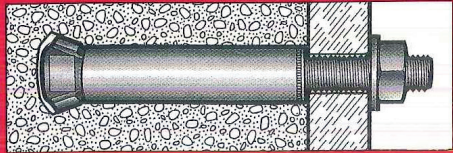


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Making your mark in

Berlin



BRITISH builders, construction professionals and materials companies have just six months to prepare for a massive building boom in Berlin. The reunited city is to be turned into the showcase capital of the largest European economy. So far planning problems and unresolved property ownership claims have left developers fuming and builders idle. But the local building industry now confidently expects a boom to begin next spring.

"Everyone is fed up with the delays in the planning system, and the German government's inability to make up its mind on what it wants to do," says Thomas Höger, the partner at architect YRM's stylish Berlin office. "They still have not decided between a Neo-Classical or Modern style for principal sites. Yet nobody thinks this situation will be allowed to go on much longer."

"If only 30% of the projects in the planning process are approved, then we will have a bonanza," says Theo Reichert, who runs RMC Group's cement plant at Rüdersdorf, 30 km east of Berlin. "We all expect the government to sort out its plans for Berlin's infrastructure by the end of the year. The authorities have to decide where the streets are going, the rail and underground routes, and what to do about the airport. Private development cannot really get very far without such decisions."

Last month, one of Germany's largest building companies, Walter Bau, warned clients that they will have to be put on a waiting list for projects set to start next spring. The opportunity for UK contractors to pinch aggrieved clients is clear enough. ▶

Construction spending on an awesome scale will in the next few years help Berlin resume its role as capital of a reunified Germany. The multibillion-deutschmark bonanza covers everything from government buildings, housing and infrastructure to an Olympics bid - and British firms are jostling for position. Over five pages, Peter Cooper visits Berlin, and offers advice on the goldrush.

The British firms staking their claim

CONTRACTORS Bovis and Wimpey have offices in Berlin, and Tarmac is nearby in Leipzig. Tyne and Wear-based Tolent Construction has a small refurbishment job in the city; so does Mowlem which has bought an east German contractor.

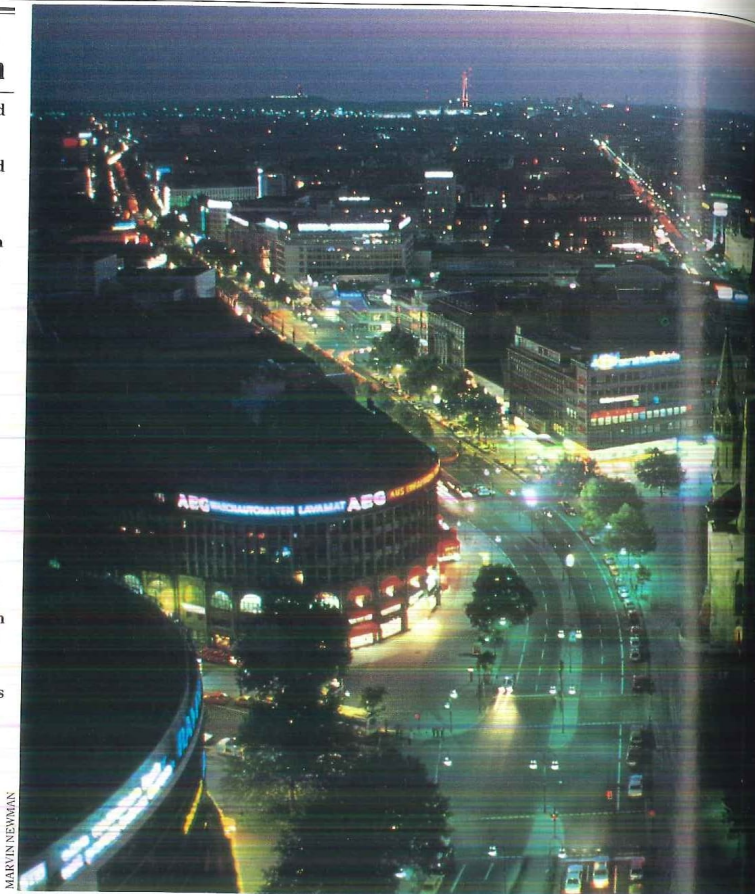
UK architects in Berlin include: YRM, Aukett Associates, DEGW, BDP, Alsop & Stormer, Conran Roche Architects, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, Nicholas Grimshaw, Arup Associates, Sir Norman Foster and Partners and Richard Rogers Partnership.

