

WELCOME TO THE LAND OF THE IDEAS: THE GOETHE INSTITUTE FELLOWSHIP TOUR OF GERMANY

Keith Samuelson

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."

Mark Twain was inspired to write these words after a visit to Germany in the 1860's. Almost a century and a half later, I visited many of the same sites he described so eloquently in "Innocents Abroad". The Goethe Institute's 2006 Fellowship Tour gave me a much deeper appreciation of the significance of his words.

The Land of Ideas

There are many valid reasons for participating in an educators' tour of Germany. It is a nation that has a legacy of literary and political thought that has had a profound impact on the evolution of Western civilization. Germany has offered the world artistic and scientific genius and been the source of devastating war and unprecedented genocide. The historic opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the unification of Germany in 1990 underscore the importance of understanding the geopolitical role of modern Germany in the world community.

Today, Germany is one of the world's leading export countries, a major contributor to the European Union and an internationally respected member of the United Nations. Model of post-war reconstruction and the use of renewable energy resources, Germany has shared many of the problems evident in Canadian and American societies. Many teachers across North America consider a study of contemporary Germany essential to developing global understanding from an international perspective.

The Transatlantic Outreach Program

The Transatlantic Outreach Program (TOP) supports these teachers by disseminating teaching materials about modern Germany to K-12 Canadian and American teachers, program coordinators and university "methods" professors, promoting in-service teacher training, and offering all-expense-paid study/travel tours to Germany for social studies educators. The participants of the study tours are expected to contribute lesson plans to the Program and to offer in-service training about Teaching Modern Germany.

TOP is a public-private partnership between the Goethe-Institut, the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, Deutsche Bank and the Robert Bosch Foundation. The initiative is based on the idea that the best lessons in life come from experience. Since 2001, the TOP program has sought to find the best and most qualified K-12 social studies educators and give them the opportunity to experience modern Germany in the most dramatic way possible: in person. From Munich to Nürnberg, from Lake Constance to the Black Forest,

from Dresden to Weimar, and from Frankfurt to Berlin, each corner of Germany is sampled through sight, sound, touch, and taste!

Highlights of past summer study/travel seminars include Question and Answer sessions with diplomats from the Federal Foreign Office, experts on German immigration, officials from the European Central Bank and German curriculum developers, authors, teachers and students. Participants are given a private guided tour of the Reichstag and visit modern German industries such as the "Glass" Volkswagen factory in Dresden and a brewery in Weimar. Last year one group met and exchanged gifts and photos with Chancellor Schroeder; this past summer another group met Chancellor Merkel and President Bush during his official state visit.

These all-expense-paid travel seminars are two weeks in length. Four groups of about 15-20 educators visit different regions of Germany during July and August, and all "Fellows" spend a few days in Berlin and Frankfurt. This past summer Harry Lewis from Victoria and I became the first Canadian participants. Our itinerary focused on Berlin, Schwerin, Hamburg and Frankfurt with many excursions to smaller towns and villages along the way.

Orientation to the Program

Our tour group included thirteen teachers, professors and program coordinators from across North America and three Goethe Institute staff members. We met at the Institute's head office in downtown Atlanta where Dr. Michael Nentwich, Executive Director of the Goethe-Institut, provided a fascinating orientation on German culture, politics and economics. Dr. Nentwich gave us a great deal of practical advice to ease the transition to German culture. He pointed out that Germans were the first non-English speaking group to come to America. We learned that one quarter of Americans and six percent of Canadians trace their ancestry to Germany and that Germans are the most frequent travelers in the world. We were assured that Germany is a very safe country and that we should feel free to wander around any large city in our leisure time without jeopardizing our safety. We were gently cautioned to always be on time and to respect the schedule and social etiquette of our host country. In Germany, punctuality is next to godliness and German orientation towards personal space is different from what is acceptable in North America.

While Germans share many things with us culturally, their media is more oriented towards public television. Television networks are not licensed to provide entertainment at all costs but are expected to provide educational programming representative of the "Goethe-Schiller" ideal, a belief in the value of elite culture. Germany spends \$2 billion per year on the arts, more than any other country. Over half of the operas that are performed worldwide on any given night are performed in Germany, and even the smallest villages provide private and public-funded theatrical performances, art exhibitions and public concerts all year round. There is a fundamental belief that it takes time to learn to appreciate art; that most people only develop this appreciation later in life and are not mature enough to develop it while they're still in school. The public is encouraged to visit the wide variety of museums that are integral to the cultural life of every community. Germans believe that the arts are as important as the sciences because they teach us about what is essentially human.

