

'Parvenu Polis' and 'Human Workshop': Reflections on the History of the City of Berlin

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Berlin is a comparative newcomer among the great European cities. It lacks the tradition of Roman history which distinguishes many towns in the west and south of Germany, as well as the Christian tradition of the early and high middle ages. The history of Berlin begins in the late twelfth century as an integral aspect of the great eastern migration of the medieval age—the establishment of German domination in the territories east of the Elbe which were inhabited by the Slavs. In contrast to the widely held legend, Berlin was never a fishing village; from the outset, it was a trading centre and a settlement with some degree of autonomy and many of the rights which larger cities of the period enjoyed. Its development was in no way striking, and for centuries the history of Berlin was of little more than regional interest. Its economically favourable situation on the Spree crossing, at the intersection of old trade routes and waterways, promoted the prosperity and political self-confidence of the citizens. Nevertheless, the ruler of Brandenburg was able to enforce his rights as *Stadtherr* even against the will of the council; from the time the old castle was built in the mid-fifteenth century, Berlin was the residence of the Elector of Brandenburg. Attempts to establish an independent self-governing city (*Bürgerstadt*) were thereby finally extinguished. Until 1918, the fate of the city was closely linked with the fortunes of the House of Hohenzollern and the political system over which it ruled—first the Electorate of Brandenburg, then the Kingdom of Prussia, and finally the German Empire of 1871. Nevertheless, the history of Berlin since the eighteenth century is also the history of the city's emancipation from the tutelage of the princely house and its government. Berlin remained the residence city until the end of the monarchy, but it grew more and more into a city of the middle classes and, of course, into a city of the working classes. It became a modern great city able to stand on its own feet, and relying more on industry than on the royal household for its blossoming economic strength.

The history of the city never played a major part in moulding the consciousness of Berliners in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mainly owing to the fact that it was characterized by upheavals and disruptions rather than by continuity. In the first half of the seventeenth century, during the Thirty Years War, Berlin suffered such a dramatic decline (the population

was halved to around 6,000) that it had to be almost completely rebuilt afterwards. More distinct links with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be traced only from around this time. Even after the Thirty Years War, a number of drastic changes continued to influence Berlin. By the middle of the nineteenth century at the latest, a quite fundamental transformation of the city began under the influence of industrialization, the growth of the power of Prussia, and finally the foundation of the German national state. The cumulative impact of these developments was so great that, after only a few decades, it seemed fair to ask whether the old city still existed at all. Berlin grew ever larger and the face of the city changed constantly; new buildings, streets, and districts were constructed, and older ones destroyed without hesitation in order to make way for them. Shortly after the foundation of the Reich in 1871, a Swiss writer commented on the conspicuous shortage of historical artefacts in the face of the city: 'What Berlin reveals to its visitors is modern, is brand new.'

The tempo of change actually increased during the Imperial period, and also after 1918. The city had contained 400,000 inhabitants in 1848, but its population passed the million mark in 1877 and reached 2 million in 1905. In 1920, the population rose to 3.8 million as a result of the incorporation of the entire 'Greater Berlin' area, including the large and previously independent cities of Charlottenburg, Lichtenberg, Neukölln, Schöneberg, Wilmersdorf, and Spandau. Finally in 1939, before the outbreak of the Second World War, the city numbered 4.3 million inhabitants. The change in the territories incorporated in 1920 was even more radical than in the old city itself. In about 1870, only Charlottenburg and Spandau had been cities in their own right, and even these had no more than 20,000 inhabitants at most; otherwise, the region contained little apart from villages and estates. This strongly agricultural area was subjected to a dramatic process of urbanization within a very short space of time, especially after 1890. In only four decades, the 100,000 inhabitants of 1870 had become 1.7 million. Figures of this kind make it easy to understand why people frequently spoke of the 'American' growth of Berlin and its surrounding countryside. Contemporaries compared Berlin with New York, and even more often with Chicago. Mark Twain was only one of a number of observers to refer to the 'European Chicago' during a visit to the city at the turn of the century.

Comparisons of this kind revealed a genuine public fascination with the explosive growth of Berlin, but also gave an impression of the 'lack of history' of the expanding city. There is some doubt whether Karl Scheffler, the conservative critic of Berlin, was right in 1910 when he claimed that Wilhelmine Berlin was 'certainly the capital city of all modern ugliness'. However, there can be no disputing the judgement of a city and architectural historian of the 1920s, to the effect that the city was 'everywhere lacking in characteristic and valuable records of its history'. Ceaseless expansion meant that Berlin was virtually devouring its own history. Apart from a few

buildings and streets in the centre, it was often only possible to follow the traces of the past for a few years, or at most a few decades. Scheffler claimed with resignation that the old Berlin had been almost completely obliterated, and spoke of the 'tragedy' of the city which was 'condemned to be continually becoming and never to be'. In a similar way, but more positively, Ernst Bloch wrote that Berlin was 'an entity which is, so to speak, always only becoming and never is'. He noted with a certain critical admiration that 'in Berlin it is always foundation time [*Gründerzeit*]'.

