform in West Germany, where they gained a small but loyal following.

In their homeland, the Puhdys sold 14 million records – an amazing number considering the small size of the market. They were so successful that they didn't make a farewell tour until 1989. "We had done it all," says Birr. Shortly after they finished the tour, the Berlin Wall fell and East Germany too had to say goodbye. Germany was reunified in 1990, and the Puhdys re-formed in 1992. Today, the band has been in existence longer than East Germany ever was. "The ironies of history," laughs Birr.

East Germany's artificial shortage of rock music ensured that there wasn't much to choose from. That meant that Puhdys fans who grew up in the East were particularly devoted to their music idols. It's a connection which has held to the present day. "We mean more to former East Germans than any western band does to West Germans," says Birr. "People like to remember us."

East Germans only forgot the Puhdys for a short time – straight after the fall of the Wall, all 17 million of them immediately lost interest in their own bands. "We never got the feeling people thought we were bad," says Birr, "But they spent their new, hard currency on new bands." After a few years, many of their fans came back to them, and have been filling the big concert venues in eastern Germany ever since. The Puhdys also play regularly at western venues – but "the audiences are not so big there," Birr admits.

Yet they are still big enough to mark the Puhdys as a "German band" overall and indeed to call them part of the history of the two Germanys. The Puhdies were the band which went onto the empty stage when the West German band BAP cancelled their concert in 1984 following outrageous restrictions imposed by East German censors. The Puhdys came to terms with the system but they never sold their souls to it – that was the view of Birr and the other band members, and they still stand by it.

The Puhdys also had a role to play in the reappraisal of East Germany's police state. In 1993 keyboard player Peter Meyer was confronted by a television crew with the file kept on him by the East German secret police, the Stasi. They had listed him as "informer Peter." Meyer claimed he had not known about it, saying it was because he joined the Committee for Entertainment Art in 1973 and had regular contact with the highest functionaries. No evidence has come to light since which suggests that Meyer knowingly spied for the Stasi – as musicians in other East German bands are known to have done.

That episode fits well with a band which many East Germans identify with – particularly because, in the new order following reunification, they too were confronted with prejudices. Back then, allegations of collaboration with the Stasi set off a clamor of public condemnation. The fuss surrounding Peter Meyer's Stasi file contributed to a more nuanced treatment of each case on its own merits.

The Puhdys' success today is primarily due to a phenomenon known in Germany as "ostalgia" – a combination of "nostalgia" and the German word for "east" – fond remembrance of the lost nation in which East Germans grew up. Birr sees this feeling above all as a longing for one's lost youth. "People like to look back to the days when they were young and sexy – it's the same everywhere, in West Germany or in England. And we can help with that." The Puhdys are planning their final farewell tour next year. In 2015, says Dieter "Machine" Birr, it really is goodbye. "You should always end on a high note." ■

ULLSTEINBILD

Three BZ readers probably from East Berlin with the newspaper's edition from November 10, 1989.

How to find headlines in a city that has seen it all

As Editor-in-Chief of BZ, Berlin's biggest and oldest newspaper, Peter Huth understands what makes news in his city. Here he explores the pulse of the city that gives him his headlines

By Peter Huth

Finding headlines in Berlin is like selling beds in a city that never sleeps. It's a tough job, but someone has to do it. And that someone is me.

Since 2008 I have been Editor-in-Chief at BZ, Berlin's biggest and oldest newspaper. The history of the paper is a novel of my country, written in printing ink and pain. It is the story of the rise and fall of Ullstein, a prominent Jewish publishing family that lost everything to German barbarians.

But this is not about BZ, this is about a city whose fate the paper has followed, described and shared since 1877.

What do you know about Berlin? What do you hear of the city that is currently celebrating the 25th anniversary of its unification?

Almost certainly that Berlin is Europe's place to be. It is a creative oasis, a magnet for anyone starting out (artists, musicians, programmers) and people who come to invest.

Berlin is also the city which granted dream factory projects their share of German money. Welcome Stauffenberg and Street Racer, Bryan Singer and Tom Cruise. Hello Brangelina!

And it's home to Berghain, the notorious club in which everyone can ... with anyone, nonstop Friday to Monday!

My Berlin is a very different Berlin. I'm just back from an early morning jog during which I had a close shave with a beast of wild boar. I live in Wannsee, just 20 kilometers from the Kudamm. In the wild west. This is truly a tiny, giant city.

Wild boar! National Socialists! Money! Hotbed of sin!

And they say it's hard to come up with headlines here?

They're right. It is.

Berlin has a very thick skin. The airport – yes, you've heard of that one! The great German failure. Perhaps it made you smirk a little. I wouldn't blame you! It's pretty embarrassing stuff for engineering nerds like we Germans.

So how did it happen? Easy, the Berlin administration thought it could pull a fast, cheap one. Stupid thought? Absolutely, but for Klaus Wowereit it was worth a try.

Apropos: our mayor ousted himself. Not overnight, but slowly, over three months during which Wowi strutted from party to party. Royal lame duck.

And who will succeed him? The decision won't fall to the city's 3.5 million inhabitants, but to the 17,000 members of the Berlin Social Democrats (SPD). Crazy democracy. And for the SPD, a good opportunity for an advertising campaign ("You want to elect the mayor? Become a member!")

What about the opposition? Ha! We have a grand coalition and every time I ask the Chairman of the Christian Democrats (CDU) in Berlin, Frank Henkel, if he is pushing for new elections, he says it wouldn't be a good idea and that it would be better to wait, to play it safe.

Henkel is also Interior Minister and top sheriff for the city-state of Berlin. He used to be a tough guy, but now he's gone soft. For almost a year African refugees occupied a site in central Berlin with a vigor that made Occupy Wall Street look like a scout camp.

The demonstrators ultimately moved into an old school and threatened to throw Molotov cocktails at police from the roof. By that point most of the refugees had moved on, leaving a collection of thieves and dealers behind.

The district of Kreuzberg was broke for three days because the police operation was so expensive. Every ballpoint pen had to be authorised, toilet paper in public toilets was banned. But then the city Senate transferred a couple of hundred thousand euros and normal life resumed.