The German attitude towards the arts is rooted a political ideal: the obligation of the state to look after its' citizens. Germany is a parliamentary democratic republic in which the President's role is mainly ceremonial and the Chancellor is the head of government in a

multi-party system. The present Chancellor, Angela Merkel, is the first female, the first former East German and the youngest post-war head of state. According to a recent article in Forbes magazine, she is the most powerful woman in the world.

Federal legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of parliament, the Bundestag, which is similar to Canada's House of Commons, and the Bundesrat, which functions much like our Senate. Since 1949 the party system has been dominated by the conservative Christian Democratic Union and more liberal Social Democratic Party.

Today Chancellor Merkel leads a coalition from both parties and is the most popular Chancellor ever. Smaller parties that play an important role include the Free Democratic Party, which has been in the Bundestag since 1949, and the Green Party, which has had seats since 1983. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislative branches. This political framework was laid out in the Basic Law of 1949, which remained in effect with minor amendments after Reunification. Basic Law has four principles:

1. Social Welfarism- the state is obligated to protect and support disadvantaged citizens and to strive for social justice and human dignity;
2. Federalism- the government's power and sovereignty are shared between a central government and regional (state) governments;
3. Democracy - all authority emanates from the people;
4. Rule by Law - actions of the state are subject to law and justice.

These principles have served the country well. Germany has a higher rate of voting than either Canada or the United States. Over 70 percent of the population participates in any given election. A mechanism is in place which enables each citizen to vote for a candidate and a party separately, thus ensuring that parliament reflects the views of the majority of voters who support an individual candidate and the percentage of voters who support a particular party's platform. This culture of discourse has been nurtured by an educational system that has given Germany a competitive edge in the global economy.

After four years of elementary school, most students attend a "Hauptschule", which is designed to prepare them for life and focuses on practical matters. About one third of them attend a "Gymnasium", which concentrates on more academic topics to prepare students for university. As a result, classes in the Hauptschule concentrate on the basics in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, History, the World of Work (Arbeitslehre), Religion (or a substitutesubject), Music, Art, Politics, Physical Education and Language. From the first year of Hauptschule, all children learn English (sometimes French) and German. Once students have graduated at the age of 15 or 16, they can go into practical vocational training, start work in the public service at the basic or secretarial level, or attend a Berufsfachschule (full-time vocational school). The jobs for which they apply consequently require practical skills rather than academic knowledge. They also can qualify for further education in a Gymnasium depending on their academic performance. Gymnasium students attend for nine years from the 5th through 13th grades and study the same main subjects offered at Hauptschule but in greater depth. They are also required to study at least two foreign languages (the combination of English and Latin or English and French being the most

popular) and, in the 12th and 13th grades, prepare for the "Abitur", a challenging external examination required for entrance to university.

Berlin

The summer of 2006 was a particularly exciting time to visit Germany. In the year of the World Cup, the German government and business leaders are presenting the country's modern face to the world with an initiative entitled "Germany - The Land of Ideas". The project is a showcase of the inventiveness, creativity and open-mindedness of the German people. A sculpture boulevard is being developed in the center of Berlin, each one dedicated to an outstanding idea which originated in Germany. At the German Historical Museum visitors approach the various exhibits along the "Walk of Ideas". A competition entitled "365 Places in the Land of Ideas" aims to find different places where ideas were born - one place for every day of the year. These "places" include private or public institutions, cultural and religious establishments, social projects, private companies and scientific research centers - any location where good ideas have been or are being conceived.

The practical application of German creativity was evident during our private tour of the Reichstag, a modern parliament in a historic setting. We were very impressed with its' state of the art energy system and other services which comply with the most stringent environmental criteria. The German Parliament features transparency from the basement to the open-air rooftop dome which provides visitors with a spectacular panoramic view of the city's landmarks. The most visible element is the "light sculpture", a skittle-shaped cone which extends from the cupola with 360 angled mirrors attached so that less electricity is required for artificial lighting. Waste air rises naturally for extraction through the open upper end of the cupola and fresh air is channeled under the plenary chamber via large ducts which existed in the original building.

