



Transformation Group Newsletter

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A LETTER FROM BERLIN

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A LETTER FROM BERLIN

John F. Kennedy famously declared during his visit to Berlin in June 1963 that 'Ich bin ein Berliner'. But what is it that characterises the Berliner? During a three-month research stay in Berlin, from April-June 2007, I had the opportunity to conduct an investigation not only into the role of EU member states in the EU's policy towards Russia during the German EU Presidency but also to discover a city I had only lived in for a few months after my birth, and consequently my memory of it was rather hazy.

I was told that Berlin has changed a lot since that time, so even if I had any memory of it, it would probably not have served me particularly well. The face of Berlin has certainly changed since the fall of the wall that separated West Berlin from its other half, and from the rest of the country. A division between 'Wessi' and 'Ossi' is not noticeable anymore, at least not to an outsider, but I was told though that you can spot an Ossi by the sound of their voices (their intonation). Those born and bred in the former 'West' of

the city pride themselves on speaking immaculate German while those from the East do what is best known as 'berlinern' (speaking like a Berliner). Of course such divisions are not as clear-cut, and it was my impression that social class and career ambitions rather than geography (pre)determine the accent a Berliner adopts, much the same as in the UK with the Queen's English and Received Pronunciation.

But even when you try to spot the former border between East and West, you have a hard time unless you are

aided by memorial plaques or a map that tell you where the former border ran. Besides, the former upmarket places in West-Berlin, such as Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, are becoming slightly less chic to live in, whereas the Ost-Berliner district of Prenzlauer Berg (also affectionately called 'Prezi-Berg') has become the new fashionable district for younger well-to-do Berliners.

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Above: Checkpoint Charlie

The Transformation Group brings together members of the Department of whatever status who take a primary or at least substantial interest in the process of political change in Eastern Europe, the former USSR and China.



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Even the famous Checkpoint Charlie [photo] now looks rather out of place. On the street is a reconstruction of the original checkpoint, which looks exactly like one you see in the history books (and on souvenir postcards), but which in today's Berlin looks and feels rather implanted into an otherwise unobtrusive part of the city.

Perhaps the most visible remnant of the DDR in the Eastern part of the city is the 'Ampelmännchen' - which can only poorly be translated as little traffic-light man, a special traffic light figure that was invented in the 1960s in the GDR. Following German unification, there were attempts to standardise all traffic signals - meaning that West German forms

were to be adopted also in the eastern part of the city of Berlin, and in the country as a whole. This helped propel the Ampelmännchen to its current status, and transformed it into a symbol of everything the Ossi looked back on with fondness and wanted to preserve in the reunited Germany.

The movement to save the Ampelmännchen was successful - the traffic sign was restored in the eastern parts of Berlin, and installed in some western districts, which makes it all the more confusing for the outsider to figure out whether s/he is in the east or in the western part of the city (unless, of course, you paid enough attention in

your history classes to remember precisely the demarcations of the Soviet, American, British and French occupied zones). The 'little traffic-light man', like the Spree-waldgurken that became world famous with the film 'Goodbye Lenin', are today's leading symbols of 'Ostalgie' together with the DDR-Sandmännchen, a figure of a children's pre-bedtime programme which also adorns mugs, plates and shirts available in every souvenir shop in Berlin.

Although the Trabbi, another symbol of the 'good old days', has almost completely disappeared from the streets, for the 'ostalgic' tourist the Trabbi-Safari offers a unique opportunity to both get to know the city and also to sit behind the wheel of a real Trabbi. For those intent

on finding out more about the history of the GDR, there is a DDR-Museum about 5 minutes' walk from the Lustgarten and the Palast der Republik (Palace of the Republic), which used to be affectionately called Erichs Lampenladen (Erich Honecker's lamp shop). A noteworthy event hosted at the Palast der Republik included a performance by West German rock star Udo Lindenberg in October 1983. At the concert, Lindenberg sang one of his best-known songs, *Sonderzug nach Pankow* ('Special Train To Pankow'), which he had explicitly been asked not to play, since it satirised East German head of state Erich Honecker. (Lindenberg went on to collect the Bundesverdienstkreuz from the German government in November 1989 - he cur-

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CONFERENCES/PRESENTATIONS

Valentina presented her UK case-study ('Spinning Russia: The Role of Russia's Image in Russia-UK Relations') at the BASEES conference at the end of March, and her paper on the mechanism of Russia's PR campaign at the PSA Northern Graduate Conference in May.