Qs MDA Group, Davis Langdon & Everest and Gleeds have local offices. Consulting engineer Ove Arup is well-established, so too are WS Atkins and rival Acer, which has acquired an East German firm. And last month Anglo-Danish consultant engineer the Carl Bro Group, which owns UK firms Haiste Group and Kirkpatrick & Partners, bought the 300-strong East German practice IPRO Berlin from the privatisation authority.

British developers Godfrey Bradman and Stuart Lipton both have sizeable projects in Berlin.

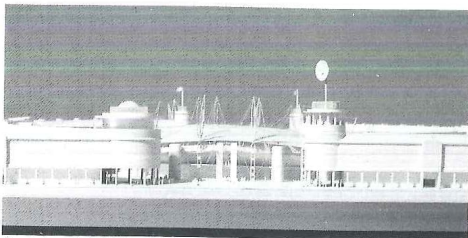
► Aukett Associates opened its four-strong temporary office this month at the Europa Centre in Charlottenburg – Berlin's Knightsbridge. Partner Andrew Jones claims to be "incredibly busy" and has just won an £18m commission from a west German client for a large office project. By next April, Jones expects to have up to 30 staff in a new permanent office.

It certainly looks as though there will be plenty of work to go round. According to the federal government's estimates for construction expenditure in eastern Germany, an incredible £850bn is to be spent between 1991 and 2005. This is an average of £60bn a year, or 50% more than the total annual construction output in the UK at the height of the 1980s'



MARVIN NEWMAN

Ultra-modern, neon-lit Berlin is set to cast off its troubled past with a huge rebuilding programme.



Arup Associates' Olympic 2000 submission.

boom. Overall construction output in eastern Germany is forecast to rise 20% this year, 25% in 1993, 15% in 1994 and 10% in 1995.

Huge public sector projects expected to emerge in Berlin over the next year include a new underground station at Lehrter, east Berlin, and the redevelopment of the Schönefeld airport. The

existing principal airport at Tegel in West Berlin is boxed in by suburbia, and the former East German airport at Schönefeld is to be extended. British firms hope to apply their experience of recent UK airport projects to the site. In addition, there is an urban design competition for the main east Berlin railway station, which UK architect Conran ►

For those seeking

SO YOU WANT to set up an office in Berlin. Before you leave, there is plenty of help available in the UK.

The Department of Trade and Industry has a large German section which will advise on the business prospects for your services, and fix up meetings with officials at the British Embassy's commercial department for your visit to Berlin.

Also worth a call in London is the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It operates as the British agent for the Treuhandanstalt privatisation authority. Apart from trying to sell you an east German company, the chamber of commerce can

the chance to utter the magic phrase 'Ich bin ein Berliner', read on . . .

suggest potential joint venture partners – a low-cost route into the new German capital, with the magic ingredient of local knowledge. Its UK counterpart, the London Chamber of Commerce, publishes a useful guide to business opportunities in central Europe.

Finally, it is obviously a good idea to talk to any UK clients or firms already working in Berlin. Bovis, for example, says it will be introducing some of its UK subcontractors to the market.

But probably the biggest secret to success in Berlin is employing the right German national. You will not be able

to tender for work, or understand the legal, technical and safety regulations without at least one person who is fluent in German.

Locating an inexpensive office could be a problem. Rents in West Berlin are among the highest in Europe, though the east is less expensive.

The one consolation is that finding clients and work will be easier than at home. British contacts are the best starting point. But German firms seem to have a high regard for UK construction professionals and contractors. Invitations to tender for public and private projects are published in

Bovis wants to give subbies good times

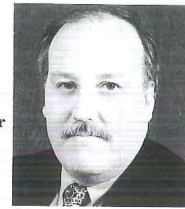
BOVIS opened its office in Berlin last month, and claims to be on the brink of securing a major project management contract. The biggest British builder

promises to take UK subcontractors to work in the new German capital.

"I think Berlin will look more like one giant building site than London in the late 1980s," says director of German operations Brian Peters. "I took a call yesterday from somebody who wanted to build 30 hotels."

Peters reckons UK firms will be in demand. "The Germans recognise the achievement of Canary Wharf in terms of cost management and speed of construction . . . though they will not be making the mistake of ignoring infrastructure development."

While many projects in Berlin are currently held up by legal and planning wrangles, Bovis is out recruiting local staff. "It will be really hard to find enough talented people to do the work," says Peters, who is based in the Europa Centre next to the zoological



Peters: "vast opportunities".

gardens. "I believe the market will become overheated very quickly, and those companies with worldwide sourcing will come out on top."

He predicts "vast opportunities" in Berlin for UK M&E subcontractors, concrete specialists and fit-out contractors. "British architects are also in demand."