Transparency is not only central to Germany's political system and the unique architecture of the Reichstag. It is evident in Germany's attempts to come to terms with the past. Goethe Fellows had an opportunity to visit Sachsenhausen, a concentration camp located just outside Berlin, which served as the model for Auschwitz and the other death factories of Poland. We also met Dr. Wolf Kaiser at the House of the Wannsee Conference, a stately lakeside villa in an exclusive suburb on the outskirts of Berlin. The present Memorial Site was used between 1941 and 1945 as a guesthouse for the SS. On January 20, 1942, in a top-secret ninety-minute meeting, fifteen high-ranking representatives of various ministries discussed and planned the deportation and murder of all European Jews. Their suggestions reflected the specific interests of their respective departments but none of them raised any basic objections regarding systematic and indiscriminate murder. The minutes taken by Adolf Eichmann document the appalling fact that state administrative agencies became accomplices to a monstrous crime against humanity which anticipated the slaughter of eleven million human beings. The central objectives of the Memorial site within the "house of the perpetrators" are to provide information about the fate of the victims and remember them by means of a permanent exhibition, a library, and various publications and educational programs. This Museum and Educational Center also aims to inform people about the perpetrators and the organization of their crimes, their ideological background and how Germany has dealt with its past.

Dr. Kaiser explained that Holocaust education is compulsory in Germany. The event is covered thoroughly in all schools as part of the required curriculum in every Land (state) and includes student visits to concentration camps and memorial sites. The Holocaust still

receives regular media attention. At the House of the Wannsee Conference, educational programs are provided to public school students and youth organizations, as well as adults. Seminars for adults are vocationally oriented. Their central theme is how the respective occupational groups to which the seminar participants belong acted during the time of National Socialism. Proceeding from there, the discussion concentrates on the significance which the history of Nazi crimes has on our own time. Participant groups include teachers, university students, the military, police, trade unions, private companies and visitors from other countries. Every year there are approximately 850 guided tours and 100 meetings of small groups in the permanent exhibition, in addition to 450 all-day seminars; 70% of the visitors come from Germany, and 30 % from 26 other countries. Dr. Kaiser is convinced that memory makes a recurrence of the nightmare impossible, at least in Germany.

It would be very difficult to disagree with him, especially after visiting Berlin's most recent memorial. The controversial "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe", designed by architect Peter Eisenman, is an appropriate, respectful and dignified monument. A vast grid of 2,711 dark concrete pillars of various sizes seem to sink into the earth to grapple with the moral ambiguities that separate guilt and innocence, good and evil, life and death. I was reminded of the symbolic stones of Treblinka, of the power of abstract art. Even its' central location seemed symbolic – near the Brandenburg Gate, Checkpoint Charlie and the site of Hitler's bunker; a short walk from Rosenstrasse, where German women protested the arrests of their Jewish husbands, and the square across the street from Humboldt College, where Einstein taught, the site of the infamous Nazi book burnings in the '30s.

Berlin has been in a constant state of reconstruction since the end of the second world war, yet every neighbourhood is steeped in history. The city certainly provided a dramatic setting for the interactive learning activities organized by our hosts. Nikolaus Graf Lambsdorff, Director General for Communication with the Federal Foreign Office, treated us to a gourmet lunch and a thought-provoking presentation at an exclusive downtown restaurant. He spoke about a wide range of global issues, particularly the situation in the Middle East, Germany's relationship with the U.S. and Russia and its' place in the European Union.

We met Dr. Hartmut Mangold at the Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Housing for his presentation on The Reconstruction of East Germany. It was truly fascinating to learn about the social, cultural, economic and psychological aspects of reunification from a government official who was directly involved in its' implementation. Dr. Mangold said that the adoption of the former West German legal system was an unqualified success but the introduction of a free market economic system into a former Communist state was extremely challenging. The Russian system had broken down, East German industry, agriculture and goods had deteriorated rapidly and there was a loss of six million jobs within a few years. There was a low technological standard, poor quality goods and services, and the Deutschmark was seriously devalued. With a wide-ranging collapse of the economy, unemployment rose tremendously. The German government made a huge capital investment which included an economic recovery program for schools, the social system, hospitals and basic infrastructure. Public buildings were redecorated and cities rebuilt to improve aesthetics and help develop tourism. High subsidies and tax incentives were offered to investors. East Germans had to learn to become entrepreneurs and to work together. There was no family tradition of or personal wealth for enterprise in Eastern Germany.

Economic issues notwithstanding, the most difficult process was psychological. Even after fifteen years, personal priorities and values tend to vary between former East and West German citizens. According to Dr. Mangold, the main reason for this is that the social, legal

and economic systems have totally changed. A different paradigm has immediate consequences when daily life is altered and people feel like strangers in their own land. When one's personal values are devalued, the self is devalued. In some situations, an academic degree from the East was not worth as much as one from the West. When former East German universities closed and factories shut down, many young people had to go to the West to study, and many wives had to go to the West to work. When a no-risk lifestyle suddenly changes to one of all risk, it is understandable for people to feel that an open, democratic system does not necessarily represent the best of all worlds. Fifteen years is simply not long enough for mental reunification.

