

# Is unity the road to freedom

by Nuri Katz

"Freedom", declared the cover page of the Nov. 20 *Time* magazine, referring to the opening of the borders between East and West Germany.

"Nov. 9, a date that not only Germans would remember, thousands who had gathered on both sides of the wall let out a roar and started going through it as well as up and over," *Time* eloquently wrote.

"Overwhelming" is the best word to describe that night in Berlin. Seemingly the "Iron Curtain" began tumbling down at the hands of the German youth. The power of the people survived in East Germany.

This inspires the people of Eastern Europe, and of the world, to believe that maybe, just maybe, we are entering an unprecedented age, an age of peace and freedom for all. Is the eventual reunification of Germany, implied by the opening of the wall, the beginning of such an age?

Throughout the world, hope is burgeoning; yet I must confess feeling some ambivalence at the prospect of a unified Germany.

As a Jew and as a Zionist, I support the national rights of all peoples — of the Israelis and, yes, of the Palestinians. How, then, could I fear the reunification of a people that has suffered a enforced division for over 40 years? As a human being, I support freedom from oppression wherever it occurs, both in the East and in the West. Then why the ambivalence?

Many astounding occurrences are taking place in Eastern Europe. The Gorbachev phenomena has swept through Europe, displacing the corrupt leadership of nearly all the communist countries. Hungary no longer considers itself Communist; Poland is ruled by a non-communist government; Czechoslovakia's government just stepped down, and, of course, the Wall is coming down. Most astounding, however, is that relatively little blood has been spilt, something for which we must all be grateful.

Stemming mainly from Gorbachev's innovative policies, Europe and the world are seemingly on the path of unity and understanding. Nevertheless, we must step back and look at the

unification of Germany within the context of these overwhelming changes.

We must look at the sad history of Germany. It is important to remember that in this century, Germany, as a unified entity, was a major military aggressor. However, starting with World War I and World War II, Germany has shown a great deal of resilience. Having been militarily dismantled by the Versailles treaty ending World War I, its military power rose once more, enough to instigate World War II and perpetrate the worst atrocities ever known to humanity.

Now, 40 years after the Allies' eventual victory, the progress this divided country has achieved is truly admirable and commendable. West Germany has become great again — this time economically. Even East Germany has become the most successful of all Communist countries. Thus, we must acknowledge the enormous impact a unified Germany could have on the future of the world and its economy.

As a Jew, I must admit I am very skeptical. I am the son of an Auschwitz survivor. Most of my

family perished at the hands of the Nazis.

I know that my contemporaries in Germany are living with the knowledge of what their forefathers perpetrated, and I do not in any way blame the youth for their parents' sins. Yet I am wary.



Nov. 9 was not only the day the Wall was opened but, as the Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel pointed out, Nov. 9 1989 is also the fifty-first anniversary of Kristallnacht, the night which symbolizes for Jewish people the real beginning of the Holocaust. On

this day in 1938 the Nazis showed their first major display of anti-Semitic sentiment by ravaging the German Jewish community with extensive lootings and beatings. Therefore, when considering the future of Germany, I am reminded of the horrors of the

past. I hope November 9 will never be forgotten — both as the symbol of the most horrific epic in the history of humanity, and as the beginning of an age of freedom and peace for all.

## l e t t e r s

### VIA violation

Dear Editor,

When the Via cutbacks were announced, it took me a little while to understand why the news angered me so much. I am not a regular passenger train user, (I guess not enough of us are), but somehow I felt personally violated by this attack on a Canadian institution. I had become used to the current government systematically eliminating our economic and cultural identity, but this new move seemed to be aimed at something closer to the soul of those who think of themselves as Canadians.

Tamarack's music has for a long time examined the 'soul' of this country. Both with our writing and our interpretations of early Canadian folksongs, we have been discovering the myths, the legends and the symbols that give us the tenuous connection that we feel for one another. The thin unbroken rail line that stretched coast to coast was the first and remains the strongest symbol of nationhood for us. We have performed in countless towns throughout the land that exist only because they were accessible by passenger train. Those railway ties (which incidentally were often made of tamarack wood) became truly 'ties that bind.' The fact that it was possible to board a train at one ocean and ride it to another without leaving one's homeland is an essential part of the Canadian mythology. It is in our songs and in our dreams, and the fact that it is not a part of the daily working lives of many does not make it less vital to our national well-being.

It is remarkable how much this steel road has become a part of our culture. That lonesome train's whine has found its way into every songwriter's imagination. The 'clickety-clack' of the train down the track is as personal a sound as a heartbeat. It's part of a sound that Tamarack has tried to keep alive by singing songs and telling the stories of the common people who live along those tracks. Maybe if we sing those songs loud enough, Ottawa will recognize that sometimes dreams and myths and our heritage must come before economics.

Tamarack is hosting 'Rally for Rails: A Day of National Concern,' December 6th at the Ottawa Congress Centre. For information on how you can help please call (519) 767-0142.

James Gordon

### Legitimacy

The Editor,

The presence of His Excellency (as they are always addressed) D.O. Aguekum, the Ghanaian High Commissioner, at the Africa Night celebrations raises a couple of thought provoking

questions. Is this the best choice the executive of the African Students Association could have gone for as the guest of honour?

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