Under these conditions, it was very difficult for Berliners to develop a positive view of the history of their city. From Ranke and Mommsen to Otto Hintze and Friedrich Meinecke, there were many eminent historians in Berlin, but none of them made the history of the city a central feature of his academic work. The Berliners had little awareness of tradition, turning instead to the present and the future. Where historical consciousness did exist, Prussian and German history took precedence over local history. Berlin was so much a capital city that its own specific history merged into general history—or, more accurately, disappeared behind it. There were few social groups able to act as 'carriers' of local tradition; in comparison to other European capitals such as Vienna, the nobility played an astonishingly small role in the development of the city, whilst the number of old-established bourgeois families was very small. In late nineteenth-century Berlin, very few families were linked with the fate of the city in the general consciousness. Those that did exist were often Jewish. Berlin Jews had only been able to participate in the life of the city for a few generations, since the beginning of emancipation, but had thereafter worked for the public weal with great commitment. 'In fact the bourgeois patriciate, in so far as it exists at all, has come mainly from Jewry,' wrote Karl Scheffler. He continued: 'Nowhere have they [the Jews] become so much the representatives of bourgeois family culture as in Berlin.'

There was another important factor behind the lack of interest in the history of the city. Since the end of the eighteenth century it had been the people and not the buildings of Berlin, the social and intellectual circles rather than the streets and districts, which had been the main attraction for outsiders and natives alike. Heinrich Heine made a famous remark on this subject in 1828: 'Berlin is not a city at all; Berlin simply provides the location where a host of people, and among them many people of intellect, gather, to whom the location is a matter of complete indifference.' Only a year later Alexander von Humboldt wrote a letter to his brother Wilhelm, describing a barren stretch of countryside between Riga and Königsberg: 'If Schinkel sorted out some bricks there, if a Monday Club [one of the best-known Berlin Rationalist Societies], if a circle of art-loving Jewish demoiselles and an Academy were set up on those sand steppes [which are] overgrown with scrub, then nothing would be lacking for the building of a new Berlin.' The Berlin prized by Heine and Humboldt, and by many others then and later, was not the city of

bricks and mortar but a place of intellectual encounter which was constantly replenished by means of discussion, unforced social life and by common artistic and academic endeavour. This Berlin was an idea, but—despite every setback and disappointment—it was also a reality, at least during the 150 years between the Enlightenment and National Socialism.

Berlin has always been described by its detractors as a particularly ugly city. Even its admirers have rarely commented on its beauty. Nevertheless, there have been at least two periods in the city's history which possess an undisputed architectural quality: the Schinkel era and the 1920s. Along with the slightly older Brandenburg Gate, the playhouse, the school of architecture, the Old Museum and the New Guardhouse (Neue Wache) are buildings which represent a distinct 'Berlin style' of the first half of the nineteenth century. It was greatly influenced by the classicism of Schinkel and his pupils. A century later, Berlin became a 'world city' (*Weltstadt*) and was much admired as the home of modern big city architecture. After the turn of the century there was a series of major building projects in the city. These included the great warehouses of Wertheim, Tietz, Jandorf (KaDeWe), and Karstadt; the publishing and printing houses of Mosse, Ullstein, and Scherl; the industrial buildings of AEG and the urban high-capacity power stations; the office and administrative buildings of the major insurance firms and the industrial associations; and places of entertainment such as the 'cinema palaces' and the 'House of Radio' (*Haus des Rundfunks*). Fortunately for the city, a large number of skilled architects were available for these projects. The brothers Taut and Luckhardt, Alfred Messel and Peter Behrens, Erich Mendelsohn, Hans Poelzig, Emil Fahrenkamp, Walter Gropius, Hans Scharoun, and many more—in the 'golden years' of big city architecture, these men created buildings to change the face of Berlin. Their fame and influence extended well beyond the confines of the city itself.

However, the modern 'world city' was only a part of Berlin. A 'green' Berlin had arisen alongside it, whilst the 'dark' Berlin of the great working-class districts continued to exist. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the city had sought to deal with its explosive population growth by building ever higher and more densely. The great housing blocks with their many inner courtyards and small, dark, and overcrowded dwellings were created. In Imperial Germany, Berlin became the 'greatest tenement city' (*Mietskaserne*) in the world and even during the Weimar Republic—despite major efforts in house-building and the construction of model settlements from Britz to Siemensstadt—conditions were not greatly changed. In Berlin, the social question was always primarily a housing question.

The old part of the city had possessed very few open spaces, and only with the establishment of Greater Berlin in 1920 did 'green' Berlin come into being. The Havel, the Grunewald and the Müggelsee were now part of the city. With their residential districts and country houses, their lakes and pine-woods, the city now stretched far into the countryside of the March. A new

quality of Berlin life could now be discovered in the residential district of Grunewald, where Walther Rathenau and the publisher Samuel Fischer had their homes; there, nature existed alongside the pulsating life of the big city. Even today, the visitors who regard Berlin as a beautiful city are almost always referring to 'green' Berlin. They are talking about the Havel rather than the *Rathaus* Schöneberg, about Glienecke Castle and Peacock Island rather than the Kurfürstendamm and Tauentzien Street.