While studies indicate that 70 % of the population from the East feel that they are integrated, a relatively small group who were part of an economic system that has no counterpart in Western society do not believe in the benefits of democracy. 50-80% of former East Germans still vote Communist depending on the region. There is a basic difference in the way people interpret freedom or liberty. In the West people think of freedom to do something; in the East freedom stems from social security.

In modern Germany, the contrasting mental paradigms are both geopolitical and generational. The reemergence of German flags during World Cup festivities revealed mixed feelings about nationalism among people in their forties and fifties who were educated by those who had direct experience of the Third Reich. Younger Germans tend to have a stronger sense of being part of a nation. Right wing nationalism is about 10% stronger in the East, partly because of a breakdown in the family and society, partly because some people have lost their identity. For some, the ideology of the right is the only political framework that makes sense. Without Communism, the only remaining authority is the right wing.

However, the percentage of people in this category is decreasing with age. Most young Germans who have experienced neither the German Democratic Republic nor National Socialism value freedom, human rights and economic growth as much as young Canadians and Americans. As the Nazi era and its legacy of historical guilt becomes more remote, the dark clouds of the past will surely dissolve. The distinction between East and West may not exist much longer, depending on the next generation and the values they embrace.

Wolf Kuhnelt, Director of the Berlin Museum Service, provided us with another perspective on modern German culture. He pointed out that 2 % of the federal budget is reserved for museums. Berlin has over 200 museums, collections and archives, offering its citizens one of the most significant and diverse museum landscapes in the world. From A to Z, from the Allied Museum to the Zoological Garden, these museums present just about everything that has concerned humanity from the past and present. There are museums dedicated to popular culture and high art, technology and nature, ancient civilizations and neighborhood history. Every year there are countless exhibitions encouraging people to see the familiar with a different perspective and to make their own discoveries.

Because of the diversity of themes presented in the museums and their connections with other arts and sciences, the Berlin Museum Service has developed into a facility that services the entire cultural landscape of the capital. Their staff organizes programs for children, teachers, the elderly and the general public. Recent immigrants come to learn more about German culture. They have a guide network for tourists, provide special workshops by request, publish pamphlets and journals about their programs, and update events on the museum hotline and their monthly e-mail service. They believe visiting virtual museums is a matter of individual choice, for no experience can replace an actual visit.

One of their most innovative projects, the "Long Night of the Museums", is funded by private companies and the federal government. Over 400 institutions related to art, music, film and theatre are involved. The "Long Night" attempts to draw public attention to new and diverse museums such as those devoted to World War Two bunkers, Medicine, Anne Frank and the Jews of Berlin, by providing a special shuttle service on one particular night for one unique event. About 100 cities around the world are also organizing their own "Long Night of the Museums" and plans are being made for another focusing on the "'68 Generation" in the museums of Berlin, Prague, Paris, London and Los Angeles.

Early in the tour we found it striking how much Berliners exhibit their love for and enjoyment of their city. It did not take long to understand why. Our leisure hours and side trips to surrounding areas provided ample opportunities to experience Germany through sight, sound, touch, and taste. I have many fond memories of the breathtaking view from the large window of my private room in a luxury hotel overlooking a river surrounded by three-storied elegant, balconied row houses all neatly decorated with colorful floral arrangements. Afternoon and evening strolls through the city's massive boulevards surrounded by some of the world's most impressive architectural wonders are unforgettable, especially when the significance of historical sites are explained by knowledgeable guides and colleagues who have become dear friends. Nature is omnipresent in the vast forests of Berlin, complete with wild boar, deer and nude sunbathers. Late night dinners in lively beer gardens, bohemian East Berlin cafes, and Turkish, Japanese, Thai, Greek, Italian and Spanish restaurants eased into relaxing and informative debriefing sessions in preparation for yet another exciting day.

Daytrips to Small Towns

Throughout the tour, our daytrips to smaller towns were deeply enriching experiences. The narrow cobblestone streets and towering windmills of Werder Havel, a picturesque little village on a small island just outside Berlin, provide a very different sense of space after becoming acclimated to the sprawling boulevards of the capital. At Potsdam we visited the factory of Alexander Schuke, the master of organ building, and learned how the careful processing of the finest material and outstanding artistic intonation leads to the highest aesthetic and musical standards. We spent an afternoon at Marmorpalais, the summer palace of one of Germany's most progressive leaders, Frederick the Great, and reveled in the beauty of its verdant gardens, immaculate rolling hills and sparkling fountains. It is easy to understand why he chose it for his final resting place.

