

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

New horizons for U.S.-German relations

President Clinton's upcoming visit to Berlin in May is creating great expectations.

President Bill Clinton will visit Berlin, the old and future German capital, on May 14, four years after his historic, July 12, 1994 speech at the Brandenburg Gate, which heralded a new chapter in U.S.-German relations, especially for close cooperation in the economic development of eastern Europe. The day before, at a press conference in Bonn, Clinton had ended (to the embarrassment of the British) the "special relationship" between the United States and Britain.

Clinton's activities of those July days sparked great expectations, as to what could be done in this new era of U.S. emphasis on relations with reunited Germany. The bitter reality, however, is that the Germans did not take the hand extended to them by Clinton, because they were fixated on building their Maastricht Europe, behaving as "Europeans" first, before thinking about their bilateral relations with the Americans. The Europeanism of the Germans did a lot to prevent the Berlin impulse of 1994 from taking shape, so that diplomatic routine once again took over U.S.-German relations.

Therefore, there is hope that Clinton's new visit to Berlin will be characterized by efforts on both sides to renew that 1994 initiative. Most notably, the founding ceremony of the American Academy in Berlin on March 20, 1998, with more than 250 prominent U.S. and German political, economic, and scientific figures in attendance, reflects this renewed impulse toward deepening U.S.-German relations. The American Academy is a 1994 brainchild of Richard Holbrooke, then U.S. ambassador to Germany, and the

idea for it emerged in the context of Clinton's July visits to Bonn and Berlin. Holbrooke's idea was that rebuilding eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War, should be a joint U.S.-German effort. And, in the U.S. view, Germany has to play an essential role toward the East—which is a concept that the Academy, which will begin operation in September, will promote.

Holbrooke, who attended the founding ceremony for the Academy, was explicit in an interview with the March 19 *Berliner Zeitung*. He charged that the heteronomic European Union, which has no clearly defined policies other than the non-congruent geopolitics of its individual member governments, is unable to formulate a common foreign policy in the Balkans. This is why cooperation between the United States and Germany is of the utmost importance, Holbrooke said, for example, in the effort to secure peace in Kosova, whose Albanian ethnic population is being expelled or eliminated by the Serbs. In direct contrast to the British, who prefer a weak Germany, Holbrooke said that a strong, reunited Germany corresponds to the genuine interest of the United States on the European continent.

As far as U.S.-German cooperation in the Balkans is concerned, it was discussed at the Wehrkunde meeting in Munich in early February. There, a German member of parliament told this author about a design for a change in the American military presence under a renewed peacekeeping mandate in Bosnia. The German military, which is already engaged in the peace-

keeping force, would relieve the Americans in Bosnia with an upgraded German contingent. This would enable the Americans to upgrade missions elsewhere in the region—in Macedonia, where Americans are already stationed, and in Kosova. This U.S.-German project is disliked in London, the parliamentarian said.

The U.S. conflict with Britain over Germany, was also openly addressed in the speech by U.S. Undersecretary of State Strobe Talbott, at the American Academy ceremony in Berlin.

Not explicitly referencing Clinton's 1994 Berlin address, Talbott drew a line, however, from President John F. Kennedy's historic June 26, 1963 Berlin speech, to the process of reunification of Germany that began when the Berlin Wall came down on Nov. 9, 1989, and from there, to Clinton's role as "the first American President to be elected after the end of the Cold War."

"As a new Europe emerges out of what Americans still think of as the Old World," Talbott said, "we see a united, democratic Germany as both an important symbol and a powerful engine of what is happening, and what can happen, in Europe as a whole."

A bit later on in his address, Talbott explicitly denounced the hostile British attitude toward Germany: "I'm moved here to recall Lord Ismay's famously offensive witticism about NATO's putative purpose. The Alliance, he said, existed to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down. In 1949, when he made that remark, it was already one-third invidious—that is, in its reference to Germany—and it would soon be downright wrong. NATO actually helped foster this country's security, prosperity, and, very importantly, its international leadership. So, far from keeping the Germans down, NATO helped the new Germans stand up."