As regards the changes in the social structure of the city, there is space to mention only a few factors. Even then, the significance of these factors in establishing general trends may still be open to dispute. It is reasonable to begin with the role of the military in the history of Berlin. In the eighteenth century, an average of 20–25 per cent of inhabitants belonged to the garrison, and it was no exaggeration to describe Berlin as a soldiers' city. The situation changed after the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the political and social significance of the military continued to be very great. Serving officers enjoyed enormous social prestige, and a commission as a reserve officer was greatly in demand among the bourgeoisie. Even ministers and senior civil servants wore military uniform to festive occasions. In fact, the 'people in arms' was seen by many Berliners as the model for a national 'people's community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*) transcending the classes. Particularly in the Wilhelmine period, a high degree of militarization in politics and society was characteristic of the city.

Despite the political and social significance of the military, from the end of the eighteenth century Berlin was becoming an industrial and business city. There was a financially powerful, economically influential bourgeoisie, and, with the Industrial Revolution, Berlin also became a city of the industrial proletariat. In the mid-1920s, well over half of all employed people were manual workers of both sexes, while an additional quarter already belonged to the new group of white-collar workers. In the course of the nineteenth century, Berlin became the greatest industrial city on the European continent. It was the home of leading firms in the textile industry, engineering, the electrical industry (Berlin was actually referred to as 'electropolis'), the chemical industry, and, later, the car and aircraft industries. At the same time the city was becoming a centre of banking and insurance, of wholesale trade and of the great trade associations—at the heart of national and international transport systems. There were several reasons for the economic strength of the city: it was based on the centralizing tendencies within the German Reich, which benefited the capital most of all; and it was also a result of the especially close proximity of capital, science, and industry in the city, of the unusual connection between economic concentration, university and non-university research, and a qualified work-force.

Industry was the most important precondition for the sustained growth of population in Berlin. It offered the prospect of work, chances of promotion and possibilities for profit. Yet it was mainly the immigrants—the hordes of

young workers of both sexes, the technicians and scientists, the owners of capital and of firms—who enabled Berlin to become a leading centre of industry and commerce. They came mainly from the Prussian provinces east of the Elbe, but also from the Rhineland, from south and central Germany, and eventually from the Polish territories, from Russia, and from Austria-Hungary. At the beginning of the 1920s, around 200,000 Russians alone were living in Berlin. The city was becoming a ‘melting-pot’ for the German nation, but also for other ethnic, religious, and cultural groups of new Berliners. The identity of the modern Berliner was a result of this process of ‘melting-down’: he was created by the social world of the city rather than the region, and was a city-dweller rather than a Brandenburger. His mentality, his ways of thinking and behaving, were determined by the baffling variety of the metropolis, by the rapid change in the life of the individual and the city. The modern Berliner was the creation of a new tempo of life.

With some justice, it has been argued that the Berliners of Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic were a product of ‘inner urbanization’: of the translation of urban or metropolitan social structures into everyday modes of conduct. The Berliners were *homines novi*, without obvious links with tradition, open to change and ready to meet new challenges. Walther Rathenau described the city critically as a *Parvenüpolis*. It was, he wrote, ‘the parvenu of big cities and the big city of the parvenus’. In fact, Berlin was ‘new’ and made special demands on its inhabitants. People worked hard, and those who were successful were inclined to show it. This was true of the *nouveau riche* middle classes above all, but to a certain extent the model Berliner, the new creation of the city, was himself a parvenu. He therefore tended to trust in achievement rather than tradition, tackled things ‘unconditionally’, trusted his own judgement and believed in success.

The development which set Berlin apart, and not only from the towns and villages nearby, had begun in the seventeenth century. The re-establishment of the city was greatly influenced by population groups who were unlike the native population ethnically, in religion, in linguistic-cultural terms, and also economically. The most important of these were the Protestants who had been driven out of France (especially after 1685) and the Jews, who had been accepted back in 1671 after a long period of exclusion; but there were also people from Bohemia, the Palatinate, and Switzerland. For a short time, around 1700, French was the mother-tongue of every fifth Berliner. The city owed a great deal to the Huguenots, both economically and culturally. The sciences and the luxury goods trade flourished, and new agricultural products and methods were introduced. Most important of all, Berlin became more civilized, more open to the world, more lively.

In the long term, the contribution of the Jews to the development of the city was even more important. There was no other city in Germany where Jewish life was so rich and in which Jews played such a great role as businessmen, as intellectuals, and as artists. Today, of course, Berlin’s

position in the history of the Jews is as the centre for the planning and organization of genocide; the city was the centre of a unique crime. But it should not be forgotten that Berlin is part of modern Jewish history in another, more positive way. It was here that Moses Mendelssohn and his friends established the foundations of modern Jewry, that is, of Jewish existence within a non-Jewish society. Here too, under the influence of Mendelssohn and in the decade before the French Revolution of 1789, the political programme of emancipation was formulated, relating to the integration of the Jews, with equal rights, in modern society. Berlin was the starting-point for discussions on emancipation and emancipation politics in Europe. For 150 years, moreover, it was the centre of hope for all those who believed in the possibility of a 'German-Jewish symbiosis'.

