THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG
IN THE REICHSTAG BUILDING

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FOREWORD

To the reader:

Welcome to the German Bundestag!

This book will take you on an interesting and informative journey through German parliamentary history and its most symbolic and significant edifice, the Reichstag Building. You will learn about the working procedures, structures and functions of the German Bundestag, take a tour of its buildings, and undoubtedly discover a few surprises about Parliament of which you were previously unaware, such as its remarkable art collection. You will gain insights into the parliamentarians' working week and how they negotiate the various, and occasionally arduous, stages in the passage of legislation.

The glass dome of the Reichstag Building, designed by British architect Norman Foster at the Bundestag's specific request, has not only rapidly become the new emblem of Berlin. It is also a tangible symbol of parliamentary reform, of greater transparency and openness.

Norman Foster's renovation now shows, in terms of both outer appearance and interior design, the extent of the transformation in Parliament's self-image. When it

Norbert Lammert,
President
of the German Bundestag

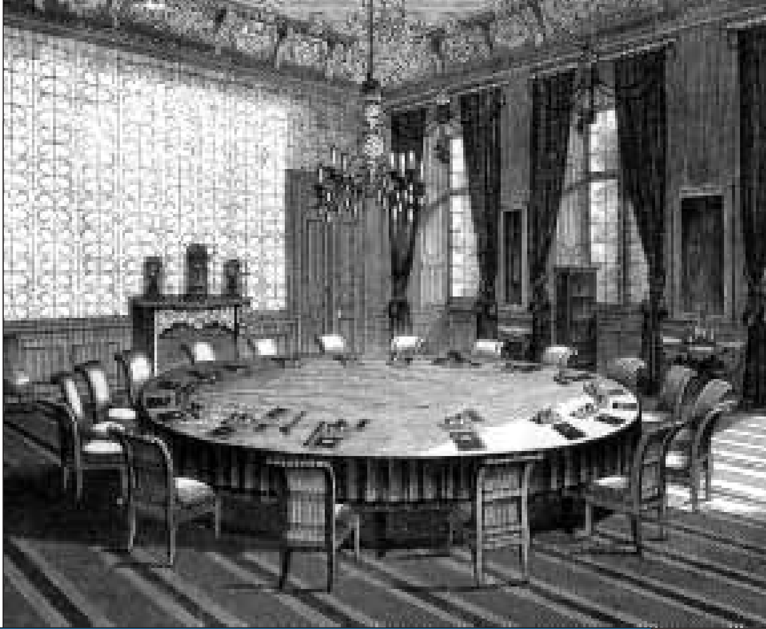
was built, at the time of the German Empire, the seat of Parliament had to be as imposing as possible to allow the young Parliament to demonstrate its self-confidence with regard to the Imperial Palace, the seat of the monarchy. Today, the renovated Reichstag exudes confidence with a note of self-irony; it is a building characterised, fittingly, by dramatic openings, clear perspectives and transparent structures. And this book is also an example of this new transparency and openness. I hope you will enjoy it as much as I have.

Dr Norbert Lammert
President of the German Bundestag

THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG

WOLFGANG KESSEL

HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT SINCE 1815



1815 TO 1848: RESTORATION AND A NEW DAWN – THE *VORMÄRZ* PERIOD

The roots of parliamentary development in Germany go back to the early decades of the 19th century. At that time, however, there was no unitary German state but only a considerable number of principalities and free cities. The Holy Roman Empire, which had long since become both internally and externally powerless, had finally dissolved itself in 1806, when the Emperor Francis II was compelled to abdicate the imperial crown under pressure from Napoleon.

FIRST PARLIAMENTS IN SOUTHERN AND SOUTH-WEST GERMANY

After the victory over Napoleon and the subsequent dissolution of the Confederation of the Rhine, the first parliaments in Germany were created in the principalities of southern and south-western Germany, which had made considerable territorial gains under the protectorate established by Napoleon. These parliaments were the fruit of written constitutions, most of which were imposed by the sovereign. The rulers' purpose in granting constitu-

tions and creating parliaments was to integrate their old and new subjects into a single community through the standardisation of the law and through the involvement of their subjects in this process, thereby consolidating the territorial unity of their states.

Although these parliaments, most of which were bicameral, were only accorded limited decision-making and consultative rights, they were able to participate in legislation and in the approval of government revenue and expenditure, but they were not yet permitted to present their own legislative proposals. Nevertheless, they were an important factor in what is known historically as the *Vormärz* movement – the increasing pressure for change that culminated in the revolution of March 1848 – in that they helped to extend a sense of citizenship and political awareness to broader sections of the population and to form a new parliamentary political leadership.

RESTORATION AND THE RISE OF LIBERALISM IN THE GERMAN CONFEDERATION

The period from 1815 until the outbreak of the 1848 revolution was marked by increasing internal political and social tension. On the one hand, the Liberal movement was spreading across Europe, gaining more and more adherents for the cause of individual and political freedom, equality of all citizens before the law, the abolition of feudal privileges and the enshrinement of human and civil rights. In Germany, these liberal aims were combined with aspirations to national unity, which had been given powerful impetus by the common struggle against Napoleon. The main pillars of this liberal-nationalist movement were university students and lecturers, the patriotic student fraternities *(Burschenschaften)* and gymnasts' associations *(Turnerbünde)* as well as the liberal societies which were being formed among the bourgeoisie. The Wartburg Festival, organised by the *Burschenschaften* in October 1817 to commemorate the Reformation and the Battle of Leipzig, was the first major public mani-

The meeting chamber of the Privy Council of the Federal Assembly in Frankfurt am Main, where the leading envoys of the German states met until the dissolution of the German Confederation in 1866.

This page:
The Wartburg Festival of 18 October 1817, attended by delegations from twelve universities and representatives of the *Burschenschaften* and *Turnerbünde,* was a historic demonstration for civil liberties and national statehood.

Facing page, top:
Karl Theodor Welcker (1790-1869), lecturer in constitutional law, member of the Parliament of Baden and one of the pioneers of Liberal thought.

Facing page, bottom:
Karl von Rotteck (1775–1840), a leading representative of Liberalism in the Parliament of Baden.

festation of these aspirations, symbolised by the black, red and gold flag and encapsulated in the slogan 'Honour, Liberty, Fatherland'.

On the other side was the German Confederation, founded in 1815 by 37 sovereign rulers and four free cities within the German territory of the former Holy Roman Empire, which had finally perished in 1806. Under the leadership of Austria and her chief minister, Prince Clemens von Metternich, the members of the Confederation were pledged to combat liberal and nationalist activities with all the means at their disposal so as to preserve or restore the old order and structures. Harsh repressive measures were taken to enforce its decisions.

Metternich's repressive regime, however, did not manage to impose its will in equal measure in all member states of the German Confederation. In the south-west in particular, the liberal and nationalist movement was able to gain further ground. The Hambach Festival, held at Hambach Castle in the Palatinate on 27 May 1832 and attended by 20,000 to 30,000 people, including Polish refugees, was the largest popular demonstration in Ger-

many for republicanism and democracy in the years before the March revolution of 1848.

This new dawn testified to a growing aspiration among the people to freedom and political change, an aspiration which was also reflected during the *Vormärz* period in works of literature, many of which were banned, and political journalism and which provided the intellectual stimulus for the revolution of March 1848. Metternich's system, predictably, responded with new and more stringent repressive measures, such as criminal prosecutions and even death sentences, the gagging of parliaments, persecutions and the prohibition of all associations, meetings and public gatherings of a 'revolutionary' nature. Numerous leaders of the movement were only able to escape further persecution by emigrating to France or Switzerland, from where they tried to encourage further progress in Germany towards unity and freedom.

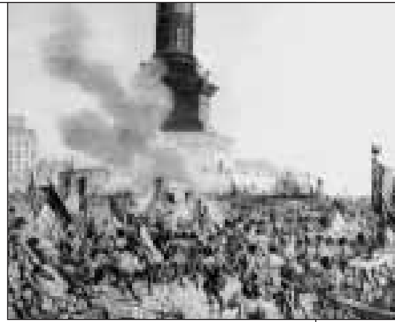
THE REVOLUTION OF 1848

The outbreak of revolution in March 1848 cannot be ascribed to one single cause. Besides the political paralysis within the German Confederation, growing social tension and economic developments and crises also played their part. The political debates conducted in the parliaments also helped to foster a revolutionary climate.

Moreover, revolutions were germinating throughout Europe. When a revolutionary uprising broke out in Paris in February 1848, resulting in the abdication of the French King and the proclamation of the Republic, the winds of change caused the revolutionary spark to ignite in Germany too. In March 1848, uprisings occurred in rural areas and in the towns, especially the capitals of the individual German

At the Hambach Festival on 27 May 1832, a crowd of almost 30,000 gathered to call for sovereignty of the people, republican government and a German nation state.

states. The bourgeoisie and the peasantry joined forces in the fight against feudal privilege. Metternich was driven from Vienna, and bloody street and barricade battles broke out in Berlin. Finally, the Prussian King, Frederick William IV, promised that a constitution would be drawn up for Prussia, that a Prussian National Assembly would be convened and that Prussia would become a constitutional monarchy. At the same time, he consented to the creation of a German nation state.



This page, top: The revolutionary uprising in Paris in February 1848 – the drawing shows the burning of the throne of King Louis Philippe – preceded the March revolution in Germany.

This page, bottom: Clashes at the barricades in Berlin on the evening of 18 March 1848.

Facing page: Processional entry into St Paul's Church, Frankfurt, of the members of the German National Assembly, the first pan-German parliament, on 18 May 1848.

THE FIRST ALL-GERMAN ELECTIONS

On the initiative of leading representatives of the southern and western German Liberal movements, a provisional parliament or *Vorparlament* assembled in Frankfurt on 30 March 1848, comprising deputies from the parliaments of the individual states, to prepare elections throughout Germany to a constituent German National Assembly on the basis of equal universal manhood suffrage. These elections took place in all the German states between mid-April and the middle of May 1848. Some of the members of the assembly were elected by secret ballot, some by open declaration; some were directly elected, but most were chosen indirectly. Since there were no organised political parties yet, candidates were generally nominated by local assemblies or by political clubs or committees, whose distinctive fundamental political convictions soon became identifiable. In many cases the parliamentarians from the *Landtage*, the diets of the individual states, featured prominently in this process.

1848/49: THE GERMAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN ST PAUL'S CHURCH, FRANKFURT

On 18 May 1848, the German National Assembly was opened in Frankfurt am Main. It was the first-ever pan-German parliament. It had more than 800 elected members, including the substitute members and other successors. The official number of members, however, was considerably lower and fluctuated, for various reasons, throughout the life of the Assembly. In German, the parliament is often simply called the *Paulskirche*, after its meeting place in the Church of St Paul in the heart of Frankfurt.

A PARLIAMENT OF INTELLECTUALS

Despite the variety of regional origins and allegiances of the deputies, the composition of the National Assembly was fairly homogeneous. It was a 'parliament of digni-

taries', most of whose members belonged to the academically educated middle and upper classes. Many were lawyers, university professors and grammar-school teachers. The high standard of debating owed much to the fact that many of the deputies were well versed in German, French, British and American academic literature, which was cited time and again in response to fundamental questions. On the opening day, parliamentary business seemed liable to become engulfed in a deluge of speeches, motions and votes, but the parliament found itself an energetic and persuasive president (speaker) in the centrist Liberal deputy Heinrich Freiherr von Gagern, whose decisive and purposeful chairmanship ensured that proceedings were soon being conducted in an orderly manner. In the speech following his election, von Gagern described the creation of a constitution for Germany and German unification as the main tasks of the National Assembly.

THE BEGINNINGS OF PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES AND THE FIRST POLITICAL CAUCUSES

Very soon, caucus-like political groupings also began to emerge; these groups served to develop common opinions and formulate common objectives. They took their names from the various inns and hostelries in the city in which groups of like-minded deputies tended to gather to discuss the issues of the day. This was the basis of the subsequent right-centre-left spectrum of political parties.

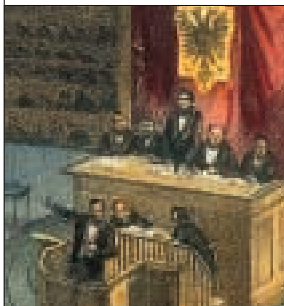
The moderate liberal members, known collectively as the Centrists, although a distinction has to be made between the left and right Centrists, occupied the middle ground. Their chief aim was the establishment of a federal constitutional monarchy with quite a strong parliament and a hereditary emperor as the head of state. The democrats in the group known as the Moderate Left wanted a parliamentary democratic republic, whereas those known as the Radical Left also advocated the continuation of the revolution and a break with the old monarchical power structures. They were committed to the sovereignty of the people. The Right was formed by the Conservatives, who believed in limited powers for central government and strong governments in the individual states. There were, however, frequent fluctuations between these groups. The Frankfurt Assembly was therefore the cradle of the German party system to some extent, although it was only in later decades that the political parties developed into extraparliamentary organisations too.

Facing page:
The Right-Centre-Left seating arrangement that characterised subsequent parliaments took shape in the chamber in St Paul's Church.

This page:
President Heinrich Freiherr von Gagern brought a steady hand to bear on the conduct of parliamentary proceedings.

CREATION OF A CENTRAL AUTHORITY AND THE START OF DISCUSSIONS ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

In the pursuit of its main goals, the National Assembly was faced from the outset with the twofold task of creating a national constitution and overseeing the establishment of a central governing authority. After lengthy debates, the Assembly decided, on the initiative of its President, Heinrich von Gagern, to establish a central authority itself. It elected the Austrian Archduke John as Imperial Administrator *(Reichsverweser)* and entrusted him with the task of appointing a Prime Minister, who would be accountable to Parliament, and a Government. But this central authority was fairly powerless and was to depend on the sup-



port of the individual states, since it had neither revenue, institutions nor armed forces of its own.

Soon after being constituted, the Assembly decided that its first legislative act would be to compile and adopt a bill of rights. In this way, the state would be firmly rooted in the rule of law, and its citizens would enjoy permanent guaranteed protection from arbitrary measures and acts of despotism. Whether the aim of achieving German unity by parliamentary means would have been better served if the Assembly had begun by devoting itself to the institutional provisions, to organising the future German state, instead of starting with the bill of rights is a question which has often been asked but to which there can scarcely be a convincing answer.

NEW REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLES AND THE SWELLING TIDE OF COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The fact is that it did not take long for the tide to start turning against the National Assembly. In both Prussia and Austria the forces of counter-revolution were gaining in strength. This in turn brought the more radical revolutionary elements to the fore and led to outbreaks of violence in various places. A second wave of insurrections erupted in Baden, Berlin and Vienna but was crushed by the armed forces. The counter-revolutionary forces, with military backing, were gradually gaining the upper hand.

THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE

On 21 December 1848, the National Assembly adopted the Act defining the Fundamental Rights of the German People. This was the first time that human and civil rights had been proclaimed and legally enshrined in Ger-

many. Despite the failure of the Frankfurt Parliament to unify Germany on the basis of a parliamentary democratic constitution, its bill of rights is an achievement of great and lasting importance. The Weimar Constitution, the Basic Law of the Federal Republic and the constitutions of its *Länder* have all based their catalogues of fundamental rights on this legacy of the Frankfurt Assembly. Foremost among these fundamental rights are equality before the law, the abolition of class privilege, guaranteed personal freedom, freedom of belief and expression, freedom of the press, academic freedom, freedom of assembly and association, inviolability of the home, postal privacy and the right of petition. In abolishing the death penalty, the Assembly was also far ahead of its time. The only gaps in this bill of rights are social rights in the sense of guaranteed social security, although even then social issues were becoming increasingly important.

Reichs-Gesetz-Blatt.

In March 1849, the National Assembly finally adopted a constitution, which set out the legal order for the German Empire to which it gave birth. It provided for a federal state headed by an emperor, who was also to be responsible for appointing the government. The main duties of the Imperial Diet, or Reichstag, which was to comprise a Chamber of States and a Chamber of the Nation, the latter being directly elected by secret ballot on the basis of equal universal manhood suffrage, were legislation and the adoption of the budget. Although the constitution did not resolve the key issue of the relationship between the government and parliament and the accountability of the former to the latter, it stipulated that details of ministerial responsibility were to be governed by a law. Thus, to all appearances, the scene was set for the introduction of a parliamentary system of government.

Facing page:
Animated discussions in St Paul's Church during the debate on a bill of rights.

This page:
The title page of the Imperial Law Gazette promulgating the Constitution, which was adopted in March 1849 and amounted to far more than 'a scrap of paper'.

FAILURE TO UNIFY GERMANY ON THE BASIS OF A CONSTITUTION

There was lengthy wrangling over the question whether the Reich should include the German part of the multi-ethnic Habsburg empire (the so-called *Grossdeutschland* solution) or whether it ought to be a smaller state *(Kleindeutschland),* excluding Austria and under Prussian leadership. The dilemma was resolved when Austrian hostility towards the National Assembly left it with no option but to adopt the *Kleindeutschland* solution. Accordingly, Parliament elected the Prussian King, Frederick William IV, to be 'Emperor of the Germans' in the expectation that he would accept the imperial crown and become head of the truncated nation state. But when a deputation from the Reichstag came to Berlin to offer him the imperial crown, the King rejected it on the grounds that monarchical sovereignty was bestowed by the grace of God alone. Prussia and other leading members of the Confederation, such as Bavaria and Saxony, refused to ratify the constitution

The constitution and the efforts to establish a German nation state were thus effectively doomed. Through petitions, pamphleteering and public meetings, the fight for the constitution went on, but the radical devotees of democracy, particularly in the south-west, who were determined to pursue the revolutionary struggle were losing more and more support from the bourgeois centre, who feared open insurrection, a descent into civil war and attacks on their lives and property. It became increasingly clear that democracy had lost and that the counter-revolution had triumphed.

In the period that followed, the forces of reaction tried in many cases to restore the pre-revolutionary order, but the efforts and achievements of the Frankfurt Parliament nevertheless made their mark on subsequent German history. What remained alive were not only a burning desire for the unification of Germany as a nation state but also the hope that the idea of a liberal constitutional state based on the rule of law, a state in which fundamental rights and freedoms were guaranteed and in which the people shared in the exercise of governmental power through a freely elected Parliament, would become a reality. But whereas the longing for a nation state was ultimately satisfied with the founding of the Empire in 1871, it was to take another half-century before the constitutional ideas of the Revolution were fully implemented. The proclamation of the king of Prussia as 'Emperor *(Kaiser)* of the Germans' in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles on 18 January 1871, which was stage-managed by Otto von Bismarck, sealed the founding of the *Reich*.

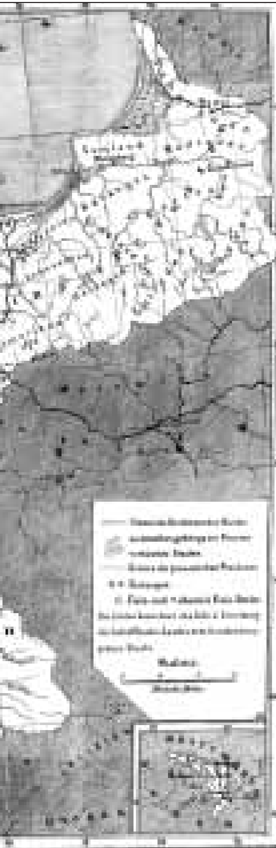
Facing page:
A deputation from the National Assembly offered the imperial crown, and with it the title of 'Emperor of the Germans', to King Frederick William IV of Prussia at the Royal Palace in Berlin on 3 April 1849. He declined the offer.

This page, top:
After the seat of the National Assembly had been moved to Stuttgart in May 1849, the rump parliament there was forcibly dissolved on 18 June 1849. This marked the end of the revolution.

This page, bottom:
Meeting of the North German Reichstag in 1867. Its President, Eduard von Simson, had been the last President of the National Assembly in St Paul's Church.

1867 TO 1918: THE REICHSTAG IN THE NORTH GERMAN CONFEDERATION AND IN THE GERMAN EMPIRE

After the demise of the National Assembly in Frankfurt, the German Confederation initially reverted to its former powers and functions. In 1851 it repealed the Act defining the Fundamental Rights of the German People. Many left-wing leaders and activists had to emigrate as the only means of escaping imprisonment and persecution after the restoration of despotic rule. In the period that followed, conservative Prussia took control of the movement for national unification. Under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck, who was appointed Prime Minister in 1862, Prussia sought to engage with Austria in a struggle for supremacy in Germany. In 1866, the two states went to



war, Prussia emerging as the victor. Austria had to recognise the new balance of power and was no longer a rival for leadership of the German Confederation, which was dissolved forthwith.

THE REICHSTAG OF THE NORTH GERMAN CONFEDERATION ADOPTS BISMARCK'S IMPERIAL CONSTITUTION

The first steps towards unification were the creation of a German Customs Union, the *Zollverein,* and the establishment of the North German Confederation *(Norddeutscher Bund),* which united the states to the north of the River Main under Prussian leadership and was made expandable from the outset to allow for the subsequent accession of the South German states to a new German Empire. After Bismarck had engineered the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, which ended in the defeat of France, the states of southern Germany, with the exception of Austria, joined with the North German Confederation to form the German Empire.

The North German Confederation, founded in 1866, already united some of the states that would form the German Empire in 1871 as a federation under Prussian leadership.

In the realm of domestic politics, Liberalism initially remained the strongest political force. The Liberal Party split, however, following a dispute between the Prussian Diet *(Landtag)* and Bismarck regarding the approval of funds for the modernisation of the Prussian army, a dispute from which Bismarck emerged victorious. Thereafter, there were two Liberal parties – the Progress Party, which opposed Bismarck's policy, and the National Liberals, whose support Bismarck was able to enlist for his objective of national unification 'from above'. This period also saw the birth of new political parties whose voters and adherents were later to increase constantly in number in the Empire, namely the Catholic German Centre Party and two socialist workers' parties which combined in 1875 to form the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany, known since 1891 as the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). On the Conservative side too, there were two new party

Following the collapse of the National Assembly, many people of a democratic persuasion escaped the despotism of their native German states by fleeing to other European countries or emigrating overseas.
This etching shows German steerage passengers on an emigrants' ship in 1850.

groups – the Free Conservatives and the German Conservatives.

On 12 February 1867, less than eighteen years after the collapse of the Frankfurt National Assembly, a supraregional parliament was once again elected in Germany – the *Reichstag* of the North German Confederation. It convened in Berlin on 24 February, and its primary task was to discuss and adopt the constitution for the North German Confederation, a document largely drafted by Bismarck. This constitution, with slight modifications, was subsequently adopted by the German Empire.

Facing page, left: The inaugural sitting of the Reichstag of the North German Confederation, held at the seat of the Prussian House of Lords in Berlin on 24 February 1867, was also the celebration of a new beginning.

Facing page, right: A deputation from the North German Reichstag, headed by its President, Eduard von Simson, offers the imperial crown to King William I of Prussia on 18 December 1870.

LIMITED POWERS FOR THE IMPERIAL REICHSTAG

The Imperial Constitution, which was expressly designed to enshrine the power of Bismarck as Prime Minister of Prussia, Imperial Chancellor and Chairman of the Federal Council *(Bundesrat),* established the German Empire as something akin to a constitutional monarchy. The Empire was to be a federal state. The King of Prussia also held the title of German Emperor *(Kaiser).* Other organs of the constitution were the Bundesrat, the Reichstag and the Imperial Chancellor.

In the Bundesrat, or Federal Council, the 25 members of the federation – comprising princes and free cities – had seats and voting rights, although these were weighted in such a way that Prussia had sufficient votes to carry the day on important matters. By virtue of this voting structure, Prussia was able to exercise a veto.

The Reichstag, or Imperial Diet, was the parliament elected by the people. Unlike the Prussian Diet – the *Landtag* – which was based on a three-class voting system that greatly favoured the propertied class, the Reichstag was elected directly by secret ballot on the basis of equal universal suffrage. Women were not allowed to vote, however. This electoral system was very progressive for its time, but its impact was lessened by the constituency boundaries having been drawn in such a way that urban areas were considerably underrepresented in relation to rural areas,

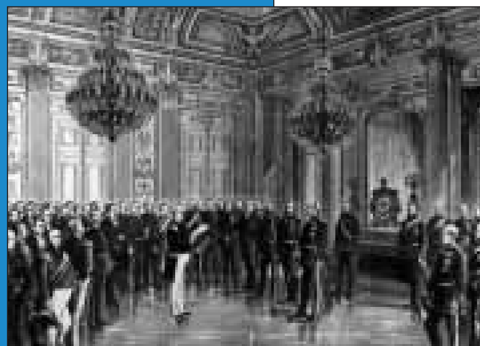
EUGEN RICHTER, CHAIRMAN OF THE PROGRESS PARTY, ON THE LIBERAL LEFT, DESCRIBES THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE REICHSTAG IN 1871:

The 21st of March, the day before the Emperor's 75th birthday, was appointed as the date for the opening of the first German Reichstag. A great number of Members had gathered on that day in the White Hall of the Royal Palace in Berlin.

The ceremonial protocol which had been used at the first opening of the North German Reichstag four years previously was once again adopted …

The elderly Emperor was preceded by the following dignitaries, who walked behind the courtiers: first came Count Moltke with the unsheathed imperial sword; on his right was General von Peuker, erstwhile Imperial Minister of War in Frankfurt, carrying the imperial orb on a cushion; behind them were General Albrecht von Roon, Minister of War, bearing the sceptre, which also rested on a cushion, and, at his side, Count von Redern with the royal crown; behind him, walking somewhat unsteadily, came the elderly Field Marshal Count Wrangel with the imperial standard.

For the election of the last emperor in the old Holy Roman Empire, the imperial princes had carried the imperial insignia at the front of the procession, as vividly described in Goethe's 'Truth and Poetry'. On this occasion, however, as in 1867, only Prussian insignia, not imperial insignia, could be paraded. Nevertheless, the throne installed in the White Hall was said to be a relic from the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. It was a seat dating from the time of the Saxon dynasty, on which one of the old emperors may have sat, and had been found in Goslar and saved by a private collector. With the lower part made of stone and the upper part of bronze, it was indeed an unusual sight. Emperor William read the imperial address …



which effectively meant that the propertied classes had a far stronger political voice than the lower classes, particularly the swelling ranks of industrial labour.

The powers vested in the Reichstag by the constitution were confined to lawmaking – including the right to initiate legislation – and to its role in the discussion and adoption of the budget. But even these rights were shared with the Bundesrat, which was dominated by Prussia.

NO PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT

The constitution assigned wide powers to the Emperor and the Imperial Chancellor appointed by him. The Imperial Chancellor held all the strings. As a rule, he was also Prime Minister of Prussia. He chaired the Bundesrat and determined the policy of the Empire, particularly its foreign policy. His was the sole supervisory authority over the executive, for there was no government in the institutional sense. The various imperial departments were each headed by a secretary of state, who was bound by the instructions of his superior, the Imperial Chancellor. Only in later years were the individual ministries detached from the Imperial Chancellery.

Emperor William II opens the Reichstag in the White Hall of Berlin Palace in 1888. Painting by Anton von Werner.

Since the Reichstag was neither involved in the appointment of the Chancellor nor empowered to force his resignation by means of a

motion of no confidence, it had virtually no control over the government. Excluded from political responsibility and the formation of governments, the Reichstag could not offer its members any opportunity to prepare for the exercise of governmental power and to gather experience of government business in political office.

THE ANTI-CATHOLIC *KULTURKAMPF* AND THE PERSECUTION OF SOCIALISTS

Even a Chancellor vested by the constitution with such great power and freedom of action, however, depends on the support of a parliamentary majority to make his policy enforceable by enshrining it in law. This applies to

IMPRESSIONS OF THE REICHSTAG DEBATING CHAMBER IN THE ROYAL PRUSSIAN PORCELAIN WORKS

In spite of its less than sturdy architecture, the debating chamber still makes a thoroughly dignified and imposing impression. The floor is covered throughout its length with a thick tan-coloured carpet, the desks and benches are made of natural brown wood and leather, and the walls and pillars are in matching colours.

The table on which … the two ballot boxes stand is the 'Table of the House'. The two ballot boxes are only used when secret voting by ballot takes place, and their use is reserved in practice for the election of the President of the Reichstag. The Table itself is used more frequently. That is, of course, where documents are 'tabled' for deputies to have immediate sight of them or to peruse them. 'I have the honour to place this on the Table of the House' is a favoured way of ending speeches. Sometimes the tabled items are filed papers or written evidence; sometimes they are building plans and front elevations of proposed edifices which the Reichstag is asked to approve. The head of the Imperial Mail, that prolific builder, is especially enamoured of such seductive presentations. The 'Table of the House' has also seen very attractive pictures from our colonies, but also on occasion the strangest things which are intended to serve as visual evidence. In a debate on customs duties, for example, a deputy from Thuringia placed samples from the toy-making industry of his native state on the Table of the House. They were well received, and the public in the galleries who knew nothing of the purpose and context of this display were astonished at the sight of representatives of the people playing with dolls and joke articles.

'Vom Deutschen Reichstag. Realistische Skizzen eines Eingeweihten', **in** ***Vom Fels zum Meer. Spemann's Illustrierte Zeitschrift für das Deutsche Haus.*** **Vol. 2., 1893.**

every Chancellor, including one with such force of character as Bismarck. Until the early eighties, Bismarck relied on a majority composed of National Liberals and Free Conservatives and pursued an anti-Catholic policy, for which the term *Kulturkampf* was soon coined.

Be that as it may, much of the Reichstag's flurry of legislative activity, especially in the early years, stemmed from its own initiatives, and it made progress towards the establishment of the rule of law, especially in the domains of criminal, civil and administrative legislation. Notable electoral gains for the Centre and the Social Democrats in the 1878 Reichstag elections prompted the Chancellor to change course in his domestic policies at the start of the eighties. The *Kulturkampf* was gradually resolved and gave way to a new unrelenting struggle against Social Democracy. Bismarck responded to the rise of the Social Democrats by means of a special act for the suppression of Socialist activity and the persecution of Social Democrat activists – the so-called Socialist Laws of 1878 – but also sought to inhibit the growth of the movement by means of a progressive social policy. The welfare legislation initiated by Bismarck to this end was actually one of the major legislative achievements of the Reichstag.

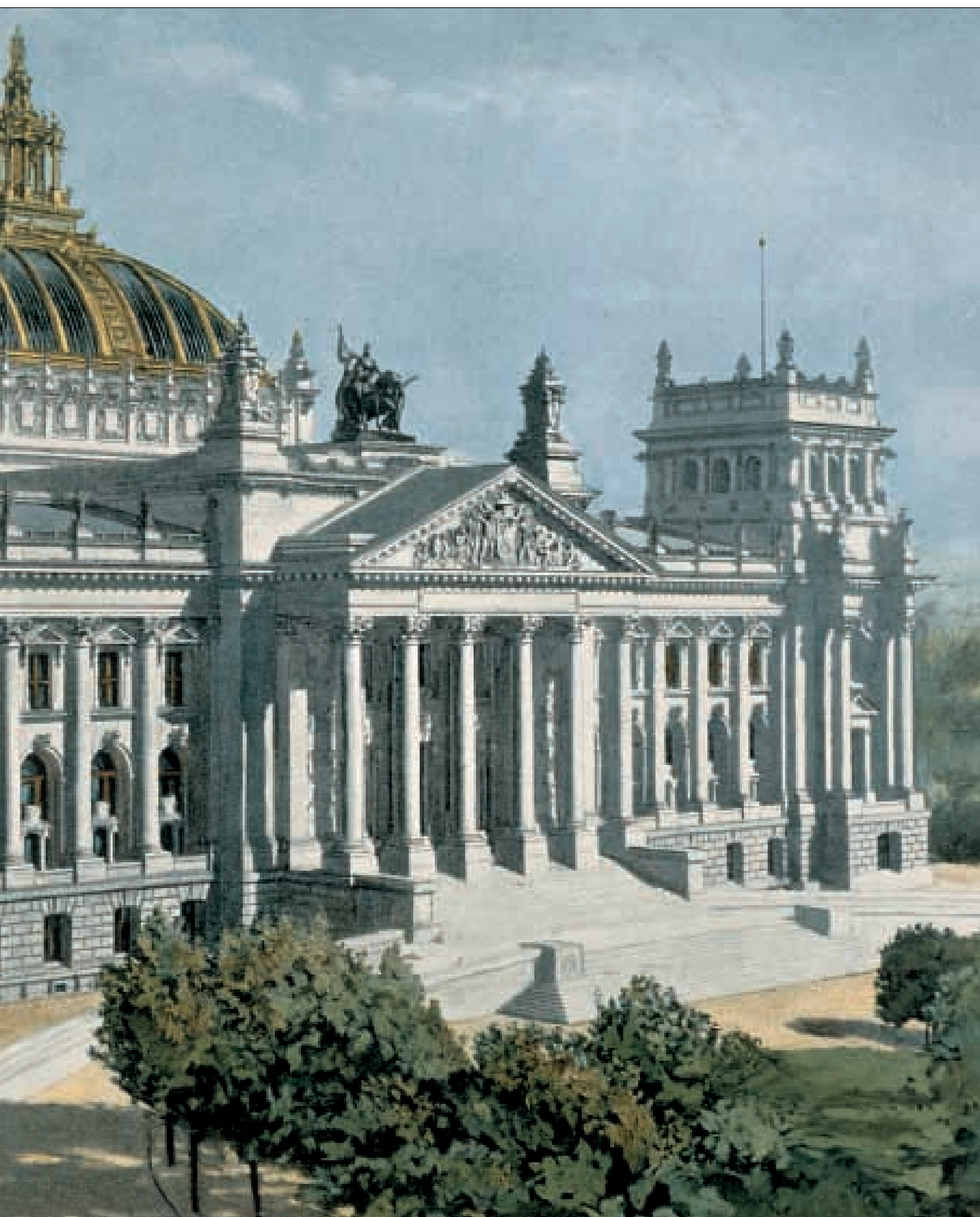
Facing page:
Sitting of the Reichstag in the former Royal Prussian Porcelain Works at No 4 Leipziger Strasse.

This page:
Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck addressing the Reichstag.

Overleaf:
The Reichstag building, built to the designs of architect Paul Wallot and formally opened in 1894.

THE REICHSTAG GAINS IN STRENGTH – BUT NO BREAKTHROUGH TO A PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

After Bismarck's departure from office in March 1890, the situation started to change. On 10 December 1894 the inaugural sitting of Parliament took place in the newly constructed Reichstag building. The Reichstag assumed greater political weight. By using its key role as a budgetary authority, it gradually increased its power. In



1912, by virtue of an amendment to its Rules of Procedure, it acquired the right to pass a vote of censure on the incumbent government, although such a vote did not suffice to force a Chancellor's resignation. The crucial breakthrough to a parliamentary system of government had not yet been made.

DEATHBED CONVERSION TO PARLIAMENTARIANISM

And so in 1914, the Empire, with a government that remained free of parliamentary control and political accountability to the Reichstag, entered the First World War. Indeed, as the war went on, the civil power in general was increasingly supplanted by the military power of the Army High Command. Not until the autumn of 1918, when military defeat had become inevitable, did the Army High Command decide to restore political responsibility to a civilian government dependent on majority support in the Reichstag. The constitutional amendment to this effect was adopted by the Reichstag on 22 October and signed by the Kaiser, but it came too late to save the monarchy and the German Empire as constituted in 1871.

This page:
On 10 December 1894, the Reichstag met for the first time in its new building next to the Tiergarten.

Facing page:
Depiction of the Reichstag in session shortly before the fall of the monarchy; by virtue of a constitutional amendment of 22 October 1918, the powers of the Reichstag now extended to the formation of the government.

A few days after this constitutional reform had brought parliamentary government to the Empire, revolution broke out. The new Chancellor, Prince Max von Baden, who now depended on the confidence of the Reichstag, announced the abdication of the Emperor, who took refuge in the neutral Netherlands. On 9 November 1918, Philipp Scheidemann (SPD), a junior minister in Prince Max's Government, proclaimed the German Republic from a balcony of the Reichstag building in Berlin.

1919/20: THE CONSTITUENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN WEIMAR

For a short time after the November revolution of 1918, it was touch and go whether Germany would develop into a Socialist soviet republic based on the Bolshevik model or into a parliamentary democracy based on a liberal constitution. While Workers' and Soldiers' Councils were being formed throughout the country, a Council of People's Representatives formed by the Majority Social Democrats (SPD) and the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), who were further to the left than the SPD, took over the reins of government in Berlin. At its head was the SPD chairman, Friedrich Ebert, who upheld the aim of parlia-

mentary democracy and secured the endorsement of this aim by the Congress of German Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, which met in the Prussian Chamber of Deputies in Berlin from 16 to 20 December 1918. By virtue of a resolution passed by the Congress, elections to a constituent national assembly were to be held on 19 January 1919.

DECISION IN FAVOUR OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND FOR ELECTIONS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

During the election campaign, radical left-wing organisations tried to incite a mass insurrection in order to overthrow the government and clear the way for a Socialist soviet republic. At the beginning of January, street fighting raged in Berlin. Against this 'Spartacist uprising' the Government deployed regular troops and units of the voluntary Free Corps, most of which were anti-republican and which proceeded against demonstrators with brutal disregard for the law. The murder of the Spartacist leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg by officers of the Free Corps set off a chain of assassination attempts against political figures in the new Republic.

Despite the continuing disturbances, the elections to the Constituent National Assembly on 19 January 1919 were conducted in an orderly fashion. For the first time, women had the right to vote and stand for election, and some women were thus able to win seats in the National Assembly.

The three parties – the SPD, the Centre and the German Democratic Party – all of which backed parliamentary democracy and the Republic and later came to be known as the 'Weimar

Facing page, top: Armed supporters of the Communist Spartacus League on the march in Berlin during the Spartacist revolt of January 1919. Troops under the command of People's Commissar Gustav Noske (SPD) restored order.

Facing page, bottom: Meeting of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in the plenary chamber of the Reichstag in December 1918. The speaker on the podium is Otto Wels, who later became chairman of the SPD.

This page: Troops guard a side entrance to the Reichstag building, where the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils are meeting, in November 1918.

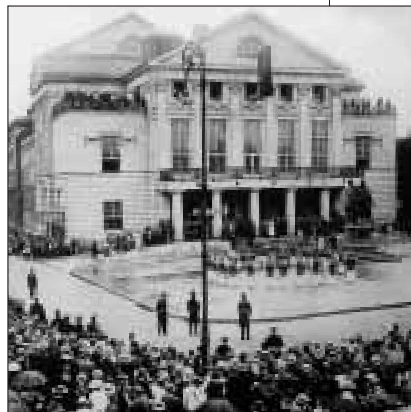
coalition' provided a total of 331 Members of the Assembly, which represented a handsome majority of 78% of all seats.

The USPD, which was only prepared to accept liberal parliamentary constitutionalism as a step towards the achievement of a socialist order and whose preferred option was a soviet-style dictatorship based on people's councils, managed to win no more than 22 seats; of the remaining seats, 19 went to the German People's Party (DVP), formed out of the right wing of the National Liberals; the DVP was initially pro-monarchy but subsequently came to terms with the republican system of government. The German National People's Party (DNVP), which largely recruited its members from the ranks of the old German Conservative Party and rejected both republicanism and parliamentary democracy, secured 44 seats.

CONSTITUTIONAL DELIBERATIONS IN WEIMAR
IN A HARSH POLITICAL CLIMATE AT HOME
AND ABROAD

On 6 February 1919, the National Assembly convened at the National Theatre in Weimar, the building being guarded by members of the Berlin police force and Free Corps troops. Weimar was chosen instead of Berlin so that the constitution could be discussed without pressure from the crowds on the streets. The main task of the National Assembly was to draft a constitution. It had to perform that task, however, against a background of tremendous political strains at home and abroad. The tough peace terms dictated by the Allies put the Assembly in the direst of predicaments. The signing of the Treaty of Versailles by the representatives of the German Government on 28 June 1919 gave the opponents of the Republic on the nationalist Right a welcome opportunity to unleash a vicious smear campaign against the leading representatives of the Republic.

The National Assembly quickly set about the task of forming a viable government. Immediately after convening, it passed a law on the provisional organisation of the governmental powers of the *Reich,* elected Friedrich Ebert President of the *Reich* and approved the formation of a coalition government comprising the three pro-republican parties.



THE DUAL PRESIDENTIAL/PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

The Constitution of the Reich, which was adopted by the National Assembly on 31 July 1919 and signed by President Ebert on 11 August, shows clear signs of compromise by the three coalition partners. The structure of the constitution was flawed, as it later emerged with devastating consequences, in that it combined two heterogeneous elements, namely a presidential system with a strong directly elected President of the *Reich* and his appointed government and a parliamentary system of government in which Parliament was vested with strong legislative powers and in which the Government was accountable to Parliament. This constitutionally enshrined 'dualism' of parliamentary and presidential features in the system of government, coupled with unlimited scope for the activities of anti-constitutional forces, did not serve to stabilise parliamentary democracy but sowed the

seeds of its decline and ultimate destruction. Moreover, by including such elements of direct democracy as the petition for a referendum and the plebiscite, the Weimar Constitution added more weapons to the anti-parliamentarians' armoury.

Facing page, left:
Last page of the constitution adopted by the National Assembly in Weimar and promulgated on 11 August 1919, bearing the signatures of Friedrich Ebert and members of the Government.

Facing page, right:
The National Theatre in Weimar, the meeting place of the National Assembly, on the day on which SPD chairman Friedrich Ebert took the oath of office as President of the *Reich* following his election by the National Assembly.

This page:
The sixth of February 1919, the date on which the National Assembly held its inaugural sitting in Weimar, marked the birth of a German parliamentary republic.

1920 TO 1933: THE REICHSTAG IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

After the adoption of the Constitution, the National Assembly returned to Berlin. The Reichstag Building, which had served as a place of assembly for the city's Workers' and Soldiers' Councils during the revolution, resumed its role as the seat of Germany's national parliament. The National Assembly continued its work there until the first elections to the Reichstag. On 13 January 1920, however, the square in front of the Reichstag Building was the scene of a mass demonstration, organised by the USPD and Communists against a Works Councils Bill. The demonstration escalated into a bloody battle as an armed mob tried to storm the building. Machine-gun fire was used to disperse the demonstrators. They fled, leaving 42 people dead on the square. Two months later, the Kapp Putsch, staged by elements on the Right, forced the National Assembly to leave Berlin and to reconvene in Stuttgart for a short time. The insurgents' attempt to seize power was foiled, however, by passive resistance on the part of the ministerial bureaucracy and a general strike called by the trade unions.

THE STAUNCHEST SUPPORTERS OF THE REPUBLIC LOSE THEIR PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY

It was against this backdrop of domestic political pressure, tension and hostility that the Reichstag began its work in June 1920. The election results augured badly for the young republic. The parties of the Weimar coalition of SPD, German Democratic Party and Centre/ Bavarian People's Party (BVP) failed in this first bid to defend their absolute majority, which they never managed to regain at any election during the lifetime of the Weimar Republic.

The losses sustained by the 'republicans' and the gains made by the 'anti-republicans' reflected not only the grim political situation at home and abroad but also the unbridled smear campaign against the signatories of the peace treaty.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE REICHSTAG

Compared with the imperial Reichstag, the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic had a relatively powerful position among the organs of the Constitution. Firstly, it was the dominant legislative body and, secondly, it had a leading role to play in the formation of the government.

In practice, however, a different picture emerges. Because of the heterogeneous spectrum of political parties and the absence of a majority for the parties that unreservedly supported the Constitution and the Republic, it became increasingly difficult to form a government. Coalition governments without majority support, dependent on parliamentary sufferance for their survival, were the order of the day. Consequently, for want of stable parliamentary majorities, most governments were short-lived. The 14 years of the Weimar Republic saw a total of 20 governments, which means that the average term of office was only eight months. At the same time, this parliamentary instability and these frequent changes of government tarnished the reputation of Parliament, shook people's faith in parliamentary democracy and fuelled the vitriolic anti-parliamentarian and anti-republican polemics of the Right and Left.

The decline of Parliament was also precipitated by various clauses in the Constitution, such as the provision whereby the Chancellor, rather than being elected by Parliament, was appointed by the President of the *Reich* without a prior vote; another such clause was Article 48, which empowered the President of the Reich to enact emergency decrees in the event of serious disruption or endangerment of pub-

Facing page:
One of a number of armoured vans carrying insurgent soldiers during the Kapp Putsch of March 1920. The National Assembly withdrew to Stuttgart as the republic came under threat.

This page:
Paul Löbe presides over a sitting of the Reichstag. Apart from a brief interlude in 1924, Löbe, a Social Democrat, served as President of the Reichstag from 1920 to 1932.

Following the collapse of the Kapp Putsch, the insurgents (right) leave Berlin, while *Reichswehr* troops loyal to the Government (left) march into the city.

lic order and security; these decrees could then put the laws adopted by Parliament into temporary abeyance. The frequent use of the powers assigned by this article, particularly during the recurring crises of the early years, tended to diminish the sense of responsibility of Parliament and the political parties for cementing the stable majorities required for the formation of governments and lawmaking. Instead, the parties were inclined to see it as their duty to represent and further the interests and ideology of particular classes or groups instead of trying to develop tenable policy programmes to which the majority of the House could subscribe.

This is why, in those extremely difficult early years, culminating in the crises of 1923, the Republic tottered on the brink of the abyss on several occasions.

FOLLOWING CRISES, ENABLING ACTS AND EMERGENCY DECREES, THE REPUBLIC ACHIEVES TEMPORARY STABILITY

The introduction of the *Rentenmark*, a temporary currency backed by the mortgaged assets of German industry, commerce and agriculture, in November 1923 and the *Reichsmark* in October 1924 as well as an interim arrangement regarding the reparations payable by Germany – the Dawes Plan – heralded a gradual improvement in the economic situation which also paved the way for the consolidation of the national budget. In the field of foreign policy, Gustav Stresemann of the German People's Party (DVP), who held the post of foreign minister throughout the period from 1923 to 1929 in spite of intervening changes of government, succeeded in ending German isolation. His sudden death in October 1929, like the untimely death of Friedrich Ebert, the first President of the *Reich,* in February 1925, was a sad loss to the Republic. Following Ebert's premature death, the elderly Paul von Hindenburg, a retired general of monarchist persuasion, was elected to succeed him. Although Hindenburg observed the Constitution, in January 1933 he

ultimately succumbed, albeit reluctantly, to pressure from his closest advisers to entrust the reins of government to the man he called the 'Bohemian lance corporal' – Adolf Hitler.

THE GROUNDSWELL OF ANTI-PARLIAMENTARIANISM ENGULFS THE REPUBLIC

During the period of economic consolidation up to 1929, the Reichstag managed, notwithstanding the lack of a stable majority, to legislate effectively. Nevertheless, not even the substantial improvement in the economic situation could eliminate widespread anti-parliamentarian sentiments. But it took the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 to provide the militant parties of the far Right and Left with the conditions in which they could mobilise the masses. While growing unemployment continually swelled the ranks of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), which took its orders from Moscow, the German National People's Party (DNVP) moved further to the Right and allied itself with Hitler's up-and-coming National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), which was skilfully exploiting a widespread sense of despair and disillusionment, anti-parliamentarianism, anti-Marxism, anti-capitalism and anti-Semitism to lure voters from all classes of society and especially from the generation that had fought in the First World War and from the younger generation.

Gustav Stresemann (DVP, on the right) who served for many years as Foreign Minister in several cabinets of the Weimar Republic era, pictured in the Reichstag in June 1929. With him (from left to right) are Josef Wirth (Centre), Rudolf Hilferding (SPD) and Julius Curtius (DVP).

Finally, the Grand Coalition of the pro-Republic parties, including the German People's Party, which had been formed in 1928 under the chancellorship of Hermann Müller (SPD), failed to maintain a united front. Its collapse in 1930 was followed by the appointment of Hein-

rich Brüning (Centre) as Chancellor of the *Reich* at the head of a minority government excluding the SPD. When the Reichstag voted down an emergency decree, Brüning asked the President to dissolve Parliament. The result of the subsequent general election was devastating for the Republic, as the National Socialists, who had previously had 12 seats in the Reichstag, saw their representation increase ninefold to a total of 107 seats, some of which were won from the German Nationalists. The Communists also managed to increase their share from 54 to 77 seats at the expense of the Social Democrats, while the Liberals and the German Nationalists suffered substantial losses.

