

Wednesday, October 3, 1990

Reunification surprises German A&M students

By CHRIS VAUGHN
Of The Battalion Staff

A reunited West and East Germany may have been inevitable after the collapse of the Berlin Wall last December, but most Germans say it is nothing less than *unglaublich* that the day is here now.

"Most of our generation never expected this to happen," Bodo Kipper, a Texas A&M M.B.A. student from Regensburg, formerly West Germany, says. "We have been raised with the Wall and we never knew different. We got used to the situation. I didn't expect this to happen because the conflict has always been so great that I never thought Germany would be reunited."

Frank Karbe, another A&M M.B.A. student from Koblenz, formerly West Germany, says he regrets not being in Germany during this time.

"I didn't expect this to happen so quick," he says. "After the Wall came down, I expected it to happen sooner or later, but not this year. It is such a joyful event."

Formal reunification of West Germany and East Germany is today — 45 years after the nations were divided by the Allies after World War II.

Karbe and Kipper, exchange students from the Koblenz School of Corporate Management, and other German students at A&M are celebrating tonight in College Station, while their countrymen undoubtedly will be partying in the now reunited Germany.

But joy over the two peoples being one again might not last long.

Germany faces monumental problems in the next years as it tries to rebuild an East German economy that lagged decades behind its western counterpart and attempts to forge a single government from all the confusion following the speedy reunification.

"Everyone was joyful when I left, but I wonder about it when I go back with all the problems," Karbe says. "I wonder what the attitude of the people will be when I go back."

Dr. Wulf Koepke, a professor of German at A&M and a native of Lübeck, formerly West Germany, says many East Germans are insecure about their future.

"Everyone had a job in East Germany because of their constitution," Koepke says. "That will change and will cause a lot of pain. They had a 100 percent secure life and now that life is uncertain. There is a lot of anxiety."

Skyrocketing unemployment is expected to be one of the largest problems for Germany because many East German government employees will be laid off as the nation's businesses are privatized.

But Koepke believes unemployment might not last long because eastern Germany's industries, roads, houses, telephone systems, banks and utilities all will have to be rebuilt and modernized.

"Once they start rebuilding East Germany, they will need a lot of people," Koepke says. "I'm optimistic the

transition will happen in three to five years and East Germany will be like West Germany."

Karbe says he and many others are worried about Germany's immediate future.

"The West German economy will suffer because this will be very expensive," he says. "I'm personally worried about how it will end and how people will deal with this. West Germany is strong, but I'm not sure if it is strong enough to pay for all of this."

Perhaps more important than today is Oct. 14 when East Germans elect governments of the newly formed states their nation will become. Until then, eastern Germany will be a territory with only local governments and the federal government in Bonn.

Many experts say the inexperienced local and state governments in eastern Germany will render Germany almost helpless for the next few years as it tries to pull the eastern part out of Communism.

Despite all the problems facing Germany, many countries, including the United States, are afraid of the potential economic and political might of a reunited Germany.

Koepke believes Germany will not wield any more economic power in the world than it does now, but he does see potential political problems.

"West Germany is already the most economically powerful country in Europe and the difference with East Germany won't be enormous," Koepke says. "Politically, I'm a bit more skeptical at this point."

Koepke says East Germany could bring a more nationalistic tone to the political scene, which could give rise to a right-wing political group.

"I don't mean Nazis, but a right-wing movement," he says. "It may go away if the economy goes well, but if they have serious problems, you may not see it go away for awhile."

Karbe and Kipper, however, say fears of the United States, France, Soviet Union and other countries aren't well founded.

"Forty years ago was a different time," Karbe says. "It's just not the same now. Things have changed so much."