With the 'Berlin Movement' around Stoecker and Treitschke in the 1870s, Berlin also played a prominent part in the emergence of modern anti-Semitism. Until 1933, however, the history of the Berlin Jews was one of success, despite anti-Semitism and undoubted social discrimination. It was a history of astonishing creative achievement in the arts and sciences, a history of material success (though there was also a Jewish proletariat, composed mainly of immigrants from eastern Europe, during the Weimar Republic), and a history of great social achievements and patronage of the cultural and social institutions of the city. The Jewish proportion of the population never exceeded 5 per cent, but Jewish citizens played an outstanding role in developing the city during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unfortunately, the history of Jewish Berlin between Mendelssohn and Nazi dictatorship has yet to be written, and much work remains to be done even to prepare the way.

In this connection, another comment needs to be made. As a result of commendable efforts to combat xenophobic tendencies in today's Germany, there have been many warnings about anti-Semitism and the fate of the Jews under Nazism. These warnings are well-intended, but the example of Berlin clearly shows that much of the argument is based on false premisses: the Berlin Jews of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were not aliens, and certainly not foreigners. A study of the history of Berlin can teach us that social heterogeneity, pluralism of different social and cultural groups, and tolerance of minorities are among the prerequisites of a living and productive big city. These conditions existed in Berlin before 1933, partly as everyday practice and partly as a conscious conviction. When the Nazis began their violent attempts to enforce both political uniformity and social homogeneity, they were destroying the most important foundations of the life of the city.

Since the subject of politics has been raised, it is sensible to make some observations on the basic political structure of the city. Until 1918 official Berlin—the governments and the state administration—was conservative-authoritarian, nationalist, and, in the Wilhelmine period, imperialist. Power relationships were clear-cut. Not even the left liberal bourgeoisie—let alone the

socialist workers' movement—had the chance to participate in state power in this system. Yet if one examines the majority opinion of the Berlin population as expressed in elections, the picture is very different: the city of Berlin, or at least its great majority, was always to the left of the Reich government and certainly of the Prussian government. Bismarck constantly complained about the unchallenged majority of left liberals in the city council and, for a time, even considered (though not entirely seriously) transferring the Reichstag elsewhere in order to remove it from the political influences of Berlin. His successors thought they were being opposed by a thoroughly 'red Berlin', the centre of the German and even the European workers' movement; in the Reichstag elections of 1912, for example, no less than 75 per cent of all the votes in the city were cast for Social Democratic candidates. This majority could achieve little in terms of municipal politics, since the three-tier voting system which continued until the end of the Empire placed the Social Democrats at an extreme disadvantage. To the credit of the Berliners, however, it can be said that their conduct as voters up to 1933 gave no encouragement to a 'seizure of power' by the National Socialists. On average, the Nazis received 20 per cent fewer votes in the city than their average in the rest of the Reich: in November 1932, the Nazi Party received 33 per cent of votes throughout the Reich; in Berlin, where the communists (31 per cent) and the Social Democrats (23 per cent) were especially strong, they received only 26 per cent.

The national and international influence of Berlin was due primarily to its arts and sciences. Its reputation began with the bourgeois Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, when Berlin became a centre of intellectual life with Lessing and Mendelssohn, with Friedrich Nicolai and a large number of enlightened and reformist civil servants. At that stage, according to Madame de Staël after her visit to the city in 1804, it was 'the true capital of the new, enlightened Germany'. In 1800, the practical reforming spirit of the Enlightenment and the new spirit of Romanticism made their great breakthrough in Berlin. Even before the founding of the university, the city was much admired as a centre of intellectual life in Germany. Schleiermacher, Fichte, and August Wilhelm Schlegel gave their great lectures on religion, philosophy, and literature to a large, educated audience in Berlin. There were also exciting performances in the theatre and the opera at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Among the writers gathered in the city were Kleist, Novalis, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Chamisso. In 1810, Wilhelm von Humboldt founded the University of Berlin; Fichte, Hegel and Schelling, Niebuhr, and Ranke taught there. It rapidly became the leading university in Germany and also—based on the principles of the unity and freedom of research and teaching—came to be regarded as an international model for university development.

Berlin was able to maintain its reputation in the German and international academic landscape for the rest of the century, even when the natural

sciences, medicine, and the technical sciences came to the fore. In 1911, a century after the university was founded, the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften* was founded in the city. This proved to be a major initiative as the world entered the age of great research institutions. Nevertheless, there was a discrepancy in Imperial Germany between the enormous research achievements and the narrow political and social outlook of the professors and academic staff. As the rector of the university once maintained, these tended to regard themselves with pride as the 'intellectual *Leibregiment* [sovereign's regiment] of the House of Hohenzollern'. It is not surprising that in 1914 the great majority of Berlin academics fell prey to wild enthusiasm for the war, to intoxication with power and to unrestrained chauvinism. Similarly, the majority welcomed the 'national revolution' proclaimed by the Nazis in 1933 as a release from unloved Weimar democracy, despite Nazi demands for interference in the autonomy of research.