PARLIAMENTARY PARALYSIS AND RISE OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST MOVEMENT DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

From that point onward, the parties of the parliamentary centre could no longer summon up the power to exert an active influence on political decisions. So-called presidential cabinets, under the chancellorship of Heinrich Brüning until 1932, took the place of coalition governments. Brüning tried, by means of emergency decrees, to implement a policy of austerity and deflation in order to overcome the effects of the Depression and spiralling unemployment. Meanwhile, the mass movements of the far Right and Left were resorting to demagogy and increasingly crude tactics in their struggle against the existing order, a

Sitting of the Reichstag on 30 October 1930, showing the NSDAP Group, which had grown in size at the recent general election to 107 members, all of whom attended the Reichstag in SA uniforms.

PAUL LÖBE, A FORMER PRESIDENT (SPEAKER) OF THE REICHSTAG, RECALLS THE DEMISE OF PARLIAMENTARIANISM IN HIS MEMOIRS:

As the number of Communist deputies increased and selection procedures, because of the system of voting for party lists, became less rigorous, attempts were initiated to forcibly disrupt or discredit the proceedings of the House. This was done by infringing the Rules of Procedure, shouting, making abusive speeches, delivering endless tirades in which the same passages were repeated a dozen times and finally by committing acts of violence. When the President tried to maintain order, he was subjected to foul-mouthed abuse ...

For a few years the Reichstag was able to conduct its business in an orderly manner once more. In 1930, however, when the German people returned 107 National Socialists along with 77 Communists to Paul Wallot's Reichstag building, and 40 members of Alfred Hugenberg's German National People's Party held a protective hand over the Nazis, the storm erupted again. The extreme Right and the extreme Left fed each other lines, supported each other's obstructive motions, greeted with thunderous applause the outpouring of invective by deputies with diametrically opposed views and tried to paralyse the work of Parliament and the Government by tabling nonsensical and demagogic motions... Mob law and hypocrisy gradually undermined the proper conduct of parliamentary business. ... But where orderly parliamentary business becomes impossible, enabling acts come into play – dangerous expedients in intolerable situations – and enabling acts are followed by a state of emergency, which is followed in turn by dictatorship and everything that goes with it. Anyone with a part to play in political decision-making today must be mindful of this sequence of events that led to the downfall of German parliamentarianism.

Tr. from Paul Löbe, *Der Weg war lang. Lebenserinnerungen.* Berlin, 1954, pp. 198 *et seq.*

struggle that was not only confined to Parliament but was also spilling over into the streets.

Another general election in July 1932, following Brüning's dismissal, enabled the National Socialists to double their representation to 230 seats, which made them the strongest party in the Reichstag. The first consequence of this was that Paul Löbe (SPD), who had served for many years as the President of the Reichstag, managing with consummate skill to bring the House to order and ensure that parliamentary business was properly conducted, even in the turbulent conditions of latter years, had to surrender his post to the National Socialist Hermann Göring.

Even though the National Socialists lost some of their seats when another general election was held in November 1932, they remained the strongest party in the Reichstag. This Reichstag, however, was to play no further part in political developments. Although the National Socialists were losing ground, President Hindenburg gave in to his advisers and to powerful extraparliamentary lobbies and appointed Hitler Chancellor of the Reich at the head of a coalition government of National Socialists and German Nationalists on 30 January 1933. Among the first measures taken by the new head of government was to ask the President to dissolve the Reichstag and call a general election for 5 March 1933. Hitler used the period of the election campaign, however, to take decisive steps towards a National Socialist 'seizure of power'

This page:
National Socialist Hermann Göring presides over the Reichstag sitting of 12 November 1932. While the Chancellor, Franz von Papen (in the government bench, standing) promulgates the presidential order for the dissolution of the Reichstag, Göring tries, by looking away, to avoid acknowledging the order.

Facing page:
The Reichstag, pictured here in February 1933, a few days before the arson attack, was no longer a bulwark of democracy.

1933 TO 1945: THE REICHSTAG IN THE 'THIRD REICH'

In the 'Third Reich' that Hitler and the National Socialists intended to establish as a totalitarian state under a single leader ('*Führer* state'), there was no place for an independent Parliament which restricted the exercise of governmental power or for a pluralist party system. On the contrary, even during their rise from obscurity, the National Socialists had always regarded Parliament as the instrument that would enable them to seize power by pseudo-legal means, but otherwise they subjected it to the same contempt and ridicule they poured on the party system of the Weimar Republic, which they sought to 'liquidate'. It is hardly surprising, then, that the new regime immediately launched a systematic reign of terror designed to ensure that its political adversaries, especially the Social Democrats and Communists, could not campaign freely for election. It made great political capital out of an arson attack on the Reichstag on the evening of 27 February 1933, which largely destroyed the interior of the building. The National Socialists accused the Communists of having started the fire in order to send out a sig-

This page, top:
An arson attack on the evening of 27 February 1933 destroyed the interior of the Reichstag building, providing the National Socialist regime with a pretext to suspend all the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Weimar Constitution.

This page, bottom:
The newly elected Reichstag found a new home in the Kroll Opera House, diagonally opposite the Reichstag building.

Facing page:
The sitting of the Reichstag in the Kroll Opera House on 21 March 1933 at which the Enabling Bill tabled by Adolf Hitler was to be discussed. The National Socialist deputies are seen greeting the National Socialist President of the Reichstag with the Nazi salute.

nal that would rally resistance to the new government. On the very next day, the government enacted an order 'for the protection of the people and the state' referred to as the Reichstag Fire Decree, suspending 'until further notice' virtually all the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Weimar Constitution and triggering a wave of arrests of Communist officials and Members of the Reichstag as well as banning the mouthpieces of the Communist and Social Democratic press.

THE ENABLING ACT – THE END OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

For all that, the National Socialists were unable to secure an absolute majority at the polls in March 1933 in what was still a relatively free election, obtaining only 43.9% of the seats in the Reichstag. Even in these circumstances, Hitler was able to continue his game with the centre-right and conservative parties. With the Reichstag building gutted by the fire, the newly elected Parliament sat in the Kroll Opera House in Berlin, where Hitler tabled a bill that would enable the government, for a period of four years, to enact legislation, including constitutional amendments, without the participation of the Reichstag and the Reichsrat in order to release the regime from the shackles imposed by the Constitution without repealing it altogether.

With promises, most of which were subsequently broken, and explicit threats, Hitler managed to persuade the parties of the Centre-Right to fall into line. Only the parliamentary group of the SPD, under the chairmanship of Otto Wels, who made a courageous speech calling for the preservation of democracy, humanity and justice, voted *en bloc* against

the bill. The 81 Members representing the Communist KPD had already been stripped of their mandates on the basis of the Reichstag Fire Decree. But even if the KPD Members had been there along with the 26 missing Social Democratic Members, some of whom had been arrested, while others had gone into hiding, and even if, as might be assumed, both groups had opposed the bill *en bloc,* that would not have changed the outcome of the vote. The 444 'yes' votes by which the bill was passed would still have exceeded the requisite two-thirds majority of Members present. The only conclusion is that, by adopting the bill, the Reichstag itself effectively signed the death warrant of democracy and the rule of law.

What followed was merely the implementation of the Reichstag Fire Edict and the Enabling Act. Trade unions and political parties were dissolved. On 14 July 1933, the Government of the *Reich* passed a law which laid down that the National Socialist German Workers' Party was the only lawful political party and that anyone attempting to preserve or create another party was liable to imprisonment.

THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST REICHSTAG AS AN AUDITORIUM

The Reichstag continued to exist and was 'elected' three more times, but all of its members took their orders from the National Socialists, and it no longer had any of the characteristics of a real parliament. It served as an auditorium, the deputies being uniformed spectators whose task was to applaud the speeches in which Hitler outlined his aims. They were not required to make decisions. For the day of the party's national rally in 1935, Hitler convoked a sitting of the Reichstag in Nuremberg to approve the National Socialist race laws, thereby creating a particularly effective legal basis for the persecution and oppression of the Jews.

During the war, the Reichstag was convoked again to assign to Hitler, as 'Chief Justice and Supreme Judge of the German People', the power to take decisions and impose penalties as he saw fit if the 'good of the nation' so warranted. In this way the entire German nation was to be made jointly liable for the crimes ordered by Hitler in his role as the Supreme Judge.

FORMER REICHSTAG MEMBERS BECOME VICTIMS OF NATIONAL SOCIALIST TYRANNY

This page:
At the Reichstag sitting of 28 April 1939, Adolf Hitler announces his rejection of an appeal for peace from President Roosevelt.

Facing page:
Plenary meeting of the victorious powers at the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945 at which the future of Germany was discussed.

The victims of the National Socialist regime also included numerous former Members of the National Assembly and Reichstag of the Weimar Republic. Of the 1,104 men and 101 women alive in 1933 who were or had been Members of the Reichstag – these figures exclude the National Socialist deputies – 774 were subjected to some form of persecution in the period from 1933 to 1945. The range of measures taken against them included dismissal from employment, Gestapo surveillance, loss of citizenship, criminal prosecution and imprisonment and even extended to brutal mistreatment and assassination.

One in three of these former Reichstag deputies was arrested at least once between 1933 and 1945. More than 100 died or were driven to suicide as a result of persecution. After 1945, many of the former Reichstag deputies who survived volunteered to serve again in the parliaments and political parties of the Federal Republic of Germany and in the creation of a new parliamentary democracy.

1948/49: THE PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL

The twelve-year rule of the totalitarian Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945 that followed the Weimar Republic ended with the total collapse of the German *Reich* amid devastation and destruction on an unimaginable scale. After the unconditional surrender of the German *Wehrmacht* on 8 May 1945, the whole of Germany was occupied by the four victorious powers – France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States – which also assumed governmental authority. For many years, no sovereignty would be exercised by the Germans themselves. Nor could the Western occupying powers reach agreement with the Eastern occupying power on a government and administration for the whole of Germany, although this had been their declared intention since the time of the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945.

SEPARATE POLICIES IN EAST AND WEST ON THE GERMAN QUESTION

The East-West conflict that was developing out of the ideological differences and political power struggle between the Soviet Union and the three Western powers meant that both sides went their own way in formulating their policies for the future of Germany. Not least out of economic necessity, the United States and the United Kingdom took the first step in this direction by deciding to merge their zones of occupation and to begin work on the creation of a partial German state based on the principle of parliamentary democracy. France subsequently integrated its zone of occupation into this unified structure. The Soviet Union also began to make its own preparations to establish a state in the territory of its zone of oc-

cupation, which gradually assumed more and more of the characteristics of the Soviet model of Socialist-Communist dictatorship. Thus, in the two parts of Germany different systems of government and different social systems emerged which were incompatible with each other, and Germany was divided for more than four decades.

The establishment of democracy began in all the zones of occupation with the authorisation of political parties and the formation of federal states *(Länder)* with their own constitutions, parliaments and governments. But whereas liberal democracy was able to develop gradually at the local and regional levels in the Western zones, the freedom of non-Communist parties in the Soviet zone of occupation was increasingly curtailed with a view to establishing the primacy of the Communist party. This intention was soon clearly manifested in the forced unification of the Social Democratic Party with the Communist Party to form the Socialist Unity Party of Germany *(Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands – SED)* on 21/22 April 1946 and thereafter in the incorporation of all the political parties in the Soviet zone into a 'Democratic Bloc' dominated by the SED.

MANDATE ISSUED TO THE STATE PREMIERS TO CONVOKE A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The final parting of the ways between the Eastern and Western occupying powers came in the summer of 1948, when the Western powers instructed and empowered the chief ministers, the *Ministerpräsidenten,* of the *Länder* in the three Western zones to convoke a Constituent National Assembly. The premiers complied, in spite of their initial reluctance, born of a fear that it might divide Germany for a long time to come. Eventually, however, they agreed, once they had secured the acquiescence of the three powers to the principle that the document to be drafted should not be a 'constitution' but only a 'basic law' for a state that would be created on a 'temporary' basis. The designation 'constituent assembly' was avoided, and

the assembly that was to be convoked was given the name 'Parliamentary Council'.

A WEALTH OF POLITICAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL

On 1 September 1948, the Parliamentary Council assembled for its inaugural meeting in Bonn. The venue was a college of education, the *Pädagogische Akademie,* situated on the left bank of the Rhine – the same building that would later serve as the Parliament of the Federal Republic. Before the constitutive meeting, the 65 members – sixty men and five women – along with five non-voting delegates from Berlin, gathered for the opening ceremony in the Alexander König Museum of Zoology in Bonn. The composition of the Parliamentary Council in terms of political affiliation already reflected the balance among the parties that would obtain for many years. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), provided a total of 27 members, as did the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). The Liberals – the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Free People's Party (FVP) – together provided five members, while the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), the German Party (DP) and the Centre were represented with two members each. Many members of the Parliamentary Council had parliamentary experience from the Weimar period.

Among the members of the Parliamentary Council were numerous figures who were destined to play important political roles in the future Federal Republic, such as Konrad Adenauer, the 72-year-old chairman of the CDU in the British zone of occupation, who was elected to preside over the deliberations of the Parliamentary Council, Carlo Schmid (SPD), who was elected to chair the executive committee, and Theodor Heuss (FDP), who would later become the first President of the Federal Republic.

Kurt Schumacher, on the other hand, who was chairman of the SPD in the Western zones and later became

Facing page: Inauguration ceremony for the Parliamentary Council in the Alexander König Museum, Bonn, on 1 September 1948.

This page: Kurt Schumacher, chairman of the SPD, in his office in Hanover. Also present is Erich Ollenhauer (3rd from left), who would later succeed him as chairman of the party and parliamentary group.

Leader of the Opposition in the German Bundestag, was not a member of the Parliamentary Council, but he did influence the course of the deliberations from his office in Hanover.

THE BASIC LAW – THE FRUIT OF FREE DECISION-MAKING

The discussions were based on a draft constitution that had previously been drawn up by a Constitutional Convention, meeting in the Bavarian palace of Herrenchiemsee. Numerous matters aroused fierce controversy, particularly the content of directives from the occupying powers, but the Parliamentary Council was essentially free to take its own decisions, and so, at the final meeting of the Parliamentary Council on the occasion of the ratification and execution of the Basic Law on 23 May 1949, Konrad Adenauer was able to give assurances that, despite the imposed restrictions, the decision to adopt the Basic Law was a freely taken decision expressing the free will of the German people.

NOT A 'TEMPORARY SOLUTION' BUT A FULLY APPLICABLE CONSTITUTION

Even though initially the provisional character of the Basic Law was repeatedly emphasised – a point reflected in the wording of the preamble, which states that the German people, 'desiring to give a new order to political life for a transitional period', enacted the Basic Law – the instrument ultimately emerged as a sustainable constitution, which proved robust enough to withstand changing times and circumstances. The Basic Law unquestionably made a very considerable contribution to the success of the second attempt in the history of Germany to establish and perpetuate an effective system of parliamentary democracy.

Although its authors drew in many cases on provisions from the Weimar Constitution, the fact that defects and shortcomings in that Constitution had been a recipe

for the demise of democracy was uppermost in their minds. They rejected the Weimar model with its combination of parliamentary and presidential government in favour of a purely parliamentary system of government in which parliament alone was to be responsible for appointing and dismissing the head of government. The authors of the Basic Law also avoided all the plebiscitary elements of the Weimar Constitution, opting instead for a strictly representative form of democracy, in which political decision-making power rested solely with the parliaments, whose legitimacy derived from free elections, and with the governments appointed by them.

HUMAN DIGNITY AND THE PROTECTION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AS THE MAIN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Moreover, if the Federal Republic of Germany was to be built on the foundations of freedom and social justice, it was crucially important that the Basic Law should lay particularly strong emphasis on the principle of respecting and protecting human dignity and, by the same token, on the binding nature of fundamental rights and of the obligation to protect them. The constitutionally enshrined fundamental rights are binding on all three branches of government – the legislature, the executive and the judiciary – as directly enforceable law, and their essential substance is inviolable and may not be overridden even in cases where certain restrictions apply. This principle has proved its worth down through the decades. Its chief guarantor is the Federal Constitutional Court, to which all individuals and corporate entities can appeal if they believe that any of their fundamental rights are being violated by the public authorities.

Top:
Konrad Adenauer (CDU), chairman of the Parliamentary Council, in talks with the chairman of the executive committee, Carlo Schmid (SPD), and SPD party chairman Kurt Schumacher (from right to left).

Bottom:
The Parliamentary Council delivers its final vote on the Basic Law on 8 May 1949. In the foreground (right) is Theodor Heuss (FDP), who later became the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany.

1949 TO 1990: THE BUNDESTAG IN DIVIDED GERMANY

The Federal Republic of Germany that was called into existence by the German *Länder* in the Western zones regarded itself as the only legitimate legal successor of the German *Reich,* even though a second German state in the territory of the former *Reich* – the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – had been simultaneously created in the Soviet zone of occupation. Unlike the GDR, the Federal Republic of Germany was, from the beginning, able to invoke the freely expressed consent of the people, which was primarily affirmed in the free elections to the German Federal Diet, the Bundestag.

SUSTAINED CONCENTRATION OF VOTES AND APPROVAL OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

The first elections to the German Bundestag took place on 14 August 1949. A large number of parties as well as numerous independents standing in individual constituencies campaigned for the votes of the electorate. Even in this first election, however, the bulk of the vote was concentrated in the hands of three party groupings, namely the CDU/CSU, the SPD and the FDP. Until 1998, governmental power was invariably exercised by one pairing or other from these three groups.

This concentration of voter support on three or four leading parties, which became even more marked in subsequent general elections, combined with the refusal by the overwhelming majority of voters to support any of the efforts made by extremist parties to establish a firm electoral base, was a sign that the new parliamentary democracy was taking root and that, unlike the old Weimar Republic, it was attracting ever broader public approval and support as time went by.

BONN BECOMES THE FOCUS AND SYMBOL OF DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL IN GERMANY

On 7 September 1949, the German Bundestag and the Bundesrat, representing the *Länder,* met for their inaugural sittings. The sitting of the Bundestag was opened with a powerful address from the chair by Paul Löbe (SPD), the oldest Member of Parliament and former President (Speaker) of the Reichstag in the Weimar Republic.

By a narrow majority of 33 to 29 votes, the Parliamentary Council had chosen Bonn, favoured by Adenauer and the CDU/CSU, as the provisional seat of the main central authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany in preference to Frankfurt, which the SPD favoured. After lengthy debates, the Bundestag confirmed this decision in a vote on 10 November 1949. The way was now clear for Bonn to

Facing page: Inaugural sitting of the German Bundestag on 7 September 1949, chaired by the oldest member, Paul Löbe (SPD), former President of the Reichstag.

This page: The White House on the Rhine – the former College of Education in Bonn that was extended to serve as the seat of the Federal Parliament.

This page, left:
Among the members of the first Federal Government, headed by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (front row, 3rd from left), were Ludwig Erhard (CDU, Economics Minister – front row, 2nd from left), Franz Blücher (FDP, Vice-Chancellor, front row, 4th from left) and Jakob Kaiser (CDU, co-founder of the East German CDU and Minister of Pan-German Affairs, front row, 5th from left).

This page, right:
The Petersberg Hotel, seat of the Allied High Commissioners in Bonn.

Facing page:
Theodor Heuss, elected President of the Federal Republic by the Federal Convention on 12 September 1949, is driven through the streets of Bonn after his inauguration.

serve for five decades – which no one, of course, could have foreseen at that time – as the focus and symbol of democratic renewal in Germany.

Meanwhile, the three High Commissioners, representing the three occupying powers, which would jointly exercise sovereignty over the new state for some years to come and which, by virtue of the Occupation Statute, reserved the right to conduct the foreign affairs of the Federal Republic, established their headquarters high above Bonn in a hotel on top of the Petersberg, in the Siebengebirge (Seven Hills) range.

After the Bundestag had elected as its President Erich Köhler (CDU), former head of the Economic Council of the united economic area of the Tri-Zone, the Federal Convention *(Bundesversammlung)* met for the first time in Bonn on 12 September. The Convention comprises the Members of the Bundestag plus an equal number of delegates drawn from the state parliaments, and it convenes for the purpose of electing the President of the Federal Republic. At that first meeting it elected Theodor Heuss (FDP) to serve as the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany. Three days later, on 15 September, the Bundestag, by the narrowest of margins – just one vote – elected the Chairman of the Parliamentary Council, Konrad Adenauer (CDU), now aged 73, to be the country's first Federal Chancellor. Adenauer formed a coalition government comprising the CDU/CSU, the FDP and the German Party (DP). Thus the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany was largely completed. The final organisational step was taken in 1951 with the inauguration of the Federal Constitutional Court, the fifth of the supreme constitutional organs prescribed by the Basic Law.

For fourteen years, from 1949 to 1963, Konrad Adenauer headed the Federal Government. His adversary as Leader of the Opposition in the early days was Kurt Schumacher (SPD). After Schumacher's untimely death in 1952, this role was assumed by Erich Ollenhauer. From the outset – and for the first time in its history – Germany had a typical parliamentary system of government in which the Government, backed by a parliamentary majority, was confronted by an Opposition which questioned government policy and made alternative proposals. This confrontation, however, did not rule out a degree of collaboration between the governing majority and the Opposition in the parliamentary legislative process.

Particularly in the first decade, the Bundestag had a very heavy legislative workload, since it had to resolve acute crises and to overcome the legacy of war and of National Socialist tyranny. Moreover, many laws were devoted to the creation of the judicial and administrative machinery of the Federal Republic and to the realisation of the concept of a 'social market economy' developed by Ludwig Erhard and other Christian Social and neoliberal theorists. Among the outstanding pieces of legislation from the fifties are the laws introducing worker participation in the coal and steel industries, the Works Constitutions Act *(Betriebsverfassungsgesetz)* and the Restrictive Practices Act *(Kartellgesetz),* designed to promote competition, as well as the laws reforming the pensions system, which introduced index-linking, i.e. the adjustment of pension levels at regular intervals to take account of general income growth. The decision to align economic and social policies with the principle of the social market economy was taken in the early years and was to prove hugely significant. Although it was initially rejected by the Social Democrats, they later

supported it in a slightly modified form. A similar situation obtained with regard to the goal of alignment with the West, which Adenauer pursued with great determination and which was ultimately intended to lead to European integration, membership of NATO and the creation of the Federal Republic's own armed forces.

The aim of integration into the West and the creation of the Federal Armed Forces *(Bundeswehr)* were the subject of bitter disputes between the governing coalition and the opposition. While membership of the Western alliance was regarded on the Government side of the House as an absolute prerequisite for the protection of the Federal Republic and of its internal and external independence in relation to the Soviet Union, the SPD campaigned against the course pursued by Adenauer, because it believed that such a course would lengthen the odds against the eventual achievement of its resolutely pursued aim of early reunification. Towards the end of the decade, however, the SPD decided to lend its support to membership of the North Atlantic Alliance, which was already a *fait accompli,* and to a German contribution to the common defence effort. A similar situation occurred two decades later with the treaties concluded by the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition with the countries of Eastern Europe, although on that occasion the roles of the two major parties were reversed. The accession of the Federal Republic to the North Atlantic Alliance, and more particularly the conclusion of the Reparations Agreement with Israel, ratified by the Bundestag in 1953, enabled Germany to win new trust within the international community.

During this whole period, *Deutschlandpolitik*, policy relating to intra-German relations, was permanently on the agenda. The Bundestag never wavered from the aim of reunification. However, the Federal Republic's claim to be the sole representative of the German people, a claim endorsed by the Bundestag, was beginning to crumble. Under the Grand Coalition, the first steps were taken towards direct contacts with the government of the GDR.

On many occasions plenary sessions of the German Bundestag were also held in West Berlin, either in the assembly hall of the Technical University or in the new Congress Hall on the fringe of the Berlin Tiergarten (pictured here).

POLICY ADJUSTMENTS UNDER THE GRAND COALITION

The German system of government in the early years of the Federal Republic, in which the dominant personality of the Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, and his authoritative style of leadership played a major part, came to be defined as *Kanzlerdemokratie*. But even Adenauer had to yield increasingly to the parliamentary process and the parliamentary groups of the governing coalition. Many government bills, such as the bill enshrining the constitutional position of the *Bundeswehr* – the federal armed forces – were amended quite significantly in the course of parliamentary deliberations.

This page, top:
The demonstrations against the government and the Socialist Unity Party in the GDR on 17 June 1953 were crushed with the aid of Soviet troops.

This page, bottom:
The German Bundestag, under the presidency of Hermann Ehlers (CDU), pays silent tribute to the victims of the uprising of 17 June 1953 in the GDR. The Communist Members remain seated.

Facing page:
The construction of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961 sealed the division of Germany and separated the people in East and West for many years to come.

The picture really changed in the 1960s, once Adenauer had handed over the chancellorship to Ludwig Erhard (CDU) in 1963, in the middle of the third electoral term. The influence of the Bundestag grew. The decision to extend the prescription period for crimes committed under the National Socialist regime, for example, was taken by Parliament alone in a free vote. And Ludwig Erhard, who ultimately lost the confidence of the FDP, the junior partner in his governing coalition, in a budgetary crisis, was compelled to resign by his own parliamentary group.

Top:
One day after the resignation of Konrad Adenauer on 15 October 1963, Eugen Gerstenmaier (CDU, centre), President of the Bundestag, administers the oath of office to the new Chancellor, Ludwig Ehrhard (CDU).

Bottom:
Construction work nears completion on the skyscraper accommodating the Members' offices in Bonn, built at the suggestion of Bundestag President Eugen Gerstenmaier (CDU) and popularly known as *der lange Eugen* ('Tall Eugen').

The next government, the Grand Coalition of the CDU/CSU and SPD, with Kurt Georg Kiesinger (CDU) as Chancellor and Willy Brandt (SPD) as Vice-Chancellor, was in power from 1966 to 1969. Although it had the backing of a huge parliamentary majority – the FDP, with 49 seats plus one Berlin seat, being the only Opposition party – the Grand Coalition was still dependent on parliamentary support for its efforts to make necessary adjustments to framework economic legislation through the Stability Act *(Stabilitätsgesetz)* and more especially in the deliberations on the emergency constitutional provisions and emergency laws. And the outcome of these deliberations also marked a victory for parliamentarianism, in that a potential domestic or international crisis would not, as had originally been proclaimed, result in a temporary surrender of power to the executive. On the contrary, even in an emergency, the adopted laws and constitutional amendments provided for the retention of parliamentary rights of participation and scrutiny. This largely took the wind out of the sails of the extraparliamentary opposition – a broad protest movement, including anti-parliamentary elements, whose main aim was to fight the adoption of laws granting the government emergency powers.

Top:
In 1966, the CDU/CSU and SPD agreed to form a Grand Coalition, with Kurt-Georg Kiesinger (CDU, left) as Chancellor and Willy Brandt (SPD, right) as Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister.

POLITICAL REORIENTATION AND A NEW *OSTPOLITIK* UNDER THE CENTRE-LEFT COALITION

Neither the student revolts that erupted at universities in the late 1960s in connection with the extraparliamentary opposition movement nor the emergence of the 'New Left' on the fringes of parliamentary life were able to shake the foundations of parliamentary democracy. The revolts, however, were perceived as the expression of a growing need within society, particularly among the younger generation, for social reforms and political reorientation, and this need was addressed by the new coalition of Social Democrats and Liberals under the chancellorship of Willy Brandt which was formed after the parliamentary elections of 1969. The creation of this SPD-FDP coalition was a more significant watershed in the history of the Bundestag than any that had gone before. For the first time, the two strongest parliamentary groups in the Bundestag swapped roles, with the SPD becoming the senior partner in the coalition government and the CDU/CSU going into opposition for the first time.

Bottom:
Protest demonstrations by the extraparliamentary opposition and students accompanied the parliamentary deliberations on the enactment of emergency laws.

This page:
The cabinet of the Centre-Left coalition under Chancellor Willy Brandt (SPD). Next to him on the right of the photograph is Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister Walter Scheel (FDP). Next to Brandt on the left is Gustav Heinemann, President of the Federal Republic.

Facing page, top:
Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt (SPD) received the Nobel Peace Prize for the new *Ostpolitik*. On 20 October 1971, when news of the award reached Bonn, the President of the Bundestag, Kai-Uwe von Hassel, interrupted the parliamentary proceedings to offer a vote of congratulations to the Chancellor.

Facing page, bottom:
The first constructive motion of no confidence in the history of the Bundestag was defeated. In the vote on 27 April 1972, the challenger Rainer Barzel (CDU), seen here congratulating Willy Brandt, fell two votes short of the required majority. Brandt remained Chancellor.

As in the early years of the Adenauer era, under the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition headed by Willy Brandt and later by Helmut Schmidt, the German Question and foreign affairs initially dominated the parliamentary agenda and were the focus of undivided public attention. The new *Ostpolitik,* which led to the conclusion of treaties with the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia and, most significantly, of a treaty on the basis of relations with the GDR, was designed to defuse the confrontation between East and West and to establish regulated coexistence between the two German States with the aim of a gradual transition to active cooperation. Once again, the German Question locked Government and Opposition in a fierce parliamentary tug-of-war. When Members from the coalition parties crossed the floor of the House to join the CDU/CSU Group in 1972, stalemate ensued, and the CDU/CSU Group tabled a constructive motion of no confidence under Article 67 of the Basic Law, whereby any attempt by the Bundestag to depose the Federal Chancellor must be accompanied by the nomination of a successor. In this case, the Union parties sought to replace Willy Brandt with Rainer Barzel (CDU), but their motion failed.

Fresh elections then took place, and the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition was returned with a handsome majority. The SPD emerged as the largest group. By parliamentary custom, this entitled it to nominate the President (Speaker) of Parliament. For the first time, a

This page:
Helmut Schmidt (SPD, right) succeeded Willy Brandt as Chancellor following the latter's resignation in 1974. Hans-Dietrich Genscher (FDP, 2nd from right) became Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister.

Facing page, top:
The SPD emerged from the 1972 general election as the largest parliamentary group in the Bundestag. For the first time in German parliamentary history, a woman, Annemarie Renger (SPD), was elected President of the Bundestag.

Facing page, bottom:
A constructive vote of no confidence brought Helmut Kohl (CDU) the chancellorship at the head of a coalition of CDU, CSU and FDP. Hans Dietrich Genscher remained Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister.

woman, Annemarie Renger (SPD), was appointed to this post, which ranks higher than any public office save that of President of the Federal Republic.

SOCIAL REFORMS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

The legislative programme of the SPD-FDP coalition contained a number of social and educational reforms as well as plans to reform matrimonial, family and criminal law.

However, the attention of the Federal Government, led by Helmut Schmidt (SPD) from 1974 following the resignation of Willy Brandt when one of his closest aides, Günter Guillaume, was unmasked as a GDR spy, and of the Bundestag was increasingly diverted by developments in the world at large and within German society. These included the precarious energy situation following an oil embargo imposed by the oil-producing nations of the Middle East in the wake of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the emergence of popular initiatives for the protection of the environment and against the use of nuclear

power and, above all, a wave of assassinations and assassination attempts by terrorist groups, targeting leading industrialists and politicians. Government and Opposition stood shoulder to shoulder in the fight against terrorism.

FDP CHANGES SIDES
TO FORM A COALITION WITH THE CDU/CSU

At the beginning of the eighties, as the economic difficulties worsened, bringing a steady increase in unemployment, negative economic growth, rising budgetary deficits and inflationary trends, the FDP, under Hans-Dietrich Genscher, made overtures to the CDU/CSU with a view to renewing the former alliance between the two groups. Divisions within the SPD on whether to support the NATO 'dual-track' decision to modernise the West's intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) if the Soviet Union did not desist from its massive deployment of new intermediate-range nuclear missiles targeted at Western Europe were an additional reason for the FDP's 'defection' from the governing coalition.

The SPD-FDP coalition collapsed, and Helmut Kohl (CDU) was elected Chancellor by means of a constructive vote of no confidence on 1 October 1982. The new coalition duly went to the country at the beginning of 1983 and won an impressive vote of approval from the electorate. In the same year, despite protest demonstrations by millions of supporters of the peace movement, the Bundestag gave the green light for INF modernisation by agreeing, after a debate lasting several days, to the deployment of new U.S. intermediate-range nuclear missiles on German soil.

The new Bundestag was also characterised by an entirely new phenomenon. At its first attempt to enter Parliament, the Green Party won enough seats to form a parliamentary group, with many young Members in its ranks, and join the SPD in opposition. The Greens regarded the alternative citizens' initiatives, the opponents of nuclear power and the peace movement as their main constituencies.

FUTURE-RELATED ISSUES INCREASINGLY DETERMINE THE PARLIAMENTARY AGENDA

Among the problems and issues inherited by the newly elected Bundestag were the continuing rise in unemployment, which persisted into the mid-eighties, the consolidation of the economy and the federal budget, energy policy and the continuing scourge of terrorism, which had been claiming new victims. To an increasing extent, envi-

ronmental pollution arising from developments in science and technology and from the continuing increase in the volume of road and air traffic was also the subject of parliamentary debate and legislation. Future-related issues in general – such as the development of the health system and social-insurance schemes as well as the continuing influx of asylum-seekers and of resettlers from Eastern Europe and East Germany – featured repeatedly on the parliamentary agenda.

Another issue relating to the future was the development of the European Communities, which, after a period

Left:
Karl Carstens (CDU), who served as President of the Bundestag from 1976 to 1979, was elected President of the Federal Republic by the Federal Convention in 1979.

of stagnation, received fresh impetus around the middle of the decade with the drafting of the Single European Act, whose provisions included the completion of the single European market by 31 December 1992.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM – AN UNENDING TASK

The 1980s were also marked by a growing need to address the question of reforming the work of parliament. At the root of these efforts was a desire to strengthen the rights of Parliament in relation to the Government, to put stronger emphasis on the rights of individual Members in Parliament and to give parliamentary debates a higher public profile, including more media coverage. Conditions in Parliament and the way in which Members perceived the role of the Bundestag were subjected to critical scrutiny in lengthy plenary debates with numerous contributions from the floor of the House. At the same time, it emerged that reforming parliamentary proceedings and working conditions was not a one-off act but had to be treated as a continuous process.

From the outset, each President of the Bundestag, who is bound by the Rules of Procedure to conduct the business of the Bundestag and to promote its work, as well as the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and the Council of Elders devoted a great deal of attention to this task.

FROM INTRA-GERMAN RELATIONS TO PEACEFUL REVOLUTION IN THE GDR

In the 1970s, the policy of the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition on the German Question had initially been the subject of repeated bitter altercations between Government and Opposition in the Bundestag. However, following the conclusion of the Treaty on the Basis of Relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, which led to a series of agree-

Facing page, centre: Richard Stücklen (CSU), President of the Bundestag from 1979 to 1983 (right), and his successor, Rainer Barzel (CDU), who presided over the Bundestag from 1983 to 1984 and initiated the first of the debates in which the Bundestag examined its own role.

Facing page, right: Philipp Jenninger (CDU), President of the Bundestag from 1984 to 1988; under his presidency, preparations were made for the reconstruction of the plenary chamber in Bonn.

This page: Joseph 'Joschka' Fischer, who later became Foreign Minister in the SPD-Green coalition, was one of the first members of the new parliamentary group of The Greens to address the House (1983).

ments providing for improvements in intra-German relations, the focus shifted from the fundamental issue of recognising or not recognising the GDR as a state to ways in which practical improvements could be made in the lives of individuals, including the easing of restrictions on travel between East and West Germany. The new coalition under Helmut Kohl continued to pursue this policy of *rapprochement* between the Federal Republic and the GDR and to foster closer relations between the two, thereby paving the way for an official visit by Erich Honecker (SED), Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR, to the Federal Republic in 1987. Nevertheless, the parties of the governing coalition and the opposition parties still differed on fundamental issues.

But events then took a surprising turn when Mikhail Gorbachev was handed the reins of government in the Soviet Union and began to introduce more freedom and democracy as well as initiating a new foreign policy, which put an end to East-West confrontation and made it possible to overcome the division of Germany and Europe. In Hungary and Poland the establishment of pluralist democracy with freedom of expression and freedom of the press proceeded with unstoppable momentum. In the

GDR, by contrast, the aged leadership team of the SED refused to associate itself with the reform movement emanating from the Soviet Union and Germany's eastern neighbours. Instead, it used repressive measures in a bid to stifle the peace movement, whose main breeding grounds were the churches, and curb the proliferation of popular initiatives. Time and again the Bundestag and the Federal Government admonished the GDR to respect human rights.

It was not until 1989, when masses of people began to flee the GDR, first by taking refuge in the embassies of the Federal Republic in Budapest, Prague and Warsaw and then by crossing the Austro-Hungarian border when it was opened towards the end of the summer and when a peaceful revolution in cities such as Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin began to gather momentum, that change finally occurred. The Berlin Wall fell, and soon afterwards the SED relinquished its monopoly on power and leadership. A new government under Hans Modrow (SED), who was regarded as a reformer, had to include in its ranks representatives of opposition groups and parties, which had met with the old regime at a 'round table' organised by the churches. One of the main tasks of these round-table discussions was to prepare free elections to the *Volkskammer*, the East German Parliament, which were finally scheduled for 18 March 1990.

GERMAN UNIFICATION APPEARS ON THE AGENDA

The Bundestag observed developments in the GDR with caution, repeatedly admonishing the East German leaders to refrain from the use of force against demonstrators. Late in the evening of 9 November 1989, when word came through that the Berlin Wall had been opened, the Bundestag, which was dealing with quite different matters at the time, received the news with deep emotion and joy, regarding it as a sign that nothing could now stop the dawning of a new era. Soon afterwards, on 28 November, Helmut Kohl took the initiative by presenting, during a

Facing page, top:
Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (right) and Erich Honecker, Chairman of the GDR State Council, met for the first time at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Helsinki on 1 August 1975.

Centre:
Demonstrations throughout the GDR – the photograph shows one in Leipzig on 30 October 1989 – resulted in the collapse of the government and party machinery in the GDR. On 9 November the Berlin Wall came down.

Facing page, bottom:
In the summer of 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Soviet Union and General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, visited the Federal Republic. The photograph shows (left to right) Marianne von Weizsäcker, Raisa Gorbacheva, President Mikhail Gorbachev and President Richard von Weizsäcker.

budget debate, a ten-point plan outlining his ideas on a possible path to unification.

From then on, the subject of German unification was on the agenda. The Federal Chancellor, together with his Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, managed to secure the consent of the Western Allies and the Soviet Union to unification. In particular, obtaining the agreement of the Soviet leaders was a signal achievement. Preparations were to take the form of so-called 'Two-Plus-Four' negotiations, in which the foreign ministers of the two German States and of the four powers responsible for Germany as a whole prepared the diplomatic ground for unification by drafting a treaty. The Bundestag overwhelmingly supported this process. Powerful impetus was generated by the population of the GDR itself, who expressed their desire for rapid unification at the demonstrations they continued to hold every Monday and ultimately in the way they voted in the elections to the People's Chamber. The summer of 1990 was dominated by the preparations for unification, which a special Unity Committee was appointed to oversee. The creation of a monetary, economic and social union between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic represented an important milestone on the way to unification. But the hurdle of the unification treaty still had to be cleared. A great deal of coordination was required between the two governments and parliaments before everything was settled. Finally, on 26 July, the Unity Committees of the Bundestag and People's Chamber agreed that the general election would be held on 2 December.

Facing page:
Relaxed atmosphere in the Caucasus on 15 July 1990 after the German-Soviet negotiations at which the USSR gave its final consent to the unification of Germany.

This page, top:
Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU), addressing the German Bundestag on 28 November 1989, unexpectedly announces a ten-point step-by-step programme to end the division of Germany.

This page, bottom:
The Two-Plus-Four negotiations conducted by the Foreign Ministers of the Allied Powers and the two German States were also held in Bonn. Pictured here are (left to right) Eduard Shevardnadze (USSR), Roland Dumas (France), Markus Meckel (GDR), Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Federal Republic of Germany), Douglas Hurd (UK) and James Baker (US).

1949 TO 1990: THE PEOPLE'S CHAMBER OF THE GDR

Around the same time as preparations were taking place in the united Western zones of occupation for the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Soviet Military Administration in Germany and the SED leadership, which was under its control, also began their preparations for the founding of the German Democratic Republic. A People's Congress appointed a 'German People's Council' *(Deutscher Volksrat)* to serve as a sort of Parliament, and in March 1949 the latter body presented a draft constitution modelled on the Weimar Constitution. The SED, created in 1946 through the forced merger of the SPD and KPD, had a majority in the People's Council, as it had on all the administrative bodies and public authorities that were being created in the Soviet zone of occupation. The third People's Congress was elected in May 1949. By the time of those elections, the political parties that had emerged in the Soviet zone were no longer permitted to compete with each other, having been integrated into a single bloc known as the National Front; their candidates were presented as part of a unified list, which also included candidates from the so-called mass-membership organisations, such as the Trade Union Confederation and the youth organisation FDJ. The distribution of seats had been determined from the outset, regardless of the election result.

On 7 October 1949, one month after the German Bundestag had constituted itself, the GDR was established when the German People's Council appointed by the third People's Congress was constituted as the 'Provisional People's Chamber' *(Provisorische Volkskammer)*. It was not until one year later that the first elections to the People's Chamber took place.

NEITHER FREE NOR SECRET ELECTIONS

Although the impression was created, especially by the first Constitution of the GDR, that the system of government was a form of parliamentary democracy similar to that of the Weimar Republic, this similarity only existed on paper. In practice the Constitution was a mere facade, concealing the actual power structure, which was very different indeed. The Constitution stated, for example, that the People's Chamber, the supreme organ of the state, was to be directly elected by equal universal suffrage and secret ballot in free elections based on a system of proportional representation. In reality, however, elections were not free, nor was there a secret ballot. They were not free because there was only one unified list, which meant that the voter could not choose an alternative political party or candidate. And there was no secret ballot, because open voting – at least in what passed for elections in later years – was regarded as a civic duty, and the use of the polling booth, like the rejection of the unified list of candidates, the deletion of individual names or failure to vote, could have detrimental effects on a person's career as well as other disadvantages.

As in the first election, the distribution of seats among the parties and mass-membership organisations united in the SED-controlled National Front was determined prior to all subsequent elections, which means that the system of proportional representation cannot be said to have operated either. Moreover, the primacy of the SED was guaranteed by the fact that the vast majority of parliamentarians representing the mass-membership organisations were also SED members and were thus subject to party discipline.

Facing page:
Founding of the GDR on 7 October 1949 with an opening address by Wilhelm Pieck (SED), who would shortly be elected President of the GDR. In the front right of the picture is Walter Ulbricht, who later became Chairman of the State Council.

This page, left:
A handshake between party leaders Wilhelm Pieck (left) and Otto Grotewohl seals the enforced merger in April 1946 of the Social Democratic (SPD) and Communist (KPD) Parties in the Soviet zone of occupation to form the Socialist Unity Party (SED).

This page, right:
The signing on 18 May 1990 of the Treaty establishing a Monetary, Economic and Social Union between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

NOT A PARLIAMENT IN THE TRUE SENSE OF THE TERM

The *Volkskammer,* or People's Chamber, cannot be described as a parliament in the true sense of the term, because neither the plenary assembly nor the committees conducted political debates in which various opinions were expressed on legislative bills or contentious issues. Nor was the government subject to parliamentary scrutiny by the People's Chamber. And so it is also misleading to speak of the People's Chamber as the supreme organ of state power. In fact, it had no power of its own, all authority being vested in the governing bodies of the SED. A parliamentary opposition was not permitted either. Since the People's Chamber was only entitled to be informed of decisions taken by the party and government authorities and to approve them, it normally needed to meet for a few days only two or three times a year, so that it could unanimously adopt legislation drafted by the Council of Ministers, the Council of State or the specialised departments of the Central Committee of the SED.

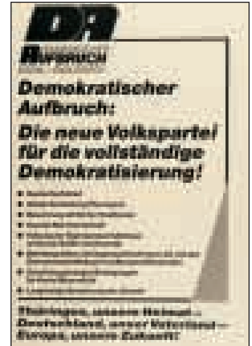
THE PEOPLE OF THE GDR DEMAND DEMOCRATIC REFORMS AND FREE ELECTIONS TO THE *VOLKSKAMMER*

Nevertheless, throughout the decades of dictatorship and unanimous decisions, the East German population remained aware that the People's Chamber, as a representative assembly, really ought to function quite differently. In the peaceful revolution of 1989 and at the mass demonstrations in the autumn of that year, one of the most forcefully stated demands was for democratic reforms, including free elections to the People's Chamber to make it reflect the will of the people. Following the dissolution of the National Front – the bloc encompassing all lawful political parties – and the granting of independence to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany (LDPD) as well as the resig-

Top:
In 1976 the People's Chamber met for the first time in its new plenary chamber in the Palace of the Republic in the centre of East Berlin.

Centre:
After the fall of the Honecker Government, civil-rights groups which had opposed the government and reformist representatives of the old parties and the new SPD formed the 'round table'.

Bottom:
Hans Modrow (SED/PDS, on the left) formed a 'Government of National Responsibility', including eight representatives of opposition groups; the People's Chamber approved the new government on 5 February 1990.



nation of the old party leaders of the SED, which renamed itself Socialist Unity Party/Party of Democratic Socialism (SED/PDS) and elected a new reformist leadership team, even the old People's Chamber was showing the first signs of willingness to enter into discussions.

But the civil-rights groups that were being formed by the public at large were in no doubt that free elections were the only way to make the People's Chamber a genuine representative body. A round table, comprising representatives of the old parties, the newly re-established Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the extra-parliamentary opposition, comprising civil-rights groups with names such as New Forum, Democracy Now and Democratic Awakening, embraced this demand and urged the new Government under Hans Modrow to amend the constitution and to set the date for free elections.

A FREELY ELECTED PEOPLE'S CHAMBER FACING A MULTITUDE OF TASKS

The first and only free parliamentary elections in the GDR, in which a 93.4% turnout was recorded, produced a

surprising result, the CDU-led Alliance for Germany winning a clear and comfortable victory with almost 48% of the vote. This meant that the parties which had unequivocally backed rapid unification had won the day.

The People's Chamber held its inaugural sitting on 5 April 1990 and elected Sabine Bergmann-Pohl (CDU) as its President. The Chairman of the CDU, Lothar de Maizière, was elected Premier and formed a grand coalition comprising the CDU, the Alliance parties, the SPD, the German Social Union (DSU) and the Liberals. The SPD subsequently withdrew from the coalition and went into opposition. In his government policy statement, Lothar de Maizière announced the aim of unifying Germany 'as quickly as possible and as well as possible'. The Government intended to take advantage of the favourable international situation, and the internal economic and financial state of the country demanded immediate action.

Facing page: Election posters for the first free elections to the People's Chamber of the GDR, held on 18 March 1990.

THE PEOPLE'S CHAMBER ON THE ROAD TO UNIFICATION

In the following months, the workload of the People's Chamber and the tasks it accomplished were of almost inconceivable proportions. On the one hand, each of the steps towards unification had to be prepared. The Unity Committee established for this purpose cooperated closely with its counterpart from the German Bundestag. The conclusion and ratification of the Treaty on Economic, Monetary and Social Union was the first step. The deliberations on the Unification Treaty and the Electoral Act for the elections to the first all-German Bundestag demanded a great deal of time and effort. At the same time the system of government, the constitution and administration of the GDR had to be democratised. The existing cen-

This page: Lothar de Maizière, Chairman of the CDU in the GDR, formed a coalition government in April 1990, comprising the parties of the CDU-led 'Alliance for Germany', the SPD, the German Social Union (DSU) and the Liberals.

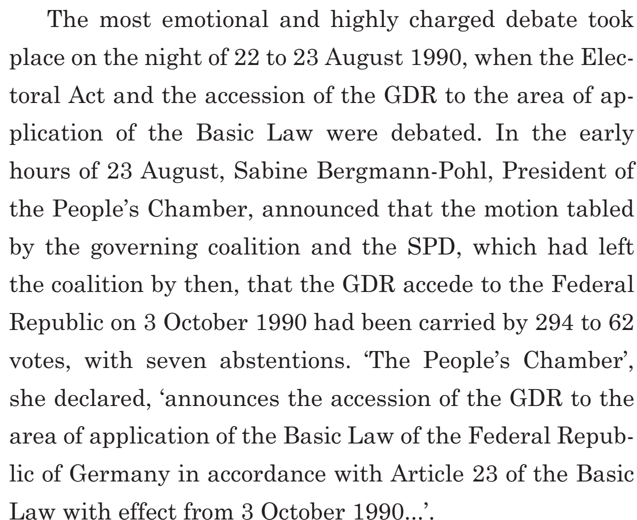
This page:
On the night of 2/3 October 1990, crowds on the Platz der Republik in front of the Reichstag building celebrate the unification of Germany.

Facing page, top:
In the early hours of the morning of 23 August 1990, the People's Chamber votes on the accession of the GDR to the Federal Republic of Germany.