We write headlines and headlines about headlines. Hot topics, important issues. Our columnist Gunnar Schupelius wags a moral finger.

And the readers? They write in and say, "It's terrible, but somehow he was a pretty cool guy, our Wowi." And, "Yes, they're brazen those refugees, but what are you going to do?"

Anyone who equates that with not caring, or with a lack of interest, has not understood Berliners, they have not studied the history of our city.

Because Berlin has made headlines that have changed the world. For better and for worse.

Hitler's rise, fall, death – that was in Berlin

The collapse of civilization – planned in Berlin

Division of the world – the Wall ran through Berlin

The victory of freedom – won in Berlin

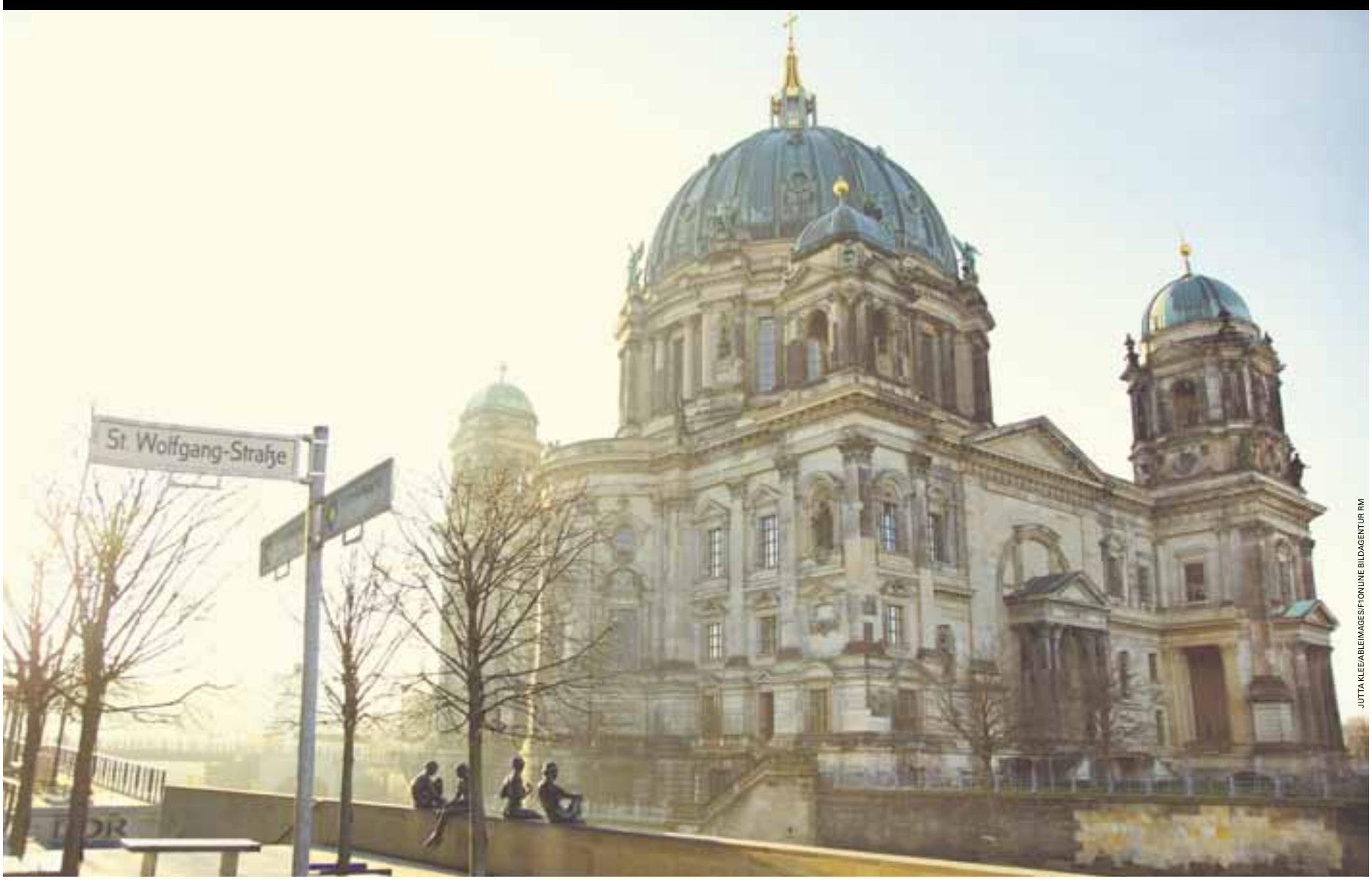
New Europe – the capital is called Berlin.

And now since the fall of the Wall 25 years ago, a kind of normality has taken root in our relaxed city. Sure our politicians and their politics are provincial. They make mistakes and then they even laugh about them, which is not very German. But it is perfect for a German capital that endured two dictatorships.

Berlin has finally become normal. Pretty normal. Relatively speaking, totally normal.

Bad for headlines. Good for our country. ■

BERLIN, MY LOVE



JUTTA KLEE/ABLEIMAGES/FIONLINE BILDAGENTUR RM

Members of the Prussian royal family are entombed in the Berlin Cathedral's crypt; across the street, their former palace is being rebuilt.

Good can win at any time

Even if that victory takes a long time – it can happen suddenly | *By Thomas Brussig*

Recently I was asked which is the more important date – November 9, 1989 or September 11, 2001.

On November 9, 1989, I was a young man who wanted to become a writer. I had finished my first novel months before, but given the censorship in the East I saw little chance of ever getting it published. Then on the afternoon of November 9 – a few hours before what was to go down in history as the fall of the Berlin Wall – I took my manuscript to a publisher.

The previous few weeks had been the most eventful time I'd ever experienced in East Germany – one party chairman had been ousted, newspapers were starting to print something like the truth, the television was reporting things that happened in real life, members of the politburo were resigning one after another, there were weekly Monday demonstrations in Leipzig and in Berlin permission was even given for a "protest demonstration," attended by nearly one million people.

