

BERLIN CHAPTER UPDATE Newsletter February 2007

By Baerbel E. Simon – The Cold War Museum – Berlin Office / German Affairs -
English Translation - David G. Tompkins and Baerbel E. Simon
Photos - Horst Simon

The Berlin Chapter wishes all its friends and supporters a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Thank you all very much for the many Christmas and New Year's greetings.

The year 2006 was very successful for the Berlin Chapter. We made significant progress. The symbolic foundation stone for the Cold War Information Center was placed on November 4, 2006. Many guests were there and I want to express again my thanks for all the interesting gifts for the Information Center. These items all will make the exhibition richer. The Information Center has had a very positive feedback in the media.

11/17/2006 Märkischen Oderzeitung

<http://www.moz.de/index.php/Moz/Article/category/Bad+Freienwalde/id/161686>

11/06/2006 Märkische Allgemeine

<http://www.maerkischeallgemeine.de/cms/beitrag/10811963/62249/>

Märkische Oderzeitung

<http://www.moz.de/index.php/Moz/Article/category/Bad%2BFreienwalde/id/160259>

link

<http://de.news.yahoo.com/04112006/336/kalter-krieg-harnekop.html>

11/05/2006Märkischen Oderzeitung

<http://www.moz.de/index.php/Moz/Article/id/160153>



Francis Gary Powers, Jr. and Gail Halvorsen USAF Col. Ret
Sep 2005 in Berlin

I am pleased to announce that Mr. Gail Halvorsen USAF Col. Ret, the famous Berlin Airlift Pilot, has agreed to serve on the Museum as Patron and Advisor. It is really for the Berlin Chapter a great honor and a step forward.

On November 30th, Werner Juretzko was in Harnekop to visit the Atomic Shelter and the Information Center, too. Mr. Juretzko is an executive board member of the Cold War Museum, and is helping to build up the Midwest Chapter in Waukesha, Wisconsin as well. He gave a very interesting talk about the "Whiskey-Vodka Line," one of the tragedies of the Cold War In Germany after the Second World War.

We welcomed special guests Dr. Stephen Bowman, US Col. (ret) and Mr Robin Greenham, GB Col. (ret). We wish to express our thanks once again for their visit

Our guests were also enthusiastic about the informative guided tour by Mr. Peter Briesemeister of the bunker. Many thanks to Mr. Briesemeister, truly the perfect guide.

I had the chance to talk with both veterans about getting veterans groups to the atomic shelter and to the Cold War Information Center in the future.



On June 30th, 2007 the solemn opening of the first phase will take place. Over the winter months, we will be working hard to make the display panels. We still are looking for sponsors for the ceremony and for the flights and hosting of guests. I have sent invitations to Francis Gary Powers, Jr., David Eisenhower and the son of Nikita Khrushchev, Dr Sergei Khrushchev. I will talk about these development in the May issue of the Cold War Newsletter later in the spring.

THE WHISKY-VODKA-LINE

On May 8, 1945, at the conclusion of world War II in Europe, allocating land within Germany for purposes of military control between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies did not end at the Potsdam Conference, as commonly believed. The discussions for apportioning land among the Allies included many complex issues, and the division of Germany into various "zones" was not reached in a harmonious manner, but was more often the result of heated disagreements between the Soviet and Western Allies. Frequently, the participants became so exhausted that important details were overlooked. One of the most important of the overlooked details was what has become known as the "Whisky-Vodka Line", which was the result of the Wanfried Agreement dated September 17, 1945. The primary negotiator of the Wanfried Agreement was Captain Michael Burda of the United States Army. The Wanfried Agreement was signed by General W.T. Sexton on behalf of the United States, and by General Vasili S. Askalepov on behalf of the Soviet Union.

The Wanfried Agreement essentially resolved a heated dispute over 2.7 miles of railroad tracks that served as an important supply line for American military forces located in the southern portion of Germany. This agreement essentially included the exchange of two villages in the State of Thuringia, which was part of the Russian Zone of Germany for five villages in the State of Hessen, which was part of the American Zone. Shortly after the Potsdam Conference, which formally concluded World War II, it was discovered that about 2.7 miles of railroad tracks ran through the Russian Zone. The alliance between the Soviets and the Western Allies, particularly America, was never amicable and was put to a severe test and a war of nerves ensued over the following months. Josef Stalin, who was portrayed to the Western public as "Uncle Joe", clearly demonstrated to the world by his behavior on this issue that his ambitions to conquer the globe for his socialist aims was still intact.

