The German Centre of St. Paul in Odessa

2004
Why Odessa?

Odessa has a German tradition dating back two hundred years. The Ukrainian Black Sea metropolis was founded in 1794. From the outset it was a centre of life and culture encompassing many different nationalities. A strong group was formed by the Germans settlers, who had been summoned by the Tsar court to establish themselves there. At the beginning of the 20th century there were over 10,000 Germans living in Odessa. At the heart of the flourishing German school and church life was the »German Hill« in the city centre. Orphanages, schools, a home for the elderly and two pastor's houses were located here under the protection of the Church of St. Paul (built in 1897).

After 1990, the German minority has come together again. During Soviet rule the remaining Germans had been stripped of their rights and sent into exile. The church was closed and all property expropriated. Today, some 3,500 Germans are again living in the Odessa region. The Lutheran congregation was re-established in 1990 and has a membership of about 500 in the city. In 1997 the state returned part of the former property, the ruins of the church and the completely run-down former home for the elderly to the German Lutheran Church in the Ukraine (Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in der Ukraine – DELKU), which was newly established in 1992. This was coupled to the church's obligation to rebuild the two buildings.

In a process that took several years to complete, the Lutheran Church in Bavaria (Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern – ELKB) bought back the former home for the elderly, converted and began operating it in 2002 as a modern church and congregational centre with a social station. DELKU and the Bavarian partner church are now facing the challenge of creating a solution for the church ruin.

Favourable prospects for Odessa as a business and industrial location. The Odessa region has approximately 2.5 million inhabitants and the city itself just over 1 million. The economy in the region is currently un-
undergoing the transition to a market economy, but must still be assessed as critical. Unemployment and the underground economy are enormous. To date, financial investments lack a proper basis for pushing the development forward. Nevertheless, in the past few years limited growth is perceptible in the building and retail sectors. Examples of this in the city are the restoration of numerous architectural monuments (theatre, opera), newly built hotels and a new orthodox cathedral as well as the Greek Centre as a trade and office centre. Among the main investors, German entrepreneurs rank sixth. The trade volume between the Ukraine and Germany amounted to $1.03 billion during the first half of 2001 and thus rose by 17 percent compared to the previous year.

«Owing to the geographically auspicious situation on the Black Sea (connecting the continent to the seas and world’s oceans) the conditions for Odessa and its port are ideal for trade and the export and import of goods to and from all over the world. Odessa therefore provides a bridgehead between Asia and Western Europe. The infrastructure of the region is well developed, although there is considerable need for modification as the technical equipment cannot stand up to Western standards.... The basic conditions for economic growth already exist. Odessa has a realistic chance of becoming an important intersection between Western Europe and Asia» (Feasibility Study 2002).

With the EU extension the political and economic development of the Ukraine is likely to gain increasing importance.

The choir of the Bayerian House in Odessa in the Philharmonic Hall of the city.

Seminar participants in the Bayerian House in Odessa.
Germa presence in Odessa. The Federal German government is pursuing a policy whereby it provides the German minority with active support; in May 2000 it defined the Odessa region as a priority. The Bavarian State Government operates the »Bavarian House« (BHO) in Odessa. Odessa is the diocesan town of DELKU, which has a reliable partner in Bavaria in the ELKB. Since the early Nineties, various government and non-government organisations have been carrying out all sorts of project funding for the German minority and, beyond this, for the further development of the social, economic and cultural life of Odessa.

To mention some in detail: the activities of the Gesellschaft für Entwicklung (GfE – Organisation for Development) in organising the implementation of incentive measures for the German Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) as well as GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit), and to the various areas of activities of BHO (language courses, cultural work, the Kindergarten, the Centre for Teaching Materials, the Goethe Reading Room) and of the Ukrainian-Bavarian Management Training Centre in collaboration with the Ost-

Renovated Church Centre next to the ruin of St. Paul

All of us – and that also includes the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin – know that a great measure of German presence is also required in the regions of the Ukraine. I am therefore convinced that the project for a »German Centre of St. Paul« in Odessa may well become a focal point in the region enabling us to systematically improve and expand our relationships there. For this reason, we have supported the project from its very inception and shall continue to do so. In times of a shortage of money it is necessary to set priorities. The Odessa region is one such priority for us. As we are all aware, the transformation of the state and society is one of the most essential preconditions for guiding the Ukraine along the way to European and Euro-atlantic structures. It is also the elementary basis for long-term networking of economies, cultures and peoples. And, last, but by no means least, German business and industry have clearly articulated their interests in achieving this.