I was sure that censorship would not last much longer. Handing in my manuscript, I found myself in a room where huge numbers of manuscripts ended up – most of them on worn paper. Everything which had been gathering dust in desk drawers across East Germany was now being sent to publishers, who were sinking under a flood of manuscripts. I added mine to the stack, although I had no hope that my work would stand out amongst those mountains of paper.

> "Is the division of the city still tangible and visible? Of course! But is that so bad?"

That evening I was at a friend's place and we watched Schabowski's press conference on TV, hearing him announce what we understood to be "freedom to travel." What he said was that anyone wanting to leave East Germany would no longer have to do so via Czechoslovakia but could use East German border crossings (into West Germany). What we didn't imagine was that the people of East Germany would intentionally misunderstand and cheekily ask the border guards: "How will you tell the difference between those who are leaving for good and those who just want a quick look at the West?"

On my way home late that night I could sense a strange atmosphere. The television was on in many apartments and through open windows I could hear the excited voices of reporters. I realized that they could only be talking about the border being opened, and when I got home I switched the radio on – becoming an earwitness to reports of a parade of (East German) Trabi cars down the Ku'damm. Although it was 2 o'clock in the morning, I got on my motorbike and headed off again. And then I ended up in the big party of which there are countless television images. If there was anything good about the Wall falling, it was that it gave us pictures like that.

Never has there been an event which was so surprising and so eruptive – and released such feelings of excessive exhilaration – as the fall of the Berlin Wall. There may have been victory celebrations after wars, with tickertape parades and dancing in the streets, but you know when the end of a war is coming. The beauty of the fall of the Wall was that it came as such a surprise. That it wasn't decided at a negotiating table but was brought about by the street. And because there were no words to express it, we finally just agreed to shout: "Amazing!"

It's only in hindsight that that November 9 took on its towering, extraordinary significance. At the time, in the hurly-burly of it all, it was just another incredible day in a series of incredible events, like the downfall of the General Secretary and the resignation of the old guard. The fact that everywhere people were showing their resentment at being patronized and constrained and did not want to continue with

The Fischerinsel, Berlin's birthplace some 800 years ago

Before Berghain, Paris Bar was the city's prominent hang-out

Mauerpark on a Sunday, as Berlin as it gets

Murals on facades instead of renovation or new buildings

West Berlin: Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and sculpture

GETTY IMAGES (4), DPA, FIONLINE

High-rises thrust into Berlin's sky and its future

the old, false life; and that we started to love freedom by taking it for ourselves – that was the real beauty of those weeks.

And if the fall of the Wall taught me one thing it is this – even a tightly nailed-down order, created to last forever, can collapse in on itself. Good can win at any time. Even if that victory takes a long time – it can happen suddenly. Dreams are worth it. I love Berlin for two characteristics which came out in the division of the city and following the fall of the Wall. Firstly, Berlin does not like militancy. And second, Berlin is a city in which you can live a halfway decent life without much money.

Calling Berlin a "metropolis" is not completely wrong. It is Germany's biggest city and is home to many different ethnic groups, subcultures and scenes. Yet there is no predominant scene in the city – no one is on top. Even when Berlin became the capital and the seat of government, it just meant that another attribute was added without Berlin changing in any basic way. Berlin is part of the Prussian tradition; when Frederick the Great invited Hugenots to come and live here, he announced that every man should be happy after his own fashion. To this day, all new arrivals to the city have taken this to heart. They came, bring their own thing, and became a part of Berlin without completely changing it. There are so many differences packed into a small space – people in this city have to get along with one another. It's interesting that hardy any of the new celebrations has become established in Berlin. The East German rite of passage, the Jugendweihe, which was obligatory in East Germany, has become a thing celebrated only by a small minority. And even during Carnival, something government officials brought from Bonn, those Rhinelanders remain pretty much amongst themselves. I recently passed a Löwenbräu beer tent on a fine sunny day. Oom-pah-pah music sounded from inside, where they were supposedly celebrating the Oktoberfest. When I looked inside, I saw ridiculously few people sitting at the tables. Festivals like that cannot simply be implanted into Berlin. Only Halloween seems to have made it.

But Berlin is very open to those with little money. That is the secret of its attraction for young artists and creatives. Rents have remained moderate over decades, and compared with Paris, London, Milan and Munich they are unbeatably cheap. That is how the city deals with low-income levels of society.

Is the division of the city still tangible and visible? Of course! But is that so bad? Berlin is a relatively young city; its big growth period only really began 150 years ago. A progression of rulers put their stamp on Berlin (and are still doing so) – and that has made the city unique. Rome may be the most beautiful city in the world. But Berlin was the seat of kings, an imperial capital, the center of the Third Reich, the "showcase of the West," "capital of the first socialist state on German territory" – and each time, it was a serious architectural business. Unfortunately it is also typical of Berlin that it always tries to neutralize the bricks-and-mortar abominations of previous epochs with new abominations.

But which is the more important date? November 9 or September 11? I think that September 11 changed our view of the world; while the events of November 9, 1989, brought real change to the lives of millions.

■

Bestselling novelist Thomas Brussig, born in 1964 in East Berlin, is known for his satirical view on life and people in the GDR ("At the Shorter End of Sonnenallee").

BERLIN, HOME OF THE FUTURE

Capital of digital natives

A new generation is turning Berlin's beleaguered economy around

By Rainer Bieling

Cafeteria of Euref Campus in Schöneberg, the new home of Cisco.

Berlin – 25 years after the fall of the Wall – one of the coolest addresses in the world. Not only for tourists, but also for digital natives, the young creative folk turning Berlin into the Home Of The Future. They've now reached an age when they are no longer simply content to consume, but also want to produce. And they want to do this in the city that's changing faster than any other in the world.

Ideas alone are no guarantee of success, courage is also a prerequisite. And money. Ideally both. The courage comes from experienced and successful managers and investors who plough money into the new digital economy because risk is an integral part of a venture's success. One person who is well aware of this is Eric Schmidt, Executive Chairman of Google. He came to Berlin in June 2014 to bolster the impact of just such an investment.