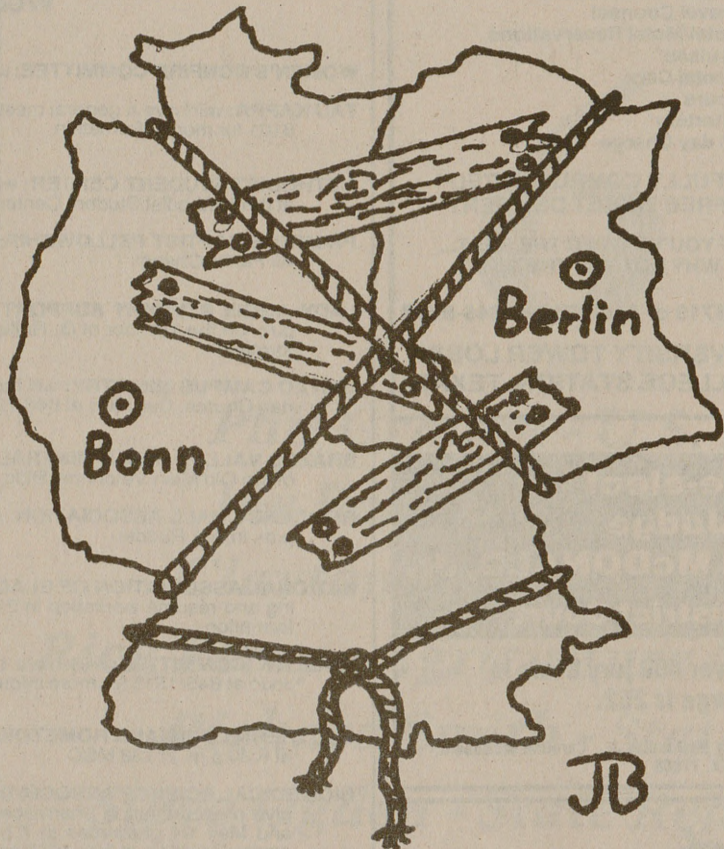
Kipper continues. "I already hear the fears of a lot of people to a reunited Germany," he says. "The fact we are reunited doesn't mean we have more power. At the moment, we are weaker than before."

But for now, Germans, West and East alike, would rather concentrate on the positive side of reunification.

Karbe, for one, says he cannot wait to return and face the challenges of his new homeland.

"It will feel very strange, but I'm excited about it," he says. "The country will be totally different. It will be bigger and it will be more difficult to find housing, used cars and other things."

"But we have tremendous opportunities and chances for our generation to overcome these problems, and I'm happy to have the chance."



GERMANY

Guten Tag is the German translation for hello or good afternoon. West Germany and East Germany officially reunited at midnight today, or 6 p.m. Tuesday CDT. The city of Berlin was also reunited. Bonn is the capital of Germany. The Battalion intends to periodically focus on the countries and cultures of international students at Texas A&M.

Beer provides national flavor

By SEAN FRERKING
Of The Battalion Staff

Beer may not be the drink of the gods. It may not even be the beverage Germans drink the most — they drink more coffee than beer.

But of all the ingredients that make the German people what they are, nothing is more dear than a *stein* of beer.

It is said to be the drink of Germany and the country's emblem. Although the type of beer has regional variations, German beer is internationally acclaimed.

Berliners drink, and apparently enjoy, beer sweetened with fruit juice. Bavarians quaff "hop-juice" from over-sized liter mugs.

Beer in Germany, however, is not only good, it is protected by a strict purity code established in Bavaria more than five centuries ago.

The age-old tradition forbids breweries from making beer with cheap fillers like rice or impure water. Modern technology slowly is replacing, however, some of the old traditions.

Germans still celebrate many of their festivals and holidays with beer.

For example, in most Munich beer halls, the minimum size beer a person can order is a *Mass*, a "measure" that means a 1-liter beer mug — more than a U.S. quart. Elsewhere, *ein grosses*, half-liters, or *ein kleines*, quarter-liters, can be ordered.

Regular *helle* beer can be purchased. If a darker, sweeter beer is desired, a *dunkle* can be had.