In the arts, development was more uneven. Despite Fontane, Berlin became a 'literary capital' only with the emergence of naturalism, expressionist poetry, critical drama, and a new kind of epic literature represented by Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* of 1929. In painting, the breakthrough occurred at the turn of the century; its important features were the 'Berlin secession', urban impressionism, the emergence of socio-critical artists such as Käthe Kollwitz and Hans Baluschek, and—most important of all—of expressionism. The arts in Berlin were typified by the new *Regie-Theater* of Jessner, Reinhardt, and Piscator, and by the modern music of Hindemith, Schönberg, and Eisler, which found a home in the *Kroll-Oper* during the 1920s. In addition, the cinema, revue, and cabaret became new forms of metropolitan 'mass culture'. Here, new and surprising links were made between aesthetics and technology. The loss of political power associated with German defeat in the First World War enabled Berlin to become even more significant as a centre of the arts and sciences than it had been before 1914. Mere references to Berlin as a 'world city' gave way to attempts to plan and regulate this status in every sphere, from the control of the city's traffic flow to the great artistic experiments and productions in which Berlin was proclaimed as a 'city of light' (1928). Even today, the vitality and spirit of 1920s Berlin can be felt in great films such as *Metropolis*, by Fritz Lang (1927), and *Berlin, The Symphony of the Big City*, by Ruttmann (1927). For many artists, Berlin was a symbol of modernity and a promise of the future.

Economically as well as politically, all these developments took place on shifting ground. In 1921, Heinrich Mann wrote an essay in which he stated that 'the future of Germany is today being exemplified by Berlin. Whoever wishes to take hope, look thither.' He saw Berlin as an 'immense human workshop' which would assist the achievement of civilization and republicanism. 'The big city', he wrote with an eye on Berlin, 'is predominantly reasonable.' Though there were good arguments for this belief, the reality

proved very different. Leon Feuchtwanger wrote in the *Welt am Abend* as early as 21 January 1931: 'What the artists and intellectuals have to expect when the Third Reich becomes visible is obvious: extermination. Most expect it, and whoever among the intellectuals is able is today preparing to emigrate. When one moves among the intellectuals in Berlin, one has the impression that Berlin is a city of . . . future émigrés.' Feuchtwanger, who was among the first to be deprived of his German citizenship in summer 1933, bought a house in Grunewald despite his pessimistic prognosis. Nevertheless, a large number of artists, scientists, and journalists actually left Berlin and Germany even before the Nazi seizure of power, because they saw no future for themselves or their country.

The 'golden years' of Berlin were short. Nazi street terror set in very quickly, and was soon followed by the establishment of a system of unparalleled injustice. In Berlin, the Nazis were supported in their conquest of power by sections of the population who possessed social power and political influence. The population of the city remained divided: many rejoiced, others adjusted to the situation, but a considerable number remained in opposition, sometimes active and sometimes cautious and hesitant.

Berlin became the capital of the 'Third Reich', of a racist and imperialist system based on terror within and also—after the beginning of the Second World War—in the conquered territories of Europe. Until 1933, Berlin had been famed as a symbol of modernity, of the capability and creative power of twentieth-century man; from 1933 to 1945 it became a world-wide symbol of injustice and the abuse of power, of inhumanity and destruction. For the city itself, the twelve years of Nazi rule were a phase of internal and external destruction.

Internal destruction began immediately after the seizure of power on 30 January 1933. The open terror of the SA, which was even deployed as an auxiliary police force, was combined with state measures of repression. Within a few months, the Nazis in Berlin managed to eliminate their most important political opponents and, at the same time, to intimidate the entire population. The measures used included the 'wild' concentration camps of the SA (particularly numerous in Berlin), the 'cleansing' of the public service, the public book-burning at the Opernplatz on 10 May, the destruction of the trade unions, the ban on political parties (or their forcible self-dissolution), the *Gleichschaltung* or forcing into line of cultural life by the 'Reich Chambers of Culture' that were established, and official deprivation of citizenship for prominent artists, academics, and politicians who had already been forced to emigrate in spring 1933. Many of the writers who lived in Berlin belonged to the 'burned poets'; almost all the painters who had earned Berlin's reputation as an international art centre were now regarded as 'degenerate' and were forbidden to exhibit and, often, even to work. Socialist, democratic, and pacifist artists, journalists, and publishers were persecuted politically and prevented from working (*Berufsverbot*). Within a short time, the city lost a

great proportion of its international prestige, its academic and artistic productivity, and, not least, its urbane quality.