With the sum of one million euros, Google is financing the funding program of a new technology center for business startups. "Factory Berlin" is now able to announce on its website that it is "Supported by Google for Entrepreneurs." Several of the startups that have taken up residence there are already global players: Soundcloud, for example, a music platform with 250 million users, or 6Wunderkinder with their to-do app Wunderlist, financed by Sequoia Capital, the company behind the success of Google, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Cisco Systems found its way to Berlin in September 2014. The network technology manufacturer is set to open a think-tank on the Euref campus at the Schöneberg gasometer – to establish a link between the company and the creative startup scene in Berlin. The spirit of the young, the money of the old and a city that attracts both; this is the secret of the marvel that is Berlin. ■

Locations that inspire creativity

Berlin's old factories are now humming with new commercial activity. There are four reasons for the rapid wave of expansion

The first reason for the new dynamism is the "Gründerzeit", a period of rapid industrial growth that made Berlin the biggest industrial metropolis in Europe in the 19th century. Factory buildings sprang up all over the place in the middle of the old urban center, dozens of which survived World War Two and the subsequent division of the city. After the fall of the Wall, the old industries moved on, eastwards, to China. And now the creative businesses of the New Economy are moving into those old sites that until very recently stood empty. Following costly restoration they are now humming with high-tech activity.

The second reason for the commercial buzz is the second "Gründerzeit" which is just underway. Nowhere in the modern world are the rents for trendy office and workspaces in traditional factory buildings as low as in Berlin: on average 150 euros per square meter versus 600 euros in Silicon Valley. In addition, private rents and living costs in the German capital remain at unrivalled levels.

The third reason is the cultural appeal of the city and its high quality of life. Savvy individuals who want to achieve something here come under their own steam; no one needs to recruit them or promise them the earth. Berlin's universities and colleges provide for a continual supply of new talent, with masses of highly qualified and highly motivated German and foreign graduates entering the labor market every year. They are here because this is an urban landscape like no other in Europe – a thriving cultural scene with bustling nightlife alongside unspoiled natural surroundings featuring lakes and rivers.

The fourth reason is Berlin's science and research landscape, which is something of a cornucopia of talent and ideas. Some 200,000 people from all over the world teach, research, work and study at four universities (including the Joint Venture Charité University Medical Center Berlin), seven polytechnic colleges, three art colleges, 18 private universities as well as more than 60 research institutions. Of these people, 160,000 are students, 15 percent of them coming from abroad.

The four big national research organizations the Fraunhofer Society, Helmholtz Association, Leibniz Association and Max Planck Society are also represented by institutes in Berlin. ■

Above: Opening night of the Factory in Mitte, a campus for startups and mature tech companies, supported by Google for Entrepreneurs. Executive chairman Eric Schmidt attended the event.

Right: Location of the first meeting of Digital Nomads in Germany, betahouse in Kreuzberg offers coworking space.

PR, PHOTOTHEK

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The Science and Technology Park Adlershof, a location featuring prime movers in industries of the future

Healthy industries

In Berlin, old and new industries are merging into the economy of tomorrow

Pessimists have already painted a bleak picture: Berlin the industrial metropolis, that's in the past, it'll never come back. But industry never disappeared, at least not completely. To this day, one in every four motorbikes in Germany is made in BMW's Berlin plant in the district of Spandau. And Siemens not only has its own neighborhood next door, Siemensstadt, it's also still manufacturing turbines there for gas power stations, without which the world's lights wouldn't go on. Before long, parts for the gas turbines will be produced using 3D printers.

The example of Siemens, a traditional company operating in a future market, shows to what extent old and new industries are merging into the economy of the future in Berlin. Siemens is one of the largest health care manufacturers in the capital. Medical technology from the Werner plant in Siemensstadt helps people live longer and provides sustainable growth for the company. Little wonder then that another health care giant, Bayer from Leverkusen, was happy to take over another traditional Berlin company, the pharmaceuticals manufacturer Schering. To this day, the Bayer Pharma AG plant in Wedding is the city's largest pharmaceuticals producer.

Berlin-Chemie AG and global concerns such as Pfizer and Sanofi-Aventis have located their German branches in the capital. The Charité is the largest university clinic in Europe, and for more than 300 years it has played a key role in ensuring that Berlin never lost its position as Health Capital. As for the life sciences, there are today some 170 courses of study at 19 Berlin universities, four Max Planck Institutes, two Fraunhofer institutes, two Leibniz institutes and two Helmholtz centers.

This density of university and non-university research institutions has encouraged 30 pharma companies, more than 230 biotech companies and 280 plus medical technology companies to remain in Berlin or relocate there. The medical technology sector is one of the guarantors for preservation and renewal of industrial manufacturing. Then there are manufacturers of optical technologies and microsystem technology, two more key 21st century technologies. Products, components and system solutions of photonics and microsystem technology are often the basis for innovations in communication technology, medical technology, security technology and air and space travel.

An upward trend: in 2013 alone, the business development agency Berlin Partners supported around 260 companies to move to the city or to grow their business in Berlin. ■

eMobility moves Berlin

A city mobilizes itself – although you can't hear it or smell it

Electromobility is a concept that was given a warm reception in Berlin from the outset. In Germany, nowhere is the desire to experiment with new forms of mobility greater than in the city where motorists and cyclists were only able to regain boundless freedom of movement after the fall of the Wall. It makes perfect sense that the undivided capital asserted itself as one of four "Electromobility showcases." With this program, the government is funding research into, and development of, engines that you can't hear or smell because they are emission-free.

Berlin wouldn't be Berlin if it hadn't immediately founded an institution to administer the "Electromobility showcase" and give it a catchy abbreviated name: eMO. The Agency for Electromobility eMO is an agency of the city-state of Berlin. The eMO has been the central hub for all matters concerning electromobility in the capital region since 2010.

