

Newsletter The Cold War Museum / Berlin Chapter February 2010

By Baerbel E. Simon – German Affairs-

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen.

Dear Friends and Supporters of The Cold War Museum – Berlin

The Berlin local office wishes all the friends and supporters a peaceful and prosperous New Year. Thank you all very much for the many Christmas and New Year's greetings. I am glad to offer the following report on the activities and development of the Berlin Branch of the Cold War Museum.

Special thanks goes to Mr. Kevon Flecknor, British Liaison of The Cold War Museum – Berlin-, he did a great job, Kevin keep up you good job!

The year 2009 was very successful for the Berlin Branch We made significant progress, the new mobile exhibition of the Berlin Branch – The First Battle of the Cold War – The Berlin Airlift – opened on May 20th 2009 at Kettering Library in the United Kingdom.

We returned to the United Kingdom on the 24th of September 2009. The Secretary of State had invited us to the Commemoration of the End of the Berlin Airlift Operation which was held at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire on 26th September. The mobile Berlin Airlift Exhibition was also exhibited at the conference held for senior school students by the British Berlin Airlift Association in Stafford. I wish express my gratitude to all who made this event possible. We shared a very impressive and moving ceremony with the Veterans, their friends and families.

A special thank you goes to Mrs. Sue Campbell and Mr. Bill Campbell for organizing



and arranging the event. Both did a great job.

In addition, the Cold War Museum Berlin Branch presented the mobile Berlin Airlift Exhibition from the 17th to 19th November 2009 at: Churchill College, Cambridge at the College's conference entitled "The Cold War and its Legacy" Special thanks goes to Mr. Allen Packwood, Director of the Archive and his staff.

Photo by Horst Simon

2009 marked the 60th Anniversary of the Berlin Airlift, I had the privilege of delivering three talks, with Power Point presentation about the Berlin Airlift in the USA, at Nicholls State University, Louisiana, at the EAA Air show, Oshkosh, Wisconsin and at the Rotary Club, Des Plaines, Illinois.

2009/2010 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution and Reunification of Germany.

I am very pleased to announce that the Cold War Museum – Berlin received a federal grant for the new project for 2010,

"Als Alles begann - Die Berliner Mauer".

The grant was supported by the "Stiftung Arbeitung der SED Diktatur"

(A Government-funded organisation devoted to the examination and



I am deeply honoured; this is a great appreciation of our past and future work.

The opening of the Exhibition will take place in June 2010 at the Memorial Site Bunker Harnekop Lindenallee 1, 15345 Harnekop

Christmas 1961 with the Iron Curtain

By Baerbel E. Simon

In August 1961, Berlin was dramatically divided. Between East Berlin and West Berlin was built the Berlin Wall. Families were split, homes were destroyed, and dreams of free lives were gone.

But how was the Christmas Eve 1961 in Berlin?

In December 1961 John F. Kennedy, the President of the United States of America, sent the people of West Berlin an emotional message:

“No wall can keep out this light.”

Was that true? How about the people in East Berlin? No one knew what might happen. No one could pass through the wall.

All crossing points in Berlin were closed. The situation was very difficult, especially when children and parents were split. Sadness, loneliness and fear - this was Christmas 1961 with the Iron Curtain in Germany. This was Christmas for more than 28 years.

UPI Press International Radiophoto

Christmas-tree lights illuminate the Berlin dividing line

BERLIN, Dec. 17 (UPI) — West Berlin's Mayor, Willy Brandt, lighted 1,000 Christmas trees along East Berlin's twenty-five-mile wall tonight to show East Berliners "they are not forgotten."

At Mayor Brandt's side, stamping his feet in the cold, was 19-year-old Klaus Haucke, who escaped to West Berlin on Nov. 5.

When Mayor Brandt flipped a switch, 50,000 lights on the trees twinkled. "This candlelight is shining across the wall to bring a message to our country-

men," Mayor Brandt shouted as 5,000 West Berliners gathered. "The message that they are not forgotten by us who live in freedom."

A loudspeaker on the Communist side of the wall blared out propaganda and music.

"Vile Western depravity" and "Fascist" was what the Communist press called the trees today.

Some West German newspapers were critical, too, saying the trees were "maudlin sentimentalizing" of the East Berliners' fate.