The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Ukraine, Dieter Stoltenberg, in a letter to Regional Bishop, Johannes Friedrich, on 07.18.2002
West Managementtraining GmbH / OWZ Bayern as well as the social welfare projects of the Diakonisches Werk Bayern in the Odessa region and the efforts of the ELKB in terms of personnel and funds towards rebuilding the DELKU.

A new German centre at the heart of Odessa?

A location with advantages in a historical setting. The aforementioned activities, an expansion of which would be desirable and possible, are currently spread out over the entire area of the city. In the long run, it would be very advantageous to concentrate them in a single place while the individual sponsors remain independent. These advantages would include the possibility of a variable use of a portion of the spaces and considerable synergetic effects, as well as lower investment and consequential costs.

A cohesive image of the German organisations and institutions involved would benefit the assertiveness, the impact and the reception by domestic and foreign visitors. It would also set a signal that in our community of values, social and cultural commitments, the promotion of trade and industry, education and religious life in the Protestant tradition do not have to vie with one another, but can give engage in mutual support. (Feasibility Study 2002).

The use of the formerly German area surrounding the Church of St. Paul, which still constitutes a central location, offers a unique opportunity to implement the concept of an integrated meeting, educational, cultural and church centre. This would mean that the erstwhile impressive model of German presence in this historic place would be recreated in an appropriate contemporary form.

A German centre such as this will have a wide variety of functions: it will cater directly to the German minority and help it rediscover its ethnic roots. It will localise German tradition and presence in the city of Odessa, which is from the very outset multinational, multicultural and multi-religious in character, in a central place. With its opportunities for further education and encounters between people it will enhance the consolidation of German – Ukrainian relations, which is highly desirable from a political standpoint. It therefore constitutes a contribution towards integrating the Ukraine in the new Europe, which is a long-term objective. And, finally, it will promote ecumenical understanding between the Protestant and Orthodox churches, which is also desirable from an ecclesiastical point of view. (Feasibility Study 2002).

Key data of a realistic concept. The Church of St. Paul, which burned down in 1976, is a well preserved ruin: the main tower in the front part
The building projekt

North-West façade
(present condition)

South façade
(present condition)

Overall plan of the area: Ground plan with position of church ruin (1) and the already renovated Church Centre (2)

An initial, tentative visualisation of the combined solution (Computer graphic ARCUS)
and two thirds of the central nave can be rebuilt, but according to inspections that have been presented, the rear part containing the apse must be demolished. This opens up the possibility of a new building or extension.

There are other reasons why a complete reconstruction of the ruin as a church is out of the question for the reduced Lutheran community of Odessa. For approximately the past four years the following concept, which is assessed as being realistic, is under discussion: Reconstruction of the tower and central nave as church and concert hall combined with the demolition of the apse followed by the construction of a modern wing with offices as an extension to the church (with separate access).

This idea has, meanwhile, met in principle with the approval of the authorities for town planning and protection of monuments and historic buildings in Odessa, of the Bavarian Ministry of Social Affairs and in the Diakonisches Werk Bayern as the sponsor of the Bavarian House, of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and of the Federal Government Commissioner for the German minority, of the German Embassy in Kiev and the Federal German Foreign Office as well as that of DELKU, ELKB and the Protestant Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland – EKD).

> Taking into account the objectives, the costs and the synergetic effects, the proposed solution of a combined building (Church/German Centre) seems the most sensible and convincing approach. This would fulfill all the criteria as well as proving the least expensive in terms of building costs and subsequent costs (possibility of owner occupancy). Owing to its design, a »German Centre« such as this would be representative in character. For German business and industry it would become extremely attractive since infrastructure and services would be available for business activities in a central, safe and representative location« (Feasibility Study 2002).

The Feasibility Study has calculated the space requirements for the »German Centre« to be 1,329 m² (for the Bavarian House, the language school and the Centre for Training and Business, the Goethe Reading Room, the Culture and Meeting Centre, the German minority, the GfE and GTZ as well as DELKU). Provision must be made for further 540 m² of rental space in order to be able to earn the running costs, taking into account the current economic situation in Odessa. Interest has already been expressed in this. This amounts to overall space requirements of approximately 1,900 m².
Occupancy of the Odessa branch of the HypoVereinsbank? Last year the HypoVereinsbank in the Ukraine was in contact with the BHO regarding the rental of rooms for a new branch. Since the space and location available were not optimal, this failed to materialise; the branch (approx. 300 m²) is currently located outside the city centre. In Autumn 2003 first talks took place with Mr. Wriedt / Kiev about the possibility of the branch taking up occupancy in the planned »German Centre«. When the current rental contract expires in around 2007, this would be conceivable, provided that sufficient space (approx. 400–500 m²) is provided and assurance given that the bank be involved in the planning; furthermore, separate entrances and the necessary security installations must be guaranteed.