A substantial number of pilot projects have taken up residence on the Euref campus in Schöneberg. The Innovation Center for Mobility and Societal Change (InnoZ) assesses the complex interplay between mobility and societal change. The project BeMobility tests innovative mobility solutions through an intelligent networking of electronic vehicles and public transport. Startups such as Urban-e manufacture electric cargo bikes on the site, or, as in the case of Ubitricity, develop a new charging infrastructure for electric cars. This makes it possible to access power from sockets that can be installed in any street lamp.

Besides the European Energy Forum site (Euref), the Science and Technology Park Adlershof will in future serve as a base for companies operating in the electro mobility sector. Production, laboratory and office space is available in the newly-built "Center for Photovoltaics and Renewable Energies." A charging station next to the building provides electricity for electric cars, e-scooter and pedelecs - bikes where the rider's pedaling is assisted by an electric motor. As soon as a startup there has invents a bicycle battery that charges itself when the rider uses the pedals, then it will be fair to say that the concept of perpetuum mobile has been invented in Adlershof. ■

The logo of the Agency for Electromobility eMO, the central hub for eMobility in the German capital

EMO

A startup on every corner

A mentality shift in Germany: The state is out of the picture, it's up to the individual

Who would have thought it? In 2014 Berlin, thousands of young people are going solo, founding companies and hoping that good ideas will eventually yield good money. The flourishing startups on every corner of the city are evidence of a staggering mentality shift in Germany: The state is out of the picture, it's up to the individual to make something of themselves.

These young entrepreneurs, most of whom are indeed young men, are not drawn to jobs in the public sector like their forefathers were, nor do they want to live off the public purse doing something vaguely creative, whiling away hours in a coffee shop with their tablet and trust fund. No, the company founders at work here are those who – with great diligence, application and tenacity - are developing business ideas set to establish themselves in the market.

At the same time, financial investors' confidence in the youngsters is growing; international donors pumped venture capital to the tune of 136 million euros into Berlin startups last year. This new vigor is especially evident on the broad playing field that is the digital economy: 500 new companies are created annually in the German startup capital, with everyone hoping their particular innovative digital technology will earn them a place in the sun. ■

Fitness for the brain

America facilitated Berliners' access to knowledge

It's just 750 meters by foot from the editorial offices of Times Media GmbH in Berlin-Kreuzberg to the American Memorial Library. This proximity made it easy, on September 20, 2014, to interrupt work on the Times edition you're currently reading to pay a 60th birthday visit to a rather special place. Yes, the AGB, as the American Memorial Library is succinctly known in Berlin, is indeed 60 years old and looks as good as it did on its day of inauguration, September 17, 1954.

This is of course because the Berlin Senate prescribed a program of rejuvenation for the imposing building, renovating it in time for the anniversary. After all, the AGB is no ordinary library. It is a gift from the Americans to the people of Berlin and recalls a time when West Berlin was an island and could only survive because the United States guarded half of the city against Soviet attack. So America facilitated Berliners' access to knowledge by financing a new building that was Germany's first public library, accessible to anyone who wanted to borrow a book.

The American concept of the public library was something new and special due to its open attitude to visitors, who were given direct access to book collections, most of which are displayed on open shelves. Stocks not accessible to visitors are kept in the basement beneath public areas. There were guided tours of the building to mark the anniversary, with the chance to visit areas normally off limits to visitors. Staff give proud assurances that any orders for books stored in the basement can be processed in just a few minutes.

The American Memorial Library, designed by architects Willy Kreuer and Fritz Bornemann, is still viewed to this day as an iconic library building. Its construction was financed by an US donation to the city of Berlin. The decision to use these funds to build a public library was made by Berlin politicians under the leadership of the Mayor at the time, Ernst Reuter.

Right from the very first day, the AGB was a magnet for people looking to keep their gray matter fit and healthy. In the 1980s, increasing numbers of visitors and books gave the authorities cause to consider building an extension. But the fall of the Wall and the high cost of Berlin's reunification initially prevented the realization of this vision.

Now the Berlin Senate plans to dust off the project and finally get to work on it. An extension would be wonderful, the site directly alongside the library was earmarked for this from the outset. Then the AGB might be ready in time for it to celebrate its 75th birthday on the library's original site.

■

Dr. Rainer Bieling is editorial director of DER HAUPTSTADTBRIEF (Letter from the Capital), a Berlin based political and economic affairs magazine.

CLB, FOTO VINCENT MOSCH

60 years of the American Memorial Library: The birthday cake being cut by Thomas Miller, Cornelia Yzer, Volker Heller (from left to right)

Adnan

Restaurant Bar

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Sir Simon Rattle, born 1955 in Liverpool, became Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Berlin Philharmonic in 2002. He is also famous for his innovative concert programs aimed at young people

(RATTLE) HIROYUKI ITO - GETTY IMAGES, (HOFFMANN) PICTURE ALLIANCE

CLASSIC DIPLOMACY

The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra may be the city's most powerful ambassador

By Martin Hoffmann, General Manager of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

Our Philharmonie is the concert hall where the Berliner Philharmonic Orchestra plays – and much more. An icon of urban architecture designed and built by Hans Scharoun 50 years ago. One of Berlin's true gems and the home of our orchestra.

The building has always been a cultural center, even when it was dedicated in 1963 and located directly next to the Wall. In no man's land, almost in the death zone! Now, 25 years after the Wall came down, the Philharmonie is in the middle of Berlin, in an area that has also become the capital's topographical center.

What makes Berlin's classical sound outstanding is mostly the fact that we also have the Konzerthaus Berlin only a few hundred meters away at Gendarmenmarkt Square. The Komische Oper Berlin is only a few hundred meters further along on Behrensstrasse and the Berlin State Opera on Unter den Linden is just another short walk away. If I want to go to a concert or see an opera, I don't have to travel through the city for hours as I would in London or New York. When added together, the Berliner Philharmonie and the Konzerthaus host around 800 concerts every year! You will not find this degree of compactness, availability, accessibility and quality anywhere else in the world. Through the new concert forms we have developed with Sir Simon Rattle, our music director, we have created a wonderful trend. Around 2,000 people always come to our late-night concerts with jazz or contemporary music at 10 p.m. And most of them are between 18 and 35 years old!