The New York Times

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Once upon a time in Berlin - Fall of the Wall

By Bill Halpin

My wife and I attended the 20th Anniversary Fall of the Wall Party at the German Embassy in Washington on Saturday, 7 Nov. It was a great time to remember those important days and to reminisce with colleagues who served in West Berlin during those tumultuous days leading to 9 November 1989.

We arrived in West Berlin the week of the La Belle Disco bombing, a year after my colleague in earlier assignments, "Nick" Nicholson, was gunned down by an over-eager Soviet soldier. Between spring 1986 and November 1989, there were many exciting and spectacular events in Berlin. Among them were Berlin's year-long 750th birthday party; President Reagan's "tear down this wall" speech, the demise of Rudolph Hess, and the annual Allies Day Parades. There were tragedies as well – Pan Am 103, numerous terror attempts to blow up the US duty train, and many tragic failed escape attempts from the Soviet Sector. I recall the last successful escape from East Berlin in the early morning hours on 7 November 1989. East German Border Command troops fired at the escapee and he was lucky to make it out alive -- risking his life just two days prior to the opening.

A little known fact about all this follows: During the Easter 1988 weekend, the grounds of the Reichstag hosted a two or three day rock concert. The crowds were enormous and naturally, young East Germans gathered near the wall to listen. Notes attached to balloons were sent across until the Vopos cleared the "no-go zone" on the East side. Protests followed and soon thereafter East Berlin officials appeased the protesters with promises of their own rock concerts.

Well, the first (and as far as I know only) concert was scheduled for the grounds of the Weissensee Radrennbahn in mid-June 1988. My teenage daughters wanted to go, so my wife and I drove into East Berlin in a Volvo station wagon filled with five teenagers. The crowd was estimated to be 350,000. I was amazed by the display of United States symbolism -- small flags, shirts, hats, etc., all displaying the American "red, white and blue." It reminded me of Washington, D.C. on any 4 July! These symbols were illegal in the East and the Volks Polizei arrested young men and women in great numbers. However, they couldn't make a dent in that incredible American display. The performer that evening was none other than, the Boss -- Bruce Springsteen. When he sang his signature song *Born in the U.S.A.*, the crowd went absolutely wild. I knew then and there that the East German government could not possibly put the genie back into the bottle.

The following Thursday morning I attended the joint US Mission/US Command staff meeting. I normally kicked-off these meetings with a situational update. On that day, I told the assembled group "the Cold War is over, the wall will fall within 18 months and not a shot will be fired." When I supported my forecast with a description of the Springsteen concert, the State Department types snickered and my Military colleagues wondered if I'd gotten into the Irish whiskey. Later, I reiterated my prediction in a meeting

with Secretary of the Army, John Marsh and his Special Assistant, Bob Winchester.

The Wall fell 17 months later. On that evening, I was watching the press conference in East Berlin as Günter Schabowski fumbled through his notes for answers to the pressing questions. My wife climbed onto the wall at the Brandenburg Gate and cheered the fall of East Bloc communism along with tens of thousands of her "closest friends" ... the rest is history.

When the Berlin Wall still stood, the Gate stood alone and isolated.

By Baerbel Simon

The Brandenburg Gate, Berlin's most famous landmark, is over 200 years old. Until 1989 it symbolized the division of Berlin and Germany; today it is a national symbol of unity.

On December 1989, thousands of people spilled on to the city's streets cheering in the pouring rain to watch the historic ceremony which effectively ends the division of East and West Germany.

East German army engineers worked through the night to tunnel through one of two crossing points in the gate, which stands in the "no man's land" on the eastern side of the Berlin Wall.

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl walked through to be greeted by Hans Modrow, the East German Prime Minister.

Both leaders, flanked by their mayors, shook hands in a moment which signalled the first time a West German leader has officially entered East Berlin.



Today it is once again integrated into the recently designed Pariser Platz. Next to the gate stand the House Liebermann and House Sommer. Josef Paul Kleihues designed them to resemble the buildings by Stüler that previously stood at the site before they were destroyed in the war.

On the north side of the plaza there are two other impressive buildings: the Dresdner Bank and the French embassy (de Portzamparc). The south side was developed by the DG Bank (Gehry) and the Academy of Arts (Behnisch). The luxury Adlon Hotel, which has been rebuilt on its original site, is also a Berlin highlight.

Photo by Horst Simon

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