During these talks, the subject of possible co-financing was touched on for the first time, for example by means of a loan for the residual financing, which could be paid back in the form of rent. Other variants need to be examined.

DLKU and ELKB have now commissioned a reputable architectural and planning office in Odessa to prepare an outline project for the new building, making allowance for both the requirements of the owner-builder and the investors, as well as meeting the criteria of the protection of monuments and historic buildings. Two versions of the outline project are to be presented: based on space requirements of 1,900 m² and – if the HypoVereinsbank branch takes up occupancy – based on space requirements of 2,300 m². These outline projects are expected to be presented in the early summer of 2004. The sketches involved are not construction plans, they are a basis for further discussion and for approval from the authorities for the protection of monuments and historic buildings.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variant 1: 1,900 m² useful space</th>
<th>Variant 2: 2,300 m² useful space</th>
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<tr>
<td>Partial demolition and reconstruction of the church:</td>
<td>1.4 Mio. €</td>
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<td>Construction of new office wing:</td>
<td>1.9 Mio. €</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project planning and ancillary building costs:</td>
<td>0.5 Mio. €</td>
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<td>Total building costs:</td>
<td>3.8 Mio. €</td>
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**Funding:**

| Funds to be provided by ELKB (2004–2007): | 2.1 Mio. € | 2.1 Mio. € |
| Commitments by BMI and Bavarian Ministry of Social Affairs: | 1.0 Mio. € | 1.0 Mio. € |
| Funding shortfall: | 0.7 Mio. € | 1.1 Mio. € |

Professor Georg Kretschman, Archbishop of the Lutheran Church in Russia, the Ukraine, in Kazakhstan and Central Asia (ELKRAV) in a letter to the Martin-Luther-Bund (Martin Luther federation) in November 2003.
On cost estimates and funding. The Feasibility Study quotes the following costs for partial demolition of and reconstruction of the church nave at 1.4 million €, the new construction of the office wing at 1.9 million €. Taken together with the project planning and ancillary building costs, this amounts to a total of 3.8 million € based on Variant 1 (1,900 m²). For Variant 2 (2,300 m² office space) the total costs amount to 4.2 million €, whereby a HypoVereinsbank share of 400 m² has been estimated.

Over the years 2004 to 2007 the ELKB will provide a total of 2.1 million €. BMI and the Bavarian Ministry of Social Affairs have committed themselves to co-finance the project to the tune of approx. 1.0 million € (Variant 1). This results in a funding shortfall amounting to 0.7 million € (Variant 1) and 1.1 million € (Variant 2).

Upcoming tasks for summer 2004:

- Talks with HypoVereinsbank:
- Is the HypoVereinsbank genuinely interested in moving the Odessa bank branch to take up residence in the planned German Centre?
- On what terms can HypoVereinsbank headquarters in Munich grant a loan for the residual financing?
- Talks with the architects' office in Odessa:
- After the presentation of the first sketches for a combined meeting and church centre, requests for alterations must be worked into it with the objective of obtaining a design that will meet with the approval of the authority for the protection of monuments and historic buildings in Odessa.
- Talks with the Federal German Ministry of the Interior and the Commissioner for Resettlers, Jochen Welt:
- Is there a possibility of obtaining sponsors for the residual funding of the German Centre, which is not resolved as yet – possibly also in the United States? The funding shortfall amounts to approximately 600,000 to 700,000 €.

Munich, October 2004

Signed: Dr. Claus-Jürgen Roepke, Commissioner for Odessa at ELKB

When the EU enlargement becomes reality in May this year, states like the Ukraine will be directly adjacent to the Eastern border of Europe: a challenge also for German-Ukrainian relations. Without doubt they will become more intense in the coming years. The planned «German Centre of St. Paul» in the Black Sea metropolis, Odessa, is a future-oriented project. With its wide variety of potential uses it represents an important contribution towards a Europe that continues to grow together. So I am very grateful to the Lutheran Church in Bavaria that — on behalf of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) — it is prepared to cooperate with other partners to implement this partnership project.

Bishop Wolfgang Huber,
Chairman of the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany,
in February, 2004

The quotations are taken from the Feasibility Study 2002 presented by Pichler Consulting in Stuttgart and funded by the Federal German Ministry of the Interior.