The tempo and extent of inner destruction in the city were most clearly revealed in the treatment of the Jewish population. The 170,000 Jews who lived in Berlin at the beginning of 1933 were the victims of a racist policy of previously unparalleled bureaucratic perfection and inhuman radicalism, from the first 'boycott actions' of spring 1933 to the November pogrom of 1938 and the deportations after October 1941. Approximately two-thirds of Berlin Jews had been forced to emigrate by 1939/40. Their expulsion served to demonstrate how much 'Jewish Berlin' had contributed to the rise and achievements of the city, to its modernity, its receptivity to new ideas, its tolerance—in short, to its character as a 'world city'. Approximately 50,000 Berlin Jews were deported in the period between 1941 and 1943. Almost all of them were murdered.

The inner destruction of the city was eventually followed by its external destruction. The Nazis themselves lit the first flames when they set fire to the city's synagogues in November 1938. Only a few years later, the Second World War unleashed by the German government took its toll of the city. The first bombs fell in August 1940; from November 1943 the city was subjected to increasingly frequent bombing raids and reduced to rubble. In all there were 310 air raids, of which 29 were the so-called *Grossangriffe*. Under the conditions of 'total war' proclaimed by Goebbels in the Berlin Sportpalast, a million people left the city after August 1943 and were evacuated to areas less threatened by bombing. By the end of the war, the number of people living in Berlin had fallen to 2.3 million. Half of all buildings had been destroyed or severely damaged; only one-quarter of all dwellings remained intact. The castle, the great museums, the old city, the newspaper district, the Hansa district around the Tiergarten, the area round the Tauentzien Street—these places and many more had been severely damaged or had simply ceased to exist.

The Berlin the Nazis left behind was 'the greatest connected ruined area in Germany and Europe', according to a scientific investigation of the changes in the earth's surface there. 'This is the second Carthage,' noted the American presidential adviser Harry Hopkins in May 1945, during a flight over the city. And in 1948 Bertolt Brecht referred laconically to 'Berlin, the heap of rubble near Potsdam'. New hills (*Trümmerberge*) did emerge from the ruins in the years after 1945, reaching heights of up to 120 metres. But it still seemed inconceivable that a living, interesting, and major city could emerge from the 'heap of rubble near Potsdam'. On the contrary, Harold Callender argued in the *New York Times* immediately after the end of the war that a policy of eliminating Berlin altogether would begin the required 'education which raises Germany to a civilized level again'. In the same newspaper, it was claimed that 'very few people [would] regret . . . the disappearance of this unloved parvenu among the European capital cities.' Opinions of this kind

were widely shared and, in view of the destruction and crime for which the German Reich and its capital had been responsible, were quite understandable.

Astonishingly, something akin to a cultural life emerged almost immediately under occupation rule—first of all under the Soviets and then, from July 1945, under the Four Powers. In the middle of May, only two weeks after the conquest of the city by the Red Army, the first concerts and theatre performances were staged. At the beginning of August the first gallery was opened on the Kurfürstendamm to show—and to sell—works of modern art of the kind banned for twelve years. In winter 1945/6, despite the hunger and cold, there was a broad programme of cultural events. It included notable premières of Lessing's *Nathan* and Brecht/Weill's *Threepenny Opera*, as well as Gorky's *Nachtsyl*. Berliners were apparently trying to take stock with the aid of the arts, but they were also taking flight into culture, from the oppressive present and certainly from the immediate past. For many people who had not been convinced opponents of the Nazis, survival techniques included the ability to forget and repress what had happened. Although this was true of the many who had gone along with things and had not prevented them, it was even more true of the 'little' and 'big' Nazis who were expecting to have to answer for their conduct (and who could not know that the vast majority of them would escape scot-free).

If the material reconstruction and spiritual regeneration of the city could scarcely be imagined in 1945, then it was equally difficult to conceive that Berlin would become a divided city, belonging to two different and often hostile political systems and lying on both sides of the demarcation line between the great international power blocs. 'It is possible that from tomorrow we [will] have two city governments and a Great Wall of China with battlements and watch-towers along the border of the sectors. Perhaps one [will] need a foreign visa to travel from Charlottenburg to Unter den Linden.' In view of the construction of the Berlin Wall some years later, this comment by the journalist Ruth Andreas-Friedrich in September 1948 was extremely shrewd. At this stage, the city was already deeply divided politically and was threatening to break apart still further.

Since the war, the history of Berlin has been marked by a number of surprising developments. The first of these was that, under the impact of the Cold War, the erstwhile capital of the Third Reich soon became a symbol of freedom and an outpost of Western democracy within the Soviet sphere. The Airlift of 1948/9, which kept 2 million people supplied during the Berlin blockade, sealed the city's membership of the Western community. In September 1948, as part of the defensive action against the communist threat, Ernst Reuter exclaimed: 'People of the world, look upon this city!' Even at this stage, he no longer had to fear any misunderstandings with regard to the Nazi past. John F. Kennedy confirmed the new image of Berlin and its

successful transformation in 1963. He offered the theory that every free man in the world was 'a citizen of this city of West Berlin', including himself: '*Ich bin ein Berliner.*'

The second surprise consisted of the painful discovery that it is possible to divide a great city such as Berlin, and to keep the two sectors hermetically sealed from each other. It had soon become clear that the Soviet sector and the three Western sectors were developing in different directions. But, even after the attempted uprising in East Berlin in June 1953, Berlin remained a relatively open city: people could move freely between the sectors; the cinemas and theatres drew their audience from all parts of the city; between 1950 and 1960, 246,000 people officially moved from East to West Berlin and another 40,000 from West to East; in 1961, more than 50,000 inhabitants of East Berlin were employed in the West of the city; and in 1960, the number of daily movements between East and West was estimated at half a million people. The Wall built in August 1961 was 165 kilometres long, of which 46 kilometres were along the inner-city border between East and West Berlin. The inconceivable had been made a reality: a city of more than 3 million inhabitants had been divided and its sectors strictly isolated from each other.