The Soviet-American confrontations over the 2.7 miles of railroad tracks began almost immediately after the signing the Potsdam Agreement. Soviet forces controlled and blocked a 2.7 mile section of this important railway, which American military forces used to transfer supplies from the port city of Bremerhaven, located on the North Sea, to the American Zone, which was located in the southern part of Germany. It is important to note the Americans had wisely secured the use of this important railway through the British Zone, which served to enhance the goodwill between the Americans and British in their respective roles in the Western Alliance.

As supply and transportation trains traveled through this 2.7 miles of railway through the Russian Zone, Red Army troops forced the trains to stop and robbed them of important supplies needed by American troops in southern Germany. In addition to the plundering of important supplies for American troops, the raping and the disappearance of European passengers on the trains by Red Army troops were a daily occurrence. Things progressed to the point where the stealing of goods and freight from rail cars occurred in brought daylight.

In order to correct this problem and cool down the escalating tensions between the Soviets and the Western Allies, high-ranking military commanders met at the noble estate of "Kalkhof" in the State of Saxony. The purpose of the meeting was to negotiate an exchange previously agreed upon land in the various Soviet and American Zones so the 2.7 miles of supply railway would be moved exclusively into American zone.

Upon the successful agreement of the exchange of villages, at the conclusion of the meeting between Generals Sexton and Askalepov, they exchanged a bottle of whisky and vodka. This

exchange resulted in what history has now labeled as the Whisky- Vodka Line. The signatures placed the city of Wanfried in Saxony. In fact, the city of Wanfried is located in the State of Hessian.

Do you remember?

At Christmas and New Year of 1963, West Berlin citizens received passes (Passagierscheine) to visit their East Berlin relatives at Christmas and New Year.

The Passierschein Agreement regulated the interior municipal holiday travel of family relatives in the divided Berlin after the Berlin Wall Construction on August 13, 1961.

The Coordinator of the Senate of West Berlin, Horst Korber, and the GDR State Secretary Erich Wendt signed the Passierschein protocol agreement on December 17th, 1963. After 28 months, it was finally possible for family members separated by the wall to visit each other.

During the next few years, several other Passierschein Agreements between the GDR Government and the Senate of West Berlin followed;

The 2nd Passierschein Agreement, on the 24th of September 1964.

The 3rd Passierschein Agreement, on the 25th of November 1965.

The 4th Passierschein Agreement, on the 7th of March 1966, for Easter and Whitsun. Between the 7th of April 7-20 and May 23 to of June 5, 1966, it was possible to visit relatives in East Berlin.

The 5th Passierschein Agreement on the 6th of October 1966, for Christmas and New Year. Unfortunately, the negotiations failed for the Passierscheine on Christmas and turn of the New Year in October 1966. The GDR demanded formal negotiations with the Senate of West Berlin. Regrettably, there were no possibilities for visits for the citizens of West Berlin to East Berlin until 1972.

In unusual cases, there was only the Passierscheinstelle for family emergencies, which were considered hardship cases.

Business travel, trips to the Leipziger Messe (fair), as well as visits by invitation of official departments of the GDR were excepted from these regulations.

Documents and further information: Deutsches Historisches Museum / Berlin

<http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/DasGeteilteDeutschland/KontinuitaetUndWandel/NeueOstpolitik/passierscheinabkommen.html>

Please help spread the word about the Berlin Chapter. Together we can make this vision a reality. If you should have any questions, want additional information, please visit the German Homepage: www.coldwar.org/BerlinChapter/ or give me a call : 030.745.1980

Thank you for your support
Baerbel E. Simon
The Cold War Museum
-Berlin Chapter-
Skarbinastrasse 67
12309 Berlin/Germany
Tel./Fax (011.49) 030.745.1980
Email: tinkadonald@hotmail.com