At Schloss Cecilienhof, the site of the Potsdam Conference, we were treated to a fascinating guided tour of each room. The impact of the past was palpable as we stood in the main conference hall where Truman, Stalin and Atlee signed a document that led to the Cold War partition of Berlin and where Truman decided to drop the A-bomb on Japan. One can't help but wonder what would have happened had Churchill not returned to England only to lose the election at home while the conference was still in session.

Schwerin or the Former East Germany

On the train to Schwerin we marveled at the perfect little fences and neat bails of hay sprinkled across the countryside. Deeper into the former East Germany, drab buildings and

grey apartment blocks abandoned since the Communist era squat alongside revived, colorful homes and well-tended gardens. The quintessential Eastern European town square features Neoclassical and Baroque architecture undisturbed by the second world war and quaint little shops on cobblestone streets off narrow passageways busy with activity. An absurd statue just outside the ancient cathedral depicts an entire community mooning King Henry in defiance as he marches triumphantly through town. We visited an exhibition which included world famous sculpture Arno Brecker's naked, beer-bellied "David and Goliath" and Schwerin Castle, which dominates the landscape and is one of the most famous tourist attractions in the country.

Denver Campbell, an American working as Project Manager for the Investment Promotion Agency of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, explained how the government is trying to develop the country's poorest region. After reunification, this state lost 20% of its' population and the employment rate hovered around 20%, so the former West German government made a significant investment in infrastructure. Today there are definite advantages to setting up a business in the heart of Europe between the two major markets of Berlin and Hamburg. Mecklenburg, a large geographic area with a sparse population, has a large pool of qualified, highly skilled workers who earn moderate wages. Production costs are lower than in the former West Germany, 82% of the workforce is proficient in English and there is a high quality education system which includes three year apprenticeships. The Investment Agency takes care of all bureaucratic details for investors and takes them through the entire set-up of operations. They provide 35-50 % of the cost depending on number of employees and annual expenditure. Grants are available for entrepreneurs, the elderly, and disabled. High tech companies are provided training for employees, subsidies and tax incentives.

Schwerin's Vocational Training Center is a private company, unlike the Investment Agency, which is state-funded. This occupational training school provides employment-oriented learning for small and medium-sized enterprises, including Information Technology, metal, woodworking, plastics and recycling. They take problems from the customer and bring it to area of science area for solutions. Education, organization and resource management are their specialties but their program changes according to the needs of society and the environment. The Center takes pride in graduating independent thinkers, thus reducing the discrepancy between the requirements of the economy, which is based on rapid change, and the requirements of public schools, where change is glacial. As Managing Director Herbert Michel said at the end of his presentation, quoting German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys, "The future we want has to be invented. Otherwise we get the future we do not want".

At Mecklenburg's Federal Institute for School and Education, Teachers' Training College, Dr. Walter Thomas began his presentation by thanking Americans for rebuilding Germany after the war. Dr. Thomas went on to express his concern about Germany placing seventeenth in the most recent Pisa study. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an internationally standardized three-year survey that was jointly developed by participating countries and administered to 15-year-olds in the principal industrialized nations to measure how well prepared students were to meet the challenges of the future. Are they able to analyze, reason and communicate their ideas effectively? Do they have the capacity to continue learning throughout life? Pisa assesses the extent to which students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in society.

The results shocked the German education establishment. They expected to place much higher. It appears that a lack of language skills among immigrant children is a major cause.

According to the new PISA report "Where immigrant students succeed - A comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA 2003", immigrant children in some OECD countries lag more than two years behind their native counterparts in school performance, and a sizeable gap often remains even after accounting for socio-economic factors.

Norbert Frank, Head of Section, Ministry of Education, Sciences and Culture, expressed his concern about the 100% increase in non-graduates over the past ten years, 25 % for whom reading and writing skills are so low they can't take part in normal life. Changes have been introduced so that there are smaller classes, more team teaching and integrated subjects as well as a more flexible curriculum and timetable. We learned about Germany's participation in the innovative "Productive Learning" project network that started as a concept in Manhattan in 1971 and spread to Edinburgh, Vienna, Budapest and Kiev. Funded in a public-private partnership with the E.U. and the Institute for Productive Learning in Europe, Productive Learning replaces traditional schooling in the last year before graduation for students whose school completion is in danger. The aim is to acquire a solid secondary school certificate that actually enables students to enter into vocational training. The approach is resource-oriented and not deficit-oriented. Students learn from the experience of work and participation in social life. There are between 15 and 18 students per group and they attend special classes with an emphasis on career exploration. The curriculum focuses on the needs of students and is taught by teachers who are trained and certified by the Institute for Productive Learning in Berlin. Students learn through practical job training in self-chosen firms and organizations for three days per week and receive an hour of individual counseling per week in which personal educational needs are combined with vocational and cultural experiences. Four teachers from each participating school and student groups develop their special "Productive Learning" curriculum. There has been no problem getting teachers to volunteer for this project; in fact, there are more applicants than available placements. The "Learning More Together" framework for cities is presently being modified for implementation in rural areas.