Facing page, bottom:
Rita Süssmuth (CDU, on the left), President of the Bundestag, and Sabine Bergmann-Pohl (CDU), President of the People's Chamber, seen here with the Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, on a joint visit to Israel in June 1990, a sign of Germany's enduring historical responsibility.

tralised structure, in which the GDR was divided into districts *(Bezirke)*, was replaced by a new federal structure through the re-establishment of the post-war *Länder* that had been abolished in 1952. The short period from April to October 1990 saw the adoption of no fewer than 164 legislative acts and 93 resolutions.

The most emotional and highly charged debate took place on the night of 22 to 23 August 1990, when the Electoral Act and the accession of the GDR to the area of application of the Basic Law were debated. In the early hours of 23 August, Sabine Bergmann-Pohl, President of the People's Chamber, announced that the motion tabled by the governing coalition and the SPD, which had left the coalition by then, that the GDR accede to the Federal Republic on 3 October 1990 had been carried by 294 to 62 votes, with seven abstentions. 'The People's Chamber', she declared, 'announces the accession of the GDR to the area of application of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany in accordance with Article 23 of the Basic Law with effect from 3 October 1990...'.



PRAISE FOR THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE'S CHAMBER FROM POLITICIANS IN EAST AND WEST

The East German Parliament had an extremely steep learning curve, and its workload often exceeded reasonable bounds. While it was certainly a parliament of amateur players, it provided a schooling in democracy. After the dissolution of the People's Chamber, many of its Members went on to play a part in the creation of parliaments in the new federal states. A living democracy always needs amateur players too, or people who come into politics from other walks of life, to ensure that politics does not degenerate into the preserve of an exclusive caste. The amount that had to be learned about democracy in the GDR in 1990, not only in the People's Chamber but in the newly elected communal assemblies throughout the country too, is not fully appreciated in either East or West.

A parliament abolishing itself – some people wanted it to do just that by voting for accession at its very first sitting. But the Parliament itself was wiser. It began its work at the second sitting by adopting declarations of guilt for German misdeeds against the Jews and neighbouring peoples in the East and apologised for the actions of the GDR in helping to crush the Prague Spring in 1968 and for the discriminatory policy of the GDR towards the State of Israel. We delayed the accession resolution until the conclusion of the Unification Treaty and the completion of the Two-Plus-Four negotiations, because we did not want German unity to take place prematurely. As quickly as possible and as well as necessary – that was our watchword …

Richard Schröder, former Chairman of the SPD Group in the freely elected People's Chamber, addressing the German Bundestag on 17 March 2000.

One of the best things was the imminent democratic election of a free People's Chamber in the GDR. During the months that followed, its Members had to address a raft of difficult problems with practically no preparation and to take decisions of unprecedented significance. Occasionally they were referred to as amateur players. Was this intended as a slight? They searched for solutions with unparalleled dedication. Their lack of professional parliamentary routine was, in fact, an advantage, because they did not seek to pin each other down. They showed how valuable it is 'not always to expect the worst of others or even to want others to fail in order to vindicate one's own view of the world' (Richard Schröder). Everyone was able to be – and had to be – honest and open-minded and to keep assimilating new knowledge. When amateurs can emulate professional politicians in this way, it does not augur at all badly for democracy. The brief reign of the freely elected People's Chamber in the GDR is one of the finest chapters in the history of German parliamentarianism.

Richard von Weizsäcker, President of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1984 to 1994; tr. from Richard von Weizsäcker, *Vier Zeiten. Erinnerungen.* Berlin, 1997, p. 39.

This page:
The freely elected People's Chamber in plenary session.

Facing page:
On the day after the accession of the new *Länder,* the Bundestag representing the whole of Germany met for the first time in the plenary chamber of the Reichstag building.

SINCE 1990: THE BUNDESTAG IN UNITED GERMANY

On 4 October 1990 – the day after the unification of Germany – the German Bundestag convened in Berlin again for the first time in 25 years, now as the first all-German Bundestag, whose Members included 144 elected by the People's Chamber. And it was also the first time for 57 years that a full German Parliament had sat in the former Reichstag building, restored in the period from 1961 to 1973 from the ravages of fire and war; in the decades of division, the Berlin Wall used to cut across the front of its eastern entrance. The Reichstag building was also the venue in which, following the elections of 2 December 1990, the German Bundestag met for its inaugural sitting on 20 December, the first sitting since 1933 of a Parliament freely elected in the whole of Germany.

After that, the Bundestag, whose membership had now been increased to 662, returned to Bonn. But even though parliamentary processes and procedures had changed very little on the surface, the start of parliamentary business after unification was, to some extent, a new beginning, because now that the two states had been unified, the next tasks were to mould them into a single political, social, economic and cultural entity and, at the same time, to discharge the greater responsibility of the Federal Republic of Germany in a changed world in which an entirely new set of international political conditions obtained.

GREATER EXTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE NATO AND EU FRAMEWORKS

The Two-Plus-Four negotiations culminated in the conclusion of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany and its ratification by the Bundestag and the other national parliaments. The Treaty, which was tantamount to a peace treaty and included provisions laying down the definitive line of the border between Germany and Poland, established the full sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany. This meant that Germany now had greater responsibility for the further development of the European Union and for the new commitments being assumed by the Alliance. Under Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the united Germany summoned up new reserves of energy for the continuing process of European unification, both in helping to seal economic and monetary union with the introduction of the euro by

On 2 April 1998, the German Bundestag approved the introduction of the euro.

the beginning of the new century and in its role in the conclusion of the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, which provided for a deepening of the Union and improvements to its structure.

In this context, an entirely new task devolved upon the Bundestag. It now had to decide whether German troops should take part along with Allied forces in certain 'out-of-area' operations, in other words in peacekeeping or peacemaking missions outside NATO territory. This immediately stirred up what turned out to be a lengthy altercation between the Government side and the Opposition and even caused internal dissension within the Government camp itself. The argument was resolved when the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the Basic Law allowed the Bundeswehr to engage in operations outside NATO territory. After that, the Bundestag voted by a large majority for the participation of the Bundeswehr in support of NATO units in the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts. Parliament thereby demonstrated its backing for the troops as well as the willingness of united Germany to assume new international obligations.

FORGING A COMMON IDENTITY AS A LONG-TERM PARLIAMENTARY AIM

Although the one thousand-plus pages of the Unification Treaty had already laid down numerous details of the unification process, the creation of a common identity, in other words the reconciliation of political, social and economic differences and above all of the differing mentalities shaped by decades of separation, was a paramount task for the German nation and its parliament and was to demand the attention of the Bundestag time and again over many years.

In the foreground was the subject of financing the cost of unity, which was fiercely debated in the early days. The assumption that Germany could be unified without tax increases was very quickly shown to be mistaken. Mas-

Top:
Against a background of public demonstrations, the German Bundestag voted to restrict the right of asylum.

Second down:
With candlelight processions like this one in Hamburg, anti-xenophobia demonstrations were held throughout Germany.

Third down:
Tension in the House on 20 June 1991 as Members await the result of the vote on the future capital.
By 337 votes to 320, the German Bundestag opted for Berlin.

Bottom:
With its glass walls, the new plenary chamber in Bonn, where the German Bundestag sat from the end of 1992, offered a view of parliamentary proceedings from every angle.

sive funding had to be allocated and disbursed to finance the necessary groundwork. The conclusion of a 'common-sense solidarity pact' between the Federal Government and the *Länder* and the imposition of a solidarity surcharge on income and corporation taxes created the basis for the financing of the various tasks arising from the unification process.

Besides the arrangements for the funding of German unification, numerous other unity-related issues and tasks were on the agenda, such as the revision of the Basic Law in the light of the Unification Treaty, although in fact this only entailed minor amendments and additions to the Basic Law.

Notwithstanding the focus on unification, a decisive fundamental change also took place in German asylum law at this time in the so-called 'asylum compromise', which was reached after lengthy wrangling, accompanied by popular demonstrations for and against the proposed changes. Arson attacks on foreigners' homes were the outward manifestation of an alarming increase in xenophobia which threatened to tarnish the image of the Federal Republic. The population, however, reacted by staging torchlight processions and mass demonstrations, and the Bundestag struck a chord with the public at large with its unanimous condemnation of all manifestations of xenophobia.

BERLIN CHOSEN AS THE SEAT OF PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNMENT

Not least among the issues arising from unification was the question of the future and final seat of the Federal Government and of the two Houses of Parliament, the Bundestag and Bundesrat – in other words the future capital of Germany. After several weeks of debating, the Bundestag decided on 20 June 1991, by 337 to 320 votes, that Berlin would be its seat. A package of support measures was put together to compensate Bonn for the loss of its status as the seat of parliament and government. The

sitting at which the capital was chosen entered the annals of the Bundestag as one of those rare occasions on which the two fronts cut across party lines, nobody knowing which way the decision would go until the vote had been taken.

For those who advocated that the seat of parliament and the government should move to Berlin, a crucial consideration was the argument advanced by Willy Brandt that such a move would represent more than merely solidarity with the eastern part of the enlarged Federal Republic; and that such a step also meant accepting German history in its entirety.

At the end of 1992, the plenary assembly of the German Bundestag once again moved house in Bonn, leaving its temporary home in a converted waterworks to reoccupy its former seat, where a new plenary chamber had been built in place of the 'historical' chamber; with its circular design and glass frontage, the Bundestag became a visitor attraction in its own right.

REMEMBERING AND INTERPRETING THE PAST

Time and again, as for example on 27 January 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the Bundestag took the opportunity to nurture awareness of history and preserve historical memories among the people of Germany. On the initiative of the Bundestag and of Roman Herzog, President of the Federal Republic, 27 January was declared a day of remembrance for the victims of National Socialist tyranny and genocide.

The work of the Study Commission on the History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in Germany also served to ensure that the lessons of history were not forgotten. With the aid of numerous people involved in the actions of the former East German regime, people affected by these actions and others who lived through the SED era, the Commission was to investigate the effects of the system on the daily lives of the East German people, to satisfy people's needs for injustices to be dealt with and hence to contribute to the reconciliation of German society. The materials gathered by the Commission, which worked for more than two years, and its findings are documented in an 18-volume publication, which is a major historical reference work.

GERMANY AS A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS LOCATION, GLOBALISATION AND FUNDING THE WELFARE STATE – THREE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

As had already been the case in the eighties, the future funding of the welfare state – especially health care and pensions – remained a contentious issue throughout the 1990s, both before and after the change of government. These discussions also focused on the question of the extent to which Germany, with its high taxes and non-wage labour costs, was still a competitive business location. Germany's ability to compete for inward investment assumed increasing importance in turn as the world's financial markets became ever more closely intertwined and the information and communication society became an ever more universal reality – the phenomenon known as globalisation.

However, a package of tax reforms planned by the coalition of CDU/CSU and FDP, which was in power until

1998, was voted down by the Social Democratic majority in the Bundesrat. This disagreement, which also extended to the future funding of the pension system, was the first such stand-off between a governing coalition and the opposition parties. The Social Democratic Opposition, indeed, announced that, if it won the next election, it would reverse the pension reforms and certain welfare cuts enacted by the coalition.

THE ELECTORATE GIVES A CLEAR MANDATE TO AN SPD AND GREEN COALITION UNDER GERHARD SCHRÖDER

Whereas the coalition under Helmut Kohl was returned with a respectable majority in the first all-German Bundestag elections in 1990 and repeated its victory in 1994, albeit with a slim majority, the next elections, in 1998, saw the governing CDU/CSU and FDP coalition suffer a decisive defeat at the hands of the electorate after 16 years in power. The outright victors were not only the SPD leader, Gerhard Schröder, but also the SPD itself, which emerged as the largest party, outpolling the CDU/CSU by a margin of 5.8 percentage points. The Social Democrats and Greens together had an absolute

Facing page:
On 23 May 1994, the Federal Convention elected Roman Herzog (CDU) President of the Federal Republic. Rita Süssmuth (CDU), President of the Bundestag, administers the oath of office.

This page, top:
Rainer Eppelmann (CDU, on the left), Chairman of the Study Commission on the History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship, in conversation with Markus Meckel (SPD), the last Foreign Minister of the GDR.

This page, bottom:
Following their election victory in the autumn of 1998, the SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens formed a new government, led by Gerhard Schröder (SPD, front row, right). Joschka Fischer (Alliance 90/The Greens, front row, centre) was appointed Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister.

majority of the seats in the Bundestag, which enabled them to conclude a 'Red and Green' coalition agreement.

This was the first time in the history of the Federal Republic that the Opposition had been voted directly into office by the electorate. It was also the first change of government in which neither of the parties in the previous governing coalition featured in the new government. Since the SPD was now the largest party, Wolfgang Thierse became the first Social Democratic President of the Bundestag since 1976. The general elections of 2002 did not alter this situation.

The PDS won 36 seats in 1998, which enabled it to enter the Bundestag as a parliamentary group for the first time. This meant that there were five parliamentary groups for the 14th legislative term; three of them – the CDU/CSU, the FDP and the PDS – formed the Opposition. In the parliamentary elections of 2002, the combined mandates of the SPD and Green Parties secured them another majority – albeit a slender one – which enabled the coalition under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to remain in office. The PDS, however, failed to clear the 5% hurdle this time and therefore did not feature as a parliamentary group in the new Parliament. Only two PDS Members managed to secure re-election by topping the poll in their constituencies. Although the CDU/CSU and FDP won more parliamentary seats than in 1998, they continued in opposition. Angela Merkel, chairwoman of the CDU, also took over as head of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group. The first political manifestation of the new beginning was a comprehensive coalition agreement which included a commitment to 'environmental modernisation' with the introduction of an eco-tax and a pledge to abandon the use of nuclear power. The Bundestag implemented these projects by adopting the appropriate legislation.

On 26 October 1998, a newly elected Bundestag convened in Bonn for the last time. Soon afterwards, preparations began for the move to Berlin. In April 1999, the President of the Bundestag, Wolfgang Thierse, formally accepted the keys to the Reichstag building, which had been entirely rebuilt on the inside and embellished on the outside with a new glass cupola. The first major event was held there on 23 May 1999, when the Federal Convention, comprising the Members of the Bundestag and an equal number of delegates from the *Land* parliaments, met to elect a new President of the Federal Republic. It elected the former Premier of North Rhine/Westphalia, Johannes Rau (SPD), to serve as the new Federal President. During the summer recess, the removal of the Bundestag from Bonn to Berlin took place, and on 7 September, the fiftieth anniversary of its first inaugural sitting, the work of the Parliament began in Berlin.

In the very next month, it hosted the Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), attended by about

Facing page:
With the election of Wolfgang Thierse (SPD) as President of the Bundestag in 1998, the second-highest public office in the Federal Republic of Germany was entrusted for the first time to an East German Member of Parliament.

This page, top:
On 23 May 1999 in the Reichstag building, the Federal Convention elected the former Premier of North Rhine/Westphalia, Johannes Rau, President of the Federal Republic.

This page, bottom:
The new plenary chamber of the German Bundestag in the Reichstag building, which was reconstructed in accordance with the architectural plans of Sir Norman Foster and has been the seat of the Bundestag since 7 September 1999.

1,000 delegates. The IPU is a global organisation whose members are the national representative assemblies of 138 sovereign states. Interim solutions would remain necessary for some time to accommodate the Members of Parliament, the parliamentary committees and the administration. With the completion of the Paul Löbe Building, primarily intended for the committees and parts of the administration, in October 2001 and of the Jakob Kaiser Building, containing the offices of the Members and parliamentary groups, in December 2001, this transitional period drew to a close. Lastly, the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building, on the opposite bank of the Spree, became the new permanent seat of the parliamentary reference and research services, including the Bundestag library and the parliamentary archives.

NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW SOLUTIONS

At the start of parliamentary life in Berlin, Wolfgang Thierse spoke the following words: 'The transition from a classic industrialised society to a service and media society, the unresolved problem of mass unemployment, the related manifest need to restructure our social-security systems – all of these are challenges that positively cry out for new innovative and even unconventional solutions'.

These are only some of the factors that would have a particular bearing on the future work of the Bundestag. Others include the problems arising from changes in the demographic structure as older people make up an increasing percentage of the population, the birth rate falls and the influx of immigrants continues. New developments in fields of science and research such as genetics, biotechnology and medicine as well as social change, including the emergence of new household structures, create a need for new rules and new structures. A new approach to the problem of safeguarding retirement pensions, for example, was adopted with the Retirement Assets Act 2001 *(Altersvermögensgesetz).* The Act en-

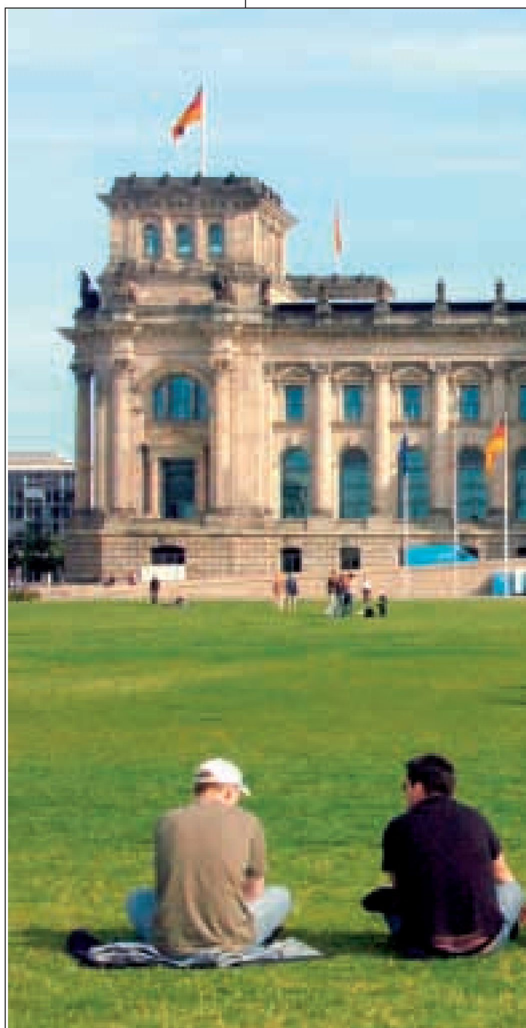
courages insured persons to supplement their entitlements under the statutory pay-as-you-go pension scheme by offering them tax concessions if they contribute to an additional private funded pension. The reform of nationality law is another new approach adopted by Parliament. In future, foreigners' children who are born in Germany can claim German nationality. This new rule marks the first departure in Germany from a system based purely on the parentage principle *(ius sanguinis)* to a system including an element of the territorial principle *(ius soli)*. Likewise, the introduction of the 'registered partnership' of same-sex couples broke new legal ground, creating a new institution in family law alongside marriage and the family.

Genetic research with embryonic stem cells confronted Parliament with an entirely new set of ethical issues. A Study Commission appointed by the Bundestag was the main body charged to assess the ethics of such research. The Federal Government also commissioned a body – the National Ethics Council *(Nationaler Ethikrat)* – to examine the matter, thereby raising the question whether this move, like the appointment of other commissions independent of Parliament, did not encroach upon the competence of Parliament. After lengthy deliberations, the Bundestag finally adopted, by a large majority, a law prohibiting the import and use of embryonic stem cells except in special cases, subject to very specific conditions. At the same time the Act also provided for the establishment of a central Ethics Commission and set out its mandate.

THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG AS A FORUM FOR THE DISCUSSION OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Developments on the international political stage are scarcely less important to the work of the Bundestag. In particular, the new global situation that emerged in the wake of the devastating terrorist atrocities of 11 Septem-

ber 2001 created a new need for political action and decision-making. Decisions had to be taken, for example, on internal security and on participation in the global fight against terrorism. The international community's expectations of the German Parliament were reflected in the addresses delivered to the Bundestag by leading world statesmen. In his address to the Bundestag in June 2000, the President of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac, reminded the House of the duty to ensure that the EU had 'solid institutions and a solid and efficient decision-making mechanism'. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, in his address of September 2001 – most of which he delivered in German – advocated an improved international security architecture, which should include Russia. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, addressing the Bundestag in February 2002, urged Germany to continue its participation in the peacebuilding effort in Afghanistan and emphasised the need for more development aid. Lastly, in his address to the Bundestag in May 2002, U.S. President George W. Bush called for concerted efforts to counteract 'new and grave threats to liberty, to the safety of our people, and to civilisation itself'.



But the concerted efforts for which President Bush was appealing, reflected in the deployment of German troops in Afghanistan and German naval units to patrol shipping lanes off the Horn of Africa, were interrupted in 2002 as the crisis in Iraq came to a head. Germany's outright refusal to take part in the war against Saddam

Hussein's regime in Iraq put a sustained strain on relations with the United States. The war in Iraq and its impact on the solidarity of the community of European states, along with the threats posed by international terrorism, were to dominate the foreign-policy agenda for some time to come.

REFORM LEGISLATION AND GROWING RESISTANCE

During the seven years of the SPD-Green coalition a number of reforms were launched with a view to promoting economic recovery, reducing employment, which

At the heart of the parliamentary district is the old Reichstag building, now the seat of the German Bundestag.

peaked at more than five million at one stage, and restoring the financial viability of the health-care and pension schemes and of the national budgets as well as improving the education system and conditions for families with children.

Among these measures were tax cuts, phased over several years, and radical reform of the labour market (the Hartz Acts), which were generally backed by the Opposition but which triggered massive extraparliamentary protest campaigns, especially in eastern Germany, against feared benefit cuts. The Federal Chancellor announced extensive restructuring measures as part of a reform package entitled *Agenda 2010*. Although the Bundestag set about enacting numerous reforms, only some of them reached the statute book. In particular, the Bundesrat was proving to be a difficult obstacle, particularly as successive state elections swung the balance there in favour of the Opposition. An Immigration Bill, for example, was rejected by the Bundesrat, albeit in controversial circumstances, and had to be reintroduced in the Bundestag before it was passed by the Bundesrat, following an agreement between the governing coalition and the opposition groups.

The swing to the Opposition was also reflected in the election of the new President of the Federal Republic. On 23 May 2004, Horst Köhler (CDU), who, prior to his nomination by the CDU/CSU and FDP, had been Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, was elected President by the Federal Convention, obtaining an absolute majority of 604 out of 1,205 votes in the first round. Gesine Schwann (SPD), the candidate proposed by Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, obtained 589 votes and was thus defeated by the Opposition's nominee.

As opposition to Agenda 2010 grew steadily within the governing coalition, not only in the Alliance 90/The Greens group but also in the ranks of the SPD itself, and the SPD-Green Government lost the state election in North Rhine/Westphalia, the Federal Chancellor decided on early elections. To this end, Mr Schröder tabled a mo-

tion in the Bundestag under Article 68 of the Basic Law, requesting a vote of confidence. As expected, the motion did not secure the required majority, whereupon the Federal President acceded to the Chancellor's request to exercise his right to dissolve the Bundestag and call an election.

A NEW PARLIAMENTARY CONSTELLATION: GRAND COALITION FORMED WITH ANGELA MERKEL AS CHANCELLOR

While both the SPD and the CDU/CSU obtained fewer votes in the election of September 2005 than they had polled in 2002, the CDU/CSU emerged as the strongest group with 226 seats. The SPD came a close second with 222 seats. Since neither of the envisaged coalitions – a 'Red and Green' coalition of SPD and Greens or a 'Black and Yellow' coalition of CDU/CSU and FDP – had secured an overall majority, new rounds of talks were needed between parliamentary groups on possible alliances. The outcome was an agreement between the CDU/CSU and SPD to form a Grand Coalition. The newly elected Bundestag now had five parliamentary groups. Besides the FDP with 61 seats and Alliance 90/The Greens with 51, The Left Party *(Die Linke),* with 54 seats, formed a new parliamentary group. The Left Party was the product of an electoral alliance between the PDS and the WASG (Election Alternative for Work and Social Justice).

After constituting itself on 18 October 2005, the Bundestag elected Norbert Lammert (CDU) as its new President (Speaker). With her election as Federal Chancellor and her appointment by the President of the Federal Republic, Angela Merkel (CDU) became the first woman to hold that office in the history of the Federal Republic. The function of her deputy, the Vice-Chancellor, was entrusted to Franz Müntefering (SPD), Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) became the new Minister for Foreign Affairs.

A comprehensive coalition agreement set out the aims of the new coalition. Job creation was the top priority. Among the other aims were the continuing development of eastern Germany, consolidation of the budgets, securing the future of the welfare systems, funding education

and science, protecting the environment, reforming the federal system of government and ensuring public safety within Germany. A Coalition Committee was set up to provide for coordination between the Government and its parliamentary groups on matters of fundamental importance.

The fact that Parliament as a whole will nevertheless remain the political heart of the nation was clearly emphasised by Norbert Lammert in his address following his inauguration as President of the Bundestag: 'Ladies and gentlemen, the Opposition is, in fact, no less important than the Government in terms of its contribution to the work and the reputation of Parliament. [...] What characterises a political system as a democracy is not the existence of a government but the existence of a parlia-

ment and its firmly established role in the constitutional structure and in political life. [...] Parliament, moreover, is not the executive agency of the Federal Government but, on the contrary, its taskmaster. Particularly at times of Grand Coalitions with large majorities, there is a special need for Parliament to assert itself in relation to the Government. All elected Members of this Bundestag have the same mandate, the same legitimacy and, in principle, the same rights and responsibilities, irrespective of the functions they are subsequently asked to perform in Government or Opposition. The unwritten rights of the Opposition, to which large parliamentary groups have staked a virtually unchallenged claim, must

Facing page:
The leaders of the Grand Coalition – Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU/CSU) and her Vice-Chancellor Franz Müntefering (SPD).

This page:
Peter Struck (SPD, left) and Volker Kauder (CDU/CSU), chairmen of the parliamentary groups in the governing coalition.

also apply, of course, to the small groups when a Grand Coalition is in power. [...] 'We are Germany': this is not just a fleeting soundbite from a high-pitched election campaign. We are Germany – every citizen of this country, each in his or her own way. But this House, the German Bundestag, must embody Germany in a very special way. Our day-to-day work must live up to this aspiration.'

THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG

CARL-CHRISTIAN KAISER/GEORGIA RAUER

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

THE BUNDESTAG – A WORKING AND DEBATING PARLIAMENT

When the Federal Republic of Germany was created in 1949, the authors of its constitution sought to underpin the new democracy with a coherent parliamentary order. To this end, the Basic Law *(Grundgesetz)* of the Federal Republic assigns a key role to the Bundestag in the structure of the state and in the formation of the nation's political will. It is the supreme democratic institution and the only organ of the German Constitution that is directly elected by the people.

The legitimacy and tasks of the Bundestag derive from Article 20 of the Basic Law, which states that 'All state authority is derived from the people. It shall be exercised by the people through elections and other votes and through specific legislative, executive and judicial bodies'. Article 38 of the Basic Law also lays down that Members

of the Bundestag shall be elected in general, direct, free, equal and secret elections. As representatives of the whole people, they are not bound by orders or instructions and are subject only to their conscience. They represent the will of the people. The Bundestag is thus the central institution of representative democracy which takes account of the manifold interests of the population in its political decisions. It is the place where diverse positions are presented, discussed and put to the vote. This is why the Bundestag is also described as the 'forum of the nation'.

WORKING AND DEBATING

The main missions of the Bundestag are to engage in public debate on political issues, to elect the Federal Chancellor and other representatives of the body politic, to legislate and to scrutinise the work of the Federal Government. The combination of these missions provides Parliament with a comprehensive and often demanding catalogue of responsibilities. The most visible expression of parliamentary work are the public debates in the plenary chamber. As a debating parliament, the Bundestag maps out the major political decisions or at least helps to determine them. Because the focus in many legislative processes is on details, however, the Bundestag also performs the role of a working parliament. It is, in short, a debating and working parliament.

This page, left:
The substantive work of the German Bundestag is performed in the various parliamentary committees, such as the Budget Committee, shown here.

This page, right:
The plenary chamber, on the other hand, is the place for public debates and votes. Peter Ramsauer, chairman of the CSU *Land* group in the Bundestag, is seen here addressing the House.

The brunt of parliamentary work is borne by the committees, which deal with specific tasks. In order to ensure that the balance of parties in the Bundestag is reproduced in the committees, their composition also reflects the relative strength of the various parliamentary groups. Each Member of the Bundestag should be a member of one of the parliamentary committees and acquire more detailed knowledge of specific matters. As a result, most Members of the Bundestag are highly familiar with particular subject areas. Members with a good command of the subject of a legislative proposal can participate all the more effectively in the lawmaking process.

In contrast to the plenary debates, deliberations in committee are not held in public as a rule. Be that as it may, the boundaries between the public debating parliament and the more off-stage working parliament are fluid. There is already such a thing as open committee meetings, for example, which give the general public an even better insight into the political processes in Parliament. This transparency is set to be further increased so as to enable the Bundestag to go on performing its role as forum of the nation.

ADOPTING LAWS

Only the Bundestag can adopt a federal law. That is prescribed by Article 77 of the Basic Law. Even when the Government enacts statutory orders, the content, purpose and scope of which must be defined in a law, it is subject to the authorisation of the Bundestag. Of all the manifestations of the legislative sovereignty of Parliament, budgetary legislation is surely the most prominent. It is the prerogative of Parliament. The Bundestag adopts the public budget by means of a law, in which all items of federal revenue and expenditure must be specified.

Since Germany has a federal system of government, the 16 constituent states (*Länder*) are involved in legislation alongside the central authority (the 'Federation'). Under Article 50 of the Basic Law, the *Länder* participate

through the Bundesrat in the legislation and administration of the Federation and in matters concerning the European Union. The Bundesrat, in other words, represents the interests of the *Länder* and brings Germany's federal structure to the fore in the interaction of political forces. For this reason, the Bundestag shares decision-making

The vote on most legislative bills is taken by a show of hands in the chamber.

powers relating to federal laws with the Bundesrat. This means that the Bundesrat must consent to certain laws adopted by the Bundestag. In other cases it can object to laws enacted by the Bundestag. The consent of the Bundesrat is needed for all laws which have a particular impact on the *Länder* or which provide for amendments to the Basic Law. Laws that mainly relate to federal matters, on the other hand, are merely open to objection. The influence of the Bundesrat therefore varies, but it is always involved in the legislative process.

In practical statecraft a very close, frequently complicated and sometimes controversial relationship has developed in the course of decades between the Federation and the *Länder*. The reform of the federal system enacted in 2006 has restructured the powers of these two tiers of government.

ELECTING THE FEDERAL CHANCELLOR

Another important task of the Bundestag is that of electing the Federal Chancellor, an office held since 2005 by Germany's first-ever female Chancellor. The Basic Law lays down that the Federal Chancellor is elected without debate by the Bundestag on the proposal of the President

of the Federal Republic. Article 63 goes on to state that 'The person who receives the votes of a majority of the Members of the Bundestag shall be elected. The person elected shall be appointed by the Federal President'. In this way the Bundestag plays a significant part in the election of the Chancellor. That is important, because the Chancellor has a powerful position, in that he or she lays down the guidelines of government policy and can freely appoint and dismiss the ministers in his or her cabinet. The governing majority does, however, have at least indirect influence on the exercise of both of these powers, because the Chancellor cannot govern against the majority and cannot promote anyone to ministerial office without any heed to the will of that majority. Taken together, the parliamentary right to elect the Chancellor and the strong constitutional position of the elected Chancellor are part of the democratic system of checks and balances.

The Bundestag not only elects the Chancellor; it can also depose him or her. Deposing a chancellor by means of a constructive vote of no confidence is the most drastic parliamentary measure, but it is also the hardest to take and requires a majority of all Members of the Bundestag. In the 16th electoral term, this would mean 307 out of 613 Members. The constructive vote of no confidence is enshrined in Article 67 of the Basic Law, which is worded as follows: 'The Bundestag may express its lack of confidence in the Federal Chancellor only by electing a successor by the vote of a majority of its Members and requesting the Federal President to dismiss the Federal Chancellor. The Federal President must comply with the request and appoint the person elected'. A constructive motion of no confidence, however, is a very rare occurrence, because such a momentous decision invariably has an effect on political continuity. Wherever possible, the Chancellor should remain in office for the full four years of a legislative term. In the history of the Bundestag only two

Facing page:
The Chancellor elected by the Bundestag is appointed by the President of the Federal Republic and then takes the oath of office before Parliament; the photograph shows Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU/CSU) being sworn in on 22 November 2005.

This page:
After her election, the new Chancellor, Angela Merkel, is congratulated by her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder (SPD).

motions of no confidence have ever been tabled, with different outcomes: in 1972 the CDU/CSU failed with a motion to have the chairman of its parliamentary group, Rainer Barzel, elected head of government in place of the incumbent Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt, whereas in 1982 Helmut Schmidt (SPD) was unseated in favour of the Leader of the CDU/CSU Opposition, Helmut Kohl.

By requesting a vote of confidence, on the other hand, the Federal Chancellor can ascertain whether he or she still has the backing of the majority of the Bundestag. If the Bundestag denies the Chancellor a majority, Article 68 of the Basic Law prescribes that the President of the Federal Republic, on the proposal of the Federal Chancellor, may dissolve the Bundestag within 21 days. The particular significance of the request for a vote of confidence, in other words, lies in the fact that a 'no' vote can trigger fresh elections. The Bundestag, however, need not be dissolved if it elects another Chancellor by the votes of a majority of its members. A request for a vote of confidence is also seldom made, only five such motions ever having been tabled. The last time was during the 15th legislative term, when the Federal Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder (SPD), requested a vote of confidence with the aim of triggering fresh elections. Four years previously, he had successfully requested a vote of confidence in order to obtain the endorsement of the Bundestag for his policies.

In 1972 Chancellor Willy Brandt (SPD) asked for a vote of confidence after Members of the Bundestag from the governing Social Democratic-Liberal coalition had defected to the CDU/CSU Opposition during the altercations over the treaties with Eastern European states, leaving the House split down the middle between the governing coalition and the Opposition. Dissolution of the Bundestag and fresh elections were the only way out of this parliamentary stalemate. A calculated defeat in the vote of confidence finally paved the way for elections, held on 19 November 1972, from which the SPD emerged as the strongest group. In that way the coalition of SPD and FDP won a clear mandate to continue its work. In 1982 the Bundestag was faced with two separate requests for a vote of confidence in the Federal Chancellor. In the first instance, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (SPD) tabled the motion with a view to stabilising his position and obtaining an endorsement of his policies. Shortly after a constructive vote of no confidence had brought down the Schmidt Government in October 1982, his successor Helmut Kohl

(CDU) asked for a vote of confidence with the aim of having the House withhold its support so that he could go to the country and obtain a mandate from the electorate for his new government. In the early general election of March 1983, he and his government achieved the desired result, polling a considerably increased number of votes.

Motions of censure can also be targeted at individual members of the Government, even though the Basic Law makes no express provision for them. The Bundestag can call on the Chancellor to propose the dismissal of a federal minister to the President of the Federal Republic. The Federal Chancellor, though not bound to accede to such a request, will scarcely be able to resist the strong political pressure to comply, especially if the pressure comes from the government benches. Lastly, the Bundestag can register its dissatisfaction or criticism effectively by voting a drastic cut in the departmental budget of the minister in question or by rejecting or recasting legislative proposals from his or her department. These devices, however, have hardly ever been used either.

The Bundestag has never had the power to dissolve itself. Because the request for a vote of confidence has sometimes been used as a means of dissolving Parliament, however, the question of empowering the Bundestag to dissolve itself is now a subject of discussion.

SCRUTINISING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Bundestag has several means of subjecting the Federal Government to scrutiny. Besides the constructive vote of no confidence, these include major and minor interpellations, parliamentary question-and-answer sessions with government ministers after cabinet meetings and committees of inquiry. The regular large numbers of questions and hearings and of debates on matters of topical interest show that the Bundestag is seriously committed to its role as a counterweight to the Government.

A government, in short, cannot govern against the will of Parliament. As a rule, however, the parliamentary

This page:
When a Grand Coalition governs, particular importance attaches to the Opposition in the Bundestag. The chairs of the opposition groups shown here are Guido Westerwelle (FDP, above), Oskar Lafontaine and Gregor Gysi (The Left Party, centre) and Renate Künast and Fritz Kuhn (Alliance 90/The Greens, below).

Facing page:
The President of the Federal Republic is elected by the Federal Convention. The incumbent President is Horst Köhler, seen here at his inauguration on 1 July 2004.

groups forming the majority, that is to say the groups in the governing coalition, ensure that government policy is defended and implemented. This is why it is important for the Government to secure a majority within its own ranks. This ultimately means that the whole Bundestag is not pitted against the Government. On the contrary, there is some overlap between the legislative and executive branches. Nevertheless, the Government must always expect opposition. Sometimes the wrangling within its own camp is fiercer than the subsequent plenary debates between the representatives of the majority and the minority. In this respect, Parliament as a whole does exercise scrutiny too. The task of public criticism and scrutiny, however, devolves primarily upon the Opposition, but in the course of parliamentary business there are often compromises, and political divides sometimes even cut across party lines.

ELECTING THE FEDERAL PRESIDENT

The President of the Federal Republic is the Head of State and is elected without debate for a five-year term by the Federal Convention, which was created for the sole purpose of electing the Head of State and is convoked by the President of the Bundestag. It comprises the Members of the Bundestag and an equal number of members elected by the parliaments of the *Länder* in accordance

with the principles of proportional representation. The number of members to be elected from each state parliament depends on the population of the *Land* in question. The Bundestag thus plays an important role in the election of the Federal President too by virtue of Article 54 of the Basic Law. The Bundestag also plays a part in appointing members to other bodies and authorities, two examples being the election of judges to serve in the Federal Constitutional Court and the appointment of judges to the supreme federal courts.

ELECTIONS AND SEATS – ENTERING PARLIAMENT

ELECTIONS TO THE BUNDESTAG – TWO VOTES FOR EVERYONE

The Bundestag is elected for a term of four years. The Basic Law stipulates that an electoral term ends when the new Parliament convenes. The new Parliament, for its

part, must hold its constituent sitting no later than the thirtieth day following the date of the general election. The date for the next general election must then be set within a time frame at least 46 months and no more than 48 months after the start of the new electoral term. For the purpose of setting that date, the President of the Federal Republic holds talks with the Federal Government, the *Länder,* the Bundestag and its parliamentary groups and then sets the precise election date. The only exception to this timescale occurs when Parliament is dissolved prematurely, in which case fresh elections must take place within 60 days. In practice, this has only ever happened on three occasions following requests for a vote of confidence or a constructive vote of no confidence.

Besides the election date, there are other time limits and rules that have to be observed when elections to the Bundestag are being prepared and conducted. These relate to matters such as the nomination of candidates, the publication of the electoral register and notifications regarding polling districts and polling stations. All of these measures are designed to ensure that the legitimacy of the election cannot subsequently be challenged on account of irregularities.

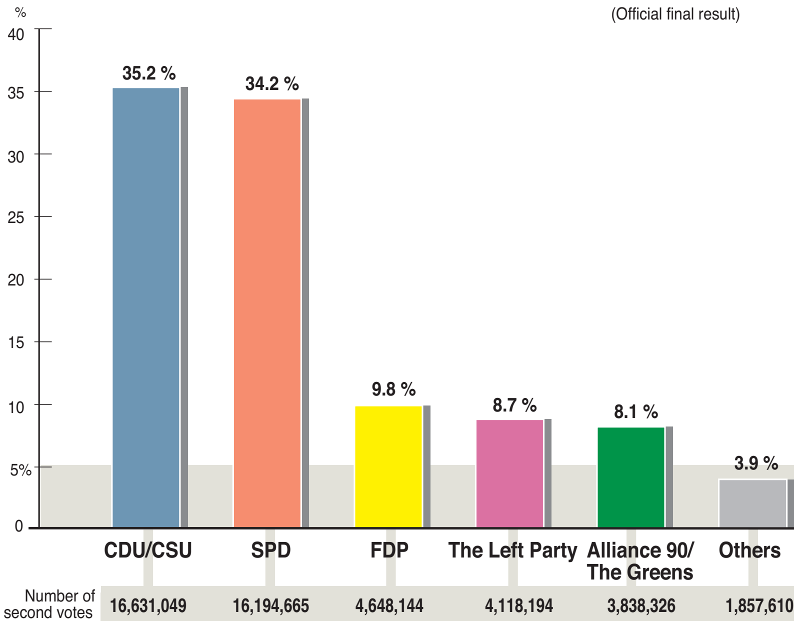
Every candidate for a seat in the Bundestag enjoys certain forms of legal protection. Article 48 of the Basic Law prescribes, for example, that a candidate for election to the Bundestag 'shall be entitled to the leave necessary for his election campaign'. It also states that 'No one may be prevented from accepting or exercising the office of Member of the Bundestag. No one may be given notice of dismissal or discharged from employment on this ground'.

Candidates can be nominated by a political party in local or regional assemblies of its members. Unattached candidates whose candidature is supported by 200 signatures of enfranchised inhabitants of the relevant constituency can also stand for election. In practice, however, such independent candidates who did not have the backing of a political party have stood virtually no chance of being elected to Parliament.

In Germany a distinction is made between the right to vote and the right to stand for election. Any enfranchised person who is at least 18 years of age can stand for election. The right to vote is granted to all German citizens who have reached their 18th birthday on or before election day and have not been disenfranchised. This means that anyone sentenced to at least one year in prison for a criminal offence is automatically disqualified from candidature for five years. In addition, a court may withdraw people's right to vote and to stand for election for two to five years if they have committed particular kinds of offence, such as obstructing an election, electoral fraud, unconstitutional activities or treasonable espionage.

Elections are general, direct, free, equal and secret. General means that no enfranchised citizen can be excluded from them; direct means that delegates or electoral colleges do not intervene in the electoral process; free means that no influence may be exerted on anyone to vote for a particular candidate or party; equal means that every enfranchised person has two votes, and secret means that no one can look over the shoulder of voters as they make their decisions. All of these criteria are laid down in Article 38 of the Basic Law.

A total of 598 Members of the Bundestag are elected, half of them in 299 constituencies, where the electorate votes for an individual, and the candidate with more votes than any of his or her rivals wins the constituency seat. This is the purpose of the first vote. The other half of the 598 Members of the Bundestag are elected on the basis of proportional representation. Voters cast their second vote for a party's *Land* list of candidates, and in every *Land* seats are allocated on the basis of the percentage of the vote accruing to each party's list. It is the distribution of these second votes that determines the composition of the Bundestag. If, for example, a party wins 20% of the second votes, it is entitled to 20% of the seats in the Bundestag. The seats won by a party's constituency candidates on the strength of the first vote are included in the calculation. First of all, seats are allocated to the directly



In the elections to the 16th Bundestag, the two mass parties were neck and neck. Neither the CDU/CSU nor the SPD was able to secure a parliamentary majority by forming a coalition with a smaller party.

elected candidates, and then the remaining seats are distributed on the basis of the *Land* lists, in which each party has listed its candidates in a fixed order.

The purpose of this complex additional-member system is to combine the first-past-the-post election of constituency candidates with the principle of proportional representation, applied by means of the *Land* lists. While all the votes cast for unsuccessful candidates in the first-past-the-post system are lost, the proportional-representation element compensates for this defect by applying the criterion of the number of second votes cast for each party list. As a result, the parties' representation in the Bundestag reflects their share of the vote and thus accurately mirrors the verdict of the electorate.

Moreover, the additional-member voting system enables people to split their vote. They can cast their first vote for the constituency candidate representing party A and their second vote for party B. As a result, it is possible not only to make a more refined choice but also to vote tactically, as would be the case if a voter wanted to help

the candidate of party A to win the constituency seat but also wanted party B to have enough votes to qualify for seats in the Bundestag and be available to form or continue a coalition with party A. Since almost all constituency seats are won by the major parties, the smaller parties are dependent on people's second votes. Many voters split their vote.

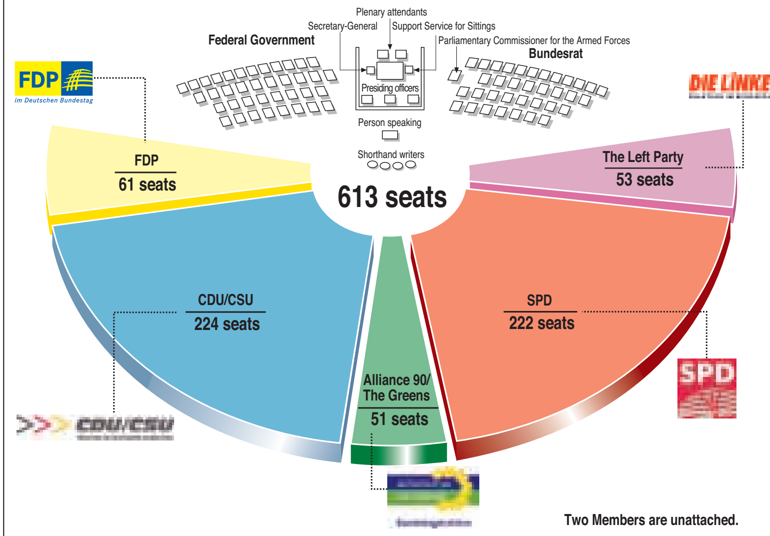
In order to prevent a fragmented Bundestag in which numerous small parties were represented, the 5% barrier was introduced. This means that seats are only distributed among those parties that win at least five per cent of the second votes; an exception is made if three of a party's constituency candidates are elected, in which case it does enter Parliament and its second votes are taken into account in determining its total parliamentary representation.

For the duration of the four-year electoral term Members of the Bundestag can neither be expelled from Parliament by their party nor voted out of office by the electorate. Members themselves, however, may resign their parliamentary seat if, for example, they have accepted another post that it incompatible with membership of the Bundestag. If a Member leaves the Bundestag, his or her seat is given to the highest-placed candidate on the party's *Land* list.

Such departures, however, are not a frequent occurrence. Nine to ten years is the average duration of parliamentary membership, and many parliamentarians remain in the Bundestag considerably longer. When a new Bundestag is elected, new Members normally account for about a quarter of the total membership, sometimes as much as a third. Following the 2005 election, more than 160 seats changed hands, 141 of them being won by complete newcomers to the Bundestag.

For its 16th electoral term, the Bundestag currently has 614 Members rather than 598. The 16 extra Members hold supernumerary seats, having entered Parliament by virtue of 'overhang mandates'. These extra seats are allocated in cases where a party has won more constituency

Distribution of seats in the 16th electoral term of the German Bundestag Date: 1 June 2007



Five parliamentary groups established themselves in the Bundestag for the 16th electoral term.

seats in a *Land* than its share of the second votes would warrant. Since these additional mandates cannot be withdrawn – after all, those who hold them were duly elected in their constituencies – the total number of Members of the Bundestag is increased accordingly. If, however, the holder of one of these supernumerary seats leaves Parliament, he or she is not replaced. This last happened when Matthias Wissmann (CDU) resigned his seat with effect from June 2007.

THE ELECTORATE – THEIR VOTE COUNTS

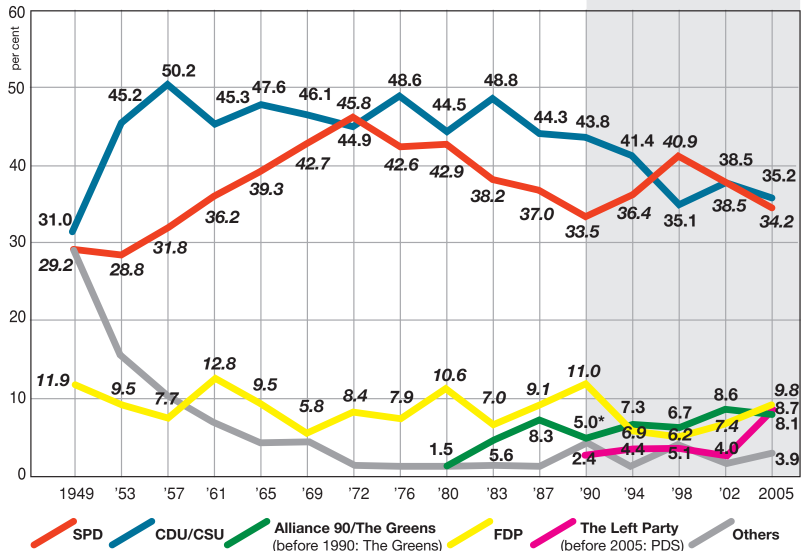
The behaviour of the electorate has long been marked by a high degree of stability. In all 16 general elections since the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949, electoral turnout has never fallen below 77%; in most cases it has been well over 80%, and it has even topped the 90% mark on two occasions.