There was a third surprise, which was that the separated parts were capable of development as well as survival. In the case of East Berlin this fact is less remarkable, since the sector was not isolated but integrated in the GDR. However, it is still unusual for the capital of a state to consist simply of the smaller segment of a city whose other parts belong to a hostile social system. For West Berlin, the situation was more difficult, because the territory was completely isolated; it was very difficult to turn this partial city into a functioning whole.

As long as Bonn was the 'interim' capital of the Federal Republic, Berlin remained a 'capital in waiting' in Western eyes. However, the building of the Wall finally confirmed that there would be no 'reunification' of the two German states, and no ending of the division of Berlin, in the foreseeable future. In the decade before the Four Power Agreement of 1971, Berlin gradually lost its character as a 'front-line city' in the Cold War. Attempts to define the city as a 'bridge' or 'turntable' between East and West foundered on the actual conditions. On the other hand, the programme of radical 'modesty'—regarding Berlin as a 'completely normal' big city—failed to take account of its special circumstances. The desire for normality was understandable after the long years of exceptional conditions and desperate crisis. Nevertheless, the long-term future of the city depended on a more realistic analysis. Berlin had to gain a new profile to take account of, and then to transcend, its special circumstances. The structural economic problems of a city without a hinterland, which had lost its power to attract the headquarters of major businesses, banks, and trade associations, were obvious. Moreover, the prospects of solving them in the short-term were slight. It seemed

necessary to develop the academic and artistic potential of the divided city which, with over 2 million inhabitants, was still among the major cities of Europe.

From this point of view, Berlin has achieved a considerable degree of success in recent years. Despite unfavourable conditions, West Berlin has again become a city of academic achievement. In cultural life, too, links were quickly established with the artistic traditions of the city and new elements of cultural life were developed in music and theatre as well as in literature and painting. The great public institutions of the arts and sciences have done much to sustain the rise in the international reputation of Berlin. Nevertheless, it seems to me to be important to conclude with a glance at the restless and rebellious 'alternative' Berlin.

The liveliness of the arts in Berlin does not depend solely, and perhaps not even mainly, on the major events that take place there—international concerts and great exhibitions, festival weeks, theatrical events, jazz festivals, and 'festivals of world culture'. It depends more on the city's dense network of smaller theatres, music groups, galleries, literary bookshops and cafés, arts performances in pubs, and loose gatherings. Chiefly in Kreuzberg, but in other districts too, 'alternative' milieux emerged from painters and writers, performance groups, and rock bands. The atmosphere was dominated by protest and rejection of existing conditions; aesthetic demands and socio-political criticisms emerged side by side. The contrast with 'official' cultural life was strongly emphasized, and radical theses and counter-theses formulated. Nevertheless, over wide areas it would be incorrect to speak of total hostility or separation between 'high culture' and 'subculture'. The outsiders quickly became insiders, so that success altered the judgement and perspectives of those involved. Moreover, public subsidies reached so far into the alternative culture that it is scarcely possible to draw clear boundaries between the groups. Most Berlin artists find that their work is influenced and even determined by their experience of the big city, by its bewildering variety and the juxtaposition of different worlds. The city provokes a definite intellectual and aesthetic radicalism, but it also creates the private spaces required for creative work.

The vitality of contemporary Berlin would scarcely be conceivable without the political and social protest movements which have constantly shaken the city since the mid-1960s. Berlin was a centre of the student movement, of proposals for alternative life-styles and, eventually, of the squatters' movement (*Hausbesetzerbewegung*). The students were protesting against the American war in Vietnam, against repression in Iran, against suppression of the Nazi past in Germany, against the Grand Coalition and the emergency legislation, against a rigid university system, against the intolerant rejection of 'critical', predominantly Marxist, ways of thinking. The criticism was comprehensive and radical. It was the expression of a deep social crisis, but also of hope for democratic renewal. Conflicts were bound to occur, and in

Berlin there were massive clashes and acts of violence. The far-reaching goals of the students could not be realized, partly because political and social relationships were more stable than the student rebels had imagined. Resignation and apathy spread, and public interest quickly shifted to the new phenomenon of political terrorism, which created considerable unrest in Berlin as elsewhere.

