

the Czech Republic, 40 percent). The church in Slovakia has been frozen in the fifties. I interviewed the Jesuit, Jan Korec, shortly after the revolution. The doorbell at his Bratislava apartment still flashed a table lamp instead of ringing, so that spying neighbors would not know he had visitors. His sacrifices under totalitarianism were deep and impressive. Yet even Korec (now a cardinal), like most of the Slovak bishops, has turned out to be an ardent nationalist. The church in Slovakia has even tried to resurrect the Nazi collaborator Monsignor Jozef Tiso as some sort of Slovak national hero. Given that kind of example, it is no wonder that many Slovak Catholics are disillusioned, and even more Czechs, with their predominately humanistic bent, are less than inspired by a Christian alternative.

I remember my friend's bone-deep blush when her hidden crucifix was exposed. Today her baby is a toddler. She and her husband want nothing more than to emigrate and raise their daughter outside the environmental and moral contamination they now see little chance of righting in their lifetime. These are bright, committed people. Where would the country be without the likes of them?

Many now believe that the Czech revolution has not really happened, and that when the real one does come it will be wrapped in a cloth far coarser than velvet. However that may be, what happens as the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe struggle for political and economic order, social integrity, and spiritual renewal could be crucial for all of us, a way out of our own environmental and moral contamination. □

LIVING WHERE THE WALL WAS

WHAT STILL DIVIDES THE GERMANS

STEPHEN BROCKMANN

As the divided capital of a divided country, Berlin was for four decades the front line of the cold war. The opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, marked both the culmination and the end of a powerful symbolic order that governed our world for half a century. In images transmitted immediately around the world, Berliners danced and sang not so much in West Berlin or East Berlin as in No Man's Land, on the Wall itself.

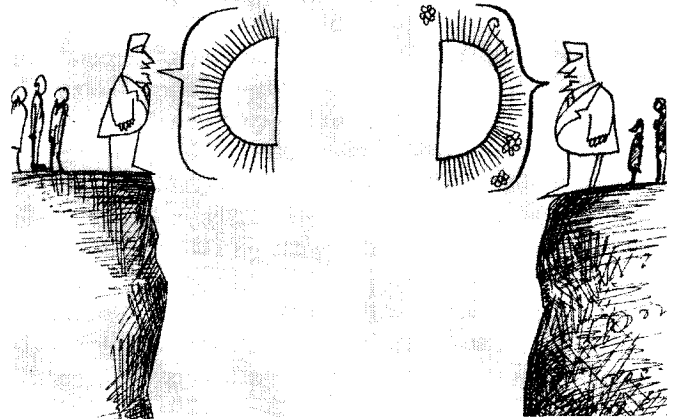
Berlin is now stripped of its most potent symbol. The Wall is no longer there. Of course there are still reminders of what used to be. Bits of the Wall have been preserved for graffiti artists and tourists. The Wall Museum in the House at Checkpoint Charlie is still there, though Checkpoint Charlie itself is long since gone. Guard towers, barbed wire, searchlights, German shepherds, machine guns—they are all commemorated here and there. In flea markets at the Brandenburg Gate you can still buy Soviet and East German army paraphernalia, as well as Communist buttons, badges, and orders. But it's not the same any more. The spine-tingling evil just isn't there. One sees tourists wandering aimlessly around where the Wall used to be, not quite sure of themselves. What to do in Berlin without the Wall?

While I was in Berlin this summer, after a three-year absence, I lived in an apartment building in the "East," in a district between the former Soviet and American sectors. The Wall used to run right beneath my apartment building. As a result, there

had been no traffic, and the street had been very quiet.

Now, with the Wall gone, there is a grassy but unkempt park full of trash and burned-out automobiles. From my apartment building, you can now walk out the door and across the park, and in thirty seconds you have traveled from East to West Berlin. In the morning, you can buy your fresh breakfast rolls and newspapers in either East or West Berlin. It still shocks me and gives me a feeling of deep satisfaction, after so many years of abnormality, that it is now possible to do such things.

Nevertheless, asked how the opening of the Wall has affected them, many residents on both the western and eastern sides of my street respond in a rather jaded and undramatic way. They say that traffic has increased, that they are worried about crime and drugs and their children, and that a woman can't go out alone



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at night any more the way she used to "in the good old days."