One such town is Lubeck, a scenic little tourist island and UNESCO World Heritage site. We visited the home of one of the twentieth century's literary giants, Thomas Mann, sampled delicious marzipan at the famous confectionary "Niederegger", had lunch at Schiffergesellschaft, the oldest restaurant in Europe, built in 1535, and enjoyed the deep strains of the largest organ in the world at the awe-inspiring cathedral. Then we were off to Hamburg for a very different experience.

Hamburg

The Reeperbahn is Hamburg's Red Light District. Here, prostitution is open, legal, and unionized. Sex trade workers are monitored for STD's. Beneath the glitzy neon signs adorning nightclubs with flamboyant names such as "Sex Heaven", "The Doll House" and "Fantasy Hotel", tuxedoed greeters and beefy bouncers urge the teeming stream of pedestrians to step inside. The street with ladies of the evening displaying their wares in the windows of private booths is barricaded on both sides and women are not allowed to enter. In the surrounding area, sailors, locals and tourists eat and drink heartily in the endless stream of dingy bars and enticing sidewalk cafes while listening to raw rocking blues bands blasting away from every direction. On a corner that marks the border of this lively district sits the Kaiserkiller, the legendary club where the Beatles developed their edge before going on to fame and fortune.

After an evening at the Reeperbahn, some of our group got up at five o'clock in the morning to go to the famous Fish Market where the catch of the day is sold to discerning local restaurants

and international merchants. There were bars, dance areas and people eating all kinds of delicacies while a rock band blared away for revelers still out after a late evening on the town and early risers looking for a little excitement while conducting business. Others waited for the Jazz Brunch with Abby Holman and the Jazz Lizards Dixieland band at "Feuerschiff", a former fire ship located in the port specializing in local dishes. Later we visited the immaculate grounds of the city's main park where throngs of people were eating, drinking, sleeping and lounging on chairs, children were playing and a German band was performing Latin music for an appreciative crowd at the open-air theatre.

Hamburg is a "city state", like Berlin and Bremen, and a major European cultural center. We toured the "Rathaus", or city hall, of the State Chancellery of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. Next door at the Hamburg Museum there were long line-ups for Mexican surrealist painter Frida Khalo's exhibition, and we were ushered in to contemplate the vitality and emotion of one of Latin America's most revered artists. The "Suitcase Full of Hope" exhibition at Cap San Diego, an ancient sailing ship, deals with the immigration to the New World at the turn of the century via the port of Hamburg. We were deeply touched by the heartbreaking stories of some of the five million immigrants to the U.S. and two hundred thousand to Canada who were jammed into filthy cargo holes while first class passengers passed the time in luxury suites and private promenades.

Official remembrance of stories such as these seems to have spurred the city's global conscience. The Korber Foundation funds educational projects that further mutual understanding between Germany and America. Founder Kurt A. Korber, a dynamic entrepreneur and engaged philanthropist who died in 1992, believed that in a profit-oriented society there was virtue in Article 14 of the German Constitution: "Property imposes duty. Its use should also serve the public weal". The Foundation is committed to strengthening and improving intercultural relations through meetings, round table discussions and competitions. A prime example is the Transatlantic Idea Contest, a forum for people who, spurred by personal experiences abroad, grapple with problems at home and make specific contributions which benefit their community. Since we face similar social challenges on both sides of the Atlantic, why not profit from each other's skills and knowledge? The contest provides financial and logistical support to prizewinners for testing their ideas in Germany. Some recent initiatives the Foundation have supported include a garden project for refugees, student counseling programs, inclusion projects for the disabled, a reading program for underprivileged children, writing, acting and visual arts workshops, pedagogical practices, model projects for developing a deeper understanding of Islam and college career centers to demonstrate best teaching practices related to voluntary engagement with humanitarian causes.

We certainly got to see Hamburg from every angle - literally from the ground up! Our tour of Norddeutsche Affinerie copper-smelting plant, complete with company overalls and hardhats, provided a truly unique experience for educators. We were surprised at how interesting it was to learn about this process and were impressed with the skill and pride of the company's presenters and employees.

