

## BALLINSTADT

# The reconstruction of a city

**Hanburgoko hiriak Ballinstadt eremua berreraikitzeke asmo irmoa du. Bertan, behin-behinean 5.000 pertsona baino gehiago hartzeko eraikin multzoa zegoen. Herritarrek “emigrazioaren barrakoiak” bezala ezagutzen zituzten.**

In the twentieth century five million people emigrated through the port of Hamburg hoping for a better life outside their country. 80% of them came from Eastern European countries such as Russia, Poland, the Balkans and Rumania. Many were Jewish; only 18% were German citizens.

In order to keep them together, protected and supervised, a large-scale accommodation for emigrants on state-owned grounds was built in Hamburg. Run by a private company, the development consisted of some 25-30 buildings housing over 5,000 people. The emigrants would spend around a week in the buildings, popularly known as “Emigrants’ Halls,” waiting to board their ships. The facility had its own power station and sewage system. The overall living conditions were satisfactory; there were even centers catering to the two main Christian denominations, Roman Catholic and Protestant, as well as a synagogue for the Jews. Health checks were carried out on a regular basis. The facility was a model at the time of how emigrants should be treated, and in 1990 the BallinStadt project was presented in Paris at the Universal Exposition.

### The new BallinStadt

With a budget of 12 million euros, Hamburg plans to rebuild the “Emigrant City”. Two million will come from the city coffers, under the auspices of the Department of Culture, and the remaining financial support will be provided by four privately-owned companies: the Hapag-Lloyd Shipping Company, with a contribution of 1.6 million euros; Norddesten Affinaire (copper producer), with one million; the Hamburg Airport, with 250,000 euros; and property insurer Hamburger Feuerkasse, with 200,000 euros. The project is a crucial part of the city’s general regeneration plan for the port area. It is expected to become one of the driving forces behind the projected five-year plan aimed at the total redevelopment of the port, which much like other European port cities, wants to recapture the important role it once played. BallinStadt will be located at the site of the old shipping port, to the south of Klein Grasbrook, where an estimated 150,000 visitors will be able to arrive by boat.

3,000 square meters of constructed space will be distributed in three buildings arranged in a U-shape – one will house



the Administration offices, another, the Genealogical Research Center, and the third building will be dedicated to emigration. Here, visitors will learn about the motives that led so many people to leave their homeland for distant countries – not only the United States, but also Brazil and Argentina.

BallinStadt will focus on the wave of emigration from 1903 until the First World War, the period when the shipping company owned by Mr. Ballin was in operation. The Ballin operation was also responsible for building many of the ships that set sail for America.

The Ministry of Culture of the State of Hamburg is also involved in the project, as is the Museum der Arbeit (Museum of Work) in Hamburg, which will coordinate the content of the BallinStadt Museum. The company Leisure Work Group will be in charge of running the facility, which is slated to open on July 15th 2007.

The University is in charge of centralizing the Hamburg archives, which contain a complete index of the five million passengers who departed for the Americas, complete with names, professions, places of origin and other interesting types of information. Over 2.7 million archives have been scanned and digitized, the remaining passenger lists expected to be fully digitized by 2009.

Part of the museum is earmarked for the BallinStadt Family Research Center, where the public will be able to trace their ancestors’ migration history free of charge. The idea is to concentrate initially on gathering documents on family biographies, letters and church records. Later a small research center will focus on emigration, particularly from East Europe. The center will have a conference hall and five or six workstations for researchers, plus organized seminars and a system of postgraduate studies focused on emigration.