

BERLIN IS unquestionably one of the great cities of the world. And yet, it remains an enigma. Berlin is all things to all people and is still somewhat in agreement with Karl Scheffler's 1910 observation that 'Berlin ist eine Stadt, verdammt dazu, ewig zu werden, niemals zu sein'. It is also a city that will never be able to divorce itself from the events and conclusion of the Second World War and National Socialist politics.

Cölln (on the Fisher Island) first mentioned in 1237, and Berlin (across the Spree in what is now called the Nikolaiviertel) in 1244. These two cities formed an economic and social unit and in 1307, were united politically to become known simply as Berlin, the larger of the pair. With the Edict of Potsdam in 1685, Frederick William offered asylum to the French Huguenots, of whom 6,000 settled in Berlin. By 1700, approximately 20% of Berlin's

the tradition of cabaret, known as Bunte Theater (colourful theatre). German cabaret really began to blossom in the 1920s and 1930s, bringing forth all kinds of new artists, such as Werner Finck at the *Katakomben*, Karl Valentin at the *Wien-München*, and most famously, Marlene Dietrich. She worked as a chorus girl and actress for Max Reinhardt in Berlin and Vienna throughout the 1920s [in 1993, some of her estate was sold to the Stiftung Deutsche

After the 1933 elections, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power. Hitler had planned to rebuild Berlin on a massive scale, renaming it 'Welthauptstadt Germania'; apart from the Olympic Stadium, however, the plan never got off the ground because of the war. The victorious powers subsequently divided the city into four sectors: the United States, the United Kingdom and France formed West Berlin; while the Soviet sector, East Berlin. The

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But as a European capital with over 800 years of documented history it was, from the very beginning of the art, extensively *photographed*. And Hans Christian Adam's portrait of the city is essentially a portrait in pictures. Over 270 photographers have created the hundreds of images of Berlin, from 1857 to the present, and these include some of the prominent documentary lensmen of their day: Friedrich Seidenstücker, Erich Salomon, Willy Römer, and Heinrich Zille; as well as modern masters such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Helmut Newton, René Burri, Robert Capa, Thomas Struth, and Wolfgang Tillmans. And what a photo-opportunity Berlin has been: classical city to sprawling metropolis, bombastic edifice to shattered ruin - to an ultra-modern commercial and creative centre.

Berlin dates from the late 12th and early 13th century, Spandau being documented in 1197, and Köpenick in 1209, though these areas did not join Berlin proper until 1920. The centre of Berlin can be traced back to two towns:

Opposite page from top:

Roger Schall

Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. 1936

Barbara Klemm

The Fall of the Wall. 1989

F.C. Guntlach

Fashion in front of the

Charlottenburg Palace. 1958



Josef Heinrich Darchinger: *Remains of the Reichstag. 1958*

residents were French, and their cultural influence on the city was immense. Napoleon Bonaparte marched into Berlin in 1806, but granted self-government to the city. The Industrial Revolution transformed Berlin during the 19th century and in 1871, it became capital of the newly founded German Empire. In 1918, the Weimar Republic was proclaimed in Berlin.

For many non-German observers, the Berlin of the 1920s holds the most fascination, with its liberal subcultures, homosexuality and prostitution, fierce political street fights and its numerous beach bars along the river Spree with green spaces in all districts. And of course

Kinemathek - including 15,000 photographs with work by Cecil Beaton, Horst P. Horst, George Hurrell, Lord Snowdon, Eugene Robert Richee and Edward Steichen]. Nearly all German-speaking cabaret artists fled into exile in Switzerland, France, Scandinavia or the USA upon the rise of Hitler. Writer Christopher Isherwood's now famous *The Berlin Stories*, first published in 1939 and usually including *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin*, epitomises the louche lifestyle all too soon destroyed as Nazism triumphed at the polls. George Orwell described them as 'brilliant sketches of a society in decay'.

Federal Republic of Germany was founded in West Germany whilst the Marxist-Leninist German Democratic Republic was proclaimed in East Germany. East Berlin, although half the size and population of West Berlin, included most of the historic centre. The tensions between east and west culminated in the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 - which lasted until 9 November 1989, when the city was reunited. The city's appearance today is predominantly shaped by the key role it played in German history in the 20th century. It is the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany and is the seat of the President. Oddly enough, Berlin has been twinned with Los Angeles since 1967.

Throughout this turbulent history there was always a man with a camera to record events. Benedikt Taschen and Hans Christian Adam have researched the millions of available images and synthesised an outstanding visual documentary of 150 years in one of the most historic, and significant, cities and nations on earth. A triumph. ☺

BERLIN Portrait of a City

Dr. Hans Christian Adam

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