

## Berlin

David Clay Large

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**David Clay Large : Berlin** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Berlin:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Rise and Fall and Rise of Berlin By Greg Polansky Framed by the two unifications of Germany in 1871 and 1990, Large writes an excellent history of Berlin. Berlin's history can be divided into concrete historical eras that mirror the events of Germany. Bismarckian Berlin. Wilhelmine Berlin. Weimar Berlin. Nazi Berlin. And then the era of two Berlins during the era of a divided Germany, when only the East German state had Berlin as its capital. Before 1871, Germany had been decentralized and many cities across the various German states were centers of art and politics. Then centralization occurred under Berlin. However, the defeat and destruction of the city during WWII saw decentralization once again become the norm in the post WWII period. Today's Berlin is nowhere near as important to modern Germany as it was to Germany between the late nineteenth century and the end of WWII. Beginning with the unification of Berlin that expanded the metropolis to the third largest city of the world at the time (behind only New York and London), Large starts the story in the latter half of the

nineteenth century when Berlin was a relative backwater in Germany. But centralization and population growth transformed the city. Bismarckian and Wilhelminian Berlin are the high points of Berlin. A stable economy and political scene allowed the city to thrive. But with the end of WWII, the downfall truly began. Though one could state it began earlier with the end of WWI. The decline began first with Weimar Berlin, one of the cultural golden periods of the world. But it was beset by political and economic problems that ultimately doomed it and the state of Germany. Then the 12 years of Nazi Berlin which saw Berlin at the center of a huge empire but then destroyed. And it fell into ruin..And not just ruin. But division as well. The city was divided into four sectors and then two sectors. What we now call West Berlin and East Berlin. And the ignominy of it all, - West Berlin was not even the capital anymore. A tiny town far to the West, Bonn, was the capital of West Germany. But East Germany kept their side of Berlin as its capital so at least Berlin was the capital of a Germany. The story continues during the Cold War period with all the famous events - Berlin Airlift, Building of the Wall, Tearing Down the Wall, Unification, and a close vote that led to Berlin becoming the capital again. Large does a great job of writing political, social, cultural, and economic history. This is not a dry, dusty tome. This is a lively biography of a city central to the twentieth-century. Though when it comes to architecture, perhaps the author could revisit some of his sentences such as this one when discussing the Gedächtniskirche (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church) - "Comparing it as it looks today with photographs from before the war, one can only conclude that this building was improved by the bombing". Yeah, that kind of criticism makes one wonder about the author. Still, this is definitely a book one wants to read to understand the importance of Berlin and its importance to the history of the world since the late 19th century. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. There are other books that describe Weimar Berlin better; he devotes too much time to describing the ...By M. Heartsworn I have mixed feelings about the book Berlin. The first half is rather disappointing. There are other books that describe Weimar Berlin better; he devotes too much time to describing the national politics before WWI, and I found a book about Berlin without a single map annoying. The quality of the photographs, in general, is disappointing. In addition, the book has no bibliography, perhaps because it would have made a very large book too unwieldy. But once Hitler appears, the book soars. Throughout, Large has a remarkable ability to describe events precisely and coherently. His descriptions of the chaos on Nov. 9 1918, the Kapp Putsch, and numerous other events are perhaps the best and most succinct I've read. He also has marvelous turns of phrases; for example, "The sightings (of Hitler) continued for decades and with a frequency that rivaled those of the Virgin Mary and Elvis Presley." Definitely not 5; at times, 3. I gave it 4.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. 736-page turner By Maria Disclosure: I'm only about 200 pages into this book, but I can't recommend it enough. Berlin may easily be the most historically fascinating place on earth, and in David Clay Large's book characters like von Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II come to life with vivid detail. I simply have not been able to put it down. It's even more exciting if you read it after having visited Berlin, as I had the opportunity to do--then the story truly acquires a sense of dimension. Funny, colloquial, sarcastic and even slightly gossipy, this is history writing at its most entertaining.