Daniel, Ariel and Tom all presented papers at the PSA Graduate Conference North in Glasgow on 29 May in a panel entitled 'Foreign and Domestic Policy Making and Policy Implementation in the People's Republic of China'. The Conference was hosted by the Politics Department and organised by Anke. Daniel's paper was entitled, 'Is It Broken, Does It Need Fixing?: Fragmented Authoritarianism as an Explanation for Urban Social Assistance Policy in the PRC'; Ariel presented on 'China's Foreign Economic Policy Towards Vietnam Since

1990'; and Tom's paper was called 'New Opportunities, Same Constraints: Environmental Protection and China's New Development Path'.

Jane presented a paper, coauthored with her colleague Dr Athar Hussain (LSE), on 'Unemployment policies and state capacity' at an international workshop on 'State Capacity of China in the 21st Century' at the City University of Hong Kong in April. While in Hong Kong she also presented a paper - 'Tackling Unemployment in China: Why is it such a Problem?' - at the lunchtime seminar series of the Universities Service Centre for Chinese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Jane also gave a paper on 'NGOs and China's Health Policy' at the British Inter-University China Centre Conference, University of Oxford, in late June. Tom also participated in this conference,

presenting a paper entitled 'Environmental Public Participation in China and the Role of NGOs in the Old Summer Palace Incident'.

Stephen spoke to the evening symposium at BASEES at the end of March on current developments in Russian politics, and presented a paper based on his focus group material to a set of panels on the Ukrainian 'Orange Revolution'. A further panel has been organised at the AAASS in New Orleans in November, and a two-part conference at Cambridge and Glasgow on 'coloured revolutions' is due to take place in the first half of next year jointly organised with David Lane. He also spoke on 'Still a Militocracy' (with Olga Kryshchanovskaya) at the Irish Association of Russian and East European Studies at Limerick University in May.

PUBLICATIONS

Jane published, along with Alasdair Young and Paul Graham (in their capacities as editors of *Politics*), *Publishing in Politics: A Guide for New Researchers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007; copies are available free to any who would like them). She also published 'Local governance, health finance, and changing patterns of inequality in access to health services', in Vivienne Shue and Christine P. Wong (eds), *Paying for Progress in China: Public Finance, Human Welfare, and Changing Patterns of Inequality* (London & New

York, RoutledgeCurzon, 2007), pp. 46-68.

Stephen completed work on *Developments in Central and East European Politics 4* (Palgrave/Duke, due out shortly), and sent off two edited volumes deriving from the Berlin ICCEES congress two years ago: one on *Culture, Media and Society in Putin's Russia*, and another on *Politics and the Ruling Group in Putin's Russia* (Hillel Ticktin of DCEES is one of the other contributors). His *Party Politics in New Democracies* (coedited with Paul Webb, Oxford

University Press) is due out shortly. A substantial bibliography on the Russian regions was published by Pittsburgh in its Carl Beck Papers in February (coedited with John Lowenhardt), and papers appeared in *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* on Russian elite perspectives on foreign policy, in *Party Politics* on parties and democratic consolidation in postcommunist societies (with Ian McAllister), and on communist nostalgia in *Mir Rossii* (not to mention a contribution to the *Sunday Post*).

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SCOTTISH CENTRE FOR CHINESE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The University's Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences has approved the creation of a pan-Scottish Centre for Chinese Social Science Research. The Centre, based at Glasgow, will bring together scholars working in the social sciences of China at the Universities of Glasgow, St Andrews, Heriot-Watt, Aberdeen and beyond. Its goals are to develop research capacity in relation to China and promote understanding of Chinese economy, politics and society.