Another contributory factor in the consolidation of parliamentary democracy was the fact that, especially throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the electorate concentrated their votes on three parties. That had been different in the first German Bundestag, in which twelve dif-

ferent parties were represented. It took the tightening in 1953 and 1956 of the 5% barrier introduced in 1949 to diminish the small parties' prospects of entering the Bundestag. By creating that obstacle, the Bundestag wanted to prevent the instability that had plagued the Reichstag during the period of the Weimar Republic. The 5% clause has played a major part in keeping extremist political organisations out of the Bundestag.

Bundestag elections 1949-2005

Percentage of second votes secured by the parties



* Combined total of the percentage of second votes secured by the West German Greens (3.8%) and by the East German electoral pact Alliance 90/The Greens (1.2%), which campaigned separately. Because the 5% barrier was calculated separately for East and West, Alliance 90/The Greens entered the Bundestag with eight seats, while the Greens (West) did not perform well enough to enter Parliament.

In the almost 60-year history of the Federal Republic there have been only five changes of government. This means that parliamentary groups have occupied the government as well as the opposition benches for lengthy periods at a time. Four out of the five groups currently represented in the Bundestag have thus amassed experience in both government and opposition over past decades. The role of the FDP has been somewhat exceptional in that it was able to stay in government for many years by making itself an indispensable coalition partner. In most cases a change of government has been effected or endorsed by

the electorate. On the whole, however, the electorate has seldom changed its allegiance abruptly but has tended to move slowly and steadily in the course of two or more electoral terms until it finally opted for a new constellation.

Within this stable framework the Bundestag has also seen new developments. In 1983, for instance, the three groups that had long monopolised the seats in Parliament, the CDU/CSU, the SPD and the FDP, were joined by a fourth group, the Greens. German unification brought further changes. In the mid-1990s, the Greens united with Alliance 90, formed from civil-rights groups in the German Democratic Republic which had been represented in the Bundestag since the first all-German election in 1990. Because the 5% barrier was applied separately to East and West Germany for that election, Alliance 90 managed to surmount it. Since German unification the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), born of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) of the GDR, has also been represented in the Bundestag, albeit in various forms – as a small grouping, by two individual members who won constituency seats and as a fully fledged parliamentary group. In the general election of 2005, when most of its candidates ran on the Left Party ticket, it regained its former group status. The new group of The Left Party in the Bundestag comprises Members from the PDS and from the Election Alternative for Work and Social Justice (WASG).

The changing constellation of the parliamentary groups is also, to a great extent, a manifestation of changes in voter behaviour. For some time now, the number of floating voters has been greater, and election re-

Facing page:
Election results throughout the history of the Federal Republic show that parties' gains and losses are subject to long-term trends.

This page:
The logos of the parliamentary groups in the 16th German Bundestag.

sults have been closer. In the 2005 general election, the CDU/CSU and SPD were neck and neck, the CDU/CSU finally winning by a slender margin of 226 to 222 seats. The formation of a Grand Coalition, however, gave the two groups a decisive initial parliamentary majority of 448 to 166 seats.

Voter behaviour was subjected to analysis in the wake of the 2005 Bundestag election. The findings showed that, out of an electorate of 61.9 million, 48 million had voted, which represents a turnout of 77.7%. This, in fact, was the lowest-ever turnout at a general election. There were wide disparities between the voting behaviour of men and women as well as between younger and older voters. Turnout in the new *Länder* of eastern Germany was 4.2% lower than in the pre-unification territory of the Federal Republic (74.3%, compared with 78.5%). The non-voting trend that has been observable for a number of years among the 18-29 age group continued. Whereas 80% of the electorate below the age of 30 went to the polls in 1980, this figure had fallen to 68.8% in 2005. There was relatively little interest in the elections among the 21-25 age group (66.5% turnout), with women in this group more likely to vote than men. The group at the very bottom of the turnout league were young East German men, only 61.8% of whom cast their votes. The most avid group of voters, on the other hand, were people in the 60-69 age bracket. Another finding was that more than 77% of older voters favoured one of the two mass parties, while the smaller parties obtained most of their support from younger voters.

MEMBERS OF THE BUNDESTAG – BETWEEN CHAMBER AND CONSTITUENCY

A heavy workload in the Bundestag and in their constituency often compels Members to stop practising their original professions and devote themselves entirely to fulfilling their mandate.

Besides the weeks when Parliament is sitting in Berlin, Members have to devote a great deal of time to

their constituency work. In the constituency, Members have to explain their activities to voters and address people's concerns. Members of the Bundestag are mediators between the public and the machinery of state and are subject to a wide range of demands from voters. They engage in numerous discussions during their surgery sessions, at meetings of local associations and at local fêtes. Members of the Bundestag are always welcome as guests and speakers at conferences and congresses. All of these are tasks that involve more than representation. At the end of the day, Members must always decide whether and how they can take political action to deal with their constituents' concerns. Needless to say, the grass roots of the party also want to know what their Member is achieving in Berlin. He or she must therefore attend meetings of the local party bodies in order to remain on the ball in political terms. This all makes for a full appointments diary whenever Members return to their constituency. To that extent, working in the constituency is no less stressful than a week of parliamentary sittings in Berlin.

In their constituencies, Members of the Bundestag canvass support and make themselves available to discuss matters with their constituents, as Michael Luther (CDU/CSU, right) is seen doing here.

This workload leaves little time for family and friends. Studies have shown that Members of Parliament have to work an average of 78 hours a week, even when Parliament is not sitting, in order to perform all their duties properly. The kind of thing they have to deal with during these hours is illustrated by the vast number of parliamentary printed papers that are produced for their perusal. Even in the curtailed legislative term from 2002 to 2005, Members had to process 6,000 such papers in the form of reports, legislative bills, communications or routine notices.

Admittedly, not every Member deals with every printed paper. There is always a cross-section that is of inter-

Reading files and printed papers is a must for Members of the Bundestag if they are to contribute to discussions and take decisions. The Budget Committee, with its mountains of printed material, is particularly demanding in this respect; Dietmar Bartsch (The Left Party, right) is seen here studying documentation with a member of the parliamentary group staff.

est to any given Member of the Bundestag, from issues and occurrences that concern everyone to subjects that fall within the Member's own area of political activity. But even this cross-section is broad and is constantly expanding. There is, in short, a great deal to do in order to remain abreast of developments. Since the early days of the Federal Republic, when Parliament had to be especially prolific in its legislative output, the workload has not grown any lighter. On the contrary, besides making fundamental decisions there is an increasing need to focus on details. Laws are becoming more complex, which means that Members of the Bundestag are required to examine issues more and more thoroughly. And finally, there are the constant emergence of entirely new issues and, time and again, especially after changes of government, new fundamental decisions to be taken, with all the spadework that entails.

Members of the Bundestag are not left to their own devices to cope with this workload. They do have assistants in their offices in Berlin and in their constituency. The Bundestag administration also makes staff and resources available. There are, for example, consultants who work for the parliamentary reference and research service and who help Members by analysing issues and compiling materials. Members can obtain further information from the parliamentary archives or from the Bundestag library with its 1.3 million or so books and innumerable journals. Assistance is also provided by the staff of the committee

secretariats as well as the staff employed by the parliamentary groups. Political consultancy can also come from external sources. For instance, the Members and bodies of the Bundestag also seek information from experts belonging to government ministries and other public authorities or invite specialists to attend consultations. Without these services and sources of assistance, Parliament could scarcely function effectively. Ultimately, however, no one can relieve Members of Parliament of the right and obligation to form their own judgements and take their own decisions. For this reason, besides their numerous sittings and meetings, they have to spend many hours poring over books and files, tables and statistics, minutes and agreements, statements and speeches.

MEMBERS' REMUNERATION

Fulfilling a mandate is not only a full-time job; it is also a recognised profession. The Federal Constitutional Court confirmed that fact in a formal ruling. And those who practise a profession must be paid accordingly. Article 48 of the Basic Law puts it this way: 'Members shall be entitled to remuneration adequate to ensure their independence'. At the present time, each Member of the Bundestag receives a monthly taxable remuneration of €7,009. If the Member also receives payments from other public funds, these are set off against the remuneration on the basis of a fixed scale.

The remuneration is supplemented by a monthly tax-free expense allowance of €3,270. Members can use this allowance to cover costs incurred in connection with the exercise of their mandate. These include the cost of maintaining a constituency office, of renting a second home at the seat of Parliament and of official travel within the Federal Republic. In Berlin, the benefits in kind with which Members are provided include a fully equipped office, rail travel within the territory of the Federal Republic and the use of official cars from the Bundestag's own vehicle pool within the Berlin area are free of charge. But

there are strings attached: if Members cannot fulfil their obligation to be present on days when Parliament is sitting, a daily amount varying between €20 and €100 is deducted from their expense allowance on the basis of predefined criteria.

A Member of the Bundestag also incurs costs for the employment of personal staff. The Bundestag reimburses these costs, on submission of evidence, up to a maximum of €13,660 per month, irrespective of whether the staff are employed at the seat of Parliament or in the Member's constituency.

When Members leave the Bundestag, they receive transitional emoluments to help them in their reintegration into their former trade or profession. The amount depends on their length of parliamentary service. Those who have been Members of the Bundestag for at least eight years are also entitled to public superannuation benefits. The date on which these benefits become payable and their amount also depend on length of service as a Member of the Bundestag. Both types of benefit are taxable, and in both cases payments received from other public funds will reduce the amount to which a former Member is entitled. One subject of discussion at the present time is whether Members of the Bundestag should not fund their own pensions and receive higher remuneration by way of compensation.

Because a Member's mandate is for a limited time, in other words the four years for which he or she is elected, it is often necessary for Members of the Bundestag to keep in touch with their trade or profession and to be prepared for the time when they leave Parliament. This connection with trades and professions also benefits Parliament, because Members bring their occupational experience and perspectives into the Bundestag. All outside employment, however, whether paid or unpaid, must be reported to the President of the Bundestag so as to disclose any potential conflicts of interest. This reported information is published in the official Bundestag handbook and on the Internet. A strict code of conduct applies to sec-

ondary income, and sanctions are imposed for breaches of the code and failure to comply with disclosure obligations. The maximum penalty is a fine amounting to half of a Member's annual remuneration and public announcement of the infringement.

During the 15th electoral term the code of conduct was refined and extended. The main purpose of these amendments was to provide for the publication of income from any professional activity in which Members continue to engage following their election to the Bundestag. Such income is assigned to one of three categories, namely monthly earnings of €1,000 to €3,500, €3,501 to €7,000 and over €7,000. Some Members from the CDU/CSU, the SPD and the FDP brought an action against this measure before the Federal Constitutional Court, but the action was dismissed by the Court in July 2007. All secondary income exceeding €1,000 in a month or €10,000 in a year must now be reported and published.

INDEMNITY AND IMMUNITY – PREREQUISITES FOR AN EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENT

So that the effectiveness of Parliament can be maintained, the old parliamentary rights of immunity and indemnity apply to Members of the Bundestag. Under Article 46 of the Basic Law, 'At no time may a Member be subjected to court proceedings or disciplinary action or otherwise called to account outside the Bundestag for a vote cast or for any speech or debate in the Bundestag or in any of its committees. This provision shall not apply to defamatory insults.' This is the right of indemnity. As regards immunity, the same article lays down that 'A Member may not be called to account or arrested for a punishable offence without permission of the Bundestag, unless he is apprehended while committing the offence or in the course of the following day'. Criminal proceedings designed to eliminate a Member of Parliament from the political process is practically unthinkable today, in contrast to the days when democracy was in its infancy. At the same

time, no parliamentarian may be prevented from exercising his or her mandate without the consent of the Bundestag. The purpose of this provision is to ensure that Parliament as a whole is able to function. This does not mean, however, that Members of the Bundestag are immune from prosecution for criminal offences. Except in the case of insults of a political nature, criminal prosecution is always authorised. At the request of the Bundestag, criminal proceedings may, however, be suspended.

THE MEMBERS OF THE BUNDESTAG IN FIGURES

The Bundestag comprises 598 seats, 299 of which are held by constituency Members and the remaining 299 by Members elected from the parties' regional lists. Following the general election of 2005 there were initially 16 overhang mandates, which meant that the 16th Bundestag convened with 614 Members. The CDU/CSU, with 224 seats, is currently the largest parliamentary group, followed by the SPD with 222 seats, the FDP with 61, The Left Party with 53 and Alliance 90/The Greens with 51. Two Members, one belonging to the CDU/CSU and the other to The Left Party, have left their respective groups are now unattached. The CDU/CSU has lost one of its overhang mandates.

The average age of Members of the Bundestag over all its electoral terms has been around 50, and this also applied at the start of the 16th term. Statisticians might wish to know that the precise average age of a Member of the Bundestag is 49.3 years. This means that both of the large groups, the CDU/CSU and the SPD, are slightly older than average, while the group of The Left Party is slightly younger. The electoral gains achieved by the FDP have considerably lowered the average age of its representatives in the Bundestag, and only the group of Alliance 90/The Greens is more youthful. The latter has always had a lower average age than the other groups. At the start of the present electoral term, 15 Members of the Bundestag were below the age of 30.

One thing that has changed is the percentage of women Members in the Bundestag. Until the 1980s only six to eight per cent of parliamentary seats were held by women. The 1987 election marked the start of a steady increase in the proportion of women, which eventually reached a peak of 32.5%. The start of the 16th electoral term saw a slight fall in the number of female Members, who now hold 31.6% of the seats in the Bundestag. In other words, of the 613 Members of the Bundestag, 194 are women and 419 men. The highest percentage of women has traditionally been found in the ranks of Alliance

90/The Greens (56.9%), while the group of The Left Party has 48.1%, the SPD 36%, the FDP 24.6% and the CDU/CSU 19.9%.

A third of the Members of the 16th Bundestag are women. The parliamentary group of Alliance 90/The Greens has traditionally had the highest percentage of women in its ranks.

The Members' level of educational attainment and their occupation are also documented. Of the 613 Members, 440 successfully completed higher secondary schooling, and 378 are university graduates. In terms of subjects studied, law is far ahead of the field, one in five Members being a law graduate. This is followed at a considerable distance by teaching, economics and social science, business management, political science, education and engineering. The basic occupational structure of the Bundestag in almost all of its previous legislative terms also applies by and large to the 16th Bundestag, in that most Members were established civil servants or other public employees. The next-largest group comes from paid positions or self-employment in the private sector or in

associations. Then come the independent professions and, finally, Members who had occupational links with political or social organisations.

In terms of religious affiliation, there has long been a balance between the Protestant and Catholic faiths, with about a third of all Members of the Bundestag belonging to each. At the present time, there are a few more Protestants than Catholics. A third of all Members do not provide any indication of a religious affiliation.

STRUCTURE AND BUSINESS OF THE BUNDESTAG

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BUNDESTAG – DEPUTY HEAD OF STATE

The President of the Bundestag is the foremost representative of Parliament. Together with his Vice-Presidents, he forms the Presidium of the Bundestag, which is elected

at the start of the first sitting of each new legislative term. The Presidium is elected for the whole term and cannot be deposed. It is traditional to elect the President from the ranks of the largest parliamentary group. In the 16th electoral term, which began in the autumn of 2005, the CDU/CSU has been the largest group, and so one of its members, Norbert Lammert, is President of the Bundestag. The Rules of Procedure lay down that each parlia-

Norbert Lammert (CDU, centre), President of the Bundestag for the 16th electoral term, with his Vice-Presidents (left to right) Hermann Otto Solms (FDP), Katrin Göring-Eckardt (Alliance 90/The Greens), Susanne Kastner (SPD), Wolfgang Thierse (SPD), Petra Pau (The Left Party) and Gerda Hasselfeldt (CSU).

mentary group is represented on the Presidium by at least one Vice-President. The number of Vice-Presidents was set at six for the present term. The CDU/CSU, as the largest group, provides one Vice-President, the SPD, the second-largest group, provides two, and the FDP, Alliance 90/The Greens and The Left Party each provide one.

The President of the Bundestag is second only to the President of the Federal Republic in order of precedence and therefore ranks ahead of the Federal Chancellor, the President of the Bundesrat and the President of the Federal Constitutional Court. Another politically significant fact is that the President of the Bundestag is the addressee of all legislative bills and other proposals presented by the Federal Government and the Bundesrat. This underlines the precedence of the legislative branch of government over the executive. The President is also the recipient of all proposals and submissions that emanate from Parliament itself or are addressed to the Bundestag.

The Rules of Procedure of the Bundestag define the general duties of the President, charging him to represent the Bundestag and conduct its business, uphold the dignity and rights of the Bundestag, further its work, conduct its debates fairly and impartially and maintain order in the Bundestag. The President exercises proprietary and police powers in the premises of the Bundestag, and the administration of the Bundestag, with a staff of some 2,500, is subject to his authority.

Conducting the deliberations in the plenary chamber is the most visible function of the President. The President and Vice-Presidents take it in turns to chair the plenary sittings. The Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag describe this task as follows: 'The President shall determine the order in which speakers are called. In so doing, he shall be guided by the need to ensure that debates are conducted properly and efficiently with due regard to the different views of political parties, the arguments for and against the tabled motion and the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups; in particular, a divergent opinion shall be heard after a speech has been delivered by a member of the Federal Government or a person commissioned by it.' Should Members commit a breach of order, the President of the Bundestag may call them to order, censure them, direct them to stop speaking or even suspend them for up to 30 sitting days.

THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS – AN IMPORTANT LINK

The name 'Council of Elders' is used figuratively. In practice, it does not comprise the oldest members of the House but highly experienced parliamentarians and particularly the parliamentary secretaries of the various groups. The Council of Elders assists the Presidium and the Bundestag in their work by ensuring that the organisation of the sitting weeks is coordinated and that they run as smoothly as possible. To this end, an advance schedule of sittings and a work programme are drawn up annually,

A meeting of the Council of Elders, which is composed of the Presidium and a further 23 Members of the Bundestag, including all the parliamentary secretaries of the five parliamentary groups.

and the agenda for each week of sittings is set at short notice.

That is no easy task, for in deciding whether and when a subject is to be debated, the Council of Elders also exerts influence on the political agenda in the wider sense. It also reaches agreement on the amount of speaking time to be devoted to each item on the agenda. If an item is allocated a good time slot, the media can give it extensive coverage. For this reason it is understandable that the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups are reflected in the Council of Elders. The Council, after all, must cooperate, reconcile interests and work out compromises. This is why it comprises the members of the Presidium, 23 further Members of the Bundestag appointed by the parliamentary groups and one representative of the Federal Government. The 23 Members are delegated in accordance with the relative strengths of the groups in the Bundestag. There are nine from the CDU/CSU group, eight from the SPD and two each from the groups of the FDP, The Left Party and Alliance 90/The Greens. The President of the Bundestag chairs the Council of Elders.

The Council of Elders cannot take decisions about the agenda. It can only make recommendations and can only reach agreements by consensus. If its members cannot reach agreement, it is up to Parliament itself to decide on the agenda and on contentious matters. The Government's work schedule must be taken into account when

the parliamentary calendar is drawn up. That is why it is also represented at meetings of the Council of Elders. Lastly, consideration must also be given to meetings of international bodies in which Members of the Bundestag are involved, such as the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe, the OSCE and NATO or the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Another important task of the Council of Elders is to discuss issues in which the dignity and rights of the House are at stake and, if possible, to resolve them. In such cases its role as an instrument of compromise and cooperation assumes particular importance.

Lastly, the Council of Elders plays a part when it comes to determining which parliamentary groups are to provide the chairpersons and vice-chairs of the Bundestag committees. In view of the political influence attaching to these posts, this by no means an easy undertaking, even if the size of the various parliamentary groups serves as a yardstick. If an agreement cannot be reached, a 'tray-passing' method comes into play, whereby a mathematical formula reflecting the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups determines the sequence in which the groups are invited to select a committee chairmanship or vice-chairmanship.

The other tasks performed by the Council of Elders are illustrated by a number of commissions that it has formed. These include a commission on the legal status of Members of the Bundestag, a body to deal with building matters and the allocation of premises and commissions on matters regarding Members' staff, on the use of new information technology and communication media and on internal affairs of the Bundestag. The Council of Elders also prepares the annual estimates for the Bundestag budget, from which the Budget Committee cannot diverge without the Council's agreement. The Bundestag has a budget of some €630 million for 2007.

In short, the Council of Elders is the key steering body which ensures that plenary sittings are not bogged down with time-consuming debates on points of order. Its nu-

merous internal duties are closely connected to its other main function, namely to serve as an important communication link both between parliamentary groups and between the groups and the Presidium.

THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS – PARLIAMENTS WITHIN PARLIAMENT

The Presidium, the Council of Elders and the committees are bodies of the whole Parliament. The parliamentary groups, on the other hand, are not common institutions, but they are nevertheless components and permanent subdivisions of the Bundestag. They reflect the result of the election, because they are ultimately the parliamentary arm of the political parties that stood for election to the Bundestag. The groups, formed by all the Members of the Bundestag from a particular party or, as in the case of the CDU/CSU, related parties, are major hubs in the parliamentary process. They decide on the political approach to plenary debates and determine whether legislative bills are introduced. They are also discussion forums in which the political will of the Bundestag is formed. For these reasons they are referred to as 'parliaments within Parliament'.

The Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag specify that a parliamentary group can only be constituted by five per cent or more of the Members of the Bundestag. In the 16th electoral term, this means 31 out of 613 Members. This figure corresponds to the clause in the Electoral Act whereby a party must obtain five per cent of the vote to qualify for a share of the seats in Parliament. The 16th Bundestag has five parliamentary groups: the CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP parliamentary groups as well as the parliamentary groups of The Left Party and Alliance 90/The Greens. There are also two Members who are not affiliated to any group. The CDU/CSU parliamentary group differs from the others in that the Members belonging to the CDU, which campaigns in all federal states except Bavaria, have united with the Members be-

longing to the Bavarian CSU. Within the joint parliamentary group the 46 CSU Members form a group with its own special status.

Each parliamentary group is headed by a chairperson and an executive committee, who provide political leadership and coordination. As far as possible, every faction within the group should be represented on the executive and take part in decision-making. The chairs of the groups and the members of their executives have a great deal of influence on their groups. This is illustrated by the fact that the chair of each group speaks in almost all major plenary debates. Their speeches often open a debate. They are equally influential in the internal decision-making process.

The parliamentary secretaries are also part of the leadership team within a parliamentary group. They have a special status, for it is they who organise and coordinate the work schedule of their respective parliamentary groups as well as cooperating with their counterparts to ensure that the everyday business of the Bundestag is conducted as smoothly as possible. They are the managers of the parliamentary process: as spokespersons they represent their parliamentary groups in the Council of Elders and are in constant contact with the other groups. In addition, they deal with matters relating to personnel and to

1. Volker Kauder (standing), chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, at a group meeting. With him at the executive table (left to right) are Peter Ramsauer, chair of the group of CSU parliamentarians, Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and First Parliamentary Secretary (Chief Whip) Norbert Röttgen.

2. Parliamentary group chairman Peter Struck (standing) opens a meeting of the SPD parliamentary group.

3. Guido Westerwelle, party and parliamentary group chairman of the FDP, rings the bell to signal the start of a group meeting.

the Rules of Procedure, mobilise the members of their group to attend major debates and votes and maintain contacts with institutions outside Parliament. All in all, their duties are so extensive that every group needs several parliamentary secretaries to perform them.

Besides the chairpersons and parliamentary secretaries of the parliamentary groups, the top echelon within the parliamentary groups also includes the chairs of the group committees and working parties as well as the group spokespersons, who coordinate the work of their group members in the Bundestag committees. Although most of their work is done behind the scenes, they have a great deal of influence on initial decisions regarding matters such as legislative bills and parliamentary work patterns.

First and foremost, however, a parliamentary group comprises Members of the Bundestag, in other words 'representatives of the whole people, not bound by orders or instructions and subject only to their conscience', as Article 38 of the Basic Law puts it. At the same time, Article 21 is also applicable, stipulating that political parties shall participate in the formation of the political will of the people. The reason why this article is significant in its own right is that Members of Parliament are normally elected as candidates of a particular party in order to represent that party in the Bundestag and to champion the party line. Moreover, Members of Parliament cannot function effectively as individuals but need the backing of a parliamentary group. For example, no individual can introduce a bill in the Bundestag; only a parliamentary group or five per cent of the Members of the Bundestag can do that.

All of this means that Members are faced with a conflict of principles between freedom of conscience and the duty they owe to their party and its voters to follow a particular course, and they can only walk that tightrope with the aid of their parliamentary group. Members are under no absolute compulsion to comply with the majority decisions of their own parliamentary group. At the same time,

4. Oskar Lafontaine (right) is one of two co-chairmen of The Left Party, the other being Gregor Gysi. Next to Lafontaine at this group meeting is Ulrich Maurer, one of the parliamentary group's two First Parliamentary Secretaries.

5. The co-chairs of the parliamentary group of Alliance 90/The Greens, Renate Künast and Fritz Kuhn, in discussion with their colleagues at a group meeting.

however, parliamentary group discipline is indispensable, otherwise Parliament would rarely be able to arrive at common decisions or achieve adequate and sustainable majorities. On the contrary, the outcome of votes would depend on unpredictable fortuitous circumstances. The Bundestag would ultimately face the threat of paralysis.

This is why lively debates ensue time and again within the groups before their various positions are established and, where possible, reduced to a common denominator. Sometimes such debates within the ranks of a parliamentary group can reveal more antithetical positions than when coalition and opposition Members cross swords in plenary debates. It is often extremely difficult for the chairperson of a group to broker an agreement among its members that will enable the parliamentary group to present a united front to its political adversaries and to the public at large. Sometimes it takes a majority decision to draw a line under disagreements, and there is even the odd occasion when the minority finds it impossible to adhere to a position adopted in this way.

As major hubs in the parliamentary process, the parliamentary groups must prepare their decisions carefully. To this end they set up working groups and working parties for all policy areas. These bodies bring together the specialists within the parliamentary group to prepare decisions for adoption by the whole parliamentary group. The parliamentary groups depend on the preparatory work and advice of these bodies, since no Member of the Bundestag can be a specialist in every field. The fact is that there is often too little time to deal fully with the sheer incalculable volume of technical issues. The CDU/CSU has established 27 such bodies, the SPD 22, the parliamentary groups of the FDP and The Left Party six each and Alliance 90/The Greens five.

THE COMMITTEES – THE ENGINES OF PARLIAMENT

Like the plenary assembly and the Council of Elders, the Bundestag committees are organs of the whole Parlia-

ment. Before Parliament takes a formal decision, the parliamentary groups come to an agreement on the number of committees to be set up, their spheres of responsibility and the number of their members. There are various types of Bundestag committee – the permanent committees, the Mediation Committee, the Joint Committee, temporary committees of inquiry and other bodies.

With 36 members, the Committee on Economics and Technology, chaired by former Education Minister Edelgard Bulmahn (SPD), is one of the largest of the 22 Bundestag committees.

The number of permanent committees varies from one electoral term to another, depending on where the Bundestag wishes to put its priorities. The first Bundestag in 1949, for instance, had a total of 40 permanent committees, whereas the 16th Bundestag has 22. To these may be added the subcommittees appointed by permanent committees to deal in greater detail with specific subject matter.

The committees also reflect the party-political balance of the Bundestag. Each committee comprises a chairperson, a vice-chair and a certain number of members, each of whom has a substitute. The number of members differs from committee to committee and is based on the expected workload. In the 16th electoral term the committees vary in size from 13 to 41 members with an equal number of substitute members.

Seats on a committee are distributed in accordance with the balance of power in the Bundestag. Each parliamentary group is entitled to provide a number of commit-

THE COMMITTEES OF THE BUNDESTAG

1. Committee for the Scrutiny of Elections, Immunity and the Rules of Procedure . . . 13 Members
2. Petitions Committee . . . 25 Members
3. Committee on Foreign Affairs . . . 36 Members
4. Committee on Internal Affairs . . . 36 Members
5. Sports Committee . . . 16 Members
6. Committee on Legal Affairs . . . 31 Members
7. Finance Committee . . . 36 Members
8. Budget Committee . . . 41 Members
9. Committee on Economics and Technology . . . 36 Members
10. Committee on Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection . . . 31 Members
11. Committee on Labour and Social Affairs . . . 36 Members
12. Defence Committee . . . 30 Members
13. Committee on Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth . . . 31 Members
14. Committee on Health . . . 31 Members
15. Committee on Transport, Building and Urban Affairs . . . 36 Members
16. Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety . . . 31 Members
17. Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid . . . 16 Members
18. Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment . . . 31 Members
19. Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development . . . 22 Members
20. Committee on Tourism . . . 16 Members
21. Committee on the Affairs of the European Union . . . 33 Members
22. Committee on Cultural and Media Affairs . . . 20 Members

tee members corresponding to its relative strength in the Bundestag. The parliamentary groups decide which of their members are to serve on which committees. Every Member of Parliament should be a full member of only one committee. Who chairs each committee, on the other hand, is determined by the Council of Elders on a cross-party basis. Because of the special political influence of the chairpersons, each group has an interest in having its members occupy these positions. If the members of the

Council of Elders cannot agree on the allocation of these posts, they are filled on the basis of a 'tray-passing' method, whereby a mathematical formula reflecting the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups determines the sequence in which the parliamentary groups are invited to select a committee chairmanship or vice-chairmanship.

The number of committees and their spheres of responsibility essentially reflect the Government's distribution of ministerial portfolios. The Foreign Office is shadowed in Parliament by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior by the Committee on Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice by the Committee on Legal Affairs. The basic principle of Parliament subjecting the Government to scrutiny is clearly visible here too. In addition, in this 16th electoral term the Bundestag has established committees that do not match the portfolio of any federal ministry. In this way the Bundestag sets its own priorities with bodies such as the Sports Committee, the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, the Committee on Cultural and Media Affairs and the Committee on Tourism.

The committees deliberate behind closed doors as a rule, because not everything on their agenda can be discussed in public and because contributions should be objective and not merely designed to make a strong public impact. At the same time, no committee member is sworn to silence on a committee's deliberations unless an explicit decision has been taken to that effect. Moreover, other Members of Parliament are free to follow the proceedings at committee meetings.

Exceptions to this rule are the Committees on Foreign Affairs and on Defence as well as the Committee on Internal Affairs when it discusses matters relating to the internal security of the Federal Republic. Much of the content of these committees' meetings requires confidential discussion. For this reason, the only Members of the Bundestag allowed to attend the meetings of these committees are the full and substitute members of the committee in question.

The Basic Law prescribes that the Bundestag must appoint a Committee on Foreign Affairs, a Committee on Defence, a Committee on the Affairs of the European Union and a Petitions Committee in every electoral term. This gives these committees a pre-eminent status. In the event of Germany facing actual or imminent armed attack, the Basic Law also provides for the Joint Committee to act as an emergency parliament. Some other committees also have a particularly important role, one example being the Budget Committee, which is involved in almost all legislative bills because it has to examine their financial implications.

In the committees, the Members of the Bundestag focus on a specific policy area. They discuss all pertinent bills before Parliament takes its decision and try to come up with a compromise in committee that is likely to attract majority support in the plenary chamber. In order to come to grips with particular issues, the committees seek information from the Government or from experts. Another way in which the Bundestag can examine a legislative bill or a complex issue in depth is by holding hearings at which the views of experts and representatives of special interests are heard by the committee, normally in public. The idea is that the specialists in the field should reinforce the technical basis of the committee's output and enrich the work of Parliament by giving it the benefit of their practical experience.

A verification role is performed by the public lists maintained by the President of the Bundestag which register all the associations that lobby the Bundestag or the Federal Government in support of their members' interests. Each association must indicate its interests, the composition of its executive board and management team and the number of its members. There are good reasons for that: on the one hand, politicians have an interest in familiarising themselves in good time with the views of those who would be affected by their proposed laws and decisions and in making use of those people's specialised knowledge; on the other hand, the register is intended to

ensure as far as possible that influence is not exerted by unknown and unverifiable organisations.

The Bundestag is no mere ‘legislation machine’. Together with its legislative functions, it has a duty to scrutinise the work of the Government. One way in which it performs this duty is through the exercise of its budgetary rights. The Budget Act, in which all public expenditure and revenue is laid down, cannot be executed without the consent of the Bundestag. To put it colloquially, if the Bundestag says no, the Federal Government is not given a brass farthing.

That is an important responsibility. After all, the Federal Government intends to spend about €270 billion in 2007. And because the allocation of budgetary resources reflects the priorities of the Government’s programme, the budget is one of the most hotly debated items on the parliamentary agenda. The wrangling begins in the Budget Committee, with 41 members the largest and most powerful specialised body in the Bundestag. It scrutinises the spending policy of the Federal Government and discusses the annual federal budget as the committee responsible. This power of scrutiny is symbolised by the fact that an unwritten law assigns the chairmanship of the Budget Committee to the Opposition. At the present time, the post is held by a representative of the FDP, which is the largest opposition group.

Year after year the Budget Committee discusses the planned expenditure of the Federal Government. This is broken down into individual budgets, the scope of which largely matches the portfolios of the government ministries and the responsibilities of the various organs of the Constitution. Departmental budget 11, for example, allocates about €124 billion to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, while departmental budget 02 provides the Bundestag with €630 million. For the deliberations on each of the departmental budgets, the Committee appoints members from all of the parliamentary groups as rapporteurs. The rapporteurs conduct a thorough examination of the spending plans of their respective as-

This page:
Prominent guests also attend meetings of the various committees. At the start of Germany's EU presidency, José Manuel Barroso (centre), President of the European Commission, is seen here at a meeting of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union. On the left of the picture is Norbert Lammert (CDU/CSU), President of the Bundestag, and on the right is Matthias Wissmann (CDU/CSU), chairman of the Committee at that time.

Facing page:
The Petitions Committee is the direct point of contact for citizens. Its members – pictured here is chairwoman Kersten Naumann (The Left Party) – try to ensure a satisfactory outcome for the petitions submitted to them.

signed ministries and hold talks with ministers and senior civil servants, the results of which then form the basis for the Committee's deliberations. Finally, the Budget Committee presents the House with a recommendation for a decision on each of the departmental budgets. The annual debate on the federal budget, which stretches over several days, is one of the highlights of the parliamentary calendar. The intentions of the Government are recognisable in the budget, and they are subjected to critical examination, especially by the Opposition, which takes the opportunity offered by the discussion of departmental budgets, particularly that of the Federal Chancellery, to launch attacks on the general performance of the Government.

The consolidation of public finances has certainly been a long-running item on the agenda of the Budget Committee. As well as focusing on that issue, the Committee also checks whether legislative bills are compatible with the budget. It examines federal land purchases and sales and major military expenditure. Lastly, it can influence the use of public funds by imposing a qualified freeze on appropriated funds when the budget is drawn up. This means that the money cannot be spent in the current year without the authorisation of the Budget Committee.

Another instrument of parliamentary scrutiny is the obligation of the Minister of Finance to present an annual statement of account, on the basis of which Parliament decides whether to grant discharge to the Government.

The Bundestag also appoints the President and Vice-President of the Federal Court of Audit, which is responsible for auditing the expenditure of the federal administration.

The Committee on the Affairs of the European Union is one of the committees prescribed by the Basic Law. It is responsible for matters of European integration as well as for cooperation with the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the EU Member States. It also deals with European projects that cover more than one policy area, such as the Financial Perspective, in which the European Union stipulates the amount and purpose of its revenue and expenditure for several years in advance. Like the other committees, the EU Affairs Committee also drafts decisions for adoption in plenary. Its powers, however, extend further than this, for if the Bundestag cannot convene in time for a plenary sitting and the President of the Bundestag authorises special meetings, the EU Affairs Committee may exercise the rights of the Bundestag; in other words, it can take decisions on behalf of the House and deliver opinions to the Federal Government. In this way the Committee can make clear the position of the German Parliament on legislative proposals from the European Union and lend parliamentary legitimacy to that position on behalf of the Bundestag.

As well as Members of the Bundestag, German Members of the European Parliament also take part in the meetings of the EU Affairs Committee. Although they

have no voting powers, they participate in the Committee's deliberations and thereby guarantee close cooperation between the national and European parliamentary bodies.

Another important instrument of parliamentary scrutiny is the Petitions Committee. Article 17 of the Basic Law stipulates that 'Every person shall have the right, individually or jointly with others, to address written requests or complaints to competent authorities and to the legislature'. For matters falling within the competence of the federal authorities, the Petitions Committee of the Bundestag is the right addressee. Year after year the Committee receives some 20,000 requests or complaints. It can hear petitioners, experts and witnesses or require the Federal Government and other federal authorities to forward files. While the Committee cannot issue instructions, it can help in many cases by providing advice and information. Behind its recommendations, especially those made to the Federal Government, is the authority of the whole Parliament. The mere fact that the Petitions Committee has asked questions often has a considerable impact.

Since 2005 the Committee has offered the option of submitting public petitions. Not only can these be sent to Parliament by e-mail; they can also be published on the Bundestag website if they are of general interest. The aim of public petitions is to involve people more closely in political decision-making processes.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs is another of the committees prescribed by the Basic Law. It monitors the Government's foreign policy, particularly in the run-up to important decisions in the realm of foreign and security policy, and operates behind closed doors, since the issues it discusses are highly sensitive. It is the lead committee for the discussion of matters such as whether the Federal Government can send German troops to take part in operations abroad. Such discussions focus on the situation in international trouble spots such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and the Middle East. Every deployment of

Meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in one of the typical committee rooms in the Paul Löbe Building, which are known as the rotundas.

the Bundeswehr abroad must have prior parliamentary approval. Deliberations on giving mandates to the Bundeswehr or on altering or extending its existing mandates account for a large part of the Committee's work. The fact is that the Federal Government cannot take these important decisions on its own. They must be taken by Parliament in a verifiable and democratic process. For this reason the Bundeswehr is sometimes referred to as a parliamentary army.

The Committee on Defence also meets behind closed doors – naturally enough, since its discussions relate to the security of the country and of Germany's allies and the safety of the operational forces of the Bundeswehr. The break-up of Yugoslavia had already compelled Germany to adopt a new role in Europe. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and in Washington on 11 September 2001 hastened the development of Germany's importance and responsibility for European security and world peace. Germany's interests and international obligations have led to a steady increase in the number, intensity, scope and duration of Bundeswehr deployments outside NATO territory. This has also resulted in an overlap between the spheres of responsibility of the Committee on Defence and the Committee on Foreign Affairs, which makes close cooperation essential.

Among the traditional tasks of the Committee on Defence are the discussion of legislative bills and motions for resolutions as well as parliamentary scrutiny of the armed forces. For example, the defence budget and major Bundeswehr procurements require the Committee's approval. A special right of the Committee on Defence is its power to act as a committee of inquiry, which it has exercised twelve times since 1949.

THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR THE ARMED FORCES – THE SOLDIER'S ADVOCATE

As the Bundeswehr, in its role as a parliamentary army, is deployed more frequently to take part in operations abroad, the duties of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces are also becoming more onerous. He is the middleman between the Bundestag and the Bundeswehr. The Commissioner is appointed to assist the Members of the Bundestag in the parliamentary scrutiny of the armed forces and has the tasks of investigating suspected breaches of human rights within the Bundeswehr and reporting to Parliament on the condition and morale of the armed forces. He is the central point of contact for soldiers, sailors and airmen and their dependants. They can address their complaints and questions in writing to the Parliamentary Commissioner. These submissions may pertain, for example, to work-related, social or personal problems. The Parliamentary Commissioner pre-

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is the ombudsman in the Bundestag for Bundeswehr troops. Reinhold Robbe (SPD) has performed this function since 2005.

sents an annual activity report to the Bundestag, which the latter debates. As well as acting on his own responsibility, the Commissioner investigates certain occurrences on the instructions of the Bundestag or the Committee on Defence. He is elected by secret ballot for a five-year period and is neither a Member of the Bundestag nor a civil servant.

THE JOINT COMMITTEE – EMERGENCY PARLIAMENT WHEN GERMANY IS ON A DEFENCE FOOTING

The Joint Committee of Parliament forms the emergency parliament. It would act in place of the Bundestag and Bundesrat if they were incapacitated by an armed attack on the territory of the Federal Republic or by the imminent threat of such an attack. In such an extreme situation, defined in the Basic Law as a 'state of defence', the Joint Committee is empowered by Article 115e to exercise the powers of the Bundestag and Bundesrat as a single body. The President of the Bundestag is chairman of the Joint Committee. The Committee comprises 32 Members of the Bundestag, designated in proportion to the sizes of the parliamentary groups, and 16 Members of the Bundesrat. This institution epitomises the intention of maintaining the parliamentary form of government even in the most exceptional circumstances.

STUDY COMMISSIONS – EXPERTS EXAMINING ISSUES OF LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE

Study commissions have become one of the most important institutions for policy discussions and are one of the main interfaces between politics and science. In contrast to the committees, the commissions involve experts who do not belong to Parliament examining an issue with Members of the Bundestag on an equal footing. By the end of the electoral term, the Commission submits a report and recommendations to the Bundestag. Study commissions are appointed to examine issues of long-term

significance. In the past, such issues have included constitutional reform (6th and 7th electoral terms) and the opportunities and risks of genetic engineering (10th term); two study commissions were appointed in the 12th and 13th electoral terms to examine the dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party, and a commission on demographic change sat during the 13th term.

Since study commissions were first introduced in 1969, Parliament has appointed 34 of them. During the 16th electoral term there has been a study commission on culture in Germany. This body of experts, on which eleven Members of the Bundestag and eleven external experts sit, has been formulating recommendations on protecting and shaping the cultural landscape in Germany and on further improving the situation of artists and performers. In principle, the deliberations of study commissions are not conducted in public. Although a commission can decide to admit the public, that is seldom done. Hearings of additional experts or special-interest groups, on the other hand, are regularly held in public.

COMMITTEES OF INQUIRY – INVESTIGATING ABUSES

Under Article 44 of the Basic Law, the Bundestag may appoint a committee of inquiry and is actually duty-bound to do so on the motion of a quarter of its Members. Committees of inquiry examine possible abuses in government and administration or suspected misconduct on the part of politicians. Its procedures are primarily governed by the Committees of Inquiry Act. The provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure are also relevant to its activities. Committees of inquiry sum up their findings in a report to the plenary assembly.

A committee of inquiry hears witnesses and experts. It can compel witnesses to attend hearings, and it can impose fines or have persons taken into custody for refusals to testify. As in the case of court proceedings, perjury before a committee of inquiry is a punishable offence.

The transactions of a committee of inquiry are, in principle, conducted in public. Audio and video recordings of its proceedings may be made only with the approval of two thirds of the committee members in attendance. This occurred for the first time during the 15th electoral term, when Joschka Fischer, Minister for Foreign Affairs at that time, was questioned at the inquiry into abuses in the issuing of visas in German embassies and consulates. The hearing was not only transmitted by the parliamentary television service but was also shown to a wider audience by German television stations.

One of the most high-profile committees of inquiry in recent times examined charges of laxity in the issuing of German visas to Eastern Europeans under the SPD-Green Government. Joschka Fischer (Alliance 90/The Greens), who was Foreign Minister at that time, was summoned to testify.

To date there have been 35 committees of inquiry. In the 16th electoral term the Bundestag has appointed one committee of inquiry, whose mandate includes an investigation of the activities of the Federal Intelligence Service in connection with the war in Iraq. The scope of the inquiry was extended to examine whether the Federal Intelligence Service had kept journalists under surveillance or bought information from them.

THE PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL PANEL – KEEPING AN EYE ON THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

The Parliamentary Control Panel of the Bundestag monitors the intelligence services of the Federal Republic, in other words the Federal Office for the Protection of the

Constitution, the Federal Intelligence Service and the Military Counterintelligence Service. The panel, whose meetings are top secret, currently comprises nine Members of Parliament, who are sworn to confidentiality, even towards other Members of the Bundestag. The Federal Government is bound to inform the Panel fully about the general activities of the intelligence services. The Panel is also linked to the parliamentary G10 Commission, which receives notification of any encroachments that are made into the secrecy of post and telecommunications to protect the basic democratic order and the integrity of the Federal Republic.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO THE CHAMBER

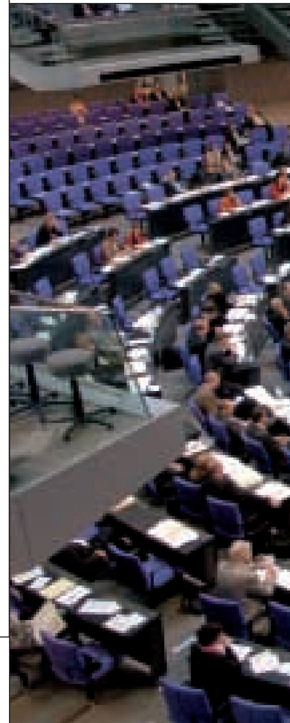
The Presidium, the Council of Elders, the parliamentary groups and the committees are all bodies in which initial major steps are taken in the process of parliamentary decision-making. The process begins long before the ultimate decision is taken in the plenary chamber. Nevertheless, all roads lead to the chamber. As the general assembly of Parliament, the chamber is, after all, the supreme authority of the Bundestag.

Decisions are preceded by lengthy deliberations in the committees and in the parliamentary groups, working parties and other bodies. Preliminary decisions may be taken at these initial stages. Indeed, when a subject has been discussed in great detail in so many forums, it only remains in many cases for the plenary assembly to set the final formal seal on the decision-making process.

This explains why plenary sittings are often akin to routine meetings, why many decisions are adopted without debate and why the Bundestag rarely comes up with unexpected decisions. Apart from the fact that Members of the Bundestag already have a heavy workload, the chamber is not the place for Members of Parliament to start determining their positions or seeking to influence each other. On the contrary, the chamber sees the public discussion of decisions that have been prepared in the

Bottom:
The plenary chamber of the German Bundestag in the Reichstag Building.

Facing page, top:
Photographers and camera crews are always present to follow proceedings in the chamber.



parliamentary groups and committees, still largely behind closed doors. The purpose of the plenary debates is to repeat the decision-making process in summary form before all eyes and ears. Only then is the final decision taken. Debates ultimately give voters the best opportunity to track political developments and monitor the work of their Members of Parliament.

The precept of deliberation in public, one of the vital principles of parliamentary democracy, is writ large. 'Sessions of the Bundestag shall be public' is the stipulation made in Article 42 of the Basic Law. Since all major debates are broadcast live on television and radio, this principle is now applied in a far fuller sense than in the early years of the Bundestag. Journalists can move freely within the Bundestag. The public nature of parliamentary deliberations is also reflected in the opportunity for numerous visitors to follow the debates in the chamber from the public galleries. The parliamentary district in Berlin and

the glass cupola above the seat of Parliament have become major public attractions in their own right. The Bundestag responds to visitors' curiosity, whether they are tourists or followers of politics, by operating with maximum transparency.

Exclusion of the public, it is true, may be requested by a tenth of the Members of the Bundestag or by the Federal Government, but a two-thirds majority of the Members of the Bundestag is required before the request can be granted. The height of this hurdle shows the extent to which plenary deliberations behind closed doors are regarded as an exception. In actual fact, no request has ever been made for the Bundestag to meet in secret.

The fact is that the plenary debates in the Bundestag are the public stage on which competing opinions are aired. The term 'stage', however, should not be taken too literally, for a plenary debate is no talk show. Unlike such shows, parliamentary debates are no inconsequential rituals but a forum where discussions take place and decisions are made on public matters that concern the entire population of the country in some way or another. Different rules apply from those that govern political talk shows, and greater weight attaches to votes cast and speakers' contributions. The rules governing the right to speak and speaking times determine who voices an opinion. The right to speak extends to Members of the Bundestag and to members of the Federal Government and of the Bundesrat. So that as many contributions as possible can be made to debates within a sitting lasting several hours, the speaking time available to Members is limited and is also divided up on the basis of the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups. At the present time, Members belonging to the SPD can speak for a total of 19 minutes in a debate lasting one hour, as can Members from the CDU/CSU group. The FDP has eight minutes, and the groups of The Left Party and Alliance 90/ The Greens each have seven minutes' speaking time.

With a view to enlivening debates in the Bundestag, brief interventions were introduced. These are state-

ments by Members, limited to three minutes, in response to a contribution to a debate. The original speaker then has the chance to reply. The purpose of this divergence from the pre-arranged schedule of speakers is to encourage spontaneity in plenary debates.

In the cut and thrust of parliamentary debate, the Government and member groups of the governing coalition and the Opposition can present their conflicting positions. The chamber is also the public forum where the Government is exposed to public scrutiny. Examples of direct forms of scrutiny are written questions put by Members of the Bundestag to the Government and the major and minor interpellations that may be tabled in the Bundestag in order to elicit information from the Federal Government on a particular issue. While written questions and the minor interpellations can only be answered in writing, the major interpellations usually lead to extensive debates. This is a particularly good and favoured opportunity for the Opposition to influence the parliamentary agenda. During the last legislative term, for example, major interpellations were tabled on matters such as the simplification of tax laws, the state of organic farming in Germany and the consequences of emigration for the new *Länder*. In the legislative term from 2002 to 2005, a total of 65 major interpellations and 797 minor interpellations were tabled.