"In the good old days." I heard that phrase several times during my stay. Meant ironically, it also revealed the extent of discomfort with rapid change. After the first excitement of freedom in November 1989, the further consequences of that open border have long since become clear.

Most important, the Wall, like any other national border, had been an economic barrier protecting East Germany from West German competition. With the collapse of the Wall and German economic reunification on July 1, 1990, East German companies were forced to compete on an equal playing field with their West German competitors. The results were economic collapse and massive unemployment. No other country in the former Communist bloc was forced to move so rapidly and radically to a free-market economy. Thanks to huge West German transfer payments to the East—on the order of a hundred billion marks a year—the social and economic misery of unemployment and industrial decline has largely been offset by welfare payments, unemployment compensation, and other safety-net measures. But the extremely rapid transformation in the economy and in social structures has been and continues to be wrenching.

One of the first surprises for me on my arrival in Berlin was the extent to which, in spite of the Wall's demise, West and East Berlin very much continue to exist as separate geographic, sociological, and even spiritual entities. Although the Wall itself no longer exists, the vast, empty spaces through which it used to cut its swath continue to testify to the city's long division.

For the most part, East Berliners continue to do most of their business in East Berlin, while West Berliners do theirs in West Berlin. People on my side of the street continue to view themselves as Easterners, while the people in the apartments on the other side of the street continue to view themselves as Westerners. For the most part, neither Easterners nor Westerners want much to do with each other. "They are all plastic people," was the typical comment of one East German friend of mine. "They don't interest me at all. Their ideal is the clean white teeth and smooth cheeks of a toothpaste commercial. Such people are completely without inner depth and warmth." The disillusionment with the West, albeit somewhat clichéd, was deep. "We expected that behind their fancy automobiles and their beautiful clothes there must be fascinating, beautiful, lovable people. But the only thing that's interesting about them is what they drive and what they wear."

"The only really admirable people in the West are the ones in the RAF," suggested one friend, referring to the terrorist group, the Red Army Faction, which in April 1991, claimed responsibility for the assassination of Detlev Rohwedder, the chief of the trustee agency responsible for privatizing East Germany's state-owned industries.

While I was in East Berlin, the most popular best seller in the former German Democratic Republic was a play called *Wessis in Weimar* by the controversial playwright Rolf Hochhuth (author of *The Deputy*). The play's opening scene is a dramatic rendering of Rohwedder's assassination. One of my more bitter East German acquaintances suggested that what had hap-

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pened to Rohwedder might well—and indeed should—happen to other West German officials.

It is now quite clear that in spite of their professed concern for East Germany and desire for German reunification, West German authorities were as caught off guard by 1989 as anyone else. They knew very little about the country to their east and failed to recognize the extent of the problems associated with German reunification. In 1990 Chancellor Kohl had foolishly declared that a new German economic miracle was around the corner, that no one would be worse off as a result of German unification, and that East Germany would soon become a blossoming landscape.

What happened instead was a short-lived boom in the West as a result of pent-up East German consumer demand, followed by the most severe postwar recession Germany has experienced, with unemployment levels in East Germany significantly surpassing the levels of the Great Depression. Particularly hard-hit have been women and people in their late forties and fifties, considered too old to train for new jobs and too young to be given early retirement and pensions. One woman in my street declared that for her, life was over: "Not a single good thing has come to me as a result of German unification," she said.

The extent and ferocity of the hatred between East and West Germans surprised and troubled me. Derogatory words like *Besserwessis* (a play on the words *better* and *Wessi*, implying Westerners who think they know it all and are far superior to their *Ossi* cousins) and *Jammerossis* (a play on the words *whine*

and *Ossi*, implying Easterners who are constantly complaining and viewing everything negatively) have been in circulation for quite some time, but the reality behind them is disturbing. A poll published while I was in Germany showed that, even three years after unification, most young West Germans still have not had any personal contact with East Germans. While most East Germans had by now had personal contact with West Germans, a great many viewed those contacts negatively.

Just as in the times of communism, it is hard to engage in any kind of conversation in East Germany without quickly coming to the political situation. A great many East Germans feel that their country has been colonized and exploited by the West. "We are the new niggers," suggested one actor during a conversation in an East Berlin theater, "and the West Germans are the colonial lords." What he was referring to was the fact that most of the key bureaucratic and governmental positions in East Germany are now occupied by Westerners who come to "hardship posts" in the East for a year or two to help realign the East German bureaucracy according to Western standards. While this kind of help is no doubt genuinely necessary to coordinate the infrastructure in both parts of Germany—after all, it was East Germany that joined West Germany, and not the other way round—East Germans tend to perceive it as a kind of colonialism.