Martin Hoffmann.

On September 12, 1989, Daniel Barenboim, who is now the music director of the State Opera, directed a very special, spontaneously organized concert here: free admission for Berlin residents from both parts of the city. It was the experience of a lifetime for everyone who was able to attend. The fall of the Wall had a major impact on the orchestra. This was one of the craziest, most moving concerts in living memory. Barenboim, all of our musicians – and those from the East – still talk about how wonderful it was. Now, in the fall of 2014, we are playing a "Fall of the Wall" tour in the cities that played a major role in the reunification process. On November 11, we are performing in Halle, on the 12th in Warsaw, on the 14th in Budapest and on the 15th in Prague.

Depending on the location, we will be performing the work of a German, Polish, Hungarian or Bohemian composer (Lachenmann, Szymanowski, Kurtág and Martinů) plus Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. This is a very special form of concert tour for us because we are not just cultural ambassadors from Berlin and Germany, but political ones as well.

However, we are not fortunate enough to enjoy diplomatic immunity… something we unfortunately experienced in a very tedious way when we traveled to the US. It was because of the ivory and tortoise shell used in our string instruments and bows! Due to a resolution of the Washington Convention, anything that was once part of an endangered animal cant be imported into the country. So customs confiscated our instruments. Of course we hope that with enough German-American friendship, we can find a diplomatic solution to this problem. ■

BEYOND CURRYWURST

For the last 25 years Hans-Peter Wodarz has unified Berlin at his table. His permanent special: an extravaganza | *By Philipp v. Studnitz*

As a rule, a famous chef never says anything good about another chef. But Alfons Schuhbeck, a highly committed cook, recently said this to me of no-less-committed Hans-Peter Wodarz – the most dynamic star chef of the 1970s and the pioneer and show master of Restaurant Theater im Spiegelzelt: "Hans-Peter is Germany's greatest gastronomic visionary." Wodarz had his two legendary restaurants, "Die Ente im Lehel" (Munich) and "Die Ente vom Lehel" (Wiesbaden), to thank for his top reputation and this kind of praise. He also has an innate urge to convey pleasure and gustatory enjoyment in the most innovative way possible – and delivers masterful results!

For the past seven years, Wodarz, a native of Wiesbaden, has accompanied Palazzo, his first-class traveling circus in which guests eat gourmet meals while they are laughing and being amazed, on its circuit. He also brings his proven mix of acts to Berlin. While the audience is enjoying an elaborate four-course meal, acrobats, comedians, musicians and jugglers present their art. This maelstrom of activity adds up to a unique, shimmering evening – an unforgettable experience. This year – in which the fall of the Wall celebrates its 25th anniversary – you will find Wodarz's glittering tent at Berlin's East Side Gallery. The première is on November 6.

German reunification plays a major role in Wodarz's professional biography. Full of proud sentimentality, he glows as he tells about a 30-minute New Year's Eve broadcast from the Babelsberg studios in former East Berlin that he whipped up for ZDF in 1989. He was able to achieve the impossible: that night, Marlene Dietrich called the studio from Paris, where she was living in exile. In her distinctive, impressive voice, she wished her homeland a happy New Year and good luck for the future. "I am still moved when I think about how Marlene even shared a memory from 1929, when she was filming 'The Blue Angel' in Babelsberg with Sternberg, with the dumbfounded audience," said Wodarz.

Six months later, Wodarz was the creative mind behind a Berlin event with the motto: "Culinary East Meets Culinary West." DFF and ZDF produced their first joint entertainment show, which was broadcast from Friedrichstadt-Palast (Erich Honecker's bourgeois-frivolous version of Carnegie Hall). "Good Evening, Germany!" – and then East and West German star chefs cooked for a "Culinary Evening" in the Hotel InterContinental (the favorite hotel of all US presidents who visit the West). It was an event at which "star chefs from the Federal Republic and West Berlin present their culinary common ground together with their colleagues from the GDR's top restaurants." What wonderful, state-funded politics of language! Among the chefs involved were great names such as Heinz Winkler, Gerd Käfer, and Siegfried Rockendorf – of course Wodarz cooked as well. Duck liver in aspic with kohlrabi rounds on apple sauce. His standards have always been light-years away from the common tricks with currywurst that still plague Germany's capital. He is a visionary who knows it takes maximum performance to make the "joie-de-vivre experience" even more intense. ■

PALAZZO PRODUKTIONEN GMBH

Hans-Peter Wodarz (top left), born 1948 in Wiesbaden, is one of the finest German chefs. Since 2007 he has presented "Palazzo" – a mix of dining and cabaret in four German cities.

Art defies a puzzling disease

Proceeds from a gala auction are used to help people with ALS

For the past four years, prominent guests from politics and business have gathered together on one evening in September at a gala event in Berlin. They've come to an art auction – a very special auction whose proceeds go to the "Hilfe für ALS-kranke Menschen" (Aid for People with ALS) initiative. This initiative with its patron, former chancellor Gerhard Schröder, aims to generate a steady flow of funds every year that go directly to Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin without any deductions for administrative expenses.

CHRISTIAN KRUPPA, MATZE RATH

With charm and professionalism, Christiane Gräfin zu Rantzau (left) ran the auction and inspired the guests to outbid each other. The result was another significant sum: 370,300 euros to benefit people with ALS. Right: The patron of the "Hilfe für ALS-kranke Menschen" initiative, former chancellor Gerhard Schröder, encouraged the guests at the gala to participate in the auction.

This globally recognized university clinic has set up an ALS outpatient clinic, making it a leader in caring for people with ALS. In summer 2014, the wider public was made aware of ALS, a disease of the nerve cells, for the first time. A wave of sympathy went around the world as celebrities in the US and Europe publicized the Ice Bucket Challenge, encouraging people to donate money to research this puzzling disease. Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a degenerative disease of the motor neurons. Right now, there is no cure for ALS. Because it affects only a comparatively small group of patients (in Germany, around 8,000 people), the major drug manufacturers do not invest much money in researching and finding a cure for ALS. This is why the "Hilfe für ALS-kranke Menschen" initiative earmarks the proceeds from its annual auction to supporting the work of the ALS outpatient clinic at Charité.