Bovis has already landed two major contracts in West Germany this year. In Frankfurt, it is project manager on Sir Norman Foster's 54-storey Commerzbank Tower in joint venture with local firm Lahmeyer International. The £250m project started this year, and is scheduled for completion in late 1996.

In the Düsseldorf suburb of Oberhausen, Bovis is construction consultant on the £700m redevelopment of the city centre. It was called in by Stadium Developments, the developer of Sheffield's Meadowhall shopping centre, which had been asked by the Oberhausen authorities to mastermind the project.

Contact file

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Mowlem: 01049 33 346 6320
Tarmac: 01049 341 52178

Wimpey: 01049 30 881 7567
YRM: 01049 30 238 4135

Aukett Associates: 01049 30 261 1184

Rudersdorfer Zement (RMC Group): 01049 30 558 9112

MDA Group: 01049 611 801427

Gleeds: 01049 531 347924
Ove Arup: 01049 30 885 4522

YRM pins hopes on Schönefeld airport

SEVEN months after opening its three-strong Berlin office on the prestigious main boulevard Unter den Linden, multidisciplinary practice YRM has secured enough work to break even this year.

"I had known YRM for a long time, and when they decided to open up in Berlin, I was offered a job straight away," says partner Thomas Höger, a German architect who worked in the UK for seven years. "It is true that things are taking longer to get going than we hoped. But I'm confident we will build a reputation for quality architecture which will serve us well."

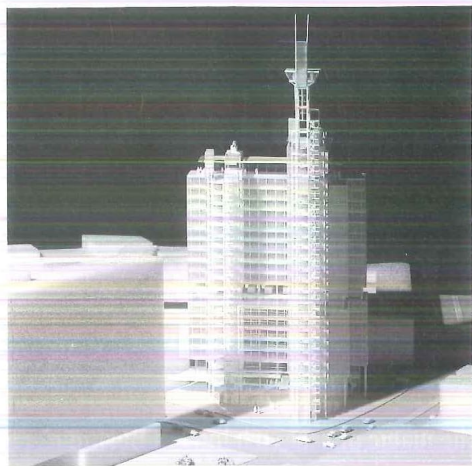
"German clients appreciate just how far UK architects developed during the late 1980s, and are looking to apply these skills to Berlin in the 1990s."

The practice's first commission is for a 7500 m² office building in East Berlin for German developer IPRO. "We went after a bigger job, which they did not award to us. But they liked us and came back with a smaller commission."

YRM's greatest hope is to win a commission on the proposed redevelopment of Schönefeld airport, which served East Berlin in the days before the wall came down. The UK firm is in joint venture with an East German partner to design a terminal building.



Central Berlin in the 1930s – before the bombs fell.



A Sir Richard Rogers design for the new capital.

An ex-German teacher learns the ropes for Balfour Beatty

BALFOUR BEATTY has established itself in Berlin on the back of its holding company BICC's £50m purchase of the largest East German state cable manufacturer in March.

The British contractor is refurbishing the cable factory, and has set up in a cramped, dingy office on site. It has ambitious plans. "We know we have to win a contract from a German client to really become established. We want to be a major player," says marketing executive Wolfram

Bielenstein, an East Berliner who met his new employer while teaching German at a Guildford language school.

"It is very important to have a German speaker if you want to win contracts here. All the documentation and tendering is in German. It has taken us quite a time to sort it out and to comply with German standards and labour safety regulations."

Bielenstein says Balfour Beatty came close to winning the headquarters building for Coca-Cola in East Berlin. But he is optimistic about

clinching a £50m project to build six office blocks at Saatwinkler Damm near Tegel airport in joint venture with East Berlin contractor Coutinho Caro & Co for the German developer Areal.

Another bid is for a food company site in joint venture with the Dutch contractor HBG. Balfour Beatty is also expecting to tender for the Bundespost parcel depot, which is to be built on the Rüdersdorf cement works site, owned by RMC (see facing page).

► Roche Architects and Allford Hall Monaghan Morris have been invited to enter.

UK architects, QSs and contractors also keenly await the competition for a new British Embassy in 1994, which is to be built near the Brandenburg Gate on the site of the former embassy destroyed in the war.

Federal government departments will be building huge new headquarters in Berlin. At the moment the key ministries have just small outposts in the new capital, and the timetable for moving departments from Bonn is undecided. Bonn bureaucrats are known to be unhappy at the prospect of leaving their leafy Rhine city, and seem to be doing everything they can to delay the move. But move they must and, of course, special housing will have to be provided for officials; senior civil servants have reserved a large site north of Berlin.

