In the early post-war years two personalities had substantial influence on the scientific and institutional development of mathematics in Berlin: Helmut Hasse (1898–1979) and Hermann Ludwig Schmid (1908–1956). In the following the authors, former students of Hasse and Schmid, respectively, try to create from a personal point of view a picture of the achievements reached in those most difficult times. For a correct understanding of the general and academic situation in post-war Berlin it seems appropriate to recall the political status of the city.

After the war Berlin was divided into four sectors, each of them controlled by one of the former allies. Due to the tensions between Western Allies and the Soviet Union immediately following the war, the political situation steadily deteriorated. In 1948 this development culminated in the first of a series of events which marked the division of the city into East Berlin and West Berlin, namely the introduction of two different currencies: In June, West Berlin joined the currency reform of West Germany (West-Zone). A few days later the Soviet administration introduced a separate currency in East Germany (Ost-Zone) and East Berlin and imposed the blockade on West Berlin. About the same time, a freely elected common city assembly with residence in East Berlin was forced to end its activities there; the Western delegates had to move to West Berlin. Thus, the division of the city had been completed also on the administrative level. Earlier that year, the Soviet administration had already left the Control Council.

It was towards the end of this year that the Freie Universität Berlin (Free University of Berlin) was founded in West Berlin and the traditional former Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in East Berlin obtained its present name, Humboldt-Universität. One year later the two German states were established, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic (BRD and DDR). These had been the general political settings in which the rebuilding of the widely destroyed city and the reorganisation of the economical and cultural infrastructure took place. Academic structures and academic life developed rather quickly whereas private life took longer to normalize.

The former Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität reopened in January 1946, for the time being under the neutral name Universität Berlin. The Mathematics Department had rooms in the west wing of the damaged main building Unter den Linden, East Berlin, and a branch office in West Berlin.

H.L. Schmid was in Berlin at that time and he became quickly one of the main figures in the Department, combining high determination with diplomatic skills. Having been a student of Hasse, he became his assistant in Göttingen between 1935 and 1937, after he had written his thesis with him in Marburg in 1934. In
1938 he became editorial secretary of the *Zentralblatt für Mathematik* in Giessen, where he also habilitated. Schmid finally moved to Berlin in 1940, starting as an assistant of H. Geppert until he became *Privatdozent* (lecturer).

Schmid was appointed full professor in 1946 and soon became a member of the *Gelehrter Rat für Fragen der wissenschaftlichen Forschung und Lehre*, an official consulting council at the *Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung* (see [3]). Thus, he gained the influence needed to realize his plans, to the benefit of the Department and of mathematics in Berlin.

At an early stage Schmid organized the beginning of teaching. The first official beginner courses started in February 1946, whereas the Department had taken up its work in the branch office unofficially as early as May 1945, immediately after the war.

It seems remarkable that it was possible in those times to provide several visiting professorships for full-term courses at the *Humboldt-Universität*. The geometer Eduard Rembs and the mathematical physicist Georg Hamel from West Berlin, the analyst Konrad Knopp, and the algebraist Friedrich Karl Schmidt from West Germany accepted invitations, the latter even for a whole year in 1947/48. F.K. Schmidt’s one-term lectures on mathematical logic indeed were highlights in those days. His way of celebrating the subject attracted many students also from other faculties, not only mathematicians and physicists. Later, he obtained an offer from the *Humboldt-Universität* which he rejected.