The 2014 auction took place on September 22 in the Schlosshotel im Grunewald. Eighty guests attended the gala event. Patron Gerhard Schröder emphasized once again: "The fact that so many artists donated the works of art that you are able to purchase at this auction makes it possible to use the evening's proceeds to provide support for people with ALS in the first place." The group of artists who donated their paintings and sculptures to the auction includes Markus Lüpertz, Anthony Cragg and Jaume Plensa. With charm and professionalism, Christiane Gräfin zu Rantzau ran the auction. The head of the Hamburg and Berlin offices of Christie's, the venerable London auction house, skillfully coaxed guests to outbid each other. As a result a significant sum – 370,300 euros – was collected to benefit "Hilfe für ALS-kranke Menschen" for the fourth year in a row. The entire amount will be made available to Charité to enable its ALS outpatient clinic to continue caring for patients. ■

PR

A unique public-private partnership over the past 20 years, Berlin Partner collaborates with the Berlin State Senate and over 200 companies dedicated to promoting their city. Celebrating on September 6, 2014 (from left to right) Berlin Partner Managing Director Dr. Stefan Franzke, Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit, Paris Deputy Mayor Jean-Louis Missika, Berlin Senator Cornelia Yzer, Councilmember Tom LaBonge (Los Angeles), Berlin Partner Managing Director Melanie Bähr and Partner for Berlin Chairman of the Board Dr. Holger Hatje.

"We are all friends and family!"

From sister city Los Angeles to the celebration in Berlin: Councilor Tom LaBonge has fallen in love with the capital city

This love story came about thanks to immigrants from Berlin who continued their career in Hollywood after 1933 – but it doesn't play out on the silver screen. The expats encouraged the mayor of Los Angeles, their new city, to initiate a city partnership with the western part of their old hometown. On June 27, 1967, during the 17th Berlin International Film Festival, Berlin's mayor Heinrich Albertz and the mayor of Los Angeles, Sam Yorty, made it official.

The relationship between the two major cities has been so close and warm since then that 47 years later, Tom LaBonge, council member of the City of Los Angeles' 4th district and chairman of Sister Cities, can say: "Germany holds a special place in our hearts as Berlin and Los Angeles are sister cities. Los Angeles has been fortunate to have had a sister city relationship with Berlin since 1967 that allows us to work on great exchange programs and with great leaders. From city to city, from country to country, we are all friends and family!" ■

Siemens: a start-up in Berlin

The pride of the company: In Berlin, where it was founded, Siemens manufactures the world's most efficient gas turbines.

When Werner Siemens and his partner, mechanic Johann Georg Halske, founded their company in 1847 with ten employees in a small rear-courtyard workshop in Berlin, it's unlikely that anyone could have guessed the firm would become a global corporation that today has a workforce of some 350,000 employees in 190 countries.

Siemens in Berlin, with about 12,000 employees, is now the largest industrial company in the German capital. An entire district of town – Siemensstadt – is named for the firm. Berlin is home to five Siemens AG production and development sites and two factories. Nowhere else in the world does Siemens have such a concentration of production sites. In fiscal 2013, they produced goods and services worth a total of EUR 2.6 billion. During the same period, the company made purchases worth some EUR 650 million from small and medium businesses in the region.

Berlin exports switchgear for energy distribution, engines to drive ships, and protective equipment for power grids to customers all over the world. One especially proud achievement: here at its founding location in Berlin, Siemens makes the world's most energy-efficient gas turbines for environmentally friendly power generation.

Siemens technology is used all over town. The traffic information base at the former Tempelhof Airport constantly gathers information about current traffic conditions. Smart energy-efficiency solutions, working with the latest automation and security systems, provide forward-looking equipment for many of the city's public and private buildings. Traffic lights are controlled to keep traffic flowing as well as possible through the metropolis. Whether with traffic control equipment in the Tiergarten tunnel, or electronic signal towers for the main train station: Siemens helps make sure that Berliners and their visitors can get anywhere they're going, safely and quickly.

The company invests heavily every year to reinforce its Berlin locations. Out of a total of EUR 320 million spent in fiscal 2013, EUR 130 million was for production facilities and buildings, and EUR 30 million was for basic and continuing training. The largest share, EUR 160 million, was spent on research and development. And it has paid off. Because every year, some 300 inventions are reported at Siemens in Berlin. And Siemens in Berlin also plays a leading role as a training site. Some 1,300 young people learn a profession here every year. Half of them are trained for other companies, who thus benefit from the thorough, up-to-date training that Siemens offers.

LET'S TALK ABOUT STYLE, MR. JÓOP

WOLFGANG STAHR/LAIF

I'm not your perfect puzzle

A message fashioned *by Wolfgang Joop*

In the 1980s Berlin style came into its own with Nina Hagen. She sprung up not just as a pop artist. She didn't jump over the Berlin Wall from the GDR via West German suburbia as a wallflower, she appeared as the queen of the fauns. She brought something totally new to Berlin's post-glam punk. We were all completely fascinated with this figure, who talked about Baltic beaches with backstreet stroppiness, with her incredible voice and her incredible outfits – West Germany had never seen anything like her. And that image of here went out to New York and everywhere.

Around that time, the movie "Christiane F." came out. The world noticed that it told the story of a very particular kind of Berlin – its lostness fitted perfectly into the "no future" punk era, which then segued into the postmodern, where the unfinished, the raw, the things that don't fit and exaggeration are all celebrated. The movie turned the "modern" on its head. Before it, we had stylistic rules about clothes and fashion, for architecture, homes and lifestyle. There was a visible glitterati in London, Germany and in New York, but at the same time, the underground came out of the big cities,

with a real compulsion to change all the aesthetic rules.

And Berlin with its exotic, closed-in, insular situation, with no social or police control, was at the forefront of it all! And still, every district, every neighborhood was completely different. Back then in the 80s, when I went to visit the old fashion legend Uli Richter, or Bettina Lauer, a former supermodel in Kladow, I used to think; this is like going to Switzerland!