Another important instrument is Question Time in the chamber, in which Members of the Bundestag can question government representatives on any issue. Besides the Member asking the initial question, other Members can ask supplementary questions to compel the Government to state its position on other aspects of the issue. The volume of questions has long outgrown its original one-hour time frame. In a sitting week, up to 120 minutes can be devoted to Question Time. In the 15th electoral period alone, almost 14,000 questions were asked.

These question-and-answer sessions can lead directly to a debate on a matter of topical interest in cases where Members are not satisfied with the information provided

by the Government or where they wish to voice their own opinion on the subject to which their question relates. It does not require a preceding question to trigger a debate on a matter of topical interest, and such debates have be-

This page:
Members ask and the Government answers – that is the format of Question Time in the parliamentary chamber. In the top picture, Volker Beck and Thea Dückert (both Alliance 90/The Greens) are the questioners. The bottom picture shows Parliamentary State Secretary Peter Altmaier (CDU/CSU) replying on behalf of the Government.

Facing page:
Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU/CSU) delivers her first Government policy statement to the Bundestag on 30 November 2005.

come an increasingly common feature of the parliamentary agenda. These debates, in which all speakers must restrict themselves to brief contributions, often tend to be lively. Because the time limit does not apply to contributions from members of, or persons commissioned by, the Government or the Bundesrat, these debates can also last longer than the allocated time of one hour. Since the Federal Government has to account for its actions in these debates, they also have a supervisory function. In the 15th electoral term there were 71 debates on subjects of topical interest.

Another instrument of parliamentary scrutiny is the question-and-answer session known as the *Regierungsbe-*

fragung in which questions are addressed to the Federal Government immediately after the Wednesday cabinet meeting. Here too, Members can seek information from members of the Government and ask them questions. The duration of this session is limited to 35 minutes. It is an important means of improving the flow of information between the Government and Parliament.

Last but not least, every Federal Chancellor makes a government policy statement to the Bundestag at the beginning of his or her term of office. Further statements of this kind may also be made in the course of the electoral term by the Chancellor or by a government minister on current political issues. The Bundestag is not empowered, however, to compel the Government to deliver a policy statement.

THE SITTING WEEK – A FULL PROGRAMME

Parliamentary business is subject to a fixed timetable. Apart from the summer recess and shorter breaks at Christmas and Easter, two weeks of sittings generally alternate with one or two non-sitting weeks. The sitting weeks in Berlin account for almost half the weeks of the year. The weeks when Parliament is not sitting are mainly devoted to the Members' work in their constituencies and at grass roots and, where possible, to the practice of their old professions.

Every sitting week follows a similar format. In general the parliamentary week begins on Monday with meetings of the executive committees and some of the working parties of the parliamentary groups. Tuesday mornings are always reserved for these working parties, while the general meetings of the parliamentary groups take place in the afternoon. On Wednesdays the committee meetings

The daily parliamentary routine is reflected in the monitors displaying meeting schedules; these are located in all parts of the parliament buildings.

take place; that is also the day on which the Presidium of the Bundestag meets. Also on Wednesday's schedule are normally a session of questions to the Government and Question Time and often a debate on a matter of topical interest too.

The Council of Elders meets at 2 p.m. on Thursdays. Thursday, like Friday, is given over to plenary debates. The concentration of the debates into these two days stems from the fact that the committees need to have sufficient time for their complex deliberations and, like other bodies, should ideally avoid meeting when plenary debates are taking place. As a rule the sitting week ends on Friday afternoon to give Members enough time to travel to evening engagements in their constituencies and for a weekend at home with their families.

The reason why the parliamentary group executive committees and then the groups themselves meet at the start of the week is to enable them to map out their political strategy for dealing with the current parliamentary agenda. Detailed preparation for the week's work and the performance of general outstanding tasks, on the other hand, are a matter for the working parties of the parliamentary groups. This is why they convene before the general group meetings. The latter then determine the line of approach and therefore precede the committee meetings and the plenary sittings.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION – REACHING ACROSS BORDERS

Although foreign policy is essentially regarded first and foremost as a matter for the Government, there are also cross-border exchanges between parliamentarians. Parliamentary monitoring on an international scale is surely the main purpose of interparliamentary relations, but the ideals of international understanding and solidarity among parliamentarians from different countries also motivate Members of Parliament to engage in international cooperation. In many cases, indeed, parliamentarians can deal more freely than government representatives with sensitive diplomatic issues.

Besides their work in the Bundestag, many Members also have international commitments or interests. These often derive directly from their work in the Bundestag. Committees, groups of parliamentarians or individual Members of the Bundestag travel to other countries in order to learn from those countries' experience in areas such as the use of new technology, the integration of foreign workers, protection of the environment or combating drug trafficking and addiction. Moreover, every year the Bundestag adopts a government budget which includes substantial amounts of money for amenities in other countries, not only in the framework of development aid. Part of the parliamentary duty of scrutiny involves verifying in the field that these funds are being used for their intended purpose. Thus the internationalisation of politics does not leave the Bundestag untouched.

Besides, the Bundestag attaches importance to international contacts. This is most clearly illustrated by the 52 joint groups of German and foreign parliamentarians in which cooperation with national or regional parliaments is cultivated. There are also two parliamentary country commissioners, one for the Republic of Moldova and one for Bosnia-Herzegovina. These parliamentary

friendship groups are appointed by the President of the Bundestag in each electoral term.

The Bundestag also sends delegations to represent it at meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), a body which has been in existence since the 19th century and which brings together parliamentarians from more than 140 countries. The purpose of the IPU is to establish personal links between parliamentarians, even across political divides, in order to foster peace and cooperation throughout the world.

Parliamentarians also monitor the work of the common institutions born of European and international agreements. Members of the Bundestag sit on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, a discussion forum of the North Atlantic Alliance. Members also belong to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as well as the Assembly of Western European Union (WEU). The same applies to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Germany's international orientation, and particularly its European orientation, is enshrined in the Basic Law, Article 23 of which requires the Federal Republic of Germany to participate in the development of the European Union with a view to establishing a united Europe. The same article goes on to stipulate that the Bundestag and the Bundesrat shall participate in matters concerning the European Union and requires the Federal Government to inform them of new developments in good time. In the realm of European affairs, as elsewhere, the main aspects of parliamentary involvement are therefore the receipt of information and scrutiny of government policy. The spe-

The European Parliament in Strasbourg, whose decisions have a profound influence on German politics.

cial importance that the Bundestag attaches to European matters and the depth of its desire to take part in decision-making processes in the institutions of the European Union are demonstrated by the fact that it has appointed a dedicated committee to deal with these matters. The Committee on the Affairs of the European Union underpins the influence and the rights of the Bundestag at the European level and lends them greater weight, for the Committee has a special status among the Bundestag committees in that it can take decisions on behalf of the whole House in certain cases and bind the Federal Government to follow a particular political line at negotiations in Brussels. In this way, the Bundestag represents itself in Europe and can demarcate any of its interests that diverge from the position of the Federal Government.

In practice, the political role of the Bundestag in European affairs means parliamentary involvement, in committee and in plenary, in processes taking place in Brussels. Members are informed in good time by the Federal Government of EU projects and can deliver opinions that the Federal Government must take into account in its deliberations in the Council of the European Union. The Members of the Bundestag thus play a part in EU legislation by ensuring that the Federal Government acts in accordance with the wishes of Parliament.

The Bundestag intends to increase its influence in the field of European affairs still further through its liaison office in Brussels, which was opened at the start of 2007 and is located near the seat of the European Parliament. Staff of the Bundestag administration and of the parliamentary groups who are based there send information about the latest political developments, chiefly to the Bundestag committees. Lastly, an ever-increasing proportion of the legislation that applies in Germany is determined by European directives, and in many cases the Bundestag has learned of the relevant proposals too late to exercise any real influence on the way in which these directives are transposed into German law. This, too, should change with the aid of the liaison office.

LEGISLATION – FROM BILL TO ACT OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative activity accounts for the lion's share of parliamentary business. It ranges from routine matters concerning the amendment of existing provisions to extensive new legislative proposals. In some cases there is cross-party consensus on proposals, while others are hotly debated. From 1949 to the end of the last legislative term in the autumn of 2005, some 9,900 legislative proposals were introduced, of which 6,400 were adopted in plenary.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Anyone has the right to propose legislative provisions, from individual citizens to special-interest groups and political parties. There are, however, only three ways to initiate formal legislative procedures. In the words of Article 76 of the Basic Law, 'Bills may be introduced in the Bun-

destag by the Federal Government, by the Bundesrat or from the floor of the Bundestag'. Most bills come from the Government, which has a pool of experts involved in the drafting process in the various government departments, but bills are also introduced by the parliamentary groups and by the Bundesrat, the representative chamber of the *Länder*.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE *LÄNDER*

Although laws are adopted in the Bundestag, the *Länder* have a major part to play in legislative procedures. The Basic Law explicitly provides for their participation. For this reason, when the Government intends to introduce a bill, it begins the legislative process by transmitting the drafts to the Bundesrat. The planned legislation is discussed and examined there by the specialised committees before being dealt with at sittings of the Bundesrat in a process known as the first passage. The Bundesrat, acting by a majority decision, may deliver an opinion on the bill, and the Federal Government then responds to the opinion.

One purpose of this procedure is to involve the *Länder* in the legislative process from the outset. It also enables the *Länder* to inform the Bundestag of their reservations in good time and to make their own suggestions, because after being discussed by the Bundesrat the bill is forwarded to the Bundestag, which deals with it in several stages. Barring exceptions, bills must be considered on three occasions, known as readings, in the Bundestag.

As the body representing the *Länder*, the Bundesrat in Berlin plays a key role in the legislative process.

The purpose of the first reading is to engage in a fundamental debate about the political significance of the bill, its necessity and its aims. Such a discussion, however, will only take place if the Council of Elders recommends a debate or a certain number of Members request a debate. Bills, however, are often referred to the committees without prior discussion in plenary. Referral means that the House determines which committee is given special responsibility for the bill and which committees are to be asked for their opinions.

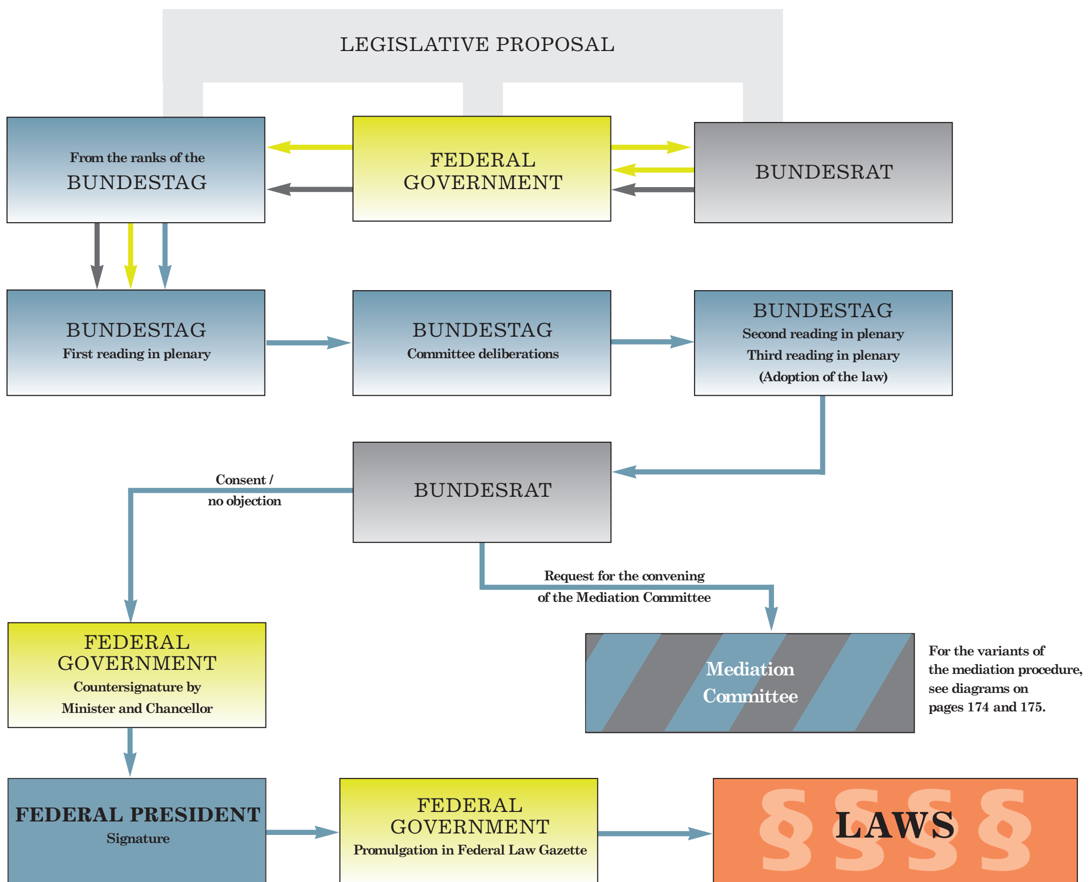
REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

Deliberations in the Bundestag committees form the core of parliamentary work. In this case too, the figures speak for themselves. Whereas the total number of plenary sittings held from the election of the first Bundestag in 1949 to the end of the last electoral term in 2005 amounted to almost 3,400, the number of committee meetings during the same period topped 31,600.

In committee the nuts and bolts of legislative proposals are carefully examined. The committees and the working parties of the parliamentary groups bring together the specialist Members who are fully conversant with the details of the subject matter under examination, whether it be pensions insurance, anti-cyclical measures, development aid or agricultural support schemes. It is by using the technical knowledge and detailed analyses of these specialists that the Members of the Bundestag can be a match for government experts.

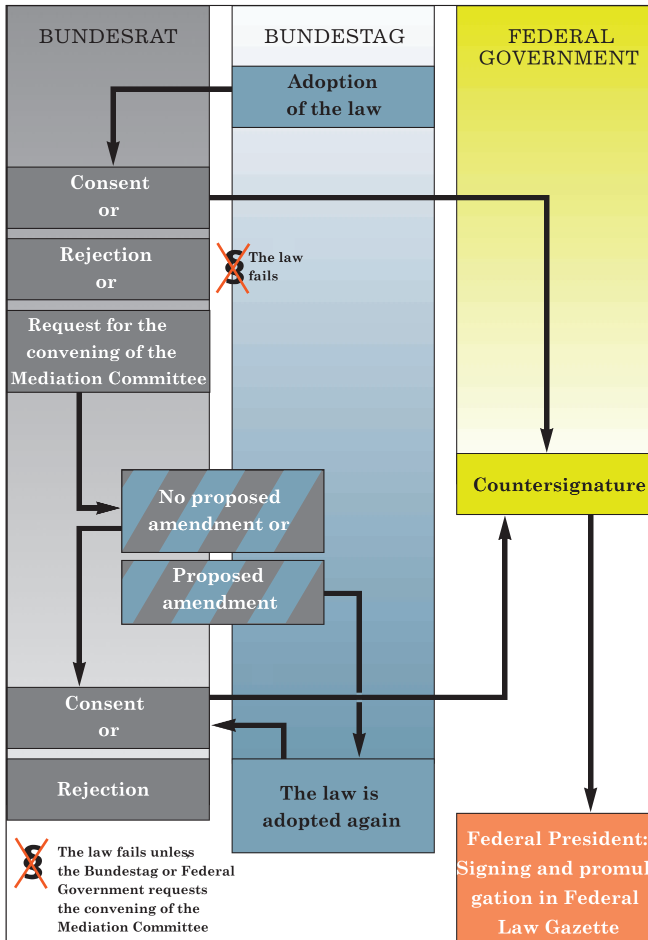
The committees are thus a scrutinising cross-party counterweight to the Government and the Bundesrat, which also take part in committee meetings. Article 43 of the Basic Law states that 'The members of the Bundesrat and of the Federal Government as well as their representatives may attend all sessions of the Bundestag and of its committees. They shall have the right to be heard at any time'. The fact remains, however, that from the moment its bills are presented to the Bundestag,

Pages 173–175: The legislative process: a complex procedure at first sight, but a logical and necessary mechanism for the careful examination of bills, scrutiny of the Government and the solution of problems relating to the federal system.



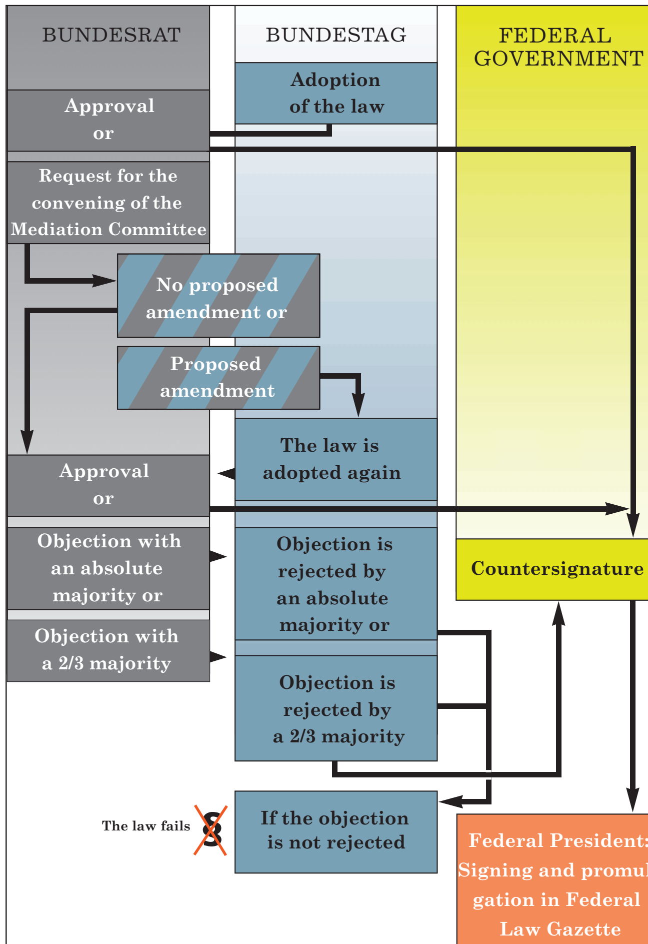
the Government loses all direct influence over its proposals. It can neither table motions to prevent amendments nor restore its own original version of the bill. It may, however, exert indirect influence through its 'own' Members and parliamentary groups in the Bundestag, but that cannot be taken for granted, for however loyal they may be, Members of the Bundestag in the government camp who belong to the majority groups have their own opinions too.

Technical and political considerations also play a part in committee business. The groups on the government and opposition sides subject the initial drafts to critical analysis and discussion at meetings of their working parties. As a result, the drafts are generally amended and occasionally even extensively recast in committee. It is rare for a bill to emerge entirely unscathed.



THE SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

Following the deliberations in the committees, the version approved by the committee responsible for the passage of the bill is presented to the House for the second and third readings. This is decision time. At second reading, conducted on the basis of the lead committee's recommendation for a decision, any Member may table amendments, if only to highlight his or her own personal point of view. In most cases, however, amendments are tabled by the parliamentary groups – usually those belonging to the Opposition. Because they constitute a minority within the committees, their proposals are often largely overruled



there. Although the Opposition cannot win acceptance for its proposals in the parliamentary chamber either, it can outline its alternative proposals very publicly and compel the majority to reveal its reasons for rejecting them.

The version of the bill adopted at second reading forms the basis for the third reading, which follows immediately. Whilst it is still possible to propose amendments at this stage, that rarely ever happens. Amendments must be tabled by a parliamentary group or by five per cent of all Members of the Bundestag if they are to lead to further discussions between the governing majority and the minority opposition groups. Moreover, such amendments may only relate to aspects on which amendments have already been adopted at second reading. The third

reading concludes with the final vote, in which Parliament passes or rejects the law with all the amendments that have been adopted.

As a rule, a simple majority of the votes cast will suffice for the adoption of a bill. In other cases, an absolute majority is required, in other words the votes of half the Members of the Bundestag plus one. There are also instances in which a two-thirds majority is required; for some types of decision the two-thirds majority must correspond to at least half of all Members, while for others a two-thirds majority of Members present is sufficient. In the case of constitutional amendments, a two-thirds majority of all Members of the Bundestag is necessary.

THE MEDIATION COMMITTEE

When the Bundestag has approved a bill, the legislative process is not yet over by any means. On the contrary, the bill now goes for its second passage through the Bundesrat, which can exercise its power of veto at this stage.

If the Bundesrat has objections, it can appeal to the Mediation Committee, a joint body of the Bundestag and Bundesrat with constitutional status. The Committee comprises one representative of each of the 16 *Länder* and 16 Members of the Bundestag, the latter being appointed in accordance with the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups. So that they can arrive at compro-

mises, the 32 mediators are entirely free to make proposals as they see fit. This also applies to the members of the Bundesrat, who are otherwise bound by the instructions of their respective state governments. Accordingly, the meetings of the Mediation Committee are not held in public and are strictly confidential. This means that the minutes of their meetings are not open to perusal until the start of the next-but-one electoral term, in other words at the earliest around four years later. This confidentiality serves to enable committee members to diverge from the political position of their state government or political party in order to reach a compromise.

The amendments proposed by the Committee are put to the vote in the Bundestag and the Bundesrat. If the Bundesrat still has reservations, it may lodge an objection to certain legislative proposals. This amounts to a curtailed veto, because a decision taken by a majority of the Members of the Bundestag can overrule it. The Bundestag only has that power, however, if the Bundesrat, in deciding to lodge its objection, has acted by an absolute majority of its members. If, on the other hand, two thirds of the Bundesrat members have voted for an amendment, a two-thirds majority is required in the Bundestag to overrule the objection.

These rules, however, only apply to what are called *Einspruchsgesetze* – bills to which the Bundesrat may lodge an objection but which do not require its express consent. Bills with a significant impact on the interests of the *Länder,* on the other hand, can fall if the Bundesrat votes ‘no’. These are known as *Zustimmungsgesetze* – bills

Facing page:
Members take part in a roll-call vote in the plenary chamber, using voting cards in three colours: red for ‘no’, blue for ‘yes’ and white for abstentions.

This page:
The Mediation Committee is called into play when the Bundestag and the Bundesrat cannot agree on the adoption of a bill.

requiring the consent of the Bundesrat. In point of fact, the norm in these cases is recourse to the Mediation Committee, to which the Bundestag and the Federal Government can each appeal once. If the majority in the Bundesrat does not agree to the recommendations of the Mediation Committee, however, the bill cannot enter into force.

The general consensus is that the Mediation Committee, for which there is no precedent in German constitutional history, has proved beneficial over a long period. The success of its work is reflected in the fact that it has brokered a compromise in more than four out of every five cases referred to it and thereby led to the ultimate promulgation of numerous laws derived from contentious proposals.

The number of bills requiring the consent of the Bundesrat has risen considerably over the years. Depending on the political hue of the Bundesrat, it has sometimes been more difficult for governing coalitions to implement their legislative programme, because they have either had to accept unwanted compromises or been confronted with a blockade. For this reason, there have been moves to reform the federal system of government, primarily with a view to reducing the proportion of bills that require the consent of the Bundesrat and, in return, devolving more powers to the *Länder* to govern their own affairs. This, however, will not alter the final step in the legislative process. Whether or not a bill has been controversial, when the entire process is completed, the Act is signed by the President of the Federal Republic and promulgated in the Federal Law Gazette, whereupon it enters into force.

REFORM OF THE FEDERAL SYSTEM – A BIG PUSH WITH ENTICING REWARDS

Germany is a federal republic. This means that the *Länder* are the basis of the republic and have formed themselves into a federation. Through the Bundesrat they play a part in federal legislation and administration. The Bun-

desrat, in other words, represents the interests of the *Länder* at the federal level. With the passage of time, however, a tangled web of responsibilities developed that many people could no longer comprehend. A prime example is the law restricting the opening hours of shops *(Ladenschlussgesetz).* Should there be a set of national rules laying down when shops have to close, or should each *Land* make its own rules? One of the main concerns that underlie these questions is invariably a desire to ensure that living standards are as uniform as possible throughout Germany.

The reform of the federal system now presents an opportunity to restructure the powers of the federation and its constituent states. Following the unexpected collapse of the first reform talks in 2004, the formation of the Grand Coalition in November 2005 enabled the CDU/CSU and the SPD to agree on a fresh bid to modernise the federal system. The reform package adopted by the Bundestag and Bundesrat in the summer of 2006 is the most extensive amendment of the Basic Law in the history of the Federal Republic.

The provisions of the reform package for the restructuring of the federal system of government have had the force of law since September 2006. They represent a big push with enticing rewards, in that their purpose is to improve the ability of the federal and state institutions to act and take decisions and to assign political responsibility more clearly. This will have a particular impact on legislation, because the reform of the federal system will reduce the number of federal laws that require the consent of the Bundesrat. Nuclear energy, the fight against terrorism, registration of residents and the protection of German cultural assets are now federal matters. In the realms of environmental protection and waste management too, more powers have been transferred to the federal level. In return, other responsibilities have been devolved to the *Länder*. These include pay and pensions for state civil servants and support for social housing. In addition, the *Länder* are now responsible for prisons and

shop opening hours. In science and research at institutions of higher education, on the other hand, the Federation and its constituent states can collaborate on projects of supraregional significance.

THE BUNDESTAG – THE HEART OF GERMAN DEMOCRACY

The German Bundestag, in short, is not just a body like any other. It is at the heart of our constitutional order. As well as being one of the main organs of the Constitution, along with the President of the Federal Republic, the Bundesrat, the Federal Government and the Federal Constitutional Court, the Bundestag is also the decisive political forum of the German nation. It is the fulcrum of legislative activity as well as the only organ of the Constitution that is directly elected by the people, which means that the Bundestag represents all people in Germany.

The Bundestag not only makes the laws but also subjects the Government to scrutiny. It elects the Federal Chancellor, thereby influencing the formation of the Govern-

ment and indirectly determining the guidelines of government policy. That is precisely why the President of the Bundestag, Norbert Lammert (CDU/CSU), emphasises that the Bundestag is not the executive organ of the Government but its taskmaster. Particularly at times of Grand Coalitions with large majorities, he said, there was a special need for Parliament to assert itself in relation to the Government.

Accordingly, the plenary chamber of the Bundestag is where competing views are put before the public. It is where the political issues that affect people in the country are definitively addressed. The Bundestag is a place of heated debate, but that conflict is waged with firm rules and willingness to compromise, without which parliamentary democracy cannot function. This is ultimately reflected, for example, in the continuity of the work of Parliament, in the lengthy periods of largely stable voting behaviour and in the few changes of government, most of which have been effected or endorsed by the electorate.

At the polls, if not before, it becomes apparent where sovereignty rests in Germany. 'It is not the parties', said Norbert Lammert in his inaugural speech as President of the Bundestag at the start of the 16th electoral term, 'but the people; they have produced a different result in this election from the one that many had hoped for and some had feared'. He went on to say this: 'A change of government is also part of normal democratic life, in which the voters and not the parties decide who they want to represent and govern them. It is no everyday occurrence, to be sure, but it is not to be confused with the re-creation of the world. Government goes on around the globe, whoever does the governing and in whatever conditions they govern. What qualifies a political system as a democracy is not the existence of a government but the existence of a parliament and its established role in the constitutional structure and in everyday political life. If the heart of democracy does not beat here, it does not beat at all.'

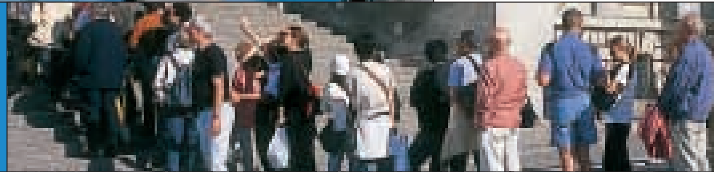
Norbert Lammert (CDU/CSU), President of the German Bundestag, in the plenary chamber.

THE REICHSTAG BUILDING

SEBASTIAN REDECKE

ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECTURE



THE ENTRANCE

D*em Deutschen Volke* – the inscription high up on the frieze of the building's horizontal entablature catches the eye from some distance away: 'To the German People'. Today, visitors pass beneath these words as they make their way into the German Bundestag in the former Reichstag Building, climbing the broad flight of steps and the side ramps that rise to its west entrance. It is a magnificent approach. At the latest after they have walked through the portico's first row of columns and noted the robust side reliefs framed between pilasters, they will be acutely aware that this historic building, which seems so weighty and burdened by the past, is now the setting for a very modern combination of old and new. An expanse of glass opens up, rising to the capitals, sparsely articulated with

thin glazing bars and granting a first magnificent view into the heart of the completely redesigned building.

Even here at the entrance, Norman Foster's design language makes itself felt in the styling of the glass façade. Foster, who employs about 450 staff, enjoys a stellar international reputation as one of the world's leading architects. His personal style is characterised by its minimalism, as well as the combined innovativeness and elegance of his structural solutions.

The British architect was contracted by the German Bundestag's Commission on Buildings and Council of Elders at the end of a competition announced in 1993. The competition process had gone to a second round, during which Foster's prize-winning entry was heavily revised, resulting in a design solution completely different from his initial proposals. After four years of construction work, the Reichstag Building was inaugurated as the seat of the German Bundestag on 19 April 1999. The construction costs amounted to about 600 million marks.

'To the German People' – the inscription unveiled on the west portal in 1916 has survived the highs and lows of German history.

Bottom: Visitors queue up to tour the parliament building.

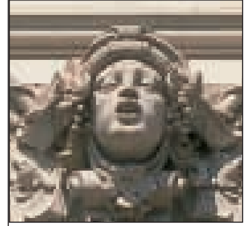
Passing through a vestibule, which is also fully glazed, visitors find themselves in an entrance hall that rises the whole height of the building. Germans sometimes refer to their parliament metaphorically as the *Hohes Haus* ('High House'), and this entrance hall might be said to embody that notion. It is a space that lives up to all expectations, although its proportions are slightly unusual, given that its height of almost 24 metres is accompanied by a comparatively modest depth of 'only' ten metres. Having arrived in this entrance hall, visitors face a wall of glass articulated with the same glazing bars, which emphasise its horizontal lines. This wall, which has been described as a huge 'display window', allows them to see far into this building with its historic exterior and highly modern interior.

The Reichstag Building designed by Paul Wallot, the master architect from Oppenheim, took ten years to build and was completed in 1894. On first acquaintance, Wallot's architectural language is unclassifiable. Nevertheless, as is characteristic of the historicist movement, his

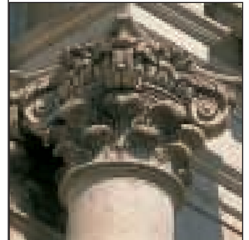
This page:
A view through the portico along the west façade, with the towers at Potsdamer Platz looking tiny in the distance.

Facing page:
Many of the original ornamental details on Paul Wallot's façade have been preserved.

models are to be sought above all in the Italian high renaissance and early baroque. He must have drawn inspiration from these periods for his richly articulated façades, reminiscent as they are of Palladio's palaces, with their mighty colossal orders, richly varied window surrounds, ornamental façade elements and mouldings of all kinds. However, it is not possible to define the whole building with its four corner towers and dome as an example of any particular style. Wallot devised his own 'imperial manner'.



Under Wallot's original floor plan, someone entering through the portico first came to a huge, impressive hall. This was followed by the Reichstag's wood-panelled plenary chamber, which was noticeably smaller and lower, had a flat ceiling and was furnished with folding seats and desks. The impressive volume of the almost 75-metre-high dome of iron and glass stood above the entrance hall and could therefore not be appreciated from the chamber. Originally, the dome was to have been placed over the chamber. Only during the building's construction was it moved to the west 'for architectural reasons', which involved an immense amount of new design work. One way of interpreting this is to see William II's rather half-hearted democratisation of the German Empire being reflected in the spatial organisation of Wallot's Reichstag Building, which was rather unpopular when it was first built. The building was indeed strongly oriented towards ceremonial display. From the very beginning, therefore, there was a disparity between its form and its content. The historian Klaus von Beyme goes further when he writes, 'The history of parliamentary architecture is a history of the adaptation of democratic parliaments to a pre-democratic architectural fabric.'



In contrast to the 'majestic' sequence of spaces in the original building, Norman Foster designed a more modest, functional entrance hall for the modern parliament. Furthermore, his dome rises directly above the plenary chamber of the German Bundestag – where it is clearly visible from all sides.

The massive glass wall in the west lobby grants a free view into the interior of the Reichstag Building.

It was possible to make fundamental changes to the building's interior because, following the never fully explained fire in 1933, the devastation wrought on the building at the end of the Second World War and the demolition of the ruined dome in November 1954 due to the danger of its collapse, a decision had already been taken at the end of the 1950s to rebuild the interior with a new architectural approach rooted in the modernism of the time. This was done in the vague hope that the building would eventually be returned to its original purpose.

The architect Paul Baumgarten was commissioned to undertake this work. He gutted the building to a large extent, removing 60,000 tonnes of rubble. Its authenticity had been lost and a completely new concept was formulated, in particular with regard to the central sequence of spaces. Baumgarten's interventions and the way they concealed so much of the building's historic fabric fitted in with the zeitgeist of the post-War years. There was a desire to make a decisive break with the past and, consequently, the architectural history of this building as well. An opulent historicist structure of this kind offered an ideal opportunity to put the past in its place. This approach was comprehensible from the perspective of the time, for the new was supposed at all costs to erase memories of what had gone before, which was associated with experiences of deep suffering. For the Berlin-based journalist Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, the changes to the Reichstag Building had forced upon it 'a kind of rigidity of soul: as if the building were looking away from itself, from its own stone, its own ornamentation, its own inscription, the bold gesture and drama of its own columns.'

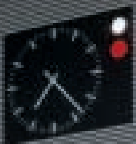
The transparency of the renovated building, a result of its many expanses of glass, successfully counteracts any sense of pomposity conjured up by the sheer height of the new entrance hall. Through the second glass wall, visitors can take in almost the whole width of the plenary chamber of the German Bundestag. Transparency was also an important theme in Baumgarten's conversion. Foster may not have regarded his predecessor's work as a

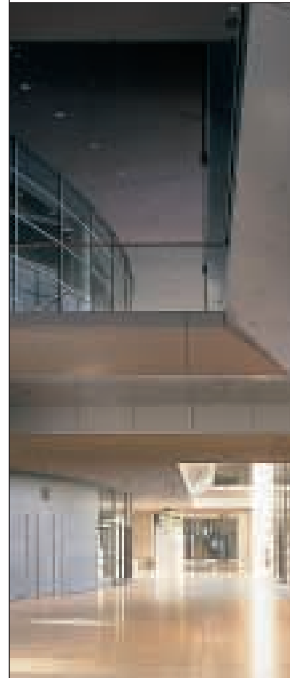
Left:

Lights on the building's clocks indicate when a vote is about to be held.

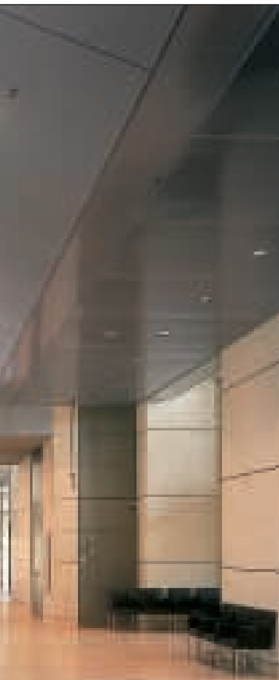
Right:

The west lobby.





model to be emulated, but it certainly suggested the general direction in which he might move. The old fabric of the building had been dealt with too brutally during the 1960s. It was not just that so much of it had been hidden. In many areas, Baumgarten and the Federal Building Office had even allowed stuccowork and other decorative elements to be simply chiselled away. The interventions made in the 1960s required approximately 45,000 tonnes of materials, which extended throughout the middle of the building. In 1995, these additions were removed in their entirety as they could no longer satisfy the changing demands of a parliament that had increased in size, needed to install more complex technical equipment and wanted a greater range of rooms. It is true that Baumgarten's conversion had accommodated the demands of parliamentary business, adding numerous rooms for conferences and other functions, but its main focus had been on purely ceremonial aspects of the Bundestag's role. Apart from this, the building no longer complied with modern heat insulation standards, and parts of it were contaminated with asbestos and would have been extremely expensive to refurbish. The material stripped out of the building corresponded to roughly one third of its entire fabric.



The hope was that it would also be possible to create a 'working parliament of short distances', in which clarity of organisation would be particularly emphasised by an effective new spatial layout. Baumgarten's rebuilding in the late 1960s remains associated with the successful permanent exhibition *Questions on German History*, which can now be seen in the Deutscher Dom on Gendarmenmarkt. Apart from this, a number of important events also took place in Baumgarten's building. For instance, the first sitting of the all-German Bundestag was held there on 20 December 1990 (after the elections on 2 December) and was opened by Willy Brandt as the Member most advanced in years.

If visitors to Foster's new conversion look back westward after reaching the entrance hall, they will notice the slightly convex vestibule extending into the hall across its whole width, which is fully glazed – even its roof is made of glass. The whole hall makes a strong impact, including the cladding of light, horizontally laid sandstone slabs added by Norman Foster. This stonework frames the columns of the portico at the sides and runs just above its capitals, fitting precisely around the large glass frontage rising up from the vestibule. Here, on the inner side of external walls protected by heritage conservation legislation, it draws attention to Foster's intentional layering of old and new. Consequently, the portico remains a presence within the renovated building. The newly inserted walls at the sides of the entrance hall, which are also clad with sandstone, offer space for works commissioned from the artists Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke.

This page:
Voting cards ready for use.

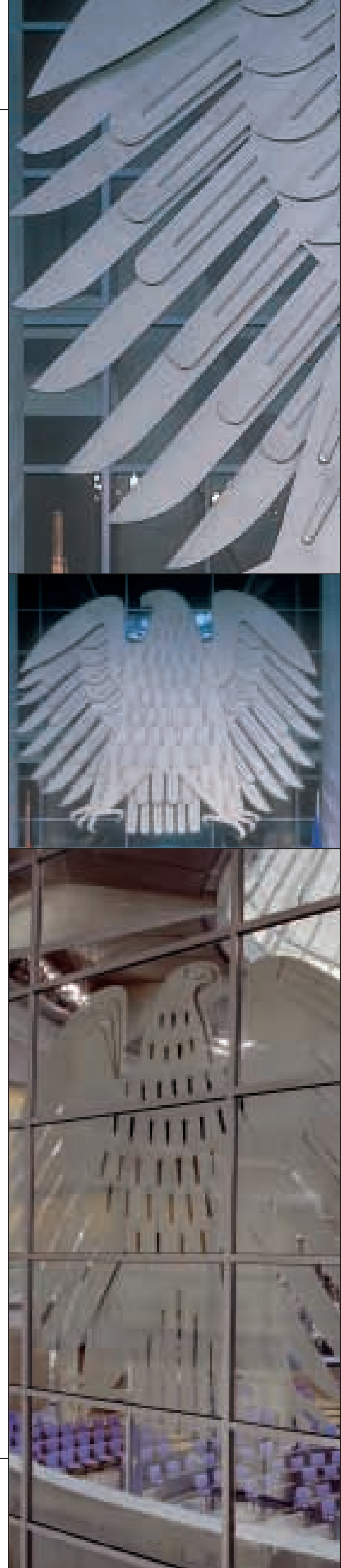
Facing page:
The circle of columns emphasises the plenary chamber's status as a democratic forum.

THE PLENARY CHAMBER OF THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG

Following its remodelling by Norman Foster, the parliament building has a volume of about 400,000 cubic metres with 11,000 square metres of useable floor space. Visitors can survey the plenary chamber through the great glass wall of the entrance hall. Here, they are separated from the chamber by an internal lobby known as the west lobby, of which there is also a good view. Looking closely, one can make out the glass doors in the chamber with the signs *Ja* ('Yes'), *Nein* ('No') and *Enthaltung* ('Abstention'), which are used for the *Hammelsprung,* the voting procedure followed when there is doubt about the results of a vote. The arrangement of seats in the chamber differs

markedly from earlier layouts. The Presidium of the German Bundestag, the Federal Government and the representatives of the *Länder,* Germany's constituent states, no longer face east, but – as in Paul Wallot's original configuration – west once again. They can now see far out through the glazed entrance hall onto Platz der Republik, beyond which it is possible to make out the expressive roof of the House of World Cultures and the Carillon, a striking bell tower erected to mark Berlin's 750th anniversary celebrations in 1987. The first chamber in the 1894 Reichstag Building was set out for 584 members, but only had an area of 640 square metres. Paul Baumgarten's chamber dating from the 1960s seated 520 Members in an area of 1,375 square metres. The modern plenary chamber measures 1,200 square metres. The rows of seats for the 613 Members of the current German Bundestag rise at a gentle slope towards the back of the chamber, facing the Presidium in a somewhat elongated semi-circle. The new chamber at the former Bundestag building in Bonn was circular. After the decision had been taken to move from Bonn to Berlin, the majority of Members favoured the current form, in which they sit in a wide curve opposite the Presidium, the Federal Government and the Bundesrat.

Günter Behnisch, the architect commissioned to design the Bundestag building in Bonn that was inaugurated in 1994, regarded transparency as a central issue there and wanted it to be seen as a contribution to 'building for democracy'. Surprisingly, despite its forbidding walls, which appear uncommunicative when viewed as a whole, transparency is also a feature of the new Berlin parliament. The responsiveness to citizens' concerns emphasised again and again in Bonn by Behnisch's architectural language is a central principle in Berlin as well. What is more: with



When viewed from the front, the federal eagle is almost identical to the one created for the Bundestag building in Bonn in 1952. Norman Foster designed a subtly modified version for its reverse.

the dome, a symbolic, almost demonstrative element of openness has been added.

There are not just views out through the hall to the west. To the east too, behind the Presidium, the plenary chamber looks out through a large glass wall. In this direction, it is possible to see part of the façade of the former Reichstag President's palace on Ebertplatz. At the sides of the plenary chamber, the old window openings, the lower row of which have round arches, offer views of the building's two courtyards. In addition to this, they admit a great deal of natural light into the chamber.

The Bundestag eagle hangs above a low grey wall behind the Presidium. It was not possible for the heavy plaster eagle by the sculptor Ludwig Gies that had adorned the first post-War plenary chamber – also known as the 'fat hen' – to be incorporated into the new building completed in Bonn in the 1990s. Gies's eagle can now be seen again in Berlin, although it is a lighter, aluminium copy with a few subtle differences. The decision to return to Gies's design was made when the move to the new capital was being planned because it would provide a recognisable element of continuity. Prior to this, Norman Foster had taken a personal interest in the issue and sketched more than a hundred different versions of the eagle, which were submitted to the Bundestag's Building Commission.

To match the dimensions of the chamber, the new Bundestag eagle in the Reichstag Building is about a third larger than the eagle in the old Bonn plenary chamber. The Berlin eagle measures 58 square metres and consists of four matte-painted aluminium layers that weigh a total of 2.5 tonnes. What is new is the way it has been placed in front of a glass wall – where it hangs on steel cables. This means the reverse of the eagle is visible from the lobby to the east, which gave Norman Foster the opportunity to create another eagle designed by him specially for 'his building'. His version is very similar to that on the front, except that its wings are less energetic and its tail feathers point straight down. Foster signed and dated his work on the left wing.

The 'light sculptor' in the cupola. 360 mirrors direct daylight into the plenary chamber below.

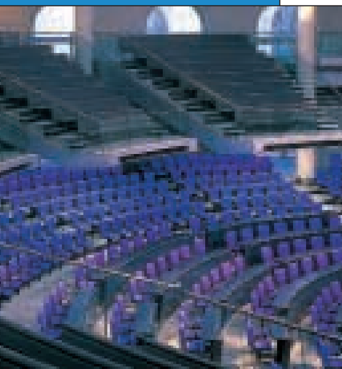
This page:

The galleries for visitors, diplomats and the press.

Facing page:

The colour chosen for Members' seats is known as 'Reichstag blue'.

As far as the plenary chamber's spatial impact is concerned, its height is the decisive innovation. The Members can look directly into the dome construction and let their gaze stray up to the highest point, which rises more than 40 metres above their heads. Visitors can be made out streaming up and down in the glass dome. Structurally, the chamber has been inserted into the 'shell' of the Reichstag Building, where it seems an almost autonomous element. It is surrounded by a ring of twelve slim, fare-faced concrete columns. Above the columns,

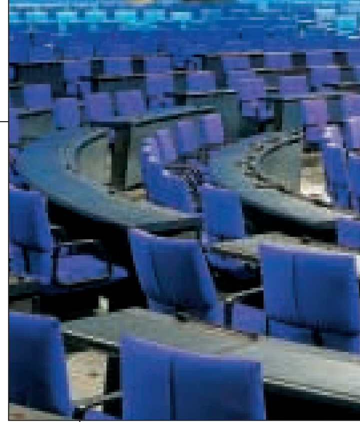


batteries of lights encircle the chamber, illuminating the space in the light intensity required for each occasion. The bearing members above each column are cantilevers, which extend as far as an inner concrete ring, upon which the glass dome rises. To ensure the foundations had the stability to bear the enormous load that would bear down on them from the great circle of columns, 90 new bored piles were added to the 2,300 pine trunks that had been driven into the earth 100 years earlier when the Reichstag Building was first built. Tests had found that these original foundations would still provide enough support.

The mighty round of columns sets the space clearly apart as a central forum. The shiny, silver point of the mirrored cone integrated into the dome is visible high up at the centre of the circle.

The dominant colour in the chamber is light grey: the carpet, the exposed concrete of the columns, the wall behind the Presidium, which is subdivided into rectangular panels and partly covered with cloth for acoustic reasons – they are all grey. The only colourful note is struck by the swivelling chairs on which the Members sit, for which a striking 'Reichstag blue' with a hint of purple was selected. Norman Foster settled on this unusual shade of blue after consultation with the Building Commission. Originally, the chairs were supposed to be upholstered in a neutral shade of grey as well.

One intriguing feature is the system by which fresh air is supplied. Air from the outside is channelled directly



through the carpeted floor of the chamber and the galleries. To make this possible, what is known as a climatic floor was specially developed with an unusual layered construction that makes it possible for fresh air to be directed into the chamber across a wide area. The floor covering also serves to dampen sound, which is of particular significance in the chamber. The carpet in the chamber and on the galleries is not laid over a cast floor, but on top of a steel construction, onto which a perforated metal mesh has been mounted. The fresh air passes through ventilation shafts still retained from the old chamber of the Reichstag, which were uncovered by Norman Foster and lead down into the plenary chamber from the roof above the west portal. The heat given off by people, lights and technical installations causes an upward thermal stream. The stale air is drawn out into the open through the air extraction plant in the lower part of the cone-shaped light sculptor that hangs down from the dome above into the centre of the hall. A heat recovery system and other technical equipment are also housed in this structure.

Since the plenary chamber is enclosed by the soffit around the light reflector, the sprinklers for fire emergencies must of necessity operate at a lower level. A system has therefore been installed under Members' seats that would envelope the chamber in a 'veil of moisture' if a fire broke out.

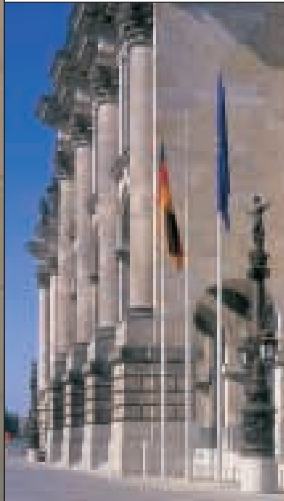
THE LOBBIES

The plenary chamber is surrounded by lobbies. On account of the building's spatial organisation around the two light shafts, which was originally laid down by Wallot, the lobbies to the west and east are markedly broader than those to the north and south. On the western side of the building, Members can make use of either the restaurant to the left of the entrance hall or the Members' lobby with its groups of black armchairs to its right. Both rooms can be seen clearly through the glass walls that separate

them from the west lobby. The north wall of the Members' lobby is dominated by Katharina Sieverding's artwork *In Memory of the Members of Parliament in the Weimar Republic who were Persecuted, Outlawed or Murdered between 1933 and 1945,* a memorial to parliamentarians who suffered under National Socialism. A bistro is located in the north-west tower. Next to it, on the western side of the building, there is the Members' restaurant, while a cafeteria can be found beside the stairwell that leads up from the north entrance. All these facilities are open at certain times of the day. Apart from this, there is also a club room in the south-west tower, to which Members can withdraw undisturbed and that is sometimes used for meetings. Food and drinks are prepared in the kitchen on the storey below. On the southern side of the building, Members can attend the Multi-faith Chapel decorated with panels by Günther Uecker. A ten-minute service is held there early in the morning on days when the Bundestag is sitting.