Near the dock where a plaque commemorates the place where the St. Louis was turned away during the Holocaust, Wulf Engelke welcomed us on board the launch "Hansa" for a private boat tour of Hamburg Harbour. We sailed through canals full of massive barges from all over the world and were treated to a totally different view of the skyline from the one we'd experienced in all our hours of walking from one site to another. Our host was thrilled with my gifts from a distinctive port city on one side of the Atlantic to one on the other: a photo book

of St. John's, a "Global Citizen" t-shirt from CIDA, an Asper Foundation cap and special pin from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

The panoramic view from the glass-enclosed, top-floor corporate boardroom at Der Spiegel was a spectacular backdrop for Research Assistant Eveline Metzen's presentation. Der Spiegel is Germany's leading news magazine and the largest in Europe. It is published every Monday, distributed in 167 countries and has a circulation of about one million copies per week. Each issue reports on a wide variety of topics, from politics to business and science, medicine and technology, culture and entertainment, media, society and sports.

Der Spiegel has become synonymous with investigative journalism. Its' archives contain over 38 million documents and it regularly publishes special issues on culture and business as well as student magazines. The media sector includes books, films, cd's, television channels and online websites. Ms. Metzen provided us with an informative and interesting overview of the magazine's rich history and told us fascinating stories about recent global issues, including 9/11 and the Hamburg cell connection. She also pointed out, with great pride, that every employee who works at the magazine for more than three years is offered the opportunity to become an associate and participate in the management of the company as well share in its' profits.

Bucerius Law School, the only private law school in Germany, has a beautiful, ultra-modern campus in the center of the city adjacent to a huge, manicured public park. A couple of very proud students gave us an insider's view of their rigorous academic program and vibrant social life. The school offers scholarships for minorities and underprivileged applicants who could not afford to attend otherwise.

There was an emotional parting at the train station when we were leaving for Frankfurt, just as there had been when we left Berlin. At every destination, the group and our tour guides became very close during the time we had together.

Frankfurt

Frankfurt is Germany's financial capital but it also has a rich cultural history. We learned a great deal about both at Deutsche Bank, which is a major contributor to the Goethe Institute's Transatlantic Outreach Program.

Reinhard Frost of the Historical Institute of Deutsche Bank presented on the history of Deutsche Bank, taking us through the first world war, the Depression, the Third Reich, the Cold War, Reunification and the age of Globalization. Some of the most fascinating stories dealt with the Nazi era, when the bank was nationalized and practically destroyed. Two branch managers were killed for not cooperating with Nazis, and after the war there was the matter of restitution of money stolen from Jews who had been sent to concentration camps. Other interesting stories dealt with Cold War espionage, the kidnap and murder of their Managing Director by terrorists in '89 and the challenges of reunification.

We were privileged to meet an extraordinary array of experts from various fields throughout the tour. However, the highlight of the trip would have to be witnessing the passionate eloquence of Hanns Michael Holz , Global Head of Corporate Citizenship and Sustainable Development for Deutsche Bank. An economic advisor to Koffi Annan, Mr. Holz held us spellbound as he spoke about the impact of the corporate world's decisions on human beings.

He explained that fair trade and economic cooperation with developing countries is in our own interest, for it leads to political stability. Issues such as economic growth, widespread poverty, and climate change and education effects every business and every person's life. He spoke proudly about the international diversity of Deutsche Bank. Most people who manage their branches in other countries are nationals of that country, not ex-patriot Germans. Deutsche Bank was a major contributor to 9/11 and tsunami relief. They provide educational programs on HIV Aids as well as teaching tools through their Asia and Africa Foundation. Deutsche Bank is an active supporter of the UN Millennium Development Goals for reducing poverty and improving the lives the world's most disadvantaged citizens. Mr. Holz urged us to educate young people to share a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labor standards, the environment and anti-corruption endeavors. He stressed the need for a new paradigm to reflect the environmental and social consequences of decisions and investments. When we spoke about our efforts to instill these values in young people, he responded with enthusiasm. We felt like we had been given a most prestigious endorsement to continue our work.

After a guided tour of the bank's impressive collection of German modern art, we had a lunch in Deutsche Bank's top-floor boardroom with TOP program consultant Susan Stern, author of "Jewish Life in Germany Today" and "These strange German ways". Ms. Stern's hour and a half presentation went by in a flash. Her light-hearted approach was very funny and perceptive; her attitude tolerant and affectionate. Yet she appeared to remain somewhat perplexed by the idiosyncrasies of a culture she's not only been living and teaching in, but writing and presenting about, for decades. She cautioned us that in Germany one must expect a certain formality and distance in relationships with people you don't know well, make efforts to arrive on time for appointments, never crowd personal space and not be surprised when doors in homes, businesses and public buildings are closed.