Typical of Berlin's unique style in those days was the Dschungel (Jungle), a club in Nürnberger Strasse. It too was a drawcard for artists from all over the world because they found something here which didn't exist anywhere else. People lived in a strange, voluntary, consistent kind of freedom. And often you felt that freedom all the more acutely because of the permanent and (back then) immediate threat of the Cold War. The city had a big fashion scene in those days, it was called "offline." It was the powerful, moving promise of a new German language of form, which had absolutely nothing to do with the old one.

Part of the style of Berlin for me is also what I saw in East Germany when I went on family visits to Potsdam as a small boy. For instance, the Russian soldiers in their washed-out, greeny-gray uniforms. These silent, young men with the belt over their baggy uniforms were not just sexy, they really had something mystical.

And in Potsdam I always saw a lot of the nobility, who had nothing left and really did walk around in clothes from before the war. Then there was Frau Müller with the red pageboy cut like Louise Brooks. She wore

DPA (2)

These shots illustrate fashion as designed by someone with a „Prussian-Hamburg mix of aesthetics and business sense".

Page 30: Wolfgang Joop with his late Dalmatian "Gretchen". The dog had one blue eye and one brown eye – like David Bowie (see page 14).

long, dropped-waist dresses and these Mary Jane pumps with one clasp. They were scenes like you'd find in the paintings of Christian Schad and George Grosz.

What has remained is a typical Berlin quality – here there is an ability to style oneself as in no other city, to make sparkles out of shit. But at the moment that's only true of individuals, not the whole city. The sea change feeling of the fall of the Wall was, up until a few years ago, that the whole world revolves around Berlin. But it doesn't do that now.

That's why it's no longer enough to come from Berlin. The real expression of our times is sort of missing here right now.

Where is the edge? The one-off? The incomparable?

Sadly it is sometimes palpable how so many promises haven't been fulfilled.

My Prussian-Hamburg mix of aesthetics and business sense – is rather missing in Berlin, and that's too bad.

The latest collection of my Wunderkind label – created in Potsdam and presented in Paris – has the motto of "New Romanticism." Part of that is my form of criticism of today's synthetic, Matrix image of human beings. One pattern I drew is composed of an eye, a nose, a mouth, a mustache and a rose – along with the sentence: "I'll never be your perfect puzzle." That is my message, and hopefully people will get it.

■

Wolfgang Joop was born 1944 in Potsdam. Every season he takes part in Paris Fashion Week with his label "Wunderkind".

What I learned from Nancy Reagan

Star hairdresser Udo Walz has been styling the hair of Berlin celebrities and famous visitors to the city for 50 years. The man's a cut above the rest!

As told to Philipp v. Studnitz

When I moved to Berlin in 1964, I ignored the Wall. At the time I worked in a salon near the KaDeWe department store on Nürnberger Strasse. But to look at the Wall, that didn't interest me. Several months later my sister Christl came to visit. She really wanted to see this awful barrier. So we drove to Brandenburg Gate and climbed up onto one of those high viewing platforms that they had put up in West Berlin. But I was disappointed by what I could see of the East of the city. There wasn't a single person on the streets!

On one occasion, I did set out with the intention of visiting East Berlin. At the border control post an East German police officer asked me about my views on Socialism. I answered him honestly, saying: "I don't know anything about it." He promptly pressed a book into my hand, saying I should read it. I was then shown in to a small room where I had to spend an hour doing just that. It put me off going to the GDR. I didn't ever go while it existed.

Richard Burt, US ambassador to Germany from 1985 to 1989, always wanted to take me with him because of course, as a diplomat, he wasn't checked. I still didn't go. Burt's wife Gahl liked buying pictures in the East, old Berlin scenes. Incidentally I thank her for bringing me a great client during that time: Nancy Reagan. I did her hair during her husband President Ronald Reagan's visit to Berlin, when he stood at the Wall in June 1987 and uttered the famous line: "Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

First Lady Nancy Reagan in Berlin on June 12,1987.

During my encounter with Nancy Reagan, I learned something from her. How to convey to a fellow human being in small-talk situations the sense that they are being taken totally seriously. By concentrating on him, listening to him, meeting his eyes and talking less yourself!

When Germany was divided I even had clients from the East coming to me for a haircut. Walter Felsenstein, for example, legendary founder of the Komische Oper and his entire family. Or the unforgetable comic actress Helga Hahnemann.

On the night the Wall fell I was in Charlottenburg having dinner with my banker and the telephone rang: "There are dozens of Trabis on the Ku'damm!" said the excited voice on the end of the line. The banker thought it was a joke and hung up. And when I made my way home – to Fasanenstrasse – I realized what had happened. I met a young couple on the Ku'damm and immediately took them to dinner at Fuffi. All they wanted to do was drink Coca-Cola and smoke! And because they didn't want to return to the eastern part of the city that night, I said they could stay in my guest apartment.

After the fall of the Wall, I did make a day trip every Sunday to the East, to take a look for myself.

Later my American clients – film stars like Julianne Moore, Harrison Ford, Gwyneth Paltrow and Jodie Foster – always wanted to know where the Wall used to stand. When Gwyneth Paltrow saw the section of the Wall that was the East Side Gallery, she said it looked as though people could have just climbed over it!

Today, in 2014, Berlin is uniquely fascinating because it's on the way to becoming a metropolis. Of course it's still not comparable with New York or Paris because after decades of division, the individual parts of the city still need to coalesce. One thing that already gives it a very cosmopolitan feel is the tolerance of the locals. People here are now used to seeing people from all over. ■

ULLSTEIN, KARSTEN THIELKER/FOTOFINDER

Udo Walz in his flagship salon in Berlin Charlottenburg. He was born on July 28, 1944 in Waiblingen (Baden-Württemberg). He's been working as a hairdresser in Berlin since 1963 – and runs numerous salons in a number of locations, including Berlin of course, but also on Mallorca and the cruise liner MS Deutschland.