Yet the student movement was far from ineffectual. Although only a few of its demands were achieved directly, it soon became clear that the political landscape had changed and that new ways of thinking and behaviour had emerged. The sciences had opened themselves to new issues, subjects were taught differently in schools, and discussions in the political parties had changed. The changes were the result of a broad new political atmosphere, but in many spheres it was the students who had first taken the initiative. The same was true of the creation of alternative life-styles, which had made an early and dramatic appearance in Berlin. Behaviour that was highly controversial in the first 'communes' soon became everyday practice. This 'cultural revolution' changed sexual morality, turned views on marriage and the family upside down, and put in question central tenets of bourgeois values. From the new casualness in clothing and manners to the flat-sharers, from the *Kinderläden* to anti-authoritarian education, basic forms of everyday conduct and human relations were being changed. The boundaries between public and private, between social norms and individual needs, were being defined anew. The Berlin experiences played an important role during these developments.

As the 1970s came to an end, Berlin was gripped by a new kind of rebellion—the squatters' movement, which reached its peak in 1981 with 165 'occupied' dwellings. Whatever the motivation of individual squatters, the movement was a radical protest against the destruction of the city, against 'wholesale redevelopment', against speculation in rents and building. The central slogan of the movement was '*Lieber Instandbesetzen als Kaputtbesitzen*'. It found a measure of agreement and sympathy far beyond the circle of people immediately involved. The 'occupied' dwellings became centres of the alternative movement, and not a few were places of significant cultural experiment. In 'Villa Schilla' in Charlottenburg, there was an exhibition in which prominent 'sponsors' such as Joseph Beuys took part; and in the Art and Cultural Centre Kreuzberg (*KuKucK*) near the former Anhalt station there was a centre of alternative culture which, with its theatre, music and film performances, was known far beyond the boundaries of Berlin.

The squatters were only the most radical symptom of a fundamental problem of modern housing and urban building policy. For decades the city had been torn down and 'cleared', from great historic buildings to apartment blocks. City planning had followed the principle of 'demixing' the various functions of the city; the great satellite colonies on the periphery of Berlin were the most visible results of this policy. Traffic planning had the '*autogerechti*' city as its

goal, so that almost every other interest was subordinated to the smooth flow of traffic. The abandonment of these principles of urban planning, and a decisive change of priorities, was necessary if the urban quality of Berlin were to be sustained and regained. The process of re-thinking was arduous; rooted preconceptions and opposing interests could be overcome only with difficulty. Nevertheless, there was a gradual reorientation towards the concept of 'living in the inner city'. It marked the work of the IBA (Internationale Bau-Ausstellung Berlin), which presented surveys of its plans and results in 1984 and 1987. With the building of inner-city dwellings and major building projects for state and private owners—a production engineering centre, a scientific centre, banking—at least some links were forged with the traditions of Berlin metropolitan architecture in the first thirty years of the century. Even more important was the programme of 'cautious city renewal', of careful 'city repair', which seeks to combine the improvement of living standards with the minimum of interference in the living conditions of residents. At the centre of this work of 'city repair' was Kreuzberg; with its attachment to older structures, the 'Kreuzberg mixture' of living space and business space provided a successful alternative to the 'demixing' programme.

Since the 1970s, Kreuzberg has also been the place where signs of the multicultural development of the city have made their most striking appearance. Kreuzberg, with its large proportion of foreign workers, shows both the problems and opportunities involved when different cultures exist alongside and with each other. Today, 'Turkish Berlin' is part of the city's image. Its residents live alongside many other groups of foreign inhabitants in the city, to say nothing of the members of over thirty religious communities in Berlin. The city has the task of forging links with the traditions of tolerance and integration which characterized it until the Nazi 'seizure of power'. For many generations, Berlin provided space for foreign and native minorities to develop independently and retain their identity; for the sake of its future as a great city, it is vital that this tradition is further strengthened and extended.

NOTES

The above contribution is a revised and extended version of two lectures which I gave on 30 April 1987 in the *Deutsches Haus* of New York University and on 16 July 1987 in the Technical University of Berlin in honour of the 75th birthday of Ernst Schraepfer. The lectures developed from my work for the great exhibition on the history of Berlin on the occasion of its 750-year celebrations. See Gottfried Korff and Reinhard Rürup (eds), *Berlin, Berlin. Die Ausstellung zur Geschichte der Stadt* (Berlin [Nicolai], 1987); *ibid* (eds), *Berlin, Berlin, Bilder einer Ausstellung* (Berliner Festspiele GmbH, 1988); R. Rürup, 'Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Geschichte: 750 Jahre Berlin', in Ulrich Eckhardt (ed.), *750 Jahre Berlin, Stadt der Gegenwart*, 2nd edn. (Frankfurt/Berlin [Ullstein], 1987). On the anniversary, comprehensive books on the

history of Berlin have appeared on both sides of the Berlin Wall: Wolfgang Ribbe (ed.), *Geschichte Berlins*, 2 vols., (Munich [Beck], 1987); and Laurenz Demps, *Geschichte Berlins von den Anfängen bis 1945* (Berlin [Dietz], 1987).

(This article was translated by Louise Willmot.)