Political incorrectness aside, increasing mobility and intercultural studies make it imperative for people to recognize that personal friendships and multi-national cooperation must be based on an understanding of and tolerance for differences in thinking and behavior. Cultural behavior can be analyzed and, in some cases, predicted, even allowing for significant regional differences, and should be taken into account if one is to function and feel comfortable in a new cultural environment.

Commenting on the distinctly German concept of "angst", Ms. Stern explained that to the German, "The unknown is, almost by definition, frightening. The future, being by its very nature unknown, is viewed at best with suspicion. And so, in an attempt to control their environment, prevent chaos and anarchy and impose some sort of order on life itself - in other words, to reduce angst - the Germans resort to inflexible rules, regulations and laws. And they have them in abundance, for all possible eventualities".

A long time professor at the University of Frankfurt, Ms. Stern mentioned many other interesting idiosyncrasies of Germans. In a country where education is free, there are university faculties where the dropout rate is 80%. Still, alcoholism is not a problem. The legal age is 16, so it's not a typical form of teenage rebellion. Sex not a major issue either, and it's not necessarily associated with love. There is no German translation for "dating" - young people usually socialize in groups - though there's been a recent passion for weddings across Europe lately. Even so, the number of single people remains very high.

Ms. Stern has seen great changes in Germany since the publication of her last book. Germans are rediscovering their identity. Public displays of German the flag are more common, something that had previously been avoided due to far right connotations. Germans are

becoming more risk-friendly due to globalization. The internet has had a tremendous impact in a country in which information does not traditionally flow easily. There are more open office areas and fewer closed doors. Still, Germany is a historically paternalistic society with high taxes and state sponsorship of cultural life. Changing the software of the mind takes many generations, even in a nation that was very happy to move into the twenty-first century. The twentieth century was a particularly troubling time for Germany.

Our speakers in Frankfurt and, indeed, everyone we met on the tour, provided solid grounds for optimism about the future. A prime example would be Vera Klinger, Project Manager at Frankfurt's Office for Multicultural Affairs, whose task is to foster the constructive co-existence of the various cultural groups and to promote their integration. 40% of Frankfurt's residents are immigrants. The Office's multi-lingual staff is at the service of the city's residents for assistance with any matter related to integration. They confront discrimination, promote mutual understanding, and mediate conflicts with the government and police at the workplace, in neighborhoods and in schools. They also implement projects to help youth become integrated into the workforce. The staff assists people in settling down in the city, keeps them informed on issues related to intercultural living through seminars and publications, and provides support for multicultural projects. Any resident who feels that he or she is suffering from discrimination, is involved in a cultural conflict, or has been subject to racist, sexist, anti-immigrant abuse or any form of discrimination is encouraged to contact their office at any time. About 250 immigrant organizations consider their department as a partner. The Frankfurt model has been so successful that it has been adopted by other German cities and communities abroad.

In addition to participating in interactive seminars which generate much optimism about Germany's future, we tasted Applewine and had a delicious organic dinner at the Ecological Fruit Farm. We also visited Goethehaus, the birthplace of German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. This is the residence where the poet spent his childhood and most of his youth, and where he began working on the subject of "Faust", which preoccupied him until the end of his life. Goethehaus comprises original furniture and artifacts from the 1700's, the Goethe Museum, a graphic arts collection, library and manuscript archive. It includes a gallery of paintings illustrating Goethe's life and times and a rich collection of works of art from late Baroque to Romanticism, the period intensely experienced by Goethe himself. With its' unique history, this site attracts about 100,000 visitors per year. No doubt they all leave feeling that it is a moving tribute to one of Germany's national treasures.

Heidelberg Or The TOP Experience

The last site we visited was historic Heidelberg, the site of one of the most famous castles in the world. Its' towers offer a breath-taking view of the old town next to the river at the rim of the city. In 1878, Mark Twain stood here and wrote: "I have never enjoyed a view which had such a serene and satisfying charm about it as this one gives."

It was a pleasure to share this experience as a 2006 Goethe Fellow. Indeed, he could have been talking about the TOP program when he wrote "...nothing so liberalizes a man and expands the kindly instincts that nature put in him as travel and contact with many kinds of people."

Applications for the Transatlantic Outreach Program are available online at www.goethe.de/washington . Teachers who are interested may contact Wood Powell top@washington.goethe.org or Keith Samuelson keithsamuelson@esdn1.ca