The open connecting footbridges and corridor zones of the levels above are clearly visible on the western and eastern sides of the building. On the northern and southern sides of the building, large, almost opulent staircases have been introduced, rising from the middle of each entrance hall to the plenary level. There is no missing the works by Jenny Holzer and Georg Baselitz installed in these areas. On the eastern side, dignified offices are to be found. The rooms on this storey were largely kept at their original height. Members therefore do not feel so enclosed there when they have just left the plenary chamber.

Members mostly arrive at the Reichstag Building via the east entrance, where the official access point for vehicles is located. The square in front of this entrance was redesigned with large granite paving stones that weigh two tonnes each and come from a quarry near Striegau (Strzegom) in Silesia. 100 years ago, this was the source of the stones typically used for Berlin's pavements, which were sometimes known as 'Charlottenburg pavers'. The



The Berlin Wall passed in front of the east portal from 1961 until reunification. This is now the entrance designated for Members

paved area is bisected by a grey strip of concrete with a groove running along it that marks the course of the Berlin Wall. Only on special occasions, for example when a state guest is visiting, is the Bundestag officially entered through the great entrance hall to the west.

The entrance hall to the east is smaller and lower, but built in the same formal language as the west entrance hall. It radiates a sense of generous proportions, achieved here above all thanks to the two broad flights of steps that rise opposite each other at the sides of the hall. They lead up to the first floor of the Reichstag Building, the *piano nobile* or plenary level, where it is possible to look into the chamber from the lobby behind the Presidium.

From the outside, the ground floor of the Reichstag Building can be regarded as a plinth storey on account of the way its mighty, rusticated masonry projects out from the façade above. It accommodates service installations for the use of the administration, the technical systems with their control rooms and a large kitchen with storage areas. Deliveries are made through a system of tunnels that connect to the building at cellar level. The 400-metre-long underground access routes are intended to reduce the pressure of traffic on the city centre roads around the Reichstag Building and, above all, make Ebertplatz more attractive to passers-by and visiting groups. The entrance to the tunnel system is located to the north of the parliamentary library in the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building. A stretch of tunnel 47 metres long under the bed of the River Spree was necessary in order to create a link to the Reichstag Building, the Jakob Kaiser Building and the Paul Löbe Building.

This page:
The illuminated east portal.

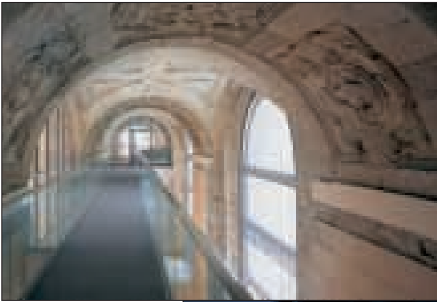
Facing page:
The bridges on the visitors' level (left: east; right: west) offer views through the curving glass walls into the plenary and out of the main portals.

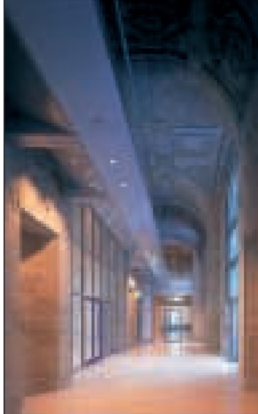
THE VISITORS' LEVEL

Visitors to the building who have entered the west entrance hall are able to look through the high glass wall in-

to the chamber. There, they are presented with the impressive sight of the whole continuum of spaces at various levels. In order to actually enter the chamber, they have to go one storey higher to the mezzanine visitors' level, where they can find their way onto one of the six galleries in order to watch proceedings. These suspended galleries are equipped with simple, cloth-covered benches and extend a long way down into the chamber, ending not far above the heads of the Members who sit in the back rows. During sittings, 470 seats are available for Protocol staff, journalists and visitors, who can observe what is happening in the chamber at unusually close quarters. The lecture rooms for visiting groups are accommodated on the northern, southern and eastern sides of the same mezzanine level. The most striking features of the mezzanine are the suspended connecting footbridges, which are routed to the west and east of the plenary chamber – and are

therefore easily visible through the glass walls they pass there. To the north and south, they run further away from the chamber under old, sandstone barrel vaults, some of which are coffered. These vaults arch over the beautifully ornamented passages along the courtyards. The decorations on the walls of the old passages, including various rounded and angular niches, were covered up for decades by Baumgarten's architectural interventions. Supported on cantilevers, the connecting footbridges, the undersides of which are clad with sheets of silver-grey anodised metal, are deliberately highlighted as newly in-





serted elements and convey a feeling of lightness. The whole route around the building on the visitors' level can be thought of as detached from the original fabric of the building. Anyone walking along the passages and footbridges can view almost 200 pieces of 'graffiti' at 17 places on the old walls. These Cyrillic scrawlings in charcoal or blue wax crayon were left by Red Army soldiers after the Reichstag Building had been stormed on 27 April 1945. As traces of the past, they have been cleaned and left visible on several areas of wall, interspersed with numerous bullet holes. When the building was remodelled by Baumgarten, these graffiti were hidden away behind wire-reinforced plaster walls.

After an initially difficult phase trying to find the right approach to this job, Norman Foster came to feel it was important to mark clearly all the intersections where old and new elements met and distinguish any additions made to forms that dated back to Wallot's time. It could be said that Foster took the building back to its fundamental structures. The old fabric was conserved, but never reconstructed. A fresh beginning was being made in a historic setting where new features were to be immediately identifiable. The delimitation of the new stonework from the walls marked by the surviving graffiti is consistent with this methodology.

For the architectural historian Tilmann Buddensieg, 'the powerful yet fragile fragment that was the old Reichstag has acquired the precious task of keeping alive memories of the past, marking a specific point in time in opposition to the emphatic here-and-now of modernism.' As a result of Foster's reconstruction, the past has, in Budden-

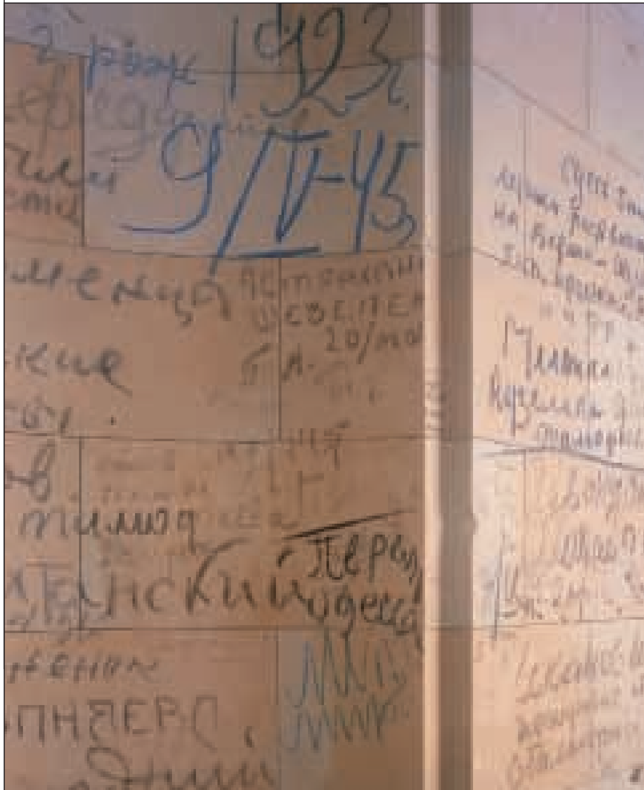
sieg's opinion, become 'nourishing food' for the present and the future.

As a symbol of the united Germany, the Reichstag Building is a very special historic site, the preservation of which is particularly important. From the very outset, showing respect for its past and making this visible in various ways, partly through the 'mediation' of architecture, was a fundamental concern for those involved in the design and construction work. This is particularly apparent here in the passages around the chamber. Norman Foster gave intensive consideration to this issue when the numerous pieces of graffiti by Soviet soldiers were discovered beneath Baumgarten's panelling. However, the quantity of graffiti and the form in which they were subsequently conserved provoked heated discussions. Some parliamentarians were alarmed at how much of the walls the preserved graffiti took up.

All the corridor areas that surround the plenary chamber benefit from the light Jurassic limestone of the floors and the beige Oberkirchen sandstone used to clad the walls. The stonework creates a pleasant, warm,

Facing page:
The light steel constructions of the bridges that give access to the galleries contrast with the massive masonry of the walls and the original ornamentation of the barrel vaulting.

This page:
The scars of war and the graffiti left by victorious soldiers are part of the Reichstag Building's history. The graffiti have been carefully preserved.



Views of the visitors' level (bottom) and the presidential level (top) show how the sun casts ever-changing geometrical patterns in these high rooms as the day passes.

friendly atmosphere. The cyclopean door surrounds that can be seen to the right and left of the plenary chamber on the first floor near the east entrance are particularly interesting. These openings were necessary in order to provide access to old and new offices. Like the Soviet graffiti, these doorways contrast starkly with the smooth new surfaces of the interior. Reminding the observer of the quarry where they were hewn, they evoke shattered blocks of stone and the fragmentary nature of the stratified levels loaded with significance that can be found in many parts of the Reichstag Building.

Visitors are not just able to visit the German Bundestag's plenary chamber, but also the roof terrace with its glass dome. In its prominent position above the plenary chamber, the glass dome is conceived as a destination for visitors. The Bundestag has become a great attraction for tourists from all over the world because it offers so much in one place. Apart from viewing the building that houses the German parliament, it is particularly fascinating to stand just a few metres away from the Brandenburg Gate and what was once the death strip along the Berlin Wall, looking out over a stretch of ground that has made German and European history and is unique in that it can be viewed and explored in its entirety.

Visitors to the dome and the nearby rooftop restaurant take one of the lifts to the side of the west entrance hall. The lift shafts are constructed with glazed front walls, allowing the lifts to be watched from the great hall as they travel upward and the passengers in the lifts to look down at the entrance hall until they pass through the roof of the building. It comes as a surprise that, since part of the hall roof is also glazed, it is already possible to see a narrow strip of the stonework that forms the roof upon entering the building.

The space between the visitors' level with the footbridges running around the building and the roof area is occupied by two storeys arranged around the courtyards and the plenary chamber that are not accessible to visitors.

THE PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL, THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS' LEVEL

The second floor is known as the presidential level. It accommodates the offices and reception rooms used by the President of the German Bundestag, the room where the Council of Elders meets, the offices of the senior management of the Administration of the German Bundestag and – in the central projection protruding from the façade above the east entrance hall – the large protocol chamber.

Left:
An unobstructed view of the plenary: it is possible to look down into the chamber from the parliamentary groups' level.

Right:
The shiny, silver cone of the 'light sculptor' points down into the plenary chamber.

On this level, where the pace of activity is much less hectic than on any of the building's other main storeys, Foster created very generous corridor areas and suites of rooms – which were based on Wallot's original floor plan. One special feature of the circulation routes here is that it is possible to look through the great glass walls into the plenary chamber, both from the east and from the west, where a suspended footbridge creates a link across the building. The footbridge to the west can be seen by the public as soon as they come in through the visitors' entrance. The openness and generous proportions of this level are particularly unexpected.

Foster replaced all the windows in the historic façade of Wallot's building, including those on the presidential level and the parliamentary groups' level. The articulation,

structure and function of the individual areas of glass differ markedly from the windows designed earlier by Baumgarten. The construction resembles a double façade: behind the outer layers of glazing lies a ventilated void equipped with solar shading devices. The inner panels can be opened, so allowing fresh air to flow into every room. Sensors measure air quality and room temperatures, and control the complementary mechanical ventilation system.

Large parts of the parliamentary groups' level on the third storey are completely new, having been added to the

building by Norman Foster. This level is hidden from the outside world in the four corner towers and behind the powerful attic storey that stands above the colossal order of columns and pilasters of Wallot's façade. Here are to be found the conference rooms and offices of the five parliamentary groups and the press lobby, which surrounds the glazed soffit of the plenary chamber as it curves up towards the dome. The great circle of angled glass rising the full height of the storey is surrounded by a rail upholstered in black leather, which prevents people from getting too close to its glazing. The representatives of the press can lean over the rail and look a long way down into the chamber. However, this is only possible when the Bundestag is not sitting and the remote-controlled fabric roller blinds attached in front of the individual segments

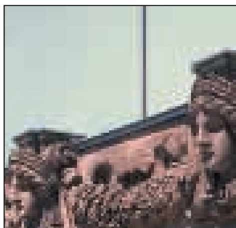
of glass inside the chamber do not block the view. The roller blinds are necessary for acoustic reasons. Without them, the plenary chamber's spatial volume and shape would create echo effects.

At the same time, the spacious area around this central point serves as a lobby where the press can meet informally with Members on days when parliament is sitting. It is also necessary to pass through this area on the way to the rooms used by the parliamentary groups.

The rooms for the big parliamentary groups, the CDU/CSU and SPD, are located to the east. The corner towers are reserved for the meetings of their executive committees, while the whole parliamentary groups meet in the much larger adjoining rooms with their partially glazed monopitch roofs. These rooms are exclusively top-lit, as the attic storey of the Reichstag Building's façade is classed as part of a historic monument, which meant it was not possible to break through its stonework to make window openings. The rooms in the towers have very different, extremely unusual proportions. Here too, the introduction of new windows would have destroyed the historic character of the façade. Consequently, these spaces are lit solely via the small rows of windows high up at the tops of the towers and their glazed roofs, which gives them a secluded, almost introverted feel. Their interior décor was kept as simple as possible. The bare bricks of the main walls were left uncovered and painted white. However, as in all the building's conference rooms, coloured wooden panels devised by the Danish designer Per Arnoldi line the lower parts of the walls. The big parliamentary groups both have a lobby at their disposal, which is reached through a reception area. These rooms are located in the central projection above the large protocol chamber.

The five parliamentary groups represented in the German Bundestag hold meetings in the top-floor rooms surmounted by the building's corner towers (above). As there are only four towers, the two smallest parliamentary groups, The Left Party and Alliance 90/The Greens, take it in turns to use the south-west tower (bottom left and centre). The SPD's large conference room is situated on the eastern side of the building (bottom right).

The parliamentary groups of the FDP, the Left Party and Alliance 90/The Greens are accommodated on the western side of the building. The northern and southern sides of this storey are laid out symmetrically as mirror images of each other. There are good views of the passages around the two courtyards that give access to the various offices. Here too, Norman Foster's distinctive architectural style is once again clearly in evidence. Several layers of glass – consisting of balustrades and windows – create a spatial continuum apparently devoid of all barriers. Looking around here, it is easy to gain the impression that one is actually in a modern new building. Some of the upper sections of the walls around the courtyards were rebuilt. These are the only places where Foster fol-



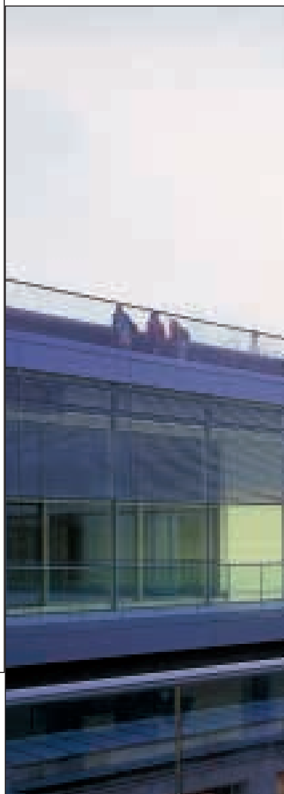
lowed what is otherwise conventional practice when façades are being restored and had the original patterning of Wallot's masonry faithfully recreated.

The parliamentary groups' level is a good place from which to examine the lower end of the light sculptor from all sides at close quarters. The smooth, shiny silver lower end of this mirrored cone, which tapers to an almost sharp point in the central circle, is braced by thin bars with a decorative appearance. Waste air is drawn out of the chamber between louvres further up where the light sculptor grows broader and expelled above at the top of the dome through a round, central opening ten metres wide.

ECOLOGICAL ENERGY SYSTEMS

When the design competition was launched, particular emphasis was placed on the formulation of an energy and heating strategy that would make efficient use of natural resources, the intention being to promote the future application of cutting-edge technology in this field. The central light sculptor is in fact a crucial part of the innovative concept for the use and reuse of energy in the building that was driven vigorously ahead by the architect and his specialist designers. The translation of this concept into reality made it possible to meet ambitious ecological targets.

The system is centred around two block-type heating and power plants, one in the Reichstag Building and one in the neighbouring Paul Löbe Building. They provide reliable supplies of power and heat, burning vegetable oil methyl ester (biodiesel), a fuel derived from regenerative raw materials. Hardly any exhaust gases are emitted when biodiesel is burned to generate energy. Furthermore, this technique is very efficient in comparison to conventional methods. If the two power stations produce surplus heat during a particular phase of operation, it is



discharged into an aquifer 280 to 320 metres below ground. Large quantities of brine are found there beneath a layer of clay that is completely impermeable from above. This means it is possible to store the heat temporarily as hot water at a temperature of 70 degrees Celsius – without any damaging impact on the environment. In consequence, only a little of the energy that has been converted is wasted. When it is needed, this heat stored below ground is returned to the energy cycle in the parliamentary buildings. In winter, the hot water can be pumped up to heat the building; in summer, a small proportion of the heat is even harnessed to drive absorption cooling plants, so helping to cool the building. The 'warm boreholes' into the brine aquifer were sunk about 200 metres north-west of the Reichstag Building.

The absorption cooling system, which produces cold water like a massive fridge, operates on the same principle. The cold water is also stored below ground. From there, it is pumped up during hot weather and conducted through ceilings around the building, so lowering the temperature of the rooms.

Facing page:
Decorative elements on the façade of the Reichstag Building.

This page:
Well lit rooms set back slightly from the historic façades accommodate the parliamentary

A second aquifer 60 metres below the surface is used to store chilled water. The cold of winter is trapped there and stored for the summer in order to keep the building cool and fresh when temperatures rise too high. The bore hole to this aquifer was sunk directly in front of the Reichstag Building's west façade.

This exemplary ecological concept ensures a pleasant room climate prevails in the new Reichstag Building at all times of year. The energy system with the biofuel-burning block-type heating and power plants also supplies the Bundestag's new office blocks near the Reichstag Building, the Jakob Kaiser Building, Paul Löbe Building and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building, as well as the day-care centre provided for the children of Members, their staff and Bundestag employees. Furthermore, the nearby Federal Chancellery has also been integrated into the network. In consequence, various patterns of demand are balanced out and the capacity of the block-type heating and power plants exploited more fully. The two power plants and the photovoltaic array, which extends over an area of 310 square metres on the southern roof of the Reichstag Building and also feeds energy into the system,

Left and centre:
Views of the parliamentary groups' level. The two light wells are reserved for artworks.

Right:
A view of the south courtyard of the Reichstag Building.

perform with extraordinary efficiency: 82 per cent of the power consumed by the Bundestag is supplied by these installations. Only at peak times does additional power have to be drawn from the public grid. The control room for the energy supply systems is located in the plinth storey of the Reichstag Building.

THE DOME

After the levels reserved for the President of the German Bundestag and the parliamentary groups, one arrives at the roof of the building.

When visitors have been brought up to this spacious new roof level by one of the two lifts from the west entrance hall, they initially emerge into a narrow glass shelter. Here, they already have a free view of Norman Foster's 'public space' with the dome construction at its centre.

The entrance hall below and the mighty west portal are to be seen once again from the longer western side of the area in front of the lifts. The view from here is particularly impressive, since it is possible to look down more

The dome, a symbol and a magnet for visitors. It connects the architecture of the late nineteenth century with that of the late twentieth century.

This page:
The pattern of the dome's faceted glazing is only apparent from close up. From a distance, it seems to blur the dividing line between the solidity of the building below and the expanses of sky above.

Facing page:
Allegorical figures carved in sandstone stand high up on the corner towers.

than 20 metres. At no point – not even when strolling around the roof – does the visitor gain the impression that they are in some cut-off area isolated from the rest of the building. Up to 1,000 visitors can be accommodated on the publicly accessible roof level, including the dome, at any one time. It is open daily from 8:00 hrs in the morning to midnight (last entry: 22:00 hrs). Just a few days after its opening, the place had become a major new Berlin attraction. Today, the dome's reputation as a magnet for visitors is a central argument for those who believe the decision to build it, which was hotly discussed during the early planning phase, was correct. A classical dome is made up of three sections with a cylindrical base or 'drum', the rounded form characteristic of a dome, which is usually a section of a sphere, and the lantern, a small turret at its top-most point. Foster's version is a new interpretation without either a drum or a lantern. His individualistic structure has been placed on top of the older building in a way that very consciously distances it from earlier models. The prominent rooftop cupola, the shape of which has been likened to an 'egg chopped in half', has two open entrances. Inside, one finds oneself in a semi-open space. On the opposite side, to the east, lies the other entrance, which leads to the nearby rooftop block that houses a restaurant. With its discreet frosted glass cladding, this angular structure appears inconspicuous, yet clearly sets itself apart from the older parts of the building with their few remaining historicist roof decorations, which were repaired in the course of the latest reconstruction. Some of the figures made of sandstone from quarries at Rackwitz (Rakowice) and Alt-Warthau (Warta Boleslawiecka) in

Silesia had been heavily eroded by acid rain and needed to be stabilised with special steel anchors and artificial resin. To the east of the restaurant, which seats 100 diners, there is a terrace shielded off from the streams of visitors. The chairs there were designed by Norman Foster himself as part of Thonet's A 900 range. With their curved aluminium contours, they represent a modern, technically elegant interpretation of the café chair.

Strolling around inside the dome, the viewer becomes aware of the scale of the light sculptor. At floor level, the structure is surrounded by a broad, slightly sloping ring of glass, in front of which a circle of display cases prevents visitors from treading on the glazed soffit that separates them from the plenary chamber. From the display cases, they can look far down into the centre of the building, making out a small patch of the chamber. The people below can be seen more or less dimly, depending on the position and intensity of the sun and the glare from the television lights. Illustrated panels in the display cases inform visitors about the history of the Reichstag Building. High-intensity xenon lamps are placed along the outer edge of the glass ring. These lamps can be directed at the upper mirrors of the light reflector to project dazzling beams of light out over the city on special occasions when spectacular lighting effects are required.

With a diameter of 40 metres and a height of 23 metres, the publicly accessible dome is an essential part of the building's natural lighting and ventilation systems. Classed as a purely exterior structure, it consists of a steel frame with an outer shell of faceted glass panels. The supporting framework is composed of 24 catenary-shaped meridian ribs with a triangular cross section that taper slightly towards the top. They were assembled from the base up on a ring-shaped box girder. The glazing consists of angled bands of glass, the maximum width of the individual sheets on the lower edge of the dome being just

over five metres. They are held in place by aluminium bars, with the narrow gaps between the rows filled in by slim horizontal glass strips.

The steel ramps that are intertwined in the form of a double helix were welded together on site from 13-metre-long, ten-tonne-heavy sections and suspended from every second rib of the dome. As a result, they make an additional contribution to the stability of the overall construction. The two ramps begin on the roof platform exactly opposite each other next to the entrances and rise upward at a gradient of eight degrees. The calculations involved in assembling the ramps so that they would fit perfectly into the dome posed a particular challenge, as building regulations required flat resting platforms to be inserted at regular intervals. The combination of the constantly altering curvature, the subtly differing trapezoidal ramp cross sections and the deformations caused by the load of the ramps themselves, which weigh a total of approximately 800 tonnes, confronted the structural engineers with an exceptionally demanding task.

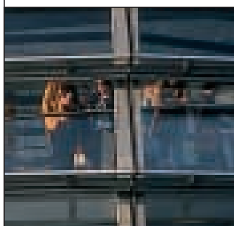
It is a fascinating experience to walk up and down the 230 metres of the ramps. As one climbs, one suddenly feels detached from the building at an airy height, alone with the ever-changing cityscape and the sky. It is an almost ceremonial ascent, the unseen endpoint of which awakens increasing curiosity. Norman Foster's typical all-glass balustrades, which are characterised by their great lightness, are well known from earlier designs – such as the Sackler Wing at the Royal Academy in London, his office building in Duisburg and the Carré d'Art in Nîmes. Here, they strengthen the impression that one enjoys tremendous freedom of movement.

The dome is reinforced externally by 17 horizontal steel ring beams. The upper platform in the dome, which takes up 200 square metres, forms the end of the large, cone-shaped light sculptor, on which 360 mirrors (30

Like a stalactite, the light reflector hangs down from the dome into the centre of the building. Its mirrors reflect the building's visitors, the architecture and the city skyline.

rows, each of twelve mirrors) are mounted at varying angles. Visitors can see tiny, distorted, repeating images of themselves in the mirrors, but their main purpose is to reflect daylight down into the debating chamber and save energy by reducing the need for artificial lighting.

This concept is one of the numerous components of the ecological energy system that makes the building such an exemplary piece of modern architecture. To prevent the rays of the sun from being reflected directly into the chamber, a large, automatically travelling sunshade was installed that hangs next to the ramps from a track attached to the upper dome platform. The shade is twelve metres high and shaped to match the curvature of the dome. Its computer-controlled movements allow it to follow the position of the sun and diffuse

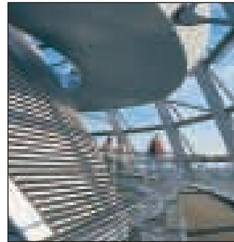


the light directed into the chamber. The shade consists of a surrounding steel frame and hundreds of tiny aluminium blades. Electronic sensors check its precise positioning.

The ascending and descending ramps spiral round the light reflector in the form of a double helix.

The skin of the dome is made up of 3,000 square metres of glass arranged in 17 overhanging rows of panels, each of 24 units. The rows overlap almost like scales, with gaps between the top of each row and the bottom of the row above, which are also glazed. The gaps between the four lowest rows have been left open to improve the flow of air through the dome.

Having arrived at the top, visitors find themselves on the viewing platform placed seven metres below the top of the dome. At a height of almost 50 meters above road level, it offers a unique panoramic view of the city. The centre of the round terrace is surrounded by a ring-shaped wooden bench, the seat of which has a bulging, rounded rim. The curved shape and great depth of the bench invite visitors to lean well back and gaze out into the distance.

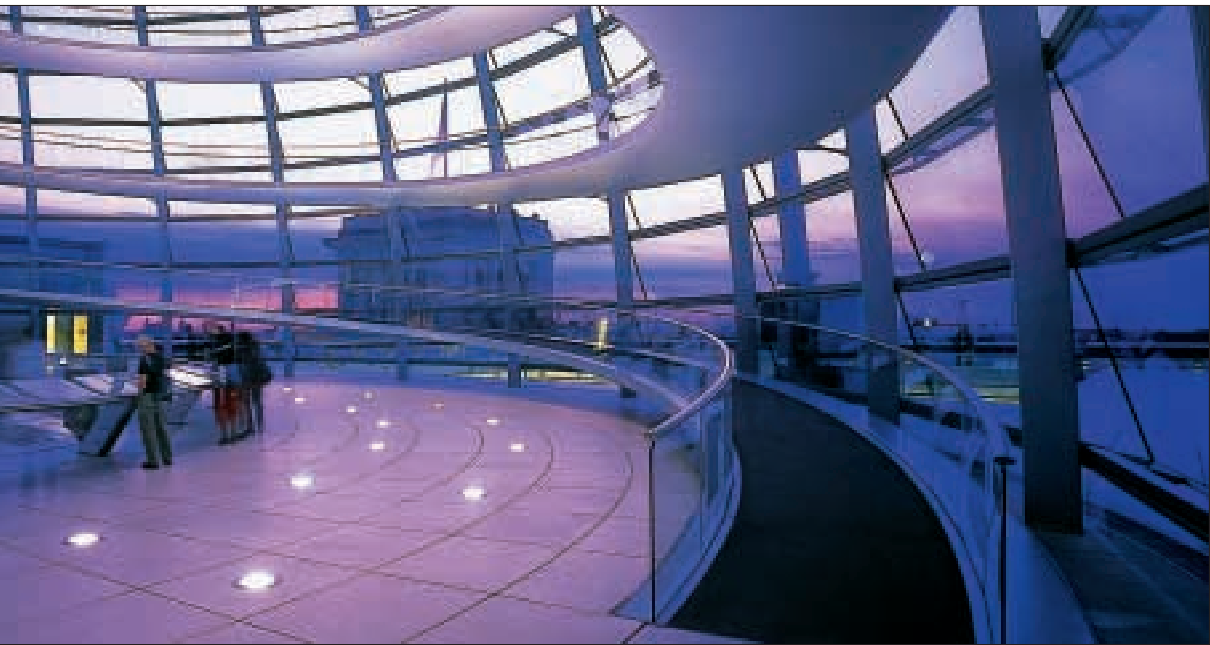


The Pantheon in Rome is topped by one of the most famous of all cupolas. Inside its hemispherical coffered dome, the whole interior seems sunk in darkness. The mysterious character of this space derives in part from the rays of the sun that enter through the oculus at its top, which is 9 metres in diameter. As if guided by an unseen hand, the bright shafts of light illuminate different areas of the interior at different times.

The glass dome of the Reichstag Building cannot be compared to the Ancient Roman rotunda. In several respects, Foster's structure is not a cupola in the classical sense. Nevertheless: an awareness of the singularity and symbolic power of the ancient temple may have influenced Norman Foster's thinking just a little. His dome also has a round, uncovered opening at the top with a diameter of eight metres. If you look at it closely, a fine net can be made out that is intended to stop birds from flying in at this point by accident. Slightly raised above this, there is an aerodynamic wind guard in the form of a flat ring.

This page:
The view of the city all around is slowly revealed as the visitor climbs higher on their way to the top of the dome.

Facing page:
The uncovered circular opening at the top of the dome has a diameter of eight metres. Only an almost invisible piece of netting prevents birds from accidentally flying into the 'High House'.



At dusk, the dome appears in a quite different light. The brightly illuminated parliamentary groups' level and the plenary chamber also stand out as night falls.

The interior of the dome is exposed to the weather, but since the vent through which the stale air from the plenary chamber escapes is located in the middle of the space above the platform, visitors are partly sheltered from the elements. The decision to have the flue end below the top of the dome and leave the circle open had the advantage that it meant no fire protection equipment would be required in this generally accessible rooftop structure, as would have been the case had it been an enclosed space. Apart from this, the quality of the air in the dome benefits from the inversion effect generated by the escaping air.

The dome has become a new symbol of the German federal capital. The magnificent glass shell with the constant flow of visitors walking up and down its ramps has proved to be an intriguing spectacle. Furthermore, since anyone can go and climb it, the dome has brought a strong sense of life and vibrancy to this place. In comparison to the powerful stone mass of the historic Reichstag Building, the structure on top seems modest and almost fragile. The dome appears to have little connection with the original building, weighed down as it is by more than

100 years of history. Only within it does the visitor realise, with surprise, how brilliantly Foster succeeded in integrating the dome into the old structure both in design terms and, above all, at the functional level.

With its dome structure, the rebuilt Reichstag Building demonstrates that a mighty historicist building can certainly be combined with innovative, forward-looking architectural elements that set standards for others to follow. A new locus of identification has been created for what is 'the most stable and confident parliament we have ever had in Germany', as Wolfgang Thierse, the former President of the German Bundestag, described it emphatically when the building was inaugurated on 19 April 1999.

This grey edifice with such a turbulent history that once stood forlorn by the Berlin Wall has awoken again and become the centre of German political life. It has also been absorbed into Berlin's new centre, the area encompassing the recently redeveloped Spreebogen, Pariser Platz with the Brandenburg Gate and, further away, the new Berlin Central Station and Potsdamer Platz, all of which now form a single organic urban structure that can be seen as a new whole.

BEFORE THE BUILDING BEGAN

THE BERLIN DECISION

On 20 June 1991, the German Bundestag voted by a narrow majority that Berlin should be the capital of the united country. Despite a number of delays in the concrete implementation of this step, it was ultimately possible for a date to be set for parliament and the government to move to their new home. In 1999, Berlin became the seat of the German national parliament and Federal Government.

Once this decision had been taken in 1991, one of the central issues was how the new political centre in the middle of Berlin should be developed. What principles should guide the creation of new buildings for the ministries, the Federal Chancellery, the Bundesrat and numerous other federal institutions? What kind of overall urban-planning concept could satisfy the numerous requirements that had to be met, and do so in a sustainable fashion?

These questions were addressed individually, and a different solution found for each problem. Klaus Töpfer (CDU), the Federal Minister for Regional Planning, Building and Urban Development at that time, deter-

mined that a number of ministries should be accommodated in existing buildings, some of which had also had the same function during the 40 years of the GDR. As a result, only a limited number of new buildings was required. These are located in the Friedrichstadt and Dorotheenstadt areas of Berlin's Mitte borough, as well as other nearby urban districts and on the Spreeinsel island. It was also decided that a central parliamentary and government quarter should be created on the Spreebogen, the great arching curve in the River Spree.

THE COMPETITION

Almost all concerned suggested the former Reichstag Building as a central location for the plenary chamber, and the Council of Elders of the German Bundestag eventually voted in favour of this solution as well. Only a few parliamentarians were of the opinion that a new building should be planned and the Reichstag Building left as a historic monument. For example, Peter Conradi (SPD), a member of the Building Commission, was convinced that a new home for the parliament of the united Germany should be built in the middle of Berlin on Schlossplatz, where the Imperial Palace had stood until it was demolished following the Second World War.

There was much discussion about how the German Bundestag and its plenary chamber could be accommodated in the Reichstag Building. For it was not just necessary to create a plenary chamber that, following unification, had to seat 669 Members. Space was also needed for Members' offices, conference rooms, rooms for the use of the parliamentary groups, the presidential area, offices for the senior management and the Administration of the German Bundestag, a base for the Visitors' Service, rooms to be placed at the disposal of the Federal Government and the Bundesrat, and other facilities. What was certain was that the amount of space required would demand a considerable extension or several subsidiary buildings. The Reichstag Building's useable floor space of

In 1991, the Reichstag Building contained 17,000 square metres of usable floor space; the German parliament needed 133,000 square metres.

17,000 square metres compared with the Bundestag's total requirements of 133,000 square metres.

Apart from the Reichstag Building, there was also the former Reichstag President's palace to be restored and linked in some way to the new plenary area. An architectural solution was expected that would do justice to the formal rooms there – at that time, it was thought that the President of the German Bundestag would occupy the palace, but today it is used by the Parliamentary Association, which brings together present and former parliamentarians for social events and private encounters. Furthermore, the memory of how the Berlin Wall had once divided the two buildings was to be kept alive. Since the War, the Reichstag Building had lain on the sidelines of events. Paul Baumgarten had reconstructed it in the 1960s and 1970s, but the condition of the building's interior structures and its spatial layout meant that it could not be used for sittings of the German Bundestag, even though he had redesigned its central chamber with unification in mind. The discussions about the kind of measures to be taken and how the buildings should be dealt with finally led to the announcement of a design competition in 1992.

This architectural competition, which was intended to identify new ways of using the site, should be seen in conjunction with another, initially more high-profile competition to find urban-design ideas for the land immediately to the north and west of the Reichstag Building. In the mean time, large parts of this area had been earmarked for Members' offices, conference rooms, the Federal Chancellery and, in the earliest plans, the Bundesrat as well. What was required was a master plan that would allocate appropriate sections of the Spreebogen for the various buildings that would be required.

830 submissions were received. The jury took its decision on 19 February 1993: the Berlin architect Axel Schultes won the first prize for his collaboration with Charlotte Frank. His master plan dispensed completely with the original configuration of the old, densely built-up

urban district that had stood there before the Second World War and proposed an expansive linear development. This line of parliamentary and government buildings would run from east to west, from the middle of the city to Moabit past the northern side of the Reichstag Building and across the River Spree, connecting and indeed integrating the two halves of Berlin. What was so convincing about this concept was its clear, precise structuring of the site and its respectful treatment of the past, even though it envisaged completely new urban spaces. In the middle of the broad 'band' defined by walls and the edges of buildings, there would be a central public square, which would have the function of connecting the green areas separated by the band of buildings – the Spreebogen to the north, the Platz der Republik in front of the Reichstag Building to the south. The square was finally completed in 2002. For the then President of the German Bundestag, Rita Süssmuth (CDU/CSU), the prize-winning entry set out a concept 'that is distinguished by its very strong architectural form and, above all, does justice to the idea that Germany's constitutional organs should use architecture as a means of self-representation.' Individual competitions were then held to find designs for the Federal Chancellery to the west of the square and the new complex of parliamentary offices to its east, the main entrances of which now stand facing each other across this open space. Axel Schultes was commissioned to de-

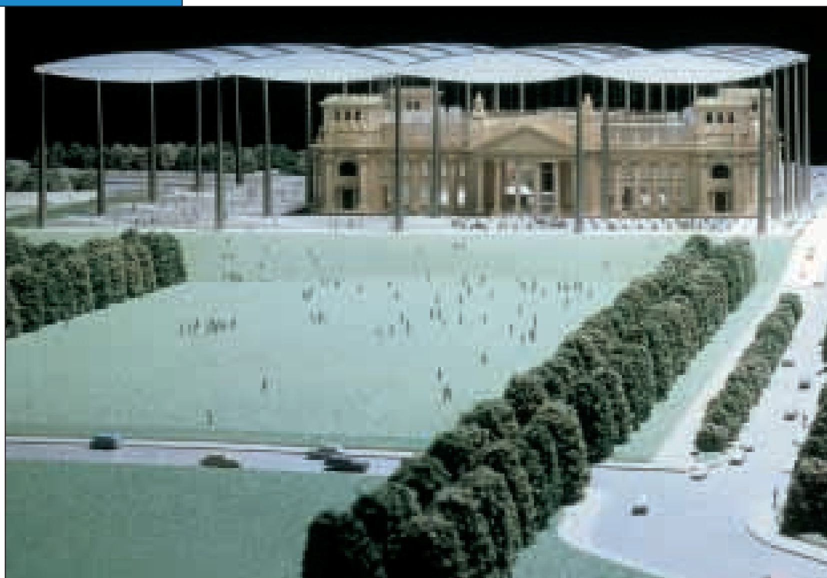
The band of federal buildings that runs to the north of the Reichstag Building: the Federal Chancellery, the Paul Löbe Building and, on the other side of the River Spree, the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building.

sign the Federal Chancellery, Stephan Braunfels to design the Paul Löbe Building and the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building.

Finding a suitable concept for the reconstruction of the Reichstag Building so that it could be used by the German Bundestag proved to be more difficult than the much larger task of planning what should be done with the Spreebogen just to its north. The competition brief was complex and set the architects some very taxing problems. Fewer than a quarter of those who had been interested in the job and requested competition documents finally submitted a design. Consequently, only 80 practices took part in the one-stage, open national competition, as well as 14 specially invited architects from abroad.

On 8 January 1993, the jury agreed on three first-prize-winners whose various approaches could hardly have been more different: Norman Foster, Pi de Bruijn and Santiago Calatrava. Experience suggests that the naming of more than one first-prize-winner in such competitions usually indicates, firstly, that there have been disagreements among the jury and, secondly, that the problems involved are extremely testing and barely soluble. The biggest difficulty was that the range of spaces required could not be accommodated in the original building, while it was hardly practicable, in either architectural or urban-planning terms, to attach an an-

Norman Foster's first design. A wide canopy was to span Wallot's original building.



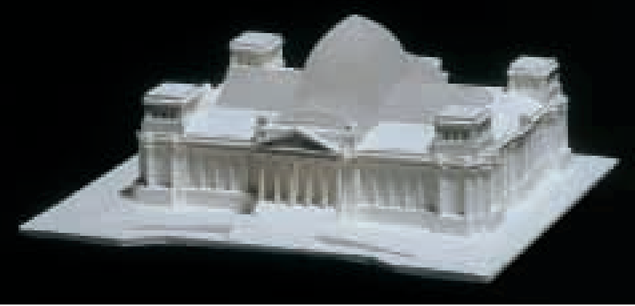
nex, for which space was available, to such a strong, unique landmark as the Reichstag Building. However, the organisers had deliberately not formulated certain parts of the brief too precisely in order to leave open various possible ways of resolving such issues. Furthermore, they did not emphasise the existing building's status as a historic monument, leaving entrants free to alter its interior and exterior. The jury therefore paid little attention to conservation concerns when judging the proposals.

Norman Foster's spectacular first design sparked particularly lively discussions: he wanted to build a translucent, transparent roof over the Reichstag Building at a height of 50 metres. This roof would rest on 25 slim steel supports that would taper as they rose higher. The exterior of the now 'canopied' original building would be preserved, while its interior would be totally gutted – a massive undertaking. Here, Foster imagined a wide, open, rectangular public space, under the middle of which the circular plenary chamber would lie. It would be possible to look into the chamber from this enclosed open space via an opening that would also be circular. It was planned to separate the offices from the old façades, building them so that they faced inwards around the public space. The proposal to completely gut the Reichstag Building would also allow the upper storeys to be made lower, although high enough for offices. This enabled Foster to accommodate the very extensive spatial programme specified in the competition largely without additional buildings.

Moreover, with this first design, Foster already presented a detailed energy strategy, which was to be further developed in a quite different form as the building took on its final shape. Today, this energy strategy is of central significance in the Reichstag Building.

Santiago Calatrava, a Spanish architect based in Zurich, was the only one of the three prize-winners who sought to use his unmistakable architectural language to restore the impact the building had had within the built urban environment prior to the Second World War. He favoured the construction of a modern dome. Much of the

building's interior would also be gutted between the four corner towers and would now form an envelope around the architect's new, monumental-looking structure. As in Norman Foster's final concept, the round plenary chamber would be located centrally under the dome, while four



The other top prize-winning entries. Santiago Calatrava proposed building a modern dome (this page); while the Amsterdam-based Pi de Bruijn intended to house the plenary chamber in a separate, new building (facing page).

entrance halls at the sides would rise the full height of the building. The dome, which would not have a lantern, and the four segmented barrel vaults over the entrance halls would consist of a filigree, rigorously geometrical steel structure that would be completely glazed. At first sight, it was reminiscent of the massive iron constructions of the 19th century. Calatrava solved the difficulties of accommodating so many rooms within such a small space by moving the areas for the parliamentary groups, the conference rooms and the accommodation for the committees into a four-storey block on land adjoining the former Reichstag President's palace to the east. This subsidiary block would be connected to the Reichstag Building by a pedestrian bridge.

The third prize-winner, Pi de Bruijn from Amsterdam, wanted to house the plenary chamber in a new building. In his opinion, the Reichstag Building did not offer enough space to meet the requirements of a modern parliament without irrevocably destroying the essence of its historical development, which was inscribed in the very fabric of the building. Rather, he suggested what was to be understood as a new overall architectural composition, in which the Reichstag Building would have a plinth storey – called the 'podium' – placed in front of it, a separate building would house the plenary chamber and a

presidential wing would be added to the north. This complex would be related to the River Spree by a connecting square. There would be limited interventions within the Reichstag Building itself. The internal structures put in place by Paul Wallot and Paul Baumgarten would be treated respectfully, and the building would remain a 'memorial to the events of the past'. However, instead of the former dome and Baumgarten's plenary chamber, de Bruijn would place an open courtyard at the centre of the building. The surrounding rooms would be solely for the use of the parliamentary groups. With its flat, bowl-shaped plenary chamber and huge flagpole, the large square at the front was reminiscent of the Square of the Three Powers in Brasilia planned by Oscar Niemeyer in the late 1950s. Here, at the centre of Brazil's new capital, the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies occupies a flat bowl designed as a spherical segment, while the Federal Senate meets in a low dome of the same height.

For the jury, de Bruijn's bowl-shaped plenary chamber stood on the podium like a symbol of democracy. However, they were less satisfied with its spatial qualities. There was a belief that it would feel more like the auditorium of a theatre sealed off from the outside world.

Once the three prize-winning entries had been announced, it became ever more evident that the Building Commission was inclined to have the reconstruction work undertaken on a much more modest scale as far as both its spatial requirements and its architectural character were concerned. There was also a desire to reduce the costs of the project.

In this connection, it should be recalled that the original Reichstag Building was itself the fruit of a difficult, controversial competition. A first competition was judged in 1872, but the prize-winner was not asked to carry out the work. Only ten years later did a second competition

produce two prize-winners, one of whom – Paul Wallot – finally received the contract to build the new parliament.

TWO COLLOQUIUMS

Two colloquiums chaired by Rita Süssmuth (CDU/CSU), the then President of the German Bundestag, were held in the Reichstag Building to discuss how the process should be taken forward. The first Colloquium on the Architectural Design and Usage of the Reichstag Building took place in February 1992 before the design competition had even been held. Numerous speakers, in particular architectural historians, architects and town planners, were invited to discuss possible new ways of using the building. Once again, the discussion started with the fundamental question of 'building and democracy'. Could architecture create a meaningful image of the state? Could a democratic state deploy a particular architectural language in order to symbolise itself? If so, would this architecture inevitably be dominated by glass and open spaces? Would it be possible to apply this widely visible 'transparency' in a coherent way to the Reichstag Building and the range of rooms specified in the competition brief?

It was necessary to completely reconfigure the spaces inside Paul Wallot's Reichstag Building without destroying its character. It had to be instantly recognisable yet at the same time quite new.

The second colloquium took place after the first round of the competition had been concluded in March 1993. By this time, the competition to find an urban master plan had created a new context, which had to be taken into consideration. Since the two competitions were being run in parallel, the President of the German Bundestag felt it was important to look at the three designs selected for the Reichstag Building as they would interact with the new master plan for the Spreebogen as a whole.

Norman Foster, Santiago Calatrava and Pi de Bruijn presented their designs in detail during the second colloquium. Foster's proposal continued to include the huge, oversailing roof spread out above the Reichstag Building.

In this connection, he noted that one should not go back in time, but only forwards, and that the Reichstag Building was an important monument and had to be an integral component of a new composition.

Some fundamental criticisms of the plans were raised, for example, by the journalist Friedrich Dieckmann – who touched once again on the discussion about the shape of the plenary chamber and delivered a clear plea against the idea of laying it out as a circle, which was also abandoned by parliament a short time later: 'Speaking is a directed activity, simply as a result of human physiology, for we speak forwards with our face and voice. We speak *to* people. The circular form contradicts this.'

By the end of the colloquium, some participants were already expressing a preference for Foster's design. However, despite all the explanations the architect had given, there were still doubts about the costs and benefits of his concept, particularly as far as the massive roof was concerned. All three prize-winners had to revise their plans once again, working to a very tight deadline. As they did this, important new criteria were specified. Apart from changes to the spatial requirements that resulted from the transfer of various facilities to the new buildings now being planned nearby, it was above all necessary to cut the construction costs.

THE DECISION

Foster, whose first design would have cost 1.3 billion marks, finally had to accept there was no chance of his canopy, which he understood as a 'heroic symbol of an enlightened democratic society', being built. He now intended to give the central chamber a simple, slightly curved glass roof. Calatrava did not abandon his dome, but planned to make it lower, which would reduce it to about the same size as the original dome designed by Wallot. De Bruijn gave up his bowl-shaped building and also proposed to put the plenary chamber in the Reichstag Building again.

In July 1993, the Building Commission and the Council of Elders of the German Bundestag had to deliberate one last time on the three significantly revised designs and make a final choice. As expected, they decided to award the contract to Norman Foster. In his new design without the massive roof, he contented himself with creating a new interior within the old building in his own distinctive style.

Once this decision had been taken, a debate about the dome flared up among the Members of the German Bundestag. The question of the dome and the form in which it should actually be built remained undecided for a long time. Ultimately, the Bundestag wanted a dome. And Foster, who had never given consideration to this idea before, began to work out numerous variants that would be feasible. A vote was eventually held to decide whether the building should be given a recreation of Wallot's old dome or a new construction. The second option won the day. Foster came to accord the function of the dome ever-greater significance. He developed the central, reflecting light sculptor, which functions as a light source, to complement his unique integrated energy strategy. Not only did he build a cupola that the public could enter and walk up, but one that would serve as a kind of 'rooftop showcase'. Foster was not satisfied with putting in place a merely symbolic structure. His rich inventiveness created a complex, completely novel interpretation of the traditional dome that is both functional and sends out a very strong message about the institution it represents. Wolf Jobst Siedler believes that, from today's point of view, the reconstruction by Norman Foster is 'the best that could have been done with the Reichstag Building. I certainly prefer this new parliament, the new Bundestag on the River Spree, to the new building for the Bundestag in Bonn, which Johannes Groß once mocked ironically as an oversized garden show pavilion. This glazed structure by the Rhine is very fine, but it is not a building capable of representing the state.'