FIELDWORK

Valentina conducted fieldwork in Moscow at the start of the year, where she interviewed a number of people involved in Russia's governmental public relations campaign. She also used the scholarship that she had received from UACES to conduct her fieldwork in Paris and Brussels in the early summer, where she interviewed a number of journalists and PR specialists.

Daniel is planning a second field trip to the PRC and Hong Kong, leaving in mid-October and returning by the start of December. He

hopes this will include a period as a visiting scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. Tom will travel to China for his second field trip at the start of October, and expects to be based in Beijing. He will also travel to Yunnan province to carry out interviews.

Jane made fieldwork trips to Beijing in March and July, where she was working with Dr Xu Ying of People's University, interviewing directors of health sector NGOs for the project 'NGOs and the making of health policy in China'.

Stephen was in Moscow in March, engaged in library research but also in the development of a grant proposal with Glasgow visiting professor Olga Kryshtanovskaya, who visited the University herself in April. We also hosted a visit by Dr Tatyana Sirodina of the Higher School of Economics in April and again in July (her case was less fortunate - it was the day of the Glasgow airport bombing, and we are still looking for it).

PERSONAL

CONGRATULATIONS to Elena Korosteleva-Polglase, formerly of the Department and now of the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth, on the arrival of Isabel Maria.

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rently lives in Hamburg in the Hotel Atlantic).

Closed because of asbestos contamination in 1990, it is at present being carefully dismantled and plans to build a Berliner Stadtschloss (City Palace) in its place have been approved by the city administration, though this plan is not wholeheartedly endorsed by the people of Berlin.

Testifying to the originality and wit of the Berliner, many of the sights of Berlin have been given popular nicknames. The Chancellery, which is now officially Angela Merkel's home (although she is said to prefer returning to her own home in Berlin rather than spend the nights near her office), is best known as 'Angie's Waschmaschine' (Angela's washing machine). Near the Chancellery there are two more intriguing buildings, the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (or HdKdW) - the House of World Cultures, better known as the 'pregnant oyster', and close by another interesting construction, a belltower of black granite, best known as the Big Benz, since it was a present from the Mercedes Benz company. It has apparently 68 bells installed, weighing a total of 48 tons! The day-nursery near the government and parliament buildings where German politicians drop off their offsprings on their way to work is called 'Pamperspalast' ('nappy palace'), referring to a well known brand of nappies. What is perhaps a bit confusing for non-Berliner, and even more so for non-

Germans, is the fact that the Berliner speaks of Alex, Herta, and Zoo when referring not to an actual person called Alex but to the famous Berlin Alexanderplatz - perhaps best known for the television series of the same name. At the Alex there are two important sights of Berlin, the Weltzeituhr (World Time Clock) which, as the name suggests, shows what time it is in other places around the world, and nearby the impressive Fernsehturm (TV Tower), which at 368 metres is the tallest in the country, and for fairly obvious reasons affectionately known as Telespargel (telly-asparagus). Every sports fan will presumably know that Herta is not a woman with an old-fashioned name but arguably the most popular Berlin football club, Herta BSC.

Having arrived at the height of the 'Knut frenzy' - for those not in the know: this is an icebear cub which was turned quickly into the Berlin mascot and a tourist magnet (it now adorns not only innumerable postcards, mugs and T-shirts but the cards of the Berliner Volksbank). So any stranger to Berlin hearing the 'Zoo' mentioned will automatically assume that this refers to the city's zoo. But that is not necessarily the case: when the Berliner refers to meeting 'am Zoo', s/he does not necessarily mean 'at the entrance to the zoo', but more likely what is meant is the Bahnhof Zoo, the train station called Zo-

ologischer Garten. The Bahnhof Zoo is 5-10 minutes' walk from the actual zoo...