Meanwhile, all East Germans in key positions, from professors to sanitation engineers, have been subjected to rigorous scrutiny to determine the extent of their collaboration with the Communist regime. Many East Germans feel that such scrutiny too often degenerates into exaggerated denunciations of all East Germans for the crime of being East German.

One particularly poignant example of the divisions between East and West came at the end of June, when gays and lesbians in Berlin celebrated Stonewall Day, the traditional Gay Pride Day in the United States and Europe. Berlin had been chosen as the collecting point for Europe's gays this year—the city of "Europride," as the organizers called it—and so gays and lesbians streamed in from London and Paris, only to find that there had been a schism in Berlin's gay community. In the West, the more nonpolitical, consumer-oriented gays marched down Kurfürstendamm, West Berlin's equivalent of Fifth Avenue, celebrating gay lifestyles; in the East, the more politicized, in-your-face gays marched through the former Jewish ghetto and campaigned against xenophobia and anti-Semitism. The split within Berlin's gay community seemed to reflect precisely the split within the city itself: in the West, glitz and glitter; in the East, grit and bitterness.

In spite of the continuing high levels of violence against foreigners in Germany, I could not get over the feeling that the very generalized concept "foreigners" was being used all over the political spectrum as a way of distracting attention from Germany's very serious problems with itself. The real story in Germany is German animosity toward one another. The real secret behind German unification, I suspect, is that no one in particular wanted it. After forty years of separation, the Germans had grown completely estranged, and the process of unification has intensified rather than alleviated that estrangement. The

Michael Cadnum
Flying over a River

Sky
covers everything. Earth is sectioned,
parceled except where the trees shag the loops
and runs of the water.

Not sea, not earth, its steel
slices one field and spills
into another so it burns in sun.
Cars glint along a levee,
and the bug of airplane shadow far
below fans and contracts

along a river that searches
without moving, finds
without losing, all the way

to the edge of the visible,
yellow as the field, bright
as the horizon, perfect
as the emptiness that
carries us away.

hatred of foreigners in both West and East serves as a convenient cover for the deeper resentments between the two Germanies. The troubled, violent youth in West and East Germany are using foreigners as scapegoats for their own problems in coming to terms with life in the more difficult circumstances of the unified Germany.

What is rarely mentioned in the discussion about foreigners and refugees in Germany and Europe is that the situation is a direct result of the collapse of the cold-war system and the rigid border controls which once existed in Eastern Europe. Western governments used to issue solemn statements condemning the lack of freedom to travel in the East. In fact, however, the Iron Curtain prevented millions of potential refugees from coming West: the Communists were efficient border guards not only for themselves but for Western Europe.

Now Western Europe is in the difficult position of having to put its money where its mouth is (or was). If it is truly for freedom to travel, then it can hardly build walls and iron curtains of its own. If it is against freedom to travel, then its declarations during the cold war are exposed as mere rhetoric. Either way, the increasing openness, fluidity, and internationalization of the world's economy demand tough choices for Germany and other European countries: closing down borders means cutting off potential access to the world economy; but opening up borders means exposing less-privileged citizens to low-wage competition from abroad. This, too, is part of the "new world order" that is emerging in the wake of the collapse of communism. In a world without borders, the third world can come to the first world, while the social contract within the first world crumbles; but a country with rigid border controls risks isolating itself from economic development.

As I left Berlin this time, I was acutely aware that here was a city and a country in the process of remaking themselves. In the new Europe, much depends on the outcome of that remaking. □

STAGE

PICK A PAIR

'SUMMER HOUSE' & 'PERFECT GANESH'

"There's no point in writing a play for your five hundred goony friends," Jane Bowles said in *Vogue* (May 1, 1954), shortly after her play *In the Summer House* opened and closed on Broadway. "You have to reach more people." Forty years after that event, Lincoln Center has revived the play, under the direction of Joanne Akalaitis, perhaps because the producers suspect that there is more Bowles-style gooniness around in the 1990s than there was in the 1950s. Without ever knowing the woman, I was one of her goony friends from the beginning. The play both baffled and delighted me when I first saw it. It had

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