In the political history of the past century, no city has played a more prominent--though often disastrous--role than Berlin. At the same time, Berlin has also been a dynamic center of artistic and intellectual innovation. If Paris was the "Capital of the Nineteenth Century," Berlin was to become the signature city for the next hundred years. Once a symbol of modernity, in the Thirties it became associated with injustice and the abuse of power. After 1945, it became the iconic City of the Cold War. Since the fall of the Wall, Berlin has again come to represent humanity's aspirations for a new beginning, tempered by caution deriving from the traumas of the recent past. David Clay Large's definitive history of Berlin is framed by the two German unifications of 1871 and 1990. Between these two events several themes run like a thread through the city's history: a persistent inferiority complex; a distrust among many ordinary Germans, and the national leadership of the "unloved city's" electric atmosphere, fast tempo, and tradition of unruliness; its status as a magnet for immigrants, artists, intellectuals, and the young; the opening up of social, economic, and ethnic divisions as sharp as the one created by the Wall.

.com Founded in the 13th century as a trading post on a windswept Prussian plain, Berlin was something of an accidental capital. It was selected by Chancellor Bismarck after Germany's unification in 1871, in part because the choice of any other city--Munich, say, or Frankfurt--would have provoked terrible regional rivalries. As it was, the rest of Germany simply looked down on the hinterland Berliners as, in historian David Clay Large's words, "parvenus whose civilization was hardly more substantial than the Prussian sands on which their town was built." The people who soon swarmed to Berlin from all over Germany--and elsewhere in Europe--put their scorn for the city aside, and they turned it, writes Large, "into a hothouse of modernity, a place that pursued change like a drug." That change becomes a dominant theme as Large charts the rapid growth of Berlin in the early 1900s from regional backwater to a leading European center of socialist politics and the arts. Berlin's avant-garde culture and freewheeling atmosphere made it a target of the Nazi leadership, which put in motion grandiose schemes of social and civil engineering intended to remake it into an imperial city the likes of which the world had never known. Devastated, instead, by World War II and divided by the victorious Allies for four decades afterward, Berlin was, until recently, gray and unattractive

compared with many other German cities--and, writes Large, that suited many Germans who "harbored the conviction that Berlin, the former Nazi capital, had no business being pretty or glamorous." In Berlin, David Large brings the city's recent past to life. Though lacking the literary flair that makes Alexandra Richie's wider-ranging history of Berlin, Faust's Metropolis, so readable, it stands as a substantial contribution to the historical literature. --Gregory McNameeFrom Publishers Weekly

"This book is a narrative history of the city of Berlin framed by the two German unificationsAGermany's unification by 'blood and iron' in 1871," and that of 1990, "which of course was achieved not by war but by the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the implosion of East Germany." Large (Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich), professor of history at Montana State University, has written a lively, rich and engaging work, full of his passion for his subject, that puts the question of Berlin's future in the context not only of its past but also of the past of the entire nation of which it has long been an ill-fitting part. As he explains, Berlin has suffered for most of the last 100 years from a "municipal inferiority complex," but with the most recent reunification, Berliners are hopeful that their city "will finally make the grade" as a world-class city. Likewise, Germans outside the capital have long maintained a love-hate relationship with Berlin, which Large equates with most Americans' "wonderful, terrible" opinion of New York City. But while its political history during the last century has been tumultuous and dangerous, the city's ability to influence the world in positive ways has been sustained by Berliners' adaptability in embracing the new, intellectually, artistically and culturally. Large cites examples including efforts to get rid of "the ghosts of Berlin" such as the Reichstag, "the war-scarred fossil... so laden with conflicting, mainly depressing, historical associations" which was accomplished when the artist Christo was given permission to "wrap" the building completely. Large claims that the city's hosting of the April 1999 European Union summit marked Berlin's "debut on the stage of international diplomacy," and that a renewed Berlin may be among the world's leaders in embracing an era of globalization. Readers interested in the history of Germany or of European culture in general will find much to enlighten them. Agent, Agnes Krup. (Nov.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From BooklistIt seems as if Berlin has been a focus of Western consciousness for more than a century. With the birth of a unified German state centered on Prussia in 1871, the city came to symbolize resurgent and threatening German economic and military power. During the era of the Weimar Republic, foreigners saw in Berlin a glittering center of avant-garde culture, or conversely a center of amoral decadence that encouraged the growth of political extremism. Of course, during the cold war, Berlin (and the wall dividing it) was the confrontation point between freedom and tyranny. Large is professor of history at Montana State University and a specialist in modern German history. He has written an in-depth examination of Berlin's history from 1871 to the present, a detailed, absorbing, and sometimes moving chronicle of a city and its inhabitants. Although Large gives due credence to the usual giants from Bismarck to Brandt, it is ordinary Berliners who are at the heart of this outstanding saga of a metropolis and of its role in history. Jay FreemanCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved