



Moira Herbst *

Staff Writer

Home Media: BusinessWeek, New York, NY
Guest Media: Der Spiegel, Berlin

Moira Herbst is a staff writer for *BusinessWeek* in New York, covering primarily labor markets. She was the Lorana Sullivan Fellow for investigative business journalism at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, and

holds a bachelor's degree from Brown University. Herbst also received a master's degree in international relations as a George Mitchell Scholar in Ireland, where she was a radio and television commentator.

Report by Moira Herbst

My placement was at DER SPIEGEL magazine in Berlin. I felt lucky to be able to explore a city I came to love and come to understand the editorial culture at another magazine. In the meantime I continued to file stories to my home publication.

I'd studied German as an undergrad and lived near Kiel for a summer and hoped the language would all come back to me upon arriving in Berlin. Sadly that wasn't the case, so I was thankful to have two weeks of immersion classes before starting work. By the end of the second week the basics had come back and I could build from there.

With so many other Burns fellows also in Berlin, I had a built-in social network. There were frequent meetings at the Prater Beer Garden on Kastanienallee. Some friends also live in Berlin and I was able to reconnect with them. For about the first month I stayed with a friend (and her husband, two young girls and two cats) in Prenzlauer Berg. It's a pretty neighborhood that feels something like a mix between Park Slope and the Lower East Side in New York. The area has gentrified quickly; with its endless boutiques and restaurants, it's hard to believe it's in the former East.

I was warmly welcomed by SPIEGEL editors and writers my first day at the bureau, just opposite the Brandenburg Gate. I was able to work in offices of staff who were on vacation, so my work space was comfortable. I had lunch with an editor and we established that while I'd sit in on editorial meetings and share ideas, I'd mainly be filing stories to my home publication. This seemed to be the best arrangement considering my language skills and the expectation of editors at home. If I hadn't been writing for BusinessWeek I might have had too much downtime at the office, but in my case it worked out well. I filed stories mainly to BusinessWeek's Europe editor, located in London. Fortunately BusinessWeek and Spiegel's Web site have a content-sharing agreement, so many of the stories appeared on both Web sites (in English).

As a weekly magazine, SPIEGEL's editorial rhythms were much like BusinessWeek's. But in contrast to the endangered weekly model at home, DER SPIEGEL is financially healthy. An editor explained to me that several years ago, management of the magazine decided to not rely too heavily on advertising for revenue. Instead, more than half of revenues would come from subscriptions and newsstand sales. With this setup, a recession and concomitant slump in advertising wouldn't mean the implosion of the publication's finances. Also remarkable to me is that the magazine is partially em-

ployee owned, with employees receiving dividends each year. Nice model, I thought. Why can't we do this in the U.S.?

It was a joy to live in Berlin, especially in the summer. In spite of the development that's taken place of the past 20 years, it's not saturated with commercialism. It also has a restless energy that I found similar New York's but with less stress on money and status. Of course Berlin is cheaper than New York and far more spread out. We were lucky to have beautiful weather so we could enjoy walks, riverside bars and outdoor parties. It's also a great biking city.

I moved from Prenzlauer Berg to a sublet in Mitte in the former East for two weeks. It's less cozy and residential than Prenzlauer Berg but is full of art galleries and nightlife. From there I moved to a neighborhood called Friedrichshain, known to be younger and less polished. I didn't expect it but Friedrichshain became my favorite neighborhood of those I stayed in. It has an unsettled and open feel.

I was able to travel elsewhere in former East Germany, in part for research on stories around the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. I went to a medieval town called Quedlinburg and another called Gorbitz on the Polish border. Both are well-preserved and lively, even while some abandoned buildings remain. I later visited Jena for a story on the resilience of its economy in the face of the recession.

I was also able to go to Frankfurt to report on the auto show there and to Munich for a Burns reunion and Oktoberfest.

Our fellowship took place during the run-up to the national elections. News reports from Germany and abroad called it boring but I found it fascinating. The parliamentary system allows for many more parties to compete for votes, so everyone from the Christian Democratic Union to the Socialists to the Pirate Party were jockeying for attention.

By the end of the fellowship I wasn't quite ready to come home. I started wondering when I could come back to Berlin and stay for a longer time.