The reunified German capital is a strong contender for the Olympic Games in 2000. A decision is imminent on the selection of the developer for the £450m Olympic 2000 site. UK developer Stanhope and its local partner ITAG are neck-and-neck with Swedish firm SIAB and Pan Immobilien to build two stadiums and 180,000 m² of office, retail and hotel space. And UK architect Alsop & Stormer has been invited to take part in a competition with 34 other practices to design the athletes' accommodation.

RMC aims to capitalise on Rüdersdorf head-start – and encourage staff to speak up

THE RMC Group is by far the best placed British company to profit from the development of Berlin.

The London-based ready-mix concrete giant owns the only major cement works in the Berlin area at Rüdersdorf – bought from the privatisation agency Treuhandanstalt in October 1990 – and is set to supply around 70% of the cement used in rebuilding Berlin. It also owns eight of the 40 ready-mix concrete plants in the greater Berlin region.

"We will invest a total of £250m in eastern Germany between 1990 and 1995," says finance director Derek Jenkins. "That makes us the largest foreign investor in the region, after Coca-Cola."

Other UK materials producers present include: BPB Industries, Marley, Pilkington and Redland – which plans to invest £100m in tile and brick plants in eastern Germany by 1994.

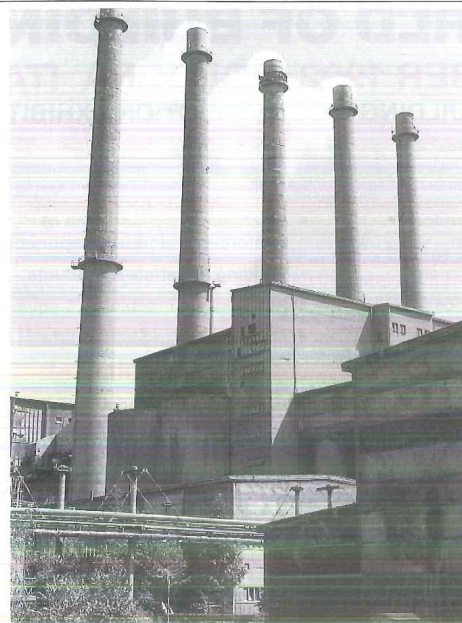
RMC has been operating in Germany since 1954, and had long coveted the run-down Rüdersdorf state cement works in East Germany. It has the only limestone quarry in the area – a natural geological monopoly of the key ingredient for cement – with consented reserves to last 50 years.

"The day the Treuhand opened its offices we had someone there at 8 am. They were not even on the

The local building industry reckons winning the Olympic Games would provide a Barcelona-style focus for infrastructure development and give the building boom a further kick.

While the public sector is beset by procrastination, the private sector should start placing contracts in earnest next year. The reason is simple. Tax concessions for development in the east run out at the end of 1994, so if projects are to be completed in time they have to get under way.

The city that was cut off from the Western world for 40 years is still largely in the hands of a local building cartel, but international money is starting



Rüdersdorf cement works: RMC's commercial prize.

phone," recalls Jenkins. The £70m deal to buy the 2.5 million tonnes/year works required a commitment to invest in the plant, and to help with the social problems created by inevitable mass redundancies among its 3000 staff.

"We were able to show that by opening up to 100 ready-mix plants in the

country, RMC would be creating a lot more jobs in the future," says Jenkins. "We also have plans for a business park on the site, and have sold part of it to the Bundespost for a parcel office."

Work on refurbishing Rüdersdorf is under way. One of the five kilns has been removed, and the remaining four will be

completely refurbished by 1994.

"We will have the best cost structure of any cement works," boasts Theo Reichert, the plant's 31-year-old West German managing director, from the black leather luxury of his newly refurbished office. "We will also not be polluting the atmosphere with 50,000 tonnes of cement a year any longer."

Staff levels are down from 3000 to 1000, and the objective is to reach 700 by 1995. Reichert says the workforce has been very co-operative.

"They were depressed by the state of the plant, and can see a good future now," he says. "The only problem I have is that they are used to obeying orders 100%. That is all right so long as I make all the right decisions. I am trying to get them to tell me when they think I'm wrong. But it is an uphill struggle."

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industrial space, offices and a hotel. "It will be an explosion when it starts. I get three or four people phoning me every day with new schemes," says Bovis director of German operations Brian Peters. "A lot of the buildings in East Berlin are full of asbestos and need to be renovated or rebuilt. There will be many new hotels, and in the suburbs of East Berlin, retail developments and business parks will be necessary. "Social housing and the refurbishment of apartment blocks will also be big business. I think there is plenty of work for everybody in Berlin. All we have seen is the tip of the iceberg so far."



Reichert: RMC whizz kid.

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