In Munich, several dozen breweries have remained the same for centuries. *Weihenstephan* was the first German brewer, beginning in 1040. Other traditional breweries include *Löwenbräu* and *Septenbräu*.

Among the several types of beer stronger than the regular brew, *Wiesnbier* probably is the most well known. It is made for *Oktoberfest*.

Various kinds of *Starkbier*, or strong beer, is brewed during Lent. In fact, one of the breweries regarded as the best in Germany is owned by an Augustinian monk.

Oktoberfest brings revelry

Oktoberfest, which really begins during the second half of September and continues a few days into October, dates back to 1810 when King Ludwig I of Bavaria got married.

This festival attracts about 6 million visitors to Munich or *München* from Germany and abroad for two weeks of parades, dancing, merry-making and beer-drinking.

Bodo Kipper, a Texas A&M M.B.A. student from Regensburg, Germany, says he has not yet been to *Oktoberfest* in Munich because the festival is too crowded.

Many companies (in Munich) invite guests during October so they can attend the festival, Kipper says. There are people from many countries, especially Japan, he says.

It is Bavaria's most important festival.

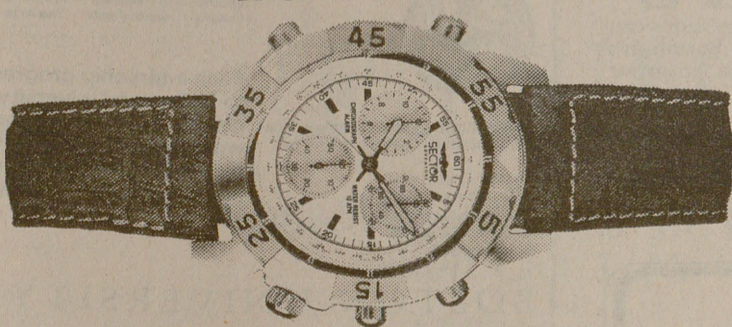
Kipper said he thinks the festival's popularity in the United States has increased because it is a Bavarian festival more than a German festival.

A German festival would be almost impossible to celebrate because there are many different cultures in Germany, Kipper says.

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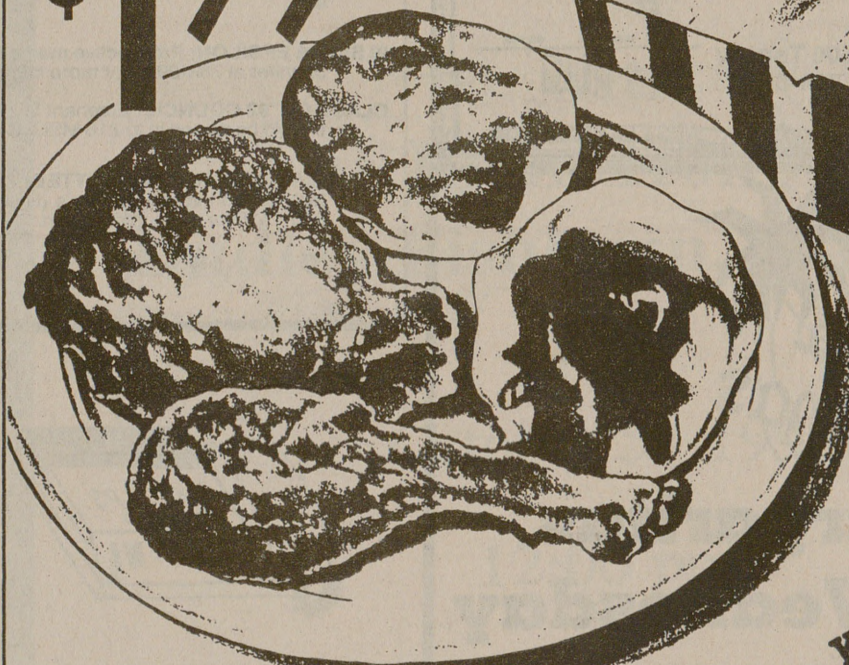
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