September 1993 saw the establishment of the Bundesbaugesellschaft Berlin mbH (BBB). It was to be responsi-

ble for the general management of several projects, organising and coordinating the construction work on the Berlin Spreebogen for the German Federation, and so took charge of the modifications to the Reichstag Building. The privately led company acts in its own name, but is financed by the Federation, which provides all its funding from the federal budget. The founding of the BBB can also be interpreted as a response to the dissatisfaction felt about the work undertaken by the Federal Building Office during the construction of the government quarter in Bonn.

The name the building would be given remained undecided almost to the very end. The construction work was practically complete by the time the Council of Elders of the German Bundestag determined that the building should be officially known as the 'Reichstag Building Plenary Area'.

WRAPPED REICHSTAG

Before the reconstruction work in the Reichstag Building could 'cement' another new beginning in its history, the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude were able to launch a special project on 17 June 1995. After 23 years of waiting and hoping, they were finally able to carry out their plan to wrap the whole Reichstag Building. About 100,000 square metres of shiny, silver panels of polypropylene fabric were required in order to envelope this potent symbol of unfulfilled hopes. The decision to approve the pro-

The Reichstag Building as it had never been seen before: the venerable building once it had been wrapped by Christo and Jeanne-Claude in June 1995.

ject was taken by parliament following a debate in February 1994. It was largely thanks to the special commitment to the idea shown by the then President of the German Bundestag, Rita Süssmuth (CDU/CSU), that this undertaking was able to go ahead.

The wrapping became a quite extraordinary event for Berlin. Christo's 14-day action has taken its place among the great moments in the story of the Reichstag Building. 'Wrapped up and neatly tied', the building came to be seen as standing for the aspirations awoken by the new era that had started with German unification.

THE BUILDING COMMISSION OF THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG

The decision to make Berlin the capital taken in 1991 had momentous consequences. If the German Bundestag, the Federal Government and most of the ministries were to make this move, it would involve significant amounts of urban-planning and construction work. Germany's democratic institutions would have to demonstrate their

ability to build on a large scale. The Bundestag had to deal not just with the Reichstag Building and the fundamental questions thrown up by its reconstruction and new uses, but at the same time provide rooms for its committees to meet in, premises for the parliamentary groups, offices for Members and the Administration of the German Bundestag, facilities for visitors, a home for the Parliamentary Association, a library and space for other institutions that belonged to the Bundestag.

In 1991, the very year the decision was taken to move to the new capital, the Commission on Buildings and Room Allocation formed to coordinate all these activities. It was given a mandate to 'to take the necessary organisational, planning and design decisions on behalf of the Council of Elders to ensure that the German Bundestag is able to conduct its business and perform its functions in Berlin as a politically responsible building owner and user.' The civil engineer Dietmar Kansy (CDU) was appointed the Commission's chairman and held this position for more than ten years. The architect Peter Conradi (SPD), who has since left the Bundestag and, like Kansy,

The members of the Building Commission during the 14th electoral term in the newly built Paul Löbe Building. From left to right: Ilse Janz, Konrad Gilges, Ilja Seifert, Gabriele Iwersen, Hans Raidel, Birgit Schnieber-Jastram, Dietmar Kansy, Franziska Eichstädt-Bohling, Ulrich Heinrich, Reinhold Robbe and Johann Jakob Nettekoven (Secretary of the Building Commission).

had previously made vital contributions to the design and construction of the Bonn plenary chamber, also had a crucial influence on the planning process in Berlin. With some justification, the members of the Building Commission, which continued to exist until the 15th electoral term, always regarded themselves collectively as the 'Bundestag's builders'. The parliamentarians who served on this body included Bernhard Brinkmann (SPD), Franziska Eichstädt-Bohlig (Alliance 90/The Greens), Ilse Falk (CDU), Konrad Gilges (SPD), Peter Götz (CDU), Ulrich Heinrich (FDP), Gabriele Iwersen (SPD), Ilse Janz (SPD), Hans Raidel (CSU), Reinhold Robbe (SPD), Ilja Seifert (PDS) and Siegfried Scheffler (SPD). Its members were supported in the performance of their duties by the Properties and Building Technology Division of the Administration of the German Bundestag.

Initially, in the early 1990s, buildings once occupied by GDR ministries along Unter den Linden and Wilhelmstraße were renovated for the Bundestag. Then, in 1993, the international urban-planning competition led to the adoption of a coherent master plan for the parliamentary and government quarter on the Spreebogen. At the same time, the much discussed questions about the treatment of the Reichstag Building were continuing to be analysed, and two colloquiums were held at which different conceptions were discussed by experts from Germany and abroad with Rita Süssmuth, the then President of the German Bundestag, in the chair.

In parallel, a start was being made on the planning work for the Jakob Kaiser Building in the Dorotheenviertel area to the east of the Reichstag Building and, to its north, the new Paul Löbe Building and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building, which were connected with one another across the River Spree. Furthermore, it would be necessary to ensure compliance with heritage conservation regulations when older buildings, such as the former Reichstag President's palace, were being integrated into the overall plans for the complex of the Jakob Kaiser Building. By the time the parliamentary quarter was finished,

the German Bundestag had spent about 1.4 billion euros in Berlin.

The practical planning phase for the individual buildings, during which many negotiations would have to be conducted and numerous decisions taken about questions of detail and costs, also represented a major challenge for the Building Commission. The uniqueness of this task – planning a 'new capital' on a historic site – prompted the decision to transfer its overall management to the Bundesbaugesellschaft Berlin (BBB), which was organised as a private-sector company with the Federal Republic of Germany as its sole shareholder.

What has been created is a parliamentary quarter of short distances. Over the years, as if quite naturally, this quarter has become integrated into a new urban structure of ever-increasing density just a few steps away from the Brandenburg Gate. Its new buildings have made the Bundestag a key part of Berlin's centre, which was once torn apart by the Wall but has now been joined together again.

A conscious attempt was made to hire architects with different personal styles for the various buildings being constructed, who gave the individual façades, courtyards and interior spaces their own unique character. In contrast to the Bonn parliamentary quarter, with its scattered arrangement of buildings, a compact, very clearly organised quarter has been created, especially due to the short distances that have to be covered, a result not least of its many underground pedestrian tunnels and glazed footbridges.

One of the Building Commission's most spectacular decisions was taken when it went against the declared wishes of the architect, Norman Foster, and voted by a majority of one to create a significant modern roof structure and build a new glass dome on top of the Reichstag Building. This was eventually the subject of a vote in the plenary of the Bundestag, which adopted the proposal submitted by the Building Commission. Millions of enthusiastic visitors from all over the world have confirmed the rightness of this decision.

THE REICHSTAG BUILDING

ANDREAS KAERNBACH

ART

THE ART COUNCIL

With the Art Council, the German Bundestag established a body that advises the President of the German Bundestag in matters relating to the promotion of the visual arts. At present, it is made up of Norbert Lammert, the President of the German Bundestag, who acts as its chairman, and eight other Members. Three of the Art Council's members come from the SPD parliamentary group (Siegmund Ehrmann, Angelika Krüger-Leißner, Wolfgang Thierse), three from the CDU/CSU parliamentary group (Renate Blank, Norbert Lammert, Siegfried Kauder), one from the Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary group (Katrin Göring-Eckardt), one from the FDP parliamentary group (Jan Mücke) and one from The Left Party parliamentary group (Lukrezia Jochimsen). Responsibility for organising the work of the Art Council lies with its secretary, Andreas Kaernbach, the Curator of the Art Collection of the German Bundestag.

The Art Council has three main fields of activity. Firstly, artworks are purchased for the Art Collection of the German Bundestag each year at acquisition meetings – a task previously performed by the Bundestag's Art Commission, which became the Art Council in 1995. Secondly, it develops the art-for-architecture concepts for the parliamentary buildings in Berlin – in which respect it draws on the knowledge of external art experts and consults with the architects concerned and the Bundesbaugesellschaft Berlin mbH. Thirdly, it takes decisions about the exhibitions held at the gallery space in the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building, where contemporary artists show their work.

The parliamentarians were advised on the formulation of the art concept for the Reichstag Building by Pro-

fessor Götz Adriani of Tübingen and Professor Karin Stempel of Kassel. As a result of its deliberations on this issue, the Art Council of the German Bundestag agreed an art concept that also encompasses the three new parliamentary complexes on the Spreebogen. Within the context of this overall strategy, a separate art concept was then developed for each of the sites on the basis of its role in the business of parliament, its architectural language and its historical significance.

The most prominent building in terms of its parliamentary and historical importance is the Reichstag Building, where Germany's parliament sits as the 'forum of the nation'. Since its topping out ceremony in 1894, the Reichstag Building has witnessed all the highs and lows of German history and, despite the destruction and remodelling it has undergone, retains a considerable amount of its original fabric – by contrast to the other parliamentary buildings in the area along the Spreebogen, which are mainly new designs.

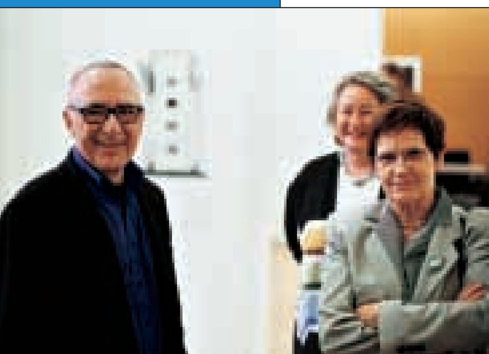
In recognition of the building's outstanding political and historical status, artistic figures who had shaped the reputation of German art during the post-War period were shortlisted to carry out art-for-architecture projects in the Reichstag Building. Furthermore, as a gesture of respect to Berlin's former four-power status, artists from the USA, France and Russia were commissioned to contribute works, while the restoration of the building and the associated conversion work were planned by an architect from Great Britain.

The German Bundestag's engagement with the visual arts began with the construction of the high-rise building in Bonn known as *Langer Eugen* ('Tall Eugen'). The architect Egon Eiermann had the conference rooms in the new tower where Members were to work decorated by various artists, including such well known figures as Georg Meistermann, Günther Uecker and HAP Grieshaber. The result was so impressive that Gustav Stein, a Member of the German Bundestag and professor of art at Düsseldorf University, suggested buying works

The artist Sigmar Polke (2nd from left) at his Cologne studio in March 1999, explaining his design for the illuminated boxes in the west entrance hall of the Reichstag Building to the Art Council and its chairman Wolfgang Thierse (right).

of art for Members' offices as well. The purchases subsequently made for the 'Stein Collection' in 1968 and 1969 form the core of the Art Collection of the German Bundestag through to the present day. At the initiative of Annemarie Renger, who was President of the German Bundestag in the mid-1970s, a solid institutional basis was created for the continuing acquisition of artworks when the Art Commission was founded in 1976. Its composition reflected the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups, with two Members representing the CDU/CSU and the SPD and one Member from the FDP. The Art Collection has gone on expanding ever since and is now also available to Members in Berlin as an 'artotheque' from which they can borrow artworks to decorate their offices.

The Art Council, including its then chairwoman Rita Süssmuth, visiting the artist Gerhard Richter at his studio in July 1998.



Over this period, the Art Commission and the Art Council have dealt with a variety of other ad-hoc tasks. For example, in 1991/92 the Art Commission administered the competition to find an artist for a memorial in the Reichstag Building to the Members of the Reichstag persecuted or murdered by the National Socialists and was responsible for ultimately deciding who should be awarded this commission. The selection of art that can be viewed in the area around the plenary chamber at Bonn also goes back to decisions taken by the Art Council. Chaired by Rita Süssmuth, the then President of the German Bundestag, the Art Council worked with the architect, Günter Behnisch, and art experts to draw up a concept for the ring of artworks surrounding the plenary chamber, which include Mark di Suvero's red steel sculpture *L' Allumé*, Olaf Metzel's elegant, filigree sculpture *Multivocality* and Nicola de Maria's extravagant blaze of colour in the restaurant.

Both the scale and the political and aesthetic significance of this commitment to art for architecture are unprecedented in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. They underline the conviction articulated by the

German Bundestag that support for the arts is a major obligation for any civilised state, an obligation fulfilled not just by the adoption of an appropriate framework of cultural policy, but also by parliament's openness to stimulating encounters with art in the course of its everyday work.

ARTWORKS

GERHARD RICHTER

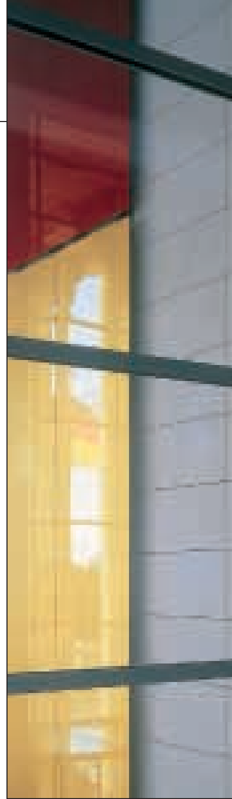
Gerhard Richter was born in Dresden in 1932, and lives and works in Cologne.

Visitors to the Reichstag Building encounter works by Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter immediately on entering. Here, in the west entrance hall, the artists faced the challenge of creating works that would not be dwarfed by the 30-metre-high walls. On one of the walls, Richter put up three glass panels 3 metres wide with a combined height of 21 metres. The panels are enamelled on the reverse in colours that recall – not without deeper meaning – the German Federal Flag: black, red and gold. The piece does not 'represent' a flag. Its attenuated vertical format and its shiny surface, which reflects the real flag outside the building when the work is seen from a certain angle, indicate that this is an autonomous work of art, the choice of colours setting an intriguing perceptual trap for the viewer in combination with the proportions of the individual panels.

The very simplicity of Richter's *Black Red Gold,* carefully accommodated to the shape and size of the wall, provides an effective counterweight to the imposing architecture of the entrance hall. It forms a coloured focus for the eye in a busy space. Despite its monumentality, the piece avoids all pathos. Instead, the fragility of the glass re-

flects literally and metaphorically the delicate nature of democratic society, its susceptibility to attack and its need to be rigorously defended if it is to maintain its vitality.

Richter attended the Art Academy in Dresden (then in the GDR) before moving to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1961. With Konrad Lueg and Sigmar Polke, he first came to the attention of the art world in 1963 with the happening *A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism,* the *first exhibition of German Pop Art,* with which he attacked the abstract art dominant at the time. Unlike American Pop Art, Richter's treatment of everyday subjects was infused with an irony that subverted style and meaning. He began by painting random photographs or newspaper images, reproducing them on canvas in black and white with blurred outlines. Since then, he has avoided commitment to any particular subject matter or style, painting portraits, abstract enlargements of paint texture, monochrome pictures in grey, coloured panels and even landscapes and still lifes with equal virtuosity. He has also embraced a wide range of techniques, but all his work, including *Black Red Gold,* reflects his chief concerns: what subjects are suitable for the modern artist, and how can communication be achieved between painter and viewer?



The real Federal Flag in front of the building is reflected in the gold of Richter's colour-based artwork. Gerhard Richter, *Black Red Gold,* 1998, glass coated with coloured enamel.

SIGMAR POLKE

Sigmar Polke was born at Olesnicka (Oels) in Lower Silesia in 1941, and lives and works in Cologne.

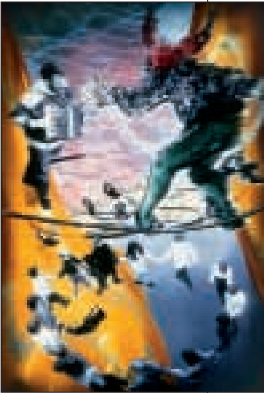
Polke plays ironically with historical imagery in the five illuminated boxes he installed opposite Richter's *Black Red Gold* in the west entrance hall. The individual boxes in On the Spot are titled *Konrad Adenauer Admo-*

nishes Reporters 'That's enough photographs for now', Test of Strength, Hammelsprung, Eulenspiegel Games and *Germania*. The boxes contrast with Richter's piece in form and in content, arranged in a low horizontal row instead of occupying a huge vertical format that almost fills the wall, and containing figurative narrative motifs rather than an abstract sequence of colours. The images in Polke's boxes comment ironically on the political and press activity that takes place immediately in front of the

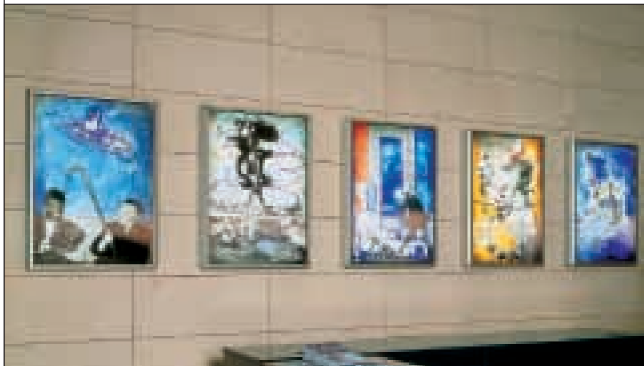
Illuminated boxes housing displays with images that shift and overlap as the onlooker's angle of view changes.
Sigmar Polke, *On the Spot,* 1998/99.

plenary chamber. The former German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, for instance, is shown cheerfully brandishing his walking-stick beneath the statue of Germania from the Niederwald monument that was erected near the town of Rüdesheim. The statue hovers menacingly in a horizontal position while Adenauer aims his stick at the place where television teams have set up their cameras in front of the plenary chamber. The central box refers to the parliamentary voting procedure known as the *'Hammelsprung',* in which the Members of the German Bundestag leave the plenary chamber in the direction of the west entrance and return to it via one of the doors marked 'Yes', 'No' or 'Abstention'. The German term for this procedure literally means 'ram leap', which Polke interprets as two men leapfrogging. The box second from the right uses one of the pranks attributed to the peasant trickster Till Eulenspiegel to compare political manoeuvring to a tightrope walk, while the corresponding box on the left alludes to the test of strength between government and op-

position as a tug of war. In the final box, Polke shows the Niederwald figure of Germania disappearing among clouds. In this way, he warns of the dangers of utopian political visions, rather as the poet Heinrich Heine mocked his fellow-Germans almost two centuries earlier for feeling more at ease in the 'airy realm of dreams' and the imagination than in the realities of everyday life on 'solid earth'. In the early 1960s, Polke, like Richter, turned his back on Art Informel, the abstract painting



that held sway in Germany at the time, to become a founder of Capitalist Realism. He has since treated all styles and subjects with an irony even greater than Richter's. Polke has painted on cheap blankets, tablecloths and shirts, used paints that alter their appearance as the light changes and incorporated quotations from various fields into his works in a way that challenges the viewer to engage with them on a political, artistic and historical level. He is an inveterate experimenter with techniques. Hence, the illuminated boxes in the Reichstag Building are covered with sheets of prismatic plastic, which creates the impression that the motifs are shifting and overlapping when the viewer moves.



Inscribed panels occupying a space between poetry and philosophy. Carlfriedrich Claus, *Aurora Experimental Space*, 1977/93, photographic film on transparent acrylic panels.

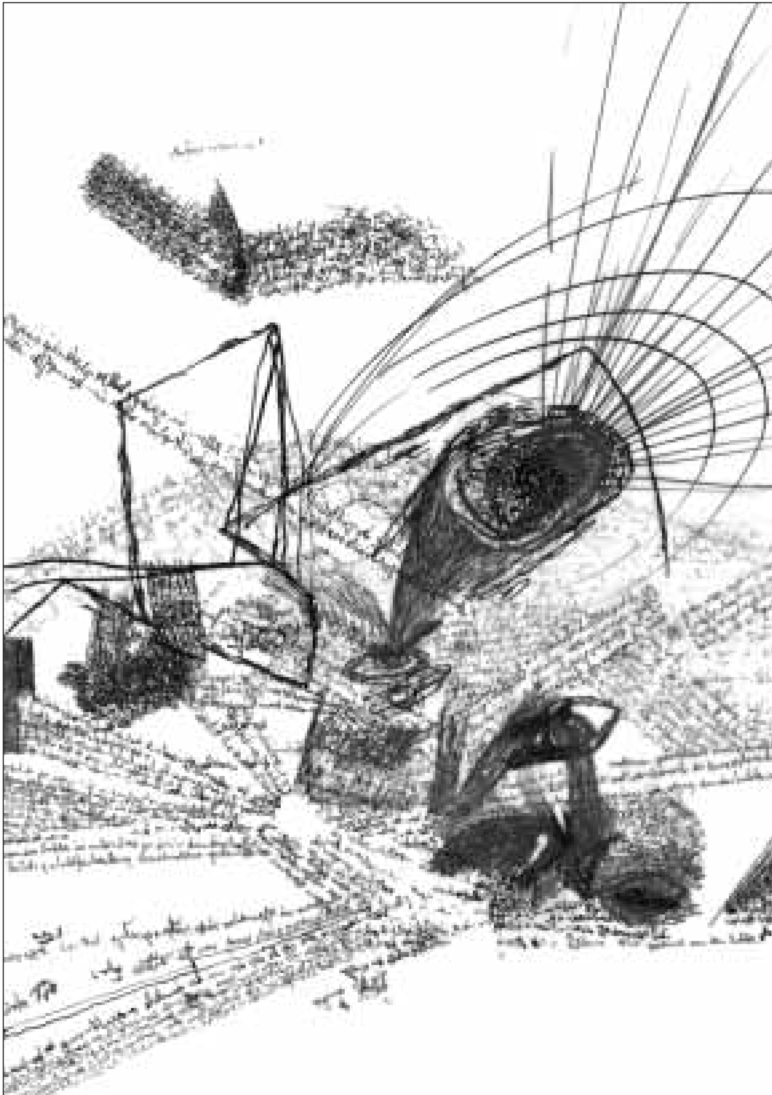
CARLFRIEDRICH CLAUS

Carlfriedrich Claus was born in the town of Annaberg in 1930, and died in Chemnitz in 1998.

Claus was forced into 'inner emigration' in the former GDR. Just before his death, he was able to oversee the installation of his work *Aurora Experimental Space* in front of the Members' lobby at the same height as the visitors' level.

Claus evolved a form of art in which he noted thoughts derived from the cabbala, other forms of mysticism and Marxist philosophy on both sides of pieces of parchment and sheets of glass. The writing contracts and overlaps to form 'inscribed shapes', forms with the character of both writing and visual imagery. These 'language sheets' sometimes embody philosophical thought processes, as when the artist writes a thesis with his right hand on the obverse of a piece of parchment, its antithesis with his left hand on the reverse and both unite in a synthesis when the sheet is viewed against the light.

For the installation in the Reichstag Building, Claus enlarged the works on paper in his *Aurora* series to form images on photographic film, which he mounted on acrylic panels and suspended in space. (Facsimiles of the original *Aurora* pieces are on display in a glass case on the plenary level.) He thus increased the visual interaction among the images: individual panels overlap as many as six times as the viewer moves, generating



Facing page:
Carlfriedrich Claus,
***It is still early political morning,* 1978/82, multimedia, pastels, charcoal and ink on paper.**

This page:
***Language Sheet,* 1998.**

an 'inscribed space' that the artist hoped would involve spectators more intensely in his 'visual notations of tension'.

Although a convinced Communist, Claus antagonised the GDR authorities by adhering resolutely to a mystically utopian form of the ideology that was incompatible with the dogmatic orthodox Marxism propagated by the regime. In *Aurora Experimental Space,* which was intended to announce the dawn of his utopia, he expressed his longing for the 'abolition of alienation from oneself,

Katharina Sieverding, *In Memory of the Members of Parliament in the Weimar Republic who were Persecuted, Outlawed or Murdered between 1933 and 1945*, 1992, enlarged photographs, tables of remembrance, books of remembrance and copper plate (see pp. 260–261).

the world and other people'. Transferred to panels, the 'scriptural poetry' that resulted from the artist's philosophical musings and poetic imaginings took on concrete form as symbols in space. In this way, Claus forged an intensely personal synthesis of poetry, philosophy, mysticism and calligraphy.

KATHARINA SIEVERDING

Katharina Sieverding was born in Prague in 1944, and lives and works in Düsseldorf and Berlin.

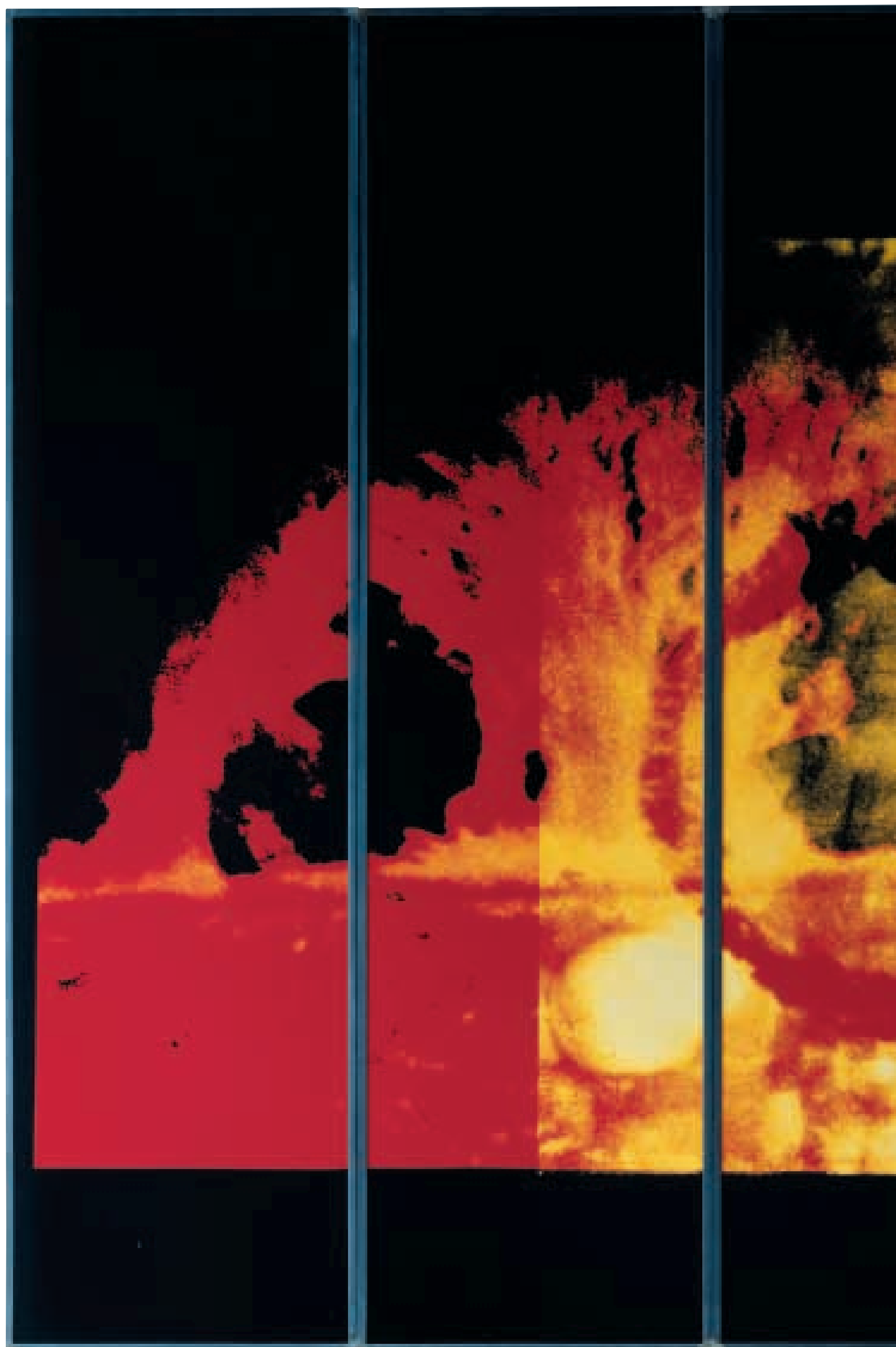
Sierverding's work in memory of members of the Weimar Republic's parliament who were victims of National Socialist persecution was created for the Reichstag Building in 1992. The sun's corona burning in the background of her five-part photopainting generates associa-

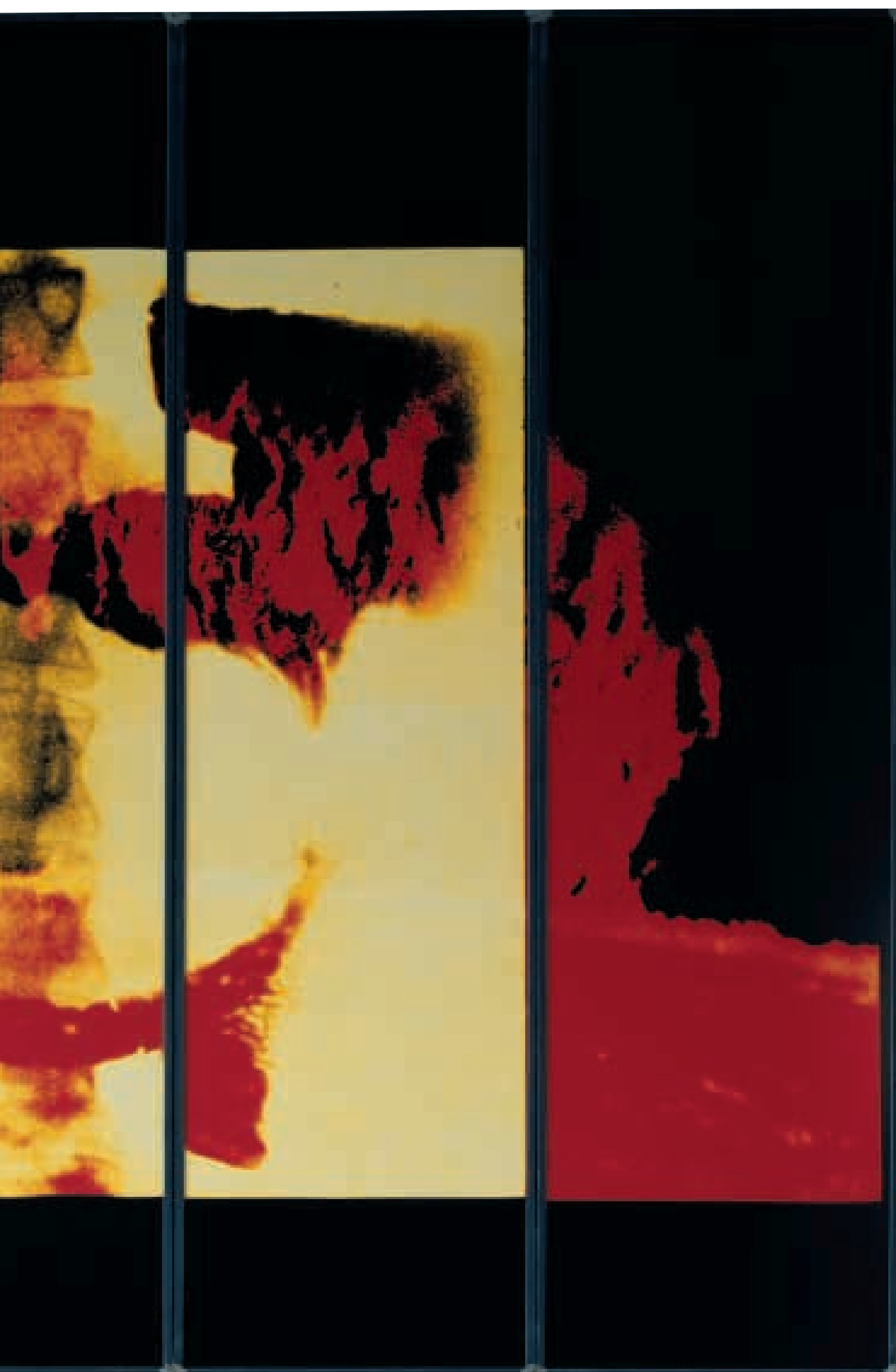
tions with the Reichstag fire of 1933 and the war into which the National Socialists later plunged the world. Yet it might also be interpreted as a purifying fire, a fire from which Germany emerged reborn as a democratic country like a phoenix from the ashes.

Sieverding, who was a pupil of Joseph Beuys at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf, is among the artists who have extended the expressive range of photography. In series focusing on images of herself and role playing scenarios, she has used superimposed images to investigate both her own identity and political and social issues.

In her piece for the Reichstag Building, Sieverding superimposes a yellow X-ray image on a sea of flames. Showing a backbone in the centre and a cancer tumour to the left, the X-ray seems like a portent of death, like a door to a terrifying oven of flames in which organic matter will perish. The backbone – the central motif of the picture – refers metaphorically to the courage of those members of the Reichstag who defied the National Socialists. Their fate is recalled in three books of remembrance placed on wooden tables in front of the memorial. The volume on the central table commemorates each of the 120 parliamentarians who were murdered with a portrait photograph and a short biography. Other members of the Reichstag who were subjected to persecution are remembered in the two remaining books. The contents of the volumes, which were designed by the Düsseldorf artist Klaus Mettig, derive from a research project initiated by the German Bundestag.

In employing the quasi-documentary medium of photography, Sieverding links her image to the historical research embodied in the three books. Her piece fashions a compelling unity from an invocation of the horrors perpetrated by the National Socialist regime, a tribute to its parliamentary victims and a free evocation of the present and future destiny of Germany. The artist has explained that her piece 'draws attention to the insidious beginnings of a so-called "crisis" and sharpens perceptions of its significance for the future.' The door, ambivalent in



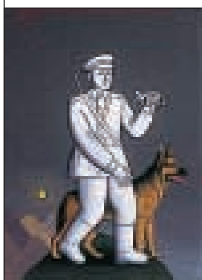


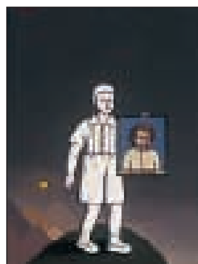
granting access in metaphorical terms both to the past and to the future, makes the flames engulfing it appear as a warning not to take democracy for granted, but to protect it with unceasing vigilance.

GRISHA BRUSKIN

Grisha Bruskin was born in Moscow in 1945, and lives and works in New York.

The title of Bruskin's *Life Above All Else,* which hangs in the Members' club room, evokes the first line of the German national anthem, *'Deutschland über alles'* (Germany above all else). The triptych comments ironically on ideological myths, especially those represented by the sculptures that the authorities in the Soviet Union insisted on erecting at every possible location in what Bruskin has called 'sculpture mania'. Each of the 115 white, schematic figures arranged in five rows resembles a statue. Coloured attributes are their only sign of individuality. Oversize agricultural products, for example, identify



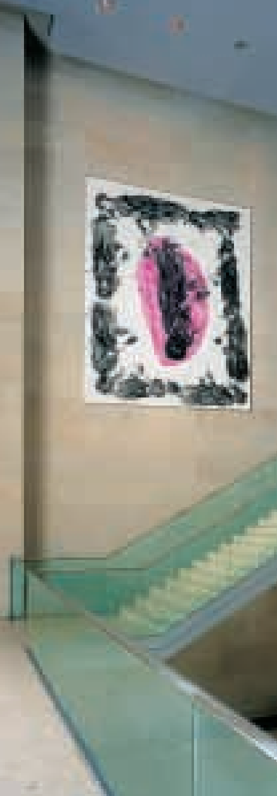


one figure as a peasant woman from a collective farm, while in another case a Soviet soldier bears the insignia of the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR.

After studying at the Art Academy in Moscow, Bruskin embarked on a career as an artist, but the Soviet authorities began denying him permission to show work in public or closing his exhibitions immediately after they had opened. Bruskin therefore moved to New York in 1988. His experience of the Soviet Union before perestroika and the ideological pressures brought to bear on him by a totalitarian regime inform the piece he created for the club room of the Reichstag Building. He took his cue from the sculptures of 'ideal heroes' that figured prominently at crossroads, in parks, on apartment buildings and in cemeteries in Moscow. The two totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century – Communism and National Socialism – shared this use of sculpture as a means of indoctrination and, since the GDR was Communist-ruled, the ties between Russia and Germany were so close that this seemed to Bruskin a suitable subject for a work created by a Russian artist for the building housing the German parliament. His depiction of a Soviet totalitarian myth is intended to prompt German viewers to come to terms with certain aspects of their own country's history.

The Moscow-based Bruskin arranged enigmatic images in rows as if on the iconostasis of an Orthodox church. Grisha Bruskin, *Life Above All Else,* 1999, oil on canvas.

Bruskin's 115 figures have all been made to conform. Each is depicted in front of a uniform landscape illuminated wanly by the moon, without hierarchical distinctions, personal characteristics or a sense of movement. In this way, the artist comments sardonically on the supposedly timeless heroic ideals embodied in the type of sculpture represented by his figures. Each man and woman appears beneath a line of text exhorting Soviet citizens to devote their lives to the greater good of society. The attributes, their colours lending them a greater degree of



realism than the figures, recall those in images of saints – a reference to the way in which secular ersatz religions, including Communism, appropriate the language and imagery of religious belief.

Despite the overall uniformity, each figure tells a story, sometimes ironic, sometimes sad, sometimes political. A Soviet border guard, for instance, carries a post, condemned for all eternity to plant it in the ground at ever more distant frontiers. Another soldier has an Alsatian dog – a 'German shepherd' – to protect him, while a schoolmistress confronts the viewer almost threateningly with Lenin's motto 'Study, study and study again.'

GEORG BASELITZ

Hans-Georg Kern, alias Georg Baselitz, was born in the village of Deutschbaselitz in 1938, and lives and works in southern Germany.

In two large-format canvases on the side walls of the south entrance hall, Baselitz takes his cue from works by the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. Since the late 1960s, Baselitz has depicted his subjects upside down in order to focus the viewer's attention on the formal aspects of his paintings. In the two pictures in the Reichstag Building, he treats motifs derived from woodcuts after Friedrich's *Melancholy*, *The Woman at the Precipice* and *Boy Sleeping on a Grave* in this way, translating them into his own pictorial idiom by applying the paint loosely and transparently. Large areas of the canvas are left blank and some of the colours appear to have been applied like washes. The paintings thus acquire the airiness of watercolours, their transparency and feverish handling counterbalancing the heaviness of the stone architecture. By referring to works by Friedrich in the traditional medium of painting on canvas, Baselitz bridges the gap between the present and the age of Romanticism, so important to Germans in their search for national identity. Both the subject matter and the handling of Baselitz's paintings suggest that he is aware

This page:
A sitting female figure sunk in pensive grief and enclosed within a magenta-coloured cocoon.
Georg Baselitz,
Friedrich's Woman at the Precipice.

Facing page:
Friedrich's Melancholy,
both 1998, oil on canvas.

of the emotional and psychological pitfalls of the Romantic project.

Baselitz studied painting at the College of Fine and Applied Arts in East Berlin, where he became friends with Ralf Winkler (alias A.R. Penck). He was expelled after two semesters on grounds of ‘social and political immaturity’ and in 1957 continued his training in West Berlin. Four years later he produced the first ‘Pandemonium’ manifesto in protest against the Art Informel that then prevailed in West Germany and the decorative formulas of an exhausted Abstract Expressionism. He embraced an intensely emotional type of expressive figurative painting, its grim pathos evoking the artist’s position out on an existential limb, poised between East and West.

Baselitz and his fellow exponents of 'Pathetic Realism' sought to overturn convention by choosing provocative subject matter and, in Baselitz's case, by turning motifs upside down as a means of foregrounding the actual painting and its expressive gestures. His figurative subjects became no more than triggers for expressive brushwork that increasingly took on a life of its own. In 1984, Baselitz began turning repeatedly to motifs derived from the early years of Christianity, when the religious function of the image was discussed with great intensity. He employed this new iconographical context to address issues relating to the content and the message of images. In the 1990s, his own personal history took on greater significance in his work. Yet Baselitz's chief artistic concern remains painting itself.

ULRICH RÜCKRIEM

Ulrich Rückriem was born in Düsseldorf in 1938, and lives and works in Clonegal, Ireland.

The ideas behind Rückriem's two floor sculptures in the south courtyard, and their proportions, comment on and develop the architecture of the site. The artist had two pieces separated from a block of Normandy granite and cut each of them into five slabs. He then arranged the slabs in their original positions and aligned them with the lines of the paving stones on the floor of the courtyard. He had previously mill-cut, ground and polished the slab in the middle, giving it a blue-grey reflecting surface that makes the rusty-grey surrounding slabs appear like the edge of a fountain or well. Rückriem contrasts the dressed stone of Paul Wallot's Reichstag Building with natural, undressed granite and, in doing so, takes one feature of Wallot's architecture a step further: the rustication of the lower courtyard storey, with its irregular, apparently undressed surfaces, gives the impression of rugged naturalness, whereas Rückriem's granite slabs are genuinely natural. At the same time, his sculptures reveal the process of their making: the holes drilled to separate the

pieces of granite from the block can be discerned at the outer edges, while the juxtaposition of dressed and undressed slabs intensifies the material qualities of the granite.

Rückriem trained as a stonemason, finishing his apprenticeship in the workshop responsible for the upkeep of Cologne Cathedral. In the 1960s and 1970s, he acquired a reputation as one of Germany's leading sculptors. Notably rigorous in his approach, Rückriem ceased

A floor relief tailored to the proportions of the southern courtyard. Ulrich Rückriem, *Double Sculpture – Floor Relief,* 1998, Bleu de Vire granite from Normandy cut into five slabs, the central slab cut and polished.

using steel and wood in 1980 to concentrate on stone and, more recently, granite. He is equally radical in his refusal to let his sculpture be interpreted in any but artistic terms, seeing himself as a formalist who creates self-contained works of art that focus on materials and the processes of working them: 'The material, its form, characteristics and proportions influence and circumscribe my creative activity. – Work processes should remain visible and their traces not be erased by subsequent interventions. – My working of the material determines the nature of the object and its relationship to its new surroundings.' The two floor sculptures in the south courtyard of the Reichstag Building embody this approach in characteristically austere fashion, their severity resulting from the artist's exclusive concentration on proportion, the effect of the material and the traces of its working.

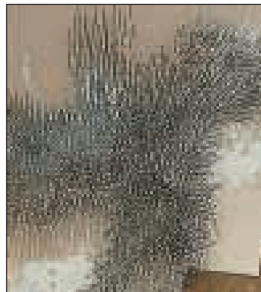
GÜNTHER UECKER

Günther Uecker was born in the village of Wendorf, Mecklenburg, in 1930, and lives and works in Düsseldorf.

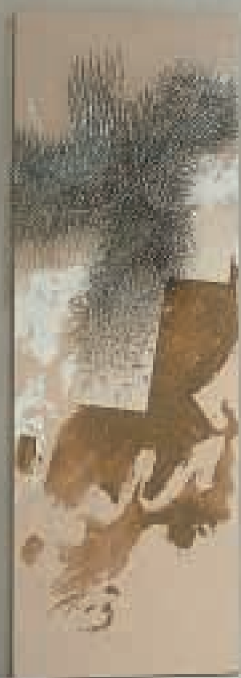
The multi-faith chapel designed by Uecker is the most comprehensive work of art in the Reichstag Building. Taking his cue from theological tradition, the artist made sparing use of architecture and sculpture to create a space that invites meditation and reflection. Uecker erected a screen wall between the windows and the inner area. The opening at one end of the wall admits indirect light into the inner sanctum, an effect that recalls the mystical aura of an early medieval crypt and contrasts strongly with Norman Foster's light-filled architecture elsewhere in the building. The edge of a raised section of floor runs from west to east. Using this line as orientation,

worshippers can face in the direction of Jerusalem or Mecca. In this way, the chapel is embedded in a system of spiritual coordinates established by major world religions, as befits an interconfessional place of worship open to dialogue with other faith traditions. An illuminated display case in the antechamber will eventually contain liturgical implements belonging to various religions.

The simplicity of the space is emphasised by the clear-cut boldness of its furnishings – an altar of sandblasted granite, a number of specially designed chairs and benches, and seven wooden panels leaning against the walls. The panels are not attached to the walls, suggesting that they might be removed at any time and thus giving expression to the unsettled nature of human life on earth. The forms on the panels, generated by nails, paint, sand, ash and stones, invoke basic human experiences and unite to create intensely evocative images. The hundreds of nails that pierce the collaged cross-shapes on the two panels at the far end of the room symbolise the pain caused Christ by disregard for his message of love. At the same time, the nails spread upwards like clouds, detaching themselves from the crosses and hence forming a transition to the Resurrection panel on the right-hand wall. Here, earth seems to have been left behind in a dynamic mass of white-painted nails that appears to thrust outwards. Uecker attended the art academies in Berlin and Düsseldorf, before joining the Zero group in the early 1960s. He had already begun to use nails as his chief material, painting them white and driving them into panels or rotating discs in strict arrangements. He created serial structures in this way and achieved optical kinetic effects through a subtle play of light and shade. Uecker has increasingly used his sculptures, installations and other artistic activities to address



Pages 270–271: Expressive use of sharp-edged stones and nails. Günther Uecker, *Multi-faith Chapel*, 1998/99.



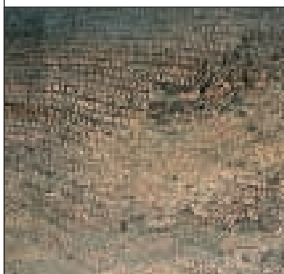
the existential threats to which humanity is exposed in the modern age and to call for greater respect for human values.

ANSELM KIEFER

Anselm Kiefer was born in the town of Donaueschingen in 1945, and lives and works in Barjac, France.

In *Only with wind with time and with sound,* a large-format painting in one of the reception rooms in the Reichstag Building, Kiefer addresses the historical roots of humanity. The picture looks like some archaeological site. In the centre is a huge tower of mud bricks, reminiscent of a Mesopotamian ziggurat. The tower has disintegrated at the sides, where it is barely distinguishable from the ground around it.

The monochrome tones of the painting and its crusty surface, with some areas seemingly burnt, almost suggest that it was created from the same material as the tower. The image is poised between reality and an illusion of reality, its archaeological character intensified by ceramic shards and pieces of paper with writing on embedded in the painted surface. The title, taken from a poem by the Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachmann, is inscribed in the paint at the upper edge.



Bachmann's poem, written in 1957, is titled *Exile* and describes the condition of an exiled German who has no spiritual home outside his native tongue: 'I am a dead wanderer / no longer registered anywhere ... long since done with / and provided with nothing / Only with wind with time and with sound.' The immaterial nature of wind, time and sound is contrasted in Kiefer's painting with the seemingly solid tower, which symbolises worldly might and, like the tower of Babel, the human presumption that seeks to appropriate divine power by construct-

ing boundless utopias. By inscribing the words 'wind', 'time' and 'sound' in the remains of a tower that appears to have decayed over a period of many centuries, the artist indicates that things we may consider permanent are, in the long term, just as evanescent as inherently fleeting phenomena. By extension, human life on earth may be described as a state of exile, our utopian visions resembling nothing so much as a breath of wind, mutable and insubstantial.

Kiefer's period as a student of Joseph Beuys at the Düsseldorf Art Academy had a crucial impact on him, fo-

A work dedicated to the poet Ingeborg Bachmann. Anselm Kiefer, *Only with wind with time and with sound,* 1998, multimedia on canvas.

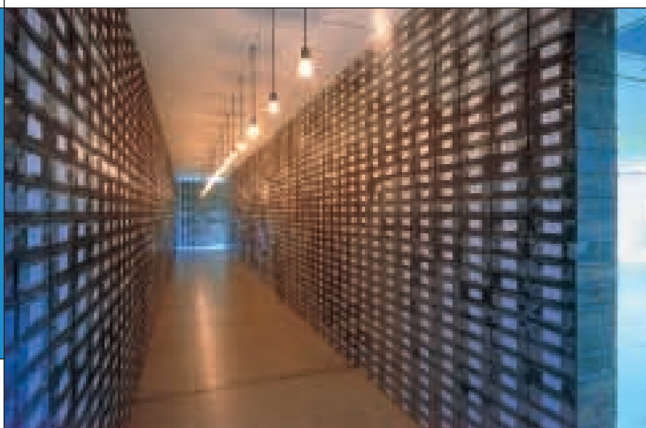
cusing his attention on the historical dimension of all human existence. Incorporating fragments of real objects in his paintings and installations, Kiefer addresses both historical and mythological themes. By representing a ziggurat-type pyramidal structure in his painting in the Reichstag Building, he draws attention to the specific geographical origins of biblical tales. He uses the image of a real or

imaginary archaeological site to induce viewers not only to recognise the transience of their actions and desires, but also to welcome the transitory nature of their existence.

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI

Christian Boltanski was born in Paris in 1944 and lives and works at Malakoff near Paris.