For the gourmand, perhaps rather than the gourmet, the Berliner Currywurst (a fried sausage with tomato ketchup covered in curry powder) is certainly the thing to go for. It did not become my staple diet during my entire stay, but I have to admit that I did eat a lot of them during the month of June. I was based at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin, also known as SWP, where I benefitted from access to a well-stocked library, a space

to work and stimulating company. For the first two months I did mostly literature and press research - the institute employs 'information managers' which are a brilliant institution, since they not only provide Pressespiegel (news coverage of the day relevant for the work of the SWP researcher) on a daily basis, but have also started monitoring new publications in academic journals and by think-tanks and policy institutes all over Europe - a marvellous source of information and a time-saver.

I also attended a number

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Above: Valentina, Sergei and others at the Berlin Congress; Anke was holding the camera

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of events organised by the various political foundations and think-tanks in Berlin, including a speech by the Norwegian foreign minister on energy policy – a particularly important topic on the EU agenda at present, a speech by the External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner (a very glamorous woman), a conference on EU foreign policy organized by the SWP research unit that I was based at which featured a speech by the former head of the policy planning unit of Javier Solana, Christoph Heusgen, who is now the foreign policy advisor to Chancellor Merkel, a conference on EU energy policy organised by the German Association for Eastern European Studies (DGO) and a conference on Germany's role in the EU's relations with the Russian Federation, organised by the Brussels-based EU-Russia Centre. I was lucky to be invited to observe a high-level trilateral conference at the German Association for Foreign Policy (DGAP) attended by US, Russian and EU member state current and former officials. I was also fortunate to be taken on a tour around the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs that was organised by the Praktikantenbeauftragter (the one in charge of looking after the interns) of the SWP, who had himself worked for the MFA before he joined the SWP.

The various events I attended did, all in all, provide me with an interesting mix of views and impressions of the political, academic and think tank 'scene' in Berlin, and I was pleased to note that most of the 'important people' that were invited to such events were those I was due to interview. The month of June I spent mostly setting up and conducting interviews with German officials and EU member state diplomats and journalists from new and old, small and large member states in Berlin – a very interesting and useful experience! What I found also very interesting and helpful were the Forschungsgruppensitzungen – the meetings of the

research group that I was part of during my time at SWP. It provided me with a good insight into the work at SWP, the type of people employed there and the type of outputs that they are preparing. Towards the end of my stay I presented my research to the group and received very encouraging feedback and constructive advice.

The timing of my stay in Berlin was fortunate not only because it coincided with the German EU presidency, but also because it coincided with the arrival of a fellow researcher from Catalonia, Anna Herranz, and her Polish colleague Michal Natorki, both PhD students at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, working on topics related to my own field of interest and who, coincidentally, will be attending the UACES-sponsored workshop on energy security in September at Glasgow that Valentina and I are organising. Further fruitful exchanges of experiences, research approaches and useful information were

fostered by Valentina's arrival in Berlin in mid-June, who shared with us the insights gathered during her research trips to Paris and Brussels.

Finally, for those who read German, I would highly recommend the books by Wladimir Kaminer, a Russian born in 1967 in Moscow and who arrived in 1990 in Berlin, where he rose to fame with the *Russendisko* - club nights featuring Russian pop music in the *Kaffee Burger*. His writing offers an entertaining insight into life in Berlin – with the best known book entitled coincidentally 'Russendisko' in which he traces in a humorous manner his own arrival in the city and the transformation of the Berlin of 1990 into that of the present day. His latest book '*Ich bin kein Berliner – ein Reiseführer für Faule Touristen*' (I am not a Berliner – a travel guide for lazy tourists) is a must-read for anyone wishing to gain an insight into the Berlin of the 21st century.

THE TRANSFORMATION GROUP: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Transformation Group was established in 2004 as a framework for co-operation among those in the Department of Politics, University of Glasgow, who work wholly or in substantial part on political change in Eastern Europe, the Former USSR and China. It includes staff members of the Department in various capacities, and research students. Its co-convenors are Professor Stephen White and Dr Jane Duckett and its other members and associates are:

Staff: Professor Bill Miller, Dr Sarah Oates.

Graduate Students: Ayse Artun, Valentina Feklyunina, Katsuto Furosawa, Daniel Hammond, Tom Johnson, Ariel Ko, Eero Mikenberg, Anke Schmidt-Felzman, Alison Swain, Guohui Wang.