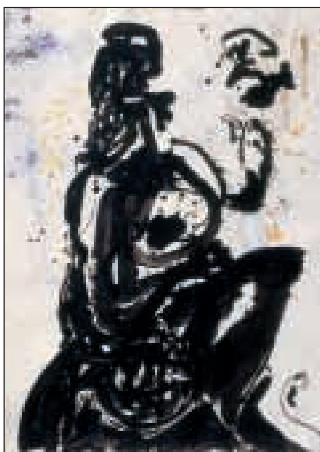
In his work, this French artist examines how we perceive the past. In the basement beneath the east entrance to the Reichstag Building, he created a piece related intimately to the building's function. This *Archive of German*

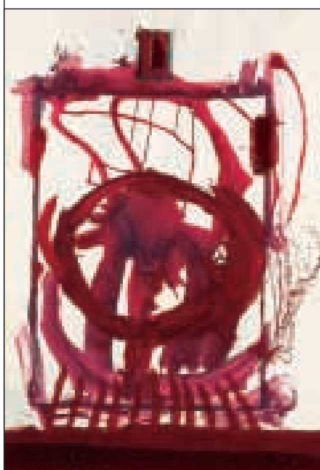


All Germany's parliamentarians are commemorated with equal volumes of space. Christian Boltanski, *Archive of German Members of Parliament*, 1999, metal boxes.

Members of Parliament consists of metal boxes bearing the names of all the democratically elected members of the Reichstag and German Bundestag from 1919 to 1999, the year in which the Reichstag Building was re-inaugurated as the seat of the national parliament. The boxes are stacked ceiling-high in two rows; the narrow passageway between them is dimly lit by naked light bulbs. Inside this 'basement archive', one is enveloped in an atmosphere of quiet seclusion; on the outside, the backs of the rusty boxes form a pattern almost picturesque in its irregularities.

Like walls supporting parliament and its work, the rows of boxes are a compelling symbol of Germany's democratic tradition. The equality of all human beings in





the face of death is expressed in visual terms by the sequences of boxes of identical shape and size. All the members of Germany's parliaments are remembered in the same way, whether they spent only two years on the backbenches or played a more extensive part in guiding the fortunes of their country. There are two exceptions to this rule: black strips bearing the words 'Victim of National Socialism' mark the boxes commemorating those killed by the National Socialists, and halfway along the passage a single black box recalls the years from 1933 to 1945, when the German people were not represented by a democratically elected assembly.

Powerful painterly gestures from an artist who has refused to conform. Strawalde, *Medea* (top left), *Tropic* (bottom left), *29.X.1991* (right), 1991, acrylic, oil, ink, chalk and assemblage on paper.

Boltanski's first installations focused on traces of human lives, including his own childhood. Later, he began using large, coarse-grained black and white photographs to 'reconstruct' fictional biographies consisting of anonymous portrait photographs, mostly of children, mounted on wall panels. In conjunction with light bulbs and lamps, the panels resembled commemorative altars symbolic of transience. Juxtaposing past lives with current remembrance and emphasising the common denominators of human existence (not least through the anonymity of the people depicted), Boltanski draws attention to the equality of each and every one of us in the long-term scheme of things. In his piece for the Reichstag Building, he modified this approach. The names on the boxes record the ex-

istence of each parliamentarian as a historical personage, while the sequences of identical boxes foreground society as a whole, encompassing generation after generation.

STRAWALDE

Jürgen Böttcher, alias Strawalde, was born in the town of Frankenberg in 1931, and lives and works in Berlin.

Böttcher, who calls himself Strawalde after Strahwalde in Upper Lusatia, where he spent much of his childhood and youth, was one of the leading oppositional painters in the GDR. In Dresden, he gathered round him a circle of like-minded spirits, including the painters Ralf Winkler, Peter Herrmann and Peter Graf, who were prevented from exhibiting and harassed in other ways by the GDR authorities. He became a mentor to Winkler, who adopted the pseudonym A.R. Penck and subsequently emigrated to the West. Strawalde was unusual in enjoying success both as a painter and as a film director notable for his documentaries. As a filmmaker too, he constantly came into conflict with the regime and its ideological and aesthetic censors. Many of his films were banned, some being destroyed before their first showing. Initially influenced by Picasso, Strawalde went on to develop an indi-

vidual style that, to this day, encompasses abstraction, gestural brushwork, figurative and surreal elements, paintings executed in impasto and delicately coloured drawings. The artist wishes 'to capture the world in free signs parallel to nature.' The three items selected for the German Chancellor's rooms in the Reichstag Building indicate that Strawalde's work is so wide-ranging in form and content as to defy categorisation in conventional terms. The paintings date from 1991, a time of political and social upheaval in the wake of German reunification. They certainly refer to political developments, but they do this in a free, associative form that makes it difficult to reduce them to particular verbal concepts, as is the case in *Tropic,* a dark red painting enriched with elements of collage. Its German title, *Wendekreis,* contains the word *'Wende'* (turning point), which is commonly used to describe this major event in German history. Quite different in its treatment of colour is *Medea,* its bold strokes of dark paint generating a powerful image of the sorceress of classical mythology. The grotesque procession of figures in the third work, titled *29.X.1991* after the date of its creation, reveals a sense of fun and a vein of whimsical poetry in Strawalde's artistic makeup. Each of these paintings possesses such a vigorous life of its own that the viewer is compelled to absorb them separately, accepting them as images drawn, in Strawalde's words, 'right from the heart of life'.

WALTER STÖHRER

Walter Stöhrer was born in Stuttgart in 1937, and died in Berlin in 2000.

Stöhrer was a pupil of H.A.P. Griesbacher in Stuttgart before moving in 1959 to Berlin, where he developed an individual style, which he called 'intra-psychic realism'. This involves colour applied with dynamic gestures of the brush over written characters and calligraphic signs.

Stöhrer began the example in the Reichstag Building by taking an impression from a plate prepared for dry-

point engraving. To this blue-grey ground he added black writing, small figures and curving lines. Then he covered parts of this underdrawing with passionate strokes of red, orange and other colours. However, these intensely expressive gestures do not obliterate the drawing, which seems to subvert their boldness by suggesting a mysterious abyss behind.

Although Stöhrer remained true to certain aspects of Art Informel to the end of his days, the strong emotions embodied in the eruptions of colour in his work enabled

Mysterious figures behind swirls of colour. Walter Stöhrer, *Untitled*, 1995, drypoint and multimedia on paper.

A panorama of Prussian and German history from Frederick the Great to Otto Lilienthal in the cafeteria. Bernhard Heisig, *Time and Life*, 1998/99, oil on canvas.

him to avoid the trap of slick, repetitive decorativeness. His pictures feature surreal elements along with reminiscences of Art Brut, children's drawings and the art of the mentally ill. Literally underlying the boldly executed brushstrokes, these elements signify a profound inner turmoil lurking beneath the extrovert brilliance of the swathes of colour. In this sense, Stöhrer's works may be interpreted as acts of mental self-assertion, as records of a lifelong battle with the monsters born of the sleep of reason.

BERNHARD HEISIG

Bernhard Heisig was born in Wroclaw (Breslau) in 1925, and lives and works at Strodehne in Brandenburg.

Heisig, a leading representative of the Leipzig School of painting in the GDR, unfolds a disquieting panorama of German history in *Time and Life,* a painting rooted in the Expressionist tradition that can be seen in the cafeteria on the first floor of the Reichstag Building. The motifs, almost bewildering in their abundance, include references to Frederick the Great, the opportunism of fellow travellers who claim only to be doing their duty and Icarus, the hubristic figure from classical mythology who played such a significant part in the art of the GDR. In his painted frieze, Heisig brings to life the perpetrators of crimes, their victims and their hangers-on. In doing so, he ad-

dresses the fundamental problem of individuals living in environments dominated by state violence and indoctrination: how far is it possible for them to lead an ethically justifiable existence in accordance with their personal desires?

The scenes follow one another like a series of film stills, though frequently overlapping. The sequence begins at the left with the colours of the 1848 revolution – black, red and gold – and continues with the eagle of the Prussian coat of arms appearing behind a dying soldier and the pendulum of a large, old-fashioned clock swinging above a stone bust of Bismarck. Further to the right, a human skeleton tries to carry off Frederick the Great while the old king holds the skull of Katte, the friend of his youth who was beheaded by order of Frederick's father. The door of a prison cell next to Frederick recalls this traumatic experience: his father forced him to watch the execution from his cell. The figure of an East European Jew, seen from behind in his caftan, is trapped in the door. His right arm is stretched towards an image of Hitler and a skull beneath a battery of public loudspeakers of the type used by the National Socialists for propaganda purposes. Below this, Heisig makes a visual reference to Felix Nussbaum's *Self-Portrait with Jewish Passport* of 1943, the last self-portrait that Nussbaum painted before his death in a concentration camp. The figure in the centre of the picture, a war invalid exposed as an opportunistic fellow traveller, raises his forefinger in a gesture of self-righteous admonishment, while a brilliant red clock next to him gives the time as five minutes to twelve.

To the right of the clock appear the pelican, framed in green, from the coat of arms of the Cathedral Chapter of St Peter's in Bautzen (the site of a battle at which

Napoleon defeated Prussia); a pair of lovers; the statue at Stendal of Charlemagne's knight Roland holding the coat of arms of Brandenburg; and, at the lower edge of the painting, a self-portrait of the artist. Otto Lilienthal's flying machine – depicted in the top right-hand corner of the picture – crashed only a few kilometres from the spot where Heisig lives in Brandenburg. Lilienthal's fate recalls the myth of Icarus, which for many artists in the GDR symbolised the failure of the Communist utopia and their own longing for freedom. Beneath Lilienthal's aeroplane, Heisig closes his disturbing sequence of historical subjects with an image of hope. The boy clutching a pink kite in a green field recalls the line 'let your kite fly' from a song by the GDR rock band Puhdys and expresses a desire to see the aberrations of German history now overcome.

JENNY HOLZER

Holzer draws on significant speeches given in the Reichstag and Bundestag to reflect literally and metaphorically on German parliamentary history. Jenny Holzer, *Installation for the Reichstag Building*, 1999, steel stele with electronically controlled moving text.

Jenny Holzer was born in 1950 in Gallipolis, Ohio, and lives and works in Hoosick Falls, New York.

The American artist Jenny Holzer installed a stele with digital LED strips along its sides in the north entrance hall of the Reichstag Building. The texts of speeches by Members of the Reichstag and the German Bundestag flow up the LED strips, with interruptions from other parliamentarians indicated by flashing letters. The speeches, which were selected by the artist and combined into thematic blocks, had originally been delivered during a period that begins in 1871, the year the German Empire was established, and ends in April 1999, when the Reichstag Building was reopened following its refurbishment by the British architect Norman Foster. The artist arranged 447 speeches and debate contributions end to end so that they run uninterrupted without repetition for about 20 days. There are always four different speeches moving along the four sides of the pillar at any one time, all dealing with the same topic. In consequence, the north entrance hall of the German parliament has become the

ORLAGEN HIER IM REICHSTAG ES VIEL SCHWIERIGER IST ZU EINEM NACH AL

scene of a never-ending discussion. By making this possible, Jenny Holzer's work provides a vivid demonstration of the truth that there cannot be just one side or just one standpoint in a parliamentary democracy.

The parliamentary speeches rising up to the middle of the ceiling on the stele form a symbolic pillar supporting parliament as a house of political speech (from the French parler, 'to speak'). The impact of the LED stele is particularly impressive at night, when the edges of the pillar are no longer visible in the darkness and the glowing words of the speeches seem to bear the vaulted ceiling on their own. At the same time, they are reflected many times over, fractured in the glass walls of the north entrance hall. In this piece, Jenny Holzer has found a visually powerful way of exploiting her distinctive artistic means of expression to reflect, both literally and metaphorically, the essence and history of parliamentarism in Germany.

The American installation artist began her artistic career with texts and essays. In 1977, she started displaying what she called 'truisms' (such as 'any surplus is immoral' or 'politics serves personal interests'), which were printed as posters, painted on house walls or erected as neon signs. In an environment dominated by advertising texts and other visual signals, these laconic messages prompt the viewer to pause and reflect. She intensified this approach in the creation of complex language-based installations, which link together visual forms that relate to specific pieces of architecture and statements about social policy, as at the American Pavilion during the 1990 Venice Biennale or the New National Gallery in Berlin since 2001. For other projects, by contrast, she has used powerful xenon lamps to project her words onto historic monuments and buildings, such as the Battle of Nations Memorial at Leipzig or the Kaiserpfalz Imperial Palace in Goslar, literally putting these heritage sites in a new light. They become vehicles for her contemporary messages while, paradoxically, the way they are illuminated enables them to regain the charismatic power they once possessed as symbolic, representative structures of their

age. In all these projects, the artist responds with her texts to the specific historical and political contexts of the locations where her works are placed. In the Reichstag Building, she engages with the past of this historic structure in a comparable way, simultaneously lending it a new relevance through the recently established medium of moving LED text. With this modern technique, Jenny Holzer consciously exploits a mode of communication her contemporaries are familiar with from their daily environment, from railway stations, from the stock market news, from trains and buses, from advertising. On the one hand, therefore, Jenny Holzer's work is certainly critical of the media, since it urges us not to let the daily messages of advertising influence us without some analysis. Yet, on the other hand, she is also arguing for the recognition of new forms of communication, which, as an artist, she deploys to convey her own ideas as effectively as possible.

Haacke's work sparked a major controversy. Hans *Haacke, To the Population,* 1999/2000, neon lights, soil, webcam.

HANS HAACKE

Hans Haacke was born in Cologne in 1936, and lives and works in New York.

Haacke's installation *To the Population* is the most recent addition to the works of art in the Reichstag Building. At the invitation of the Art Council of the German Bundestag, the artist drew up a proposal for the north courtyard that involved marking off a large area with pieces of wood and filling it with earth brought by members of parliament from their constituencies. In the middle of this wild biotope, which was

to be left untended, Haacke wished to place the words *'Der Bevölkerung'* (To the Population) in neon lettering like that designed by Peter Behrens which had been used in 1916 for the inscription *'Dem Deutschen Volke'* (To the German People) over the main entrance to the building.

Haacke's project was hotly debated inside and outside parliament. The controversy revolved around the phrase 'To the Population'. Some felt that it represented a 'correction' of the inscription above the west portal and therefore undermined certain fundamental constitutional tenets of the Federal Republic of Germany. Others found that the words extended the earlier inscription's meaning in a thoroughly legitimate, thought-provoking way. The German Bundestag voted by a narrow majority in favour of Haacke's work, which was installed in September 2000. Since then, Members of the German Bundestag have filled it with earth from their constituencies, either on their own or together with citizens they represent who have come to visit the Reichstag Building. When they do this, they talk about where the earth came from and discuss its place in the history and economy of the constituency. A webcam set up in the courtyard enables the visitors to find out what has grown in 'their' patch of earth by consulting www.derbevoelkerung.de. This website affords everyone access to the courtyard in the Reichstag Building.

In the 1960s, Haacke moved to New York, where he teaches at the Cooper Union, one of the most respected art schools in the USA. Since the early years of that decade, he has devised types of Process Art intended to reveal the structures underlying physical, biological and social developments. Haacke's installations therefore relate directly to their political, social and cultural environment, engaging the viewer in a dialogue that is a constituent part of the artwork. It does not matter whether reactions are positive or negative: Haacke's aim is to elicit responses, making viewers participate in a piece by thinking about it.

This is the purpose of the words in his installation at the Reichstag Building: by setting up a relationship with the inscription above the west entrance, Haacke encourages discussion of the role of parliament and how the German Bundestag understands its purpose. In addition, by calling on Members to fill the installation with earth, he makes reference to human responsibility towards the natural environment. Earth is a token of human mortality and, as such, reminds us that we are all equal in the face of death. At the same time, the fact that the kinds of veg-

To date, about 100 different plant species and 20 animal species have established themselves in Haacke's installation.

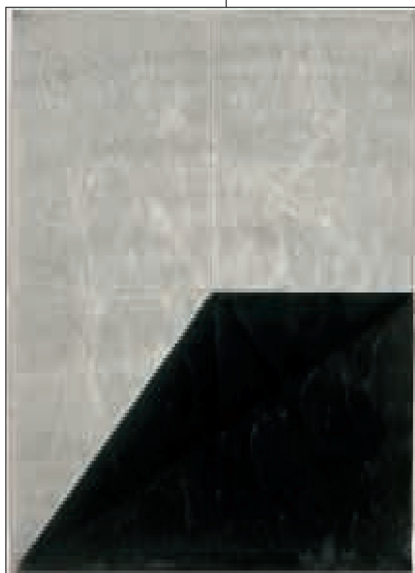
etation brought forth by the earth added to the installation cannot be determined beforehand draws attention to the limits attendant on technological and political activity. In this way, unbridled vegetative growth forms a living contrast both to Norman Foster's high-tech remodelling of the Reichstag Building and to the stone architecture of the original courtyard. The mixing of earth from every constituency in Germany serves to underline the bonds existing between the country's regions and to emphasise that the issues addressed in parliament are of equal concern to all citizens.

HERMANN GLÖCKNER

Hermann Glöckner was born at Cotta, near Dresden, in 1889, and died in Berlin in 1987.

The three works by Glöckner on display in the glass case outside the plenary chamber are entirely self-sufficient. Rather than depicting some aspect of the world outside themselves, they constitute their own reality: the image and what it represents are identical. These are typical examples of Concrete Art. They are concrete in the sense that the geometrical shapes formed by the lines are the product of real, 'concrete', actions – the folding of the paper – that are traceable in the works themselves. The folds are at once witnesses to the actions and their results. Glöckner's art is exceptionally rigorous in its aus-

terity. He arrived at his characteristic style in the mid-1930s with his *Foldings,* works of a pure, autonomous geometry that he had developed from his early imagery, which consisted of geometrical forms derived from the play of light and shade on roofs, façades, chimneys and pylons. From that point on, Glöckner devoted himself to exploring in both two and three dimensions the endless



Facing page:
Hermann Glöckner, *Wedge,* 1974, work on paper.

This page, top:
Perforation, 1965/92, corten steel, installed in front of the former plenary area in Bonn.

This page, bottom left:
Black Rhombus, 1969, work on paper.

This page, bottom right:
Black Wedge, 1980, work on paper.

variety of folded and fractured shapes, investigating the secret harmonies governing the interplay of colour, line and matter on surfaces. Such work, determined exclusively by aesthetic considerations, was bound to fall foul of totalitarian regimes. Neither the National Socialists nor the Communist authorities in the GDR could harness it to their ideological purposes, and Glöckner was therefore denied official recognition during his lifetime. The German Bundestag acknowledged his achievement shortly after reunification by having one of his unrealised designs executed posthumously in three dimensions and installed in front of the plenary building in Bonn.

GERHARD ALTENBOURG

Gerhard Ströch, alias Gerhard Altenbourg, was born in Rödichen-Schnepfenthal in Thuringia in 1926, and died in Altenburg in 1989.

Inner emigration under pressure from the GDR regime.
Gerhard Altenbourg, *Large Landscape,* 1953, Chinese ink and watercolour on paper.

In *Large Landscape,* Altenbourg took his cue from the subtle, analytical style of drawing practised by Paul Klee and Alfred Kubin. In early works such as this, he placed networks of fine lines and delicate washes of colour over and next to one another, contrasting areas that consist of a dense undergrowth of lines with more open sections that contain pale colours and/or uniform washes and thus convey a sense of breadth and depth. These lyrical, meditative works were addressed to a small circle of friends and collectors and, as such, reflected the human and artistic situation of a non-conformist in the GDR. Altenbourg belonged among those artists who refused to accommodate themselves or their work to state control of the arts and were thus forced into ‘inner emigration’. In the 1950s, when the ‘formalism debate’ in the GDR resulted in an attempt by the Communist authorities to enforce Socialist Realism as the only valid artistic style, Altenbourg showed his first delicately poetic works on paper at a number of small exhibitions in the West. Critics in the Federal Republic of Germany soon acknowledged his outstanding achievement, counting him among

the most important members of the oppositional art scene in the GDR. As a consequence, the GDR authorities subjected him to months of interrogations and threats. Hence, although his work was represented in the Federal Republic of Germany at the prestigious *documenta II* exhibition of 1959 in Kassel, in the GDR he was practically forbidden from showing his work in public, a ban broken only occasionally by courageous museum directors. Recognition eventually came to him in the GDR in the 1980s, when his official rehabilitation culminated in a major retrospective held in 1987 at the National Gallery in East Berlin. Not until 1990, however – one year after the

artist's death – did the GDR's Deputy Minister of Culture announce publicly that the GDR should 'admit its guilt' for making Altenbourg live in 'a spiritual and artistic prison'.

JOSEPH BEUYS

Joseph Beuys was born in the city of Krefeld in 1921, and died in Düsseldorf in 1986.

Beuys is generally recognised as one of the most important artists of our age. His outstanding significance lies in the fact that he propagated a synthesis of life and art and, with the courageous tenacity of an outsider, succeeded in attaining that ideal in his career. Beuys's training and practice as a sculptor prepared him for the development of 'social sculpture'. This concept necessarily entailed the artist involving himself in politics, which he understood as just one component of an all-encompassing notion of art. Realising this notion, which was his prime aim, meant liberating the creative energy contained in every human being. This would grant people the requisite maturity to behave responsibly towards their environment and actively shape history.

Joseph Beuys, *Table with Battery,* 1958/85, bronze and copper, cast 1/4, on loan.

Such a view of the world and humanity naturally had little to do with the day-to-day reality of politics, but this did not prevent Beuys from standing for the German Bundestag in 1976. The Art Council of the German Bundestag was therefore especially keen to include a work by this artist in the Reichstag Building, despite his well-known reservations about parliamentary democracy.

Beuys's bronze sculpture outside the plenary chamber in the Reichstag Building unites many strands of his work. The table, battery and balls (originally made of earth) are everyday objects – 'poor' materials long considered unworthy of attention from artists and museums. Harnessing the immediacy and symbolic force they pos-

sess by reason of their familiarity, Beuys generates a process of intuitive association in the spectator that acquaints him or her with the artist's attitudes to transmission and reception and the flow and storage of energy. Beuys was motivated by a strong sense of mission when devising his sculptures. As he put it in 1977: 'I've found ... that material can be used to express extraordinary things, things of fundamental importance to the whole world ... Or, to put it another way: the whole world depends on the arrangement of a few bits of material.'

MARKUS LÜPERTZ

Markus Lüpertz was born in Liberec in Bohemia in 1941, and lives and works in Düsseldorf and Berlin.

Lüpertz's *1840* is let into the south wall of the Members' restaurant on the plenary level. Combining motifs from works created by the English artist Joseph Mallord William Turner on his trip down the Rhine in 1840 with imagery derived from his own early work, Lüpertz constructs an imaginary bridge between the Rhine and the River Spree, which flows close to the Reichstag Building.

The date of the painting's title refers not only to Turner's journey, but also to a crucial phase in the establishment of Germany as a nation state: around this time Prussia, which was to unite Germany under its leadership some thirty years later, for the first time took a decisive part in the country's defence, warding off further French expansion across the Rhine. Lüpertz belongs among the artists who began their careers at a time when Western Europe was dominated by the abstract art emanating from New York and Paris. He soon left Düsseldorf for Berlin, where opposition to abstraction was beginning to make itself felt, not least as a result of influences from Eastern Europe. In 1962, he threw in his lot with the exponents of 'Pathetic Realism' by proclaiming himself a representative of 'dithyrambic painting'. The term 'dithyramb' denotes a hymn associated with the cult of

Dionysus, the god of wine and ecstasy in Ancient Greece, and links Lüpertz's art with the late poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche. Expressing himself in such intensely emotional terms encouraged the artist to believe in the success of his revolt against abstraction, and it can scarcely be accidental that a comparable pathos informs the 'Pandemonium' manifestos, which Georg Baselitz produced in a similar spirit at this time. The two rebels first exhibited together at the self-help gallery Großgörschen 35 in Berlin. At this stage, Lüpertz was painting everyday objects in a style notable for powerful volumes and energetic brushwork. However, the painting remained dominant as an autonomous element in these works so that the 'how' took precedence over the 'what' of the images. Around 1970, he

References to Joseph Mallord William Turner's journey along the Rhine in 1840.
Markus Lüpertz, *1840*, 1999, oil on canvas.

turned to motifs drawn from recent German history. In the cycle of paintings *Black-Red-Gold-Dithyrambic,* for instance, he combined the image of a German army helmet dating from the National Socialist period with that of a gun carriage to form an allegory of war reminiscent of monumental Baroque sculpture. In his painting for the Reichstag Building, Lüpertz included a collage of motifs and painting styles derived from his earlier work, overlapping the individual examples or placing them behind grids. In this way, he created a multi-layered image reflecting both German history and developments in the attitudes towards that history embodied in German painting.

WOLFGANG MATTHEUER

Wolfgang Mattheuer was born in Reichenbach in the Vogtland in 1927, and died in Leipzig in 2004.

Along with Bernhard Heisig and Werner Tübke, Mattheuer was one of the leading representatives of the

Leipzig School of painting in the former GDR. His style combines elements derived from the New Objectivity of the 1920s and early 1930s with surreal imagery that could be read as a critical commentary on political reality in the GDR. The oblique subtlety of this imagery avoided provocation, enabling Mattheuer to criticise the empty pathos of official pronouncements in a way intelligible to the rest of the population but not so obvious as to make him a target for attacks by state functionaries.

The two paintings by Mattheuer purchased for the Reichstag Building address issues that preoccupied people in the GDR in 1989. *The One and the Others I* deals with the isolation of those who, in desiring to lead their own lives, come into conflict with the community, which may have quite legitimate claims on them. *Panic II* likewise examines the relationship between individuals and their community. However much these paintings refer to a situation in a specific place at a specific time, the questions they raise concerning the balance of claims between the individual and society are of timeless significance.

Meditations on the events of autumn 1989. Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Panic II* (facing page), *The One and the Others I* (this page), both 1989, oil on wood.

RUPPRECHT GEIGER

Rupprecht Geiger was born in Munich in 1908, and lives and works in his hometown.

In producing a work for one of the protocol rooms, Geiger was faced with the same problem as Georg Karl Pfahler in the chamber of the Council of Elders: two-thirds of the walls in both rooms are covered with bright blue panelling. Pfahler chose to let his coloured objects encroach on the panels. Geiger, on the other hand, pushed the blue of the panelling into the background with the vitality of his brilliant orange-and-red frieze painted above it.

Geiger is another of those artists who succeeded in overcoming the all-pervading influence of Art Informel in the 1950s. He had already focused on colour, which he called a 'basic element of painting', before 1945. Interestingly, it was while painting his first landscapes in water-colour in Russia that he discovered the elemental force of colour: 'The sea of colour produced there by the pure con-

A strong contrast between Geiger's vivid colours and the blue wooden panelling. Rupprecht Geiger, *Red 2000, 875/99,* 1999, acrylic on canvas.

tinental air, especially in the morning and the evening, when the sky tones spread upwards with incredible breadth, was perhaps the single experience that was most formative and had most lasting influence.' Such experiences led Geiger to engage in an almost obsessive study of colour and its effects. He himself stated: 'I'm preoccupied with colour, with colour alone and how it is perceived.' Revealing colour's intrinsic characteristics entailed releasing it from its descriptive function.

Hence, Geiger rigorously explored ways of isolating colour from such 'external interference'. He experimented with shaped canvases, adapting the form of the picture plane to the image rather than forcing the image to accommodate itself to a rectangular picture plane. He investigated various sequences of motifs, ranging from surreal landscapes to abstract shapes, before arriving at three basic forms that best suited his purpose: the rectangle, the circle and the ellipse. Geiger explains: 'The variety of abstract forms with their often bizarre outlines distracts attention from the colour, whereas such archetypal shapes as the rectangle and the circle allow colour to unfold un-

hindered.' He reduces the formal qualities of these shapes, their geometrical severity, by spraying the paint onto the picture plane to blur their contours. The artist further dematerialises every aspect of his canvases apart from their colour by using fluorescent colours, which he describes as 'abstract' because they do not occur in nature. These paints help Geiger to release colour from the constraints of its physical support – the canvas – and make of works such as the frieze in the Reichstag Building an immaterial coloured space radiating towards the viewer.

GOTTHARD GRAUBNER

Gotthard Graubner was born in the village of Erlbach in 1930 and lives and works in Düsseldorf.

The appearance of the protocol and conference rooms on the second floor of the Reichstag Building is dominated by the colours the Danish designer Per Arnoldi selected to decorate the wooden panelling installed by Norman Foster. Hence, artists were chosen to create works of art for these rooms who focus on colour as an autonomous means

Gotthard Graubner, *... rose-fingered Eos awakes ...*, 1998/99, colour-space body, multimedia on canvass.

of expression. They include Graubner, who in his painting examines the interplay of various shades of colour in conjunction with the smooth gradations of light across the surface of a padded cushion.

By about 1960, colour had degenerated into a decorative appurtenance in the dominant post-war styles, American Abstract Expressionism and French Art Informel. Graubner was among the artists at this time who sought to reinstate the elemental power of colour by examining its intrinsic qualities.

He started by using sponge pads to apply paint to the paper or canvas as a convenient way of producing layers. In doing so, he discovered that a sponge soaked in paint acquired a character of its own as a 'coloured body' that generated subtle spatial effects. Hence, from 1960 on, he took what had originally been a tool and made it the basis of independent works of art. These 'cushion pic-

tures' consist of paint applied to many layers of absorbent cotton wool, foam rubber and synthetic fabric contained within a covering. Calling them 'colour-space bodies', the artist increased the size of these padded works from small beginnings to the monumental format of the examples he created for the main hall of Bellevue Palace, the official residence of the German Federal President.

In a sense, Graubner's three-dimensional colour painting in the protocol room on the second floor of the Reichstag Building represents the culmination of a tradition initiated by Claude Monet in the images of water lilies that he painted in his garden at Giverny. The pure appearance of colour 'as such' has achieved complete autonomy in Graubner's work. No longer pointing to anything outside itself, it invades space. And such is the size of the room that it seems almost to invite occupation by such a mass of colour. The effect of the painting is nonetheless subtle, created as it is by colours showing through from the lower layers and the various gradations of light on the curved surface. This subtlety is echoed by the piece's poetic title, which is redolent with the promise of morning, *... rose-fingered Eos awakes...*

GEORG KARL PFAHLER

Georg Karl Pfahler was born in the village of Emetzheim in 1926 and died there in 2002.

Pfahler created works for the conference room of one of the most important parliamentary bodies, the Council of Elders. Continuing his series of 'Espan' paintings, and making clever use of optical illusion, he constructed a sequence of coloured rectangles that appear to tumble down the walls, almost dancing over the blue panelling at the bottom. With sovereign command of his means, the artist met the challenge represented by the strong blue of the panels by devising a colour scheme based on the harmony and contrast of various hues, their overlapping and their development in sequences. Pfahler, an artist with a specifically south-German slant, successfully added a

note of festive gaiety to the interior of the Reichstag Building. Like Gotthard Graubner, Pfahler achieved a personal style in opposition to the prevailing Art Informel of the 1950s. He soon abandoned the Tachisme of his early work with its clearly visible brushstrokes to embrace a highly individual combination of geometrical areas of pure colour and illusionistic three-dimensional effects. In countless series of works, he explored the spatial dimension of colour, often achieving a sense of space by overlapping the coloured shapes in his paintings, prints and drawings in such a way that they appear to burst from the picture plane and interact with the surrounding space.

It was only logical that, having espoused this artistic approach, Pfahler should have moved from realising it in the form of individual paintings, prints and drawings to creating entire coloured environments. In these works – one of which attracted international attention at the Venice Biennale in 1970 – the artist examined the interplay between colour and space in three dimensions, investigating how colour can engender a feeling of space and how it can change perceptions of existing spaces. With his coloured spaces, Pfahler sought to escape the limitations of art in museums, producing public pieces that would extend the audience for his work beyond the confines of the art world. His pavilions, begun in 1978, embody his theories about colour and space in condensed form and eventually gave rise to the 'Palaver Houses', colour-space objects conceived as places of communication. Nothing could have prepared the artist better for his task of producing paintings for the conference room of the Council of Elders, a body that could be said to encapsulate the work of parliament in a nutshell. Pfahler met this challenge with a compelling mixture of carefree gaiety and intense seriousness, uniting the two to create a space in which the political art of communication can flourish.

Pages 304-305:
Georg Karl Pfahler, *Colour-Space Object*, 1998/99, acrylic on wood.

EMIL SCHUMACHER

Emil Schumacher was born in the city of Hagen in 1912, and died on Ibiza in 1999.

Like Rupprecht Geiger and Georg Karl Pfahler, Schumacher had to contend with the powerful blue that Per Arnoldi chose for Norman Foster's panelling in rooms on the second floor of the Reichstag Building. In one of

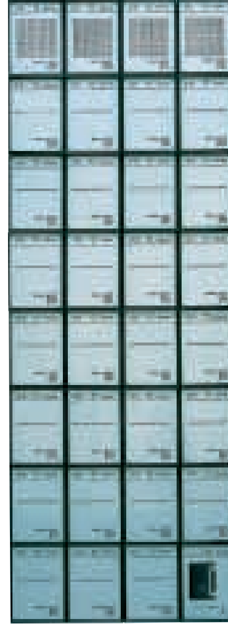
Looking back on a rich artistic life.
Emil Schumacher,
Stages and Times, I-IV,
1999, oil and acrylic on aluminium.

the last works he completed before his death, the artist responded to this challenge by applying paint to his aluminium supports in a series of bold, feverish gestures to produce starkly expressive lines. Their wildness is held in check by the air of almost casual virtuosity created by the transparency and the cool elegance of the images.

The artists chosen to contribute pieces to the second floor of the Reichstag Building focus in their work on

colour as an autonomous means of expression. Since all four are exceptionally strong artistic personalities, their paintings in the building enable most instructive comparisons to be made among radical explorations of the expressive power of colour. Unlike Geiger, Graubner and Pfahler, Schumacher employs colour in a gestural, overtly expressive manner. He developed his characteristically archaic imagery while a member of Zen, an artists' group founded in Munich in 1949. This imagery unites delicately drawn lines – a break with the tradition of calligraphic gestures in Art Informel – and mythical written characters, in a kind of graphic shorthand vaguely reminiscent of cave paintings. The artist inscribes these signs in the crust of the impasto surfaces of his pictures, which, like ur-landscapes formed by lava, seem to embody the primordial forces of nature. Schumacher's special achievement lay in the fact that, ignoring all prevailing artistic trends and fashions, he adhered to this style for the rest

of his life without ever falling into slick repetitiveness or showing any other signs of dwindling creativity. To the end, his works retained the rigorous austerity informed by intense vitality that grant them a presence so elemental they appear to have been created by nature rather than human hands.



1997 celebrated as a 'European year' with sequences of numerals handwritten on 32 sheets for each month. Hanne Darboven, *12 Months, Work for Europe,* 1998, pen and collage on vellum.

In the four-part work in the Reichstag Building, entitled *Stations and Times,* Schumacher trusts in this elemental power to draw attention away from the blue panelling. Abandoning the thick crust characteristic of many of his pictures, he chose to paint directly on sheets of aluminium. Like paper, this support encourages light strokes of the brush and makes them appear especially transparent because it reflects the light. An ascending movement in the first painting is echoed by the descending lines of the last two, tying together the four 'stations' of the title in a single sequence. Cipher-like forms hint at animals, human figures and landscapes. As the title suggests, the spiritual aura generated by the transparency of the images and the airy elegance of their lines is that of a summation: the four-part cycle in the style of his old age is Schumacher's artistic legacy.

HANNE DARBOVEN

Hanne Darboven was born in Munich in 1941, and lives and works in Hamburg.

In her *12 Months, Work for Europe,* installed in the lobby and press room of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, Darboven commemorates 1997 as a 'European

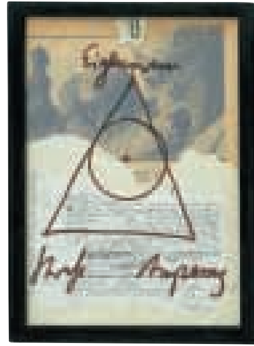
year' that represented a crucial stage in the development of the European Union.

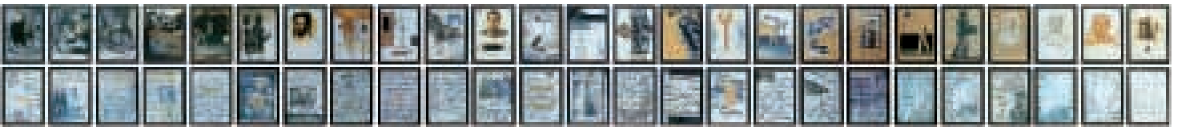
The days of the year are commemorated by sheets of paper arranged on twelve panels. Every day, the artist noted the date in numerical form on each framed sheet in an identical way. Hence, although the personal, handwritten character of the dates is preserved when the work is seen from a distance and the numbers are no longer legible, the overall appearance is that of a regular, rhythmic sequence. This regularity is underscored by the arrangement of the sheets in groups of thirty-two on twelve vertical panels, one for each month. Darboven filled the excess areas on each panel with collages of photographs featuring the symbol of the European Union as it is printed on car registration plates. Darboven's piece is a contemplation on time, a phenomenon difficult to represent in visual terms. Forcing herself to experience the passage of time in the meditative, disciplined act of writing down the date each day, the artist appropriated this experience of time and made it perceptible to the viewer in the form of a temporal grid resembling musical notation. 1997 was not only the 'European Year against Racism', but also the year in which the fifteen foreign ministers of the member states of the European Union signed the Amsterdam Treaty on 2 October. Particularly in the context of these rooms, in which long-term political concepts are presented to the press, Darboven's reflection on the philosophical and historical dimensions of time forges a link between art and politics.

Lutz Dammbeck, *Hercules Notes,* 1987/90, assemblage, photocopies, ink, pencil and soil on paper.

LUTZ DAMMBECK

Lutz Dammbeck was born in Leipzig in 1948, and lives and works in Hamburg.





Dammbeck's *Hercules Notes* was created for the third floor of the Reichstag Building, which is reserved for the parliamentary groups and the press. Consisting of a large number of collages of photocopies partly drawn over by the artist, the work critically examines attempts to force people into ideological conformity and shape them in accordance with prescribed ideals.

Like Jürgen Böttcher, Dammbeck has produced notable films of a semi-artistic, semi-documentary nature. In the film *'Zeit der Götter'* (Age of the Gods), he investigated the ideal human being of the Third Reich as propagated in the art of Arno Breker. In addressing related issues, *Hercules Notes* focuses on the eternal conflict between the conditioning and disciplining of the individual by society and the courage required to resist such forces and preserve human integrity. The artist holds up Sophie Scholl of the White Rose resistance group during the Third Reich as an exemplary instance of individual opposition to the kind of inhumanity inherent in the attempts made by the National Socialist and Communist regimes to create a 'new human being'. Dammbeck extends the

An *avant garde* provocation from the 1930s. Otto Freundlich, *Architectural Sculpture,* 1934/35, bronze, cast 3/6, on loan.

scope of his work with references to current debates about the ethics of genetic manipulation.

OTTO FREUNDLICH

Otto Freundlich was born in the town of Stolp, Pomerania, in 1878 and was killed at Majdanek concentration camp near Lublin, Poland, in 1943.

Freundlich originally intended his *Architectural Sculpture* of 1934-35 to be enlarged to a height of 20 or 30 metres. Although consisting of abstract geometrical elements, the piece hints at actual objects, including a column, a helmet, a torso and an archaic throne. A number of forms, some rounded, some angular, appear in front of a large tapering column. The firm, compact shape of the column conveys a feeling of repose, while the smaller sculpture in front opens up towards the viewer in a series of contrasts of light and shade expressive of agitation. Freundlich, active as both a painter and a sculptor, was a pioneer of abstract art who achieved a notably personal idiom in his sculpture. His political and artistic sympathies brought him into conflict with the National Socialist regime: his 1912 sculpture *The New Human Being* appeared on the cover of the booklet published to accompany the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition of 1937 and he was eventually among the many murdered at Majdanek concentration camp. Freundlich's fate and the fact that his qualities as a human being and an artist are still insufficiently recognised may be regarded as representative for the sufferings of the Jews and many avant garde artists during the Third Reich.

CHRISTO

Christo was born in the town of Gabrovo, Bulgaria, in 1935 and lives and works in New York.

A study made by Christo in 1986 in connection with his *Wrapped Reichstag* project is displayed in the rooftop restaurant of the Reichstag Building. The Berlin Wall can

be seen in the foreground. Looking at the study with its muted colouring, one recalls that Christo and his wife, Jeanne-Claude, spent more than two decades drumming up support for the project before the German Bundestag finally voted in its favour in a plenary debate on 25 February 1994. The wrapping took place in the summer of 1995 and became the occasion for a huge public celebration.

As it turned out, the delay in implementing the project gave it a whole new dimension. Originally, as the study in the restaurant makes clear, the symbolic character of the wrapped Reichstag Building derived from its position on the dividing line between East and West. This changed following the reunification of Germany and the decision by the Council of Elders to make the building the seat of the German Bundestag. Wrapping the Reichstag prior to its remodelling by Norman Foster temporarily concealed the structure's complexity and presented it as a surprisingly unified block. In this form, it offered an opportunity for taking stock and reflecting on the vicissitudes of the building as a mirror of Germany's turbulent history. Moreover, *Wrapped Reichstag* provided a focus for hopes relating to the country's political future, henceforth to be determined on a nationwide basis in Berlin, as well as the period of uncertainty that inevitably accompanied the far-reaching political and social changes then taking place.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude had to fight for almost two decades before this design sketch could be made a reality with the wrapping of the Reichstag Building. Christo, *Reichstag*, 1986, drawing/collage, two-part.

JENS LIEBCHEN

Jens Liebchen was born in 1970 in Bonn, and lives and works in Berlin.

In its efforts to acquire appropriate artworks to display in the Reichstag Building and the adjoining parliamentary buildings, the German Bundestag has invited many German and international artists to submit designs or competition entries. From the outset, Jens Liebchen

has observed this process with his camera. This has created an autonomous body of photographic work, which functions at a second level parallel to the various art projects rooted in direct responses to the building's architecture. Figures as different as Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, Jenny Holzer, Georg Baselitz, Grisha Bruskin, Neo Rauch, Jörg Herold and Franka Hörnschemeyer have all been photographed by Jens Liebchen during the conception or installation of their artworks in the parliamentary buildings.

Jens Liebchen has photographed many prominent artists in front of their works in the Reichstag Building. Facing page: Georg Baselitz. This page: Jenny Holzer.

Top:

Günther Uecker.

Centre:

Christian Boltanski.

Bottom:

Norman Foster.

The results are unique portraits of these artists that reveal the individuality of each artistic personality and, at the same time, explore the tense relationship between the imposing public architecture and the artworks placed in this political environment. Taken as a whole, the portraits provide a fascinating survey of the current art scene, from its recognised international 'stars' to a younger generation of emerging artists.

What gives Jens Liebchen's project its particular significance is the fact that it documents and photographically interprets an extraordinary moment in German parliamentary history. Never before has the German parliament devoted so much attention to the presentation of art in its own buildings in a comparable way. Never before has it shown such willingness to embrace the risks involved in engagement with artistic creativity. And this is not just a one-way street: never before have such significant artists been prepared to enter into dialogue with politics. Thus, the planning and construction of the German Bundestag's buildings in Berlin opened a new chapter in the often problematic history of encounters between the two spheres of art and politics. And it is the great achievement of Jens Liebchen's photographs that they use visual means to bring alive the vibrant creative atmosphere that has developed and the highly charged relationship between the artists and the political space that surrounds them. Some appear wary, some adopt a demonstratively down-to-earth approach or show a quiet self-confidence, while some play the clown as a way of masking their own unease. By capturing such reactions, the photographs do not just offer insights into the intellectual and aesthetic attitudes of the artists and their views of politics. The images also draw attention to the view that parliamentary representatives have of their role, their portrayal of this role and its conscious expression through the artists' creative work. Jens Liebchen's photographs, a selection of which are on display in the restaurant, are also documents of the fruitful exchange between these very different worlds.

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Cover: Werner Huthmacher: front cover, bottom + back cover, top; Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation: front cover, top.

Published by:
German Bundestag,
Public Relations Division
Platz der Republik 1
11011 Berlin

Coordination:
Michael Reinold, Public Relations Division
Christina Beinke, Berlin

Design:
Juli Gudehus, Berlin

Lithography:
SatzVogt, Berlin
Licht+Tiefe, Berlin

Edited by:
Georgia Rauer, Berlin

Translated by:
Language Service of the German Bundestag
in cooperation with Raymond Kerr and Martin Pearce

Production:
Koelblin-Fortuna-Druck GmbH & Co. KG, Baden-Baden

3rd, completely revised edition

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Berlin 2007
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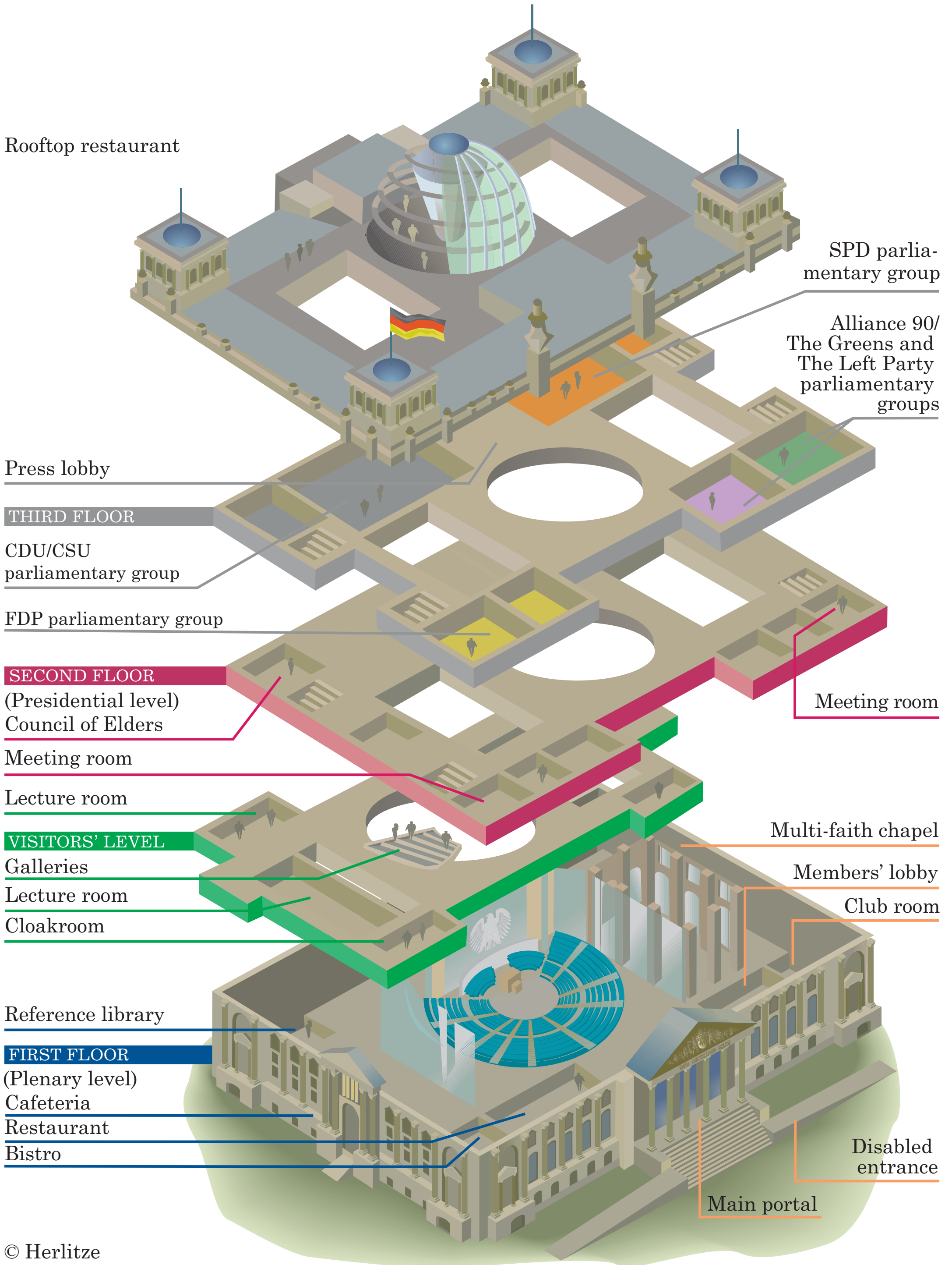

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THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG IN THE REICHSTAG BUILDING