

ICWA LETTERS

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**JW-7
GERMANY**

Jill Winder is a Donors' Fellow of the Institute studying post-reunification Germany through the work and attitudes of its artists.

48 Hours in Leipzig

By Jill Winder

JUNE 2005

BERLIN—ART WORLD INSIDER TRAVEL TIP: Weekend Getaway, 30 April & 1 May 2005, Leipzig, Germany. Are you curious about Leipzig's burgeoning contemporary art scene, blue chip galleries, new Contemporary Art Museum, lovely art deco cafes and sophisticated restaurants? Please join us for the official opening of the Spinnerei cultural complex where you will see cutting-edge art works and rub shoulders with famous artists and collectors. Depending on your credentials, you may be invited to private dinners, fabulous parties and openings, champagne receptions and tours of artists' studios. Advice on how to navigate the militarized city center and avoid the distasteful effects of the neo-Nazi demonstration on 1 May is also available.

So the travel ads might have read. And so it went for the curators, artists and gallery owners who had spent the better part of a year preparing for and promoting the official, weekend-long opening of *Die Spinnerei* (The Cotton Mill), a cultural complex with artists' studios, prominent galleries and alternative exhibition spaces in Leipzig. But as dozens of the most important contemporary-art collectors from Germany and abroad arrived in their private jets at the city's modest airport, other members of the German art-world elite were sharing spotless Deutsche-Bahn train cars and motorways with 1,000 neo-Nazis and twice as many left-wing activists who were going to protest against them.

The demonstration was not entirely a surprise. Neo-Nazis seem to have a special love for Leipzig, in particular the city's *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* (Battle of Nations Monument). Hamburg's leading neo-Nazi, Christian Worch, had already registered and led 12 demonstrations in Leipzig. The organizers of the cultural weekend had known that a demonstration might take place, but had not anticipated how it might escalate. May 1st, the traditional international workers' holiday, is still celebrated in Germany and has become the day when an extremely motley group of left-wing demonstrators (including punks, anti-globalization activists, gays and lesbians, unemployed citizens of all ages and teenagers who just feel angry) clash with riot-gear-clad policeman (known derogatorily as *Bullen*, or bulls). The largest demonstrations are usually held in Berlin, concentrated in my Kreuzberg neighborhood.

This year, however, on April 29th, organizers of the Berlin demonstration told the authorities and local papers that they "have no enemies here" and called on demonstrators to go to Leipzig (about 90 minutes by train from Berlin) to protest against the neo-Nazis. It was this announcement, and the realization that there could be violent clashes between the neo-Nazis and left-wing protesters (who would outnumber them by at least two to one), that sent the German police force scrambling to dispatch extra personnel, water-spraying armored vehicles, helicopters and tear gas in the direction of Leipzig with unusual force that weekend.

Leipzig: Then and Now

I first visited Leipzig, one of the major cities in the east-German state of Saxony, in 1998. As I try now to remember details of the visit, what I did, who I spoke to,

what I saw, my memories are dominated by images of gaping construction pits in the center of Leipzig's most famous squares, or gray and lifeless Communist-era office buildings and apartment blocks with their cheap facades crumbling off in chunks. Or I recall frustrations and inconveniences: the one place in the city with an Internet café where the connection failed after every other word I typed, the metallic taste of the smoggy air that seemed permanently polluted by a century's worth of mining and burning the region's brown coal, the terrible dinner (made only slightly more palatable by great local beer) that I paid twice the regular price for because I couldn't then speak German.

Returning after seven years, I was frankly astonished by what I saw. Leipzig is an increasingly chic and beautified city, filled with sidewalk cafes and upscale restaurants where local chefs prepare first-class meals and offer an extensive selection of the best German wines to aficionados. Its respected university and art school attract ambitious students from all over the country and they infuse the area with energy and a taste for suitably trendy nightlife. Leipzig (more specifically, the city's art school) also maintains a coveted reputation as one of the most important hot spots for contemporary art in all of Germany. Works by the much-hyped *Leipziger Schule* (Leipzig School) are among the most expensive paintings by young artists on the international market today and the fame of art stars like Neo Rauch have made shrewd



Karen and Andreas, my hosts in Leipzig

gallery-owners, such as Gerd Harry Lybke of Eigen + ART, fast millionaires.

Leipzig is one of the eastern German cities that has adjusted to reunification best, and for young urban professionals it is a place with tremendous draw and potential—if you can find a job, that is. All of this development and prestige has only slightly lifted the burden of an unbearably high 21 percent unemployment rate. Many inhabitants of the city are desperately trying to find work and struggling to make ends meet after unemployment benefits have been reduced since January 1st, when the Hartz IV social-benefit reforms took effect (see JW-2, Sept. 2004).

Karen and Andreas, my hosts over the weekend, are fairly typical of the trend. My “East-West” couple—Andreas grew up in East Germany, Karen in the West—moved to Leipzig a few months ago when Karen grew bored with Berlin after finishing university studies in geography and Andreas decided he was ready to try something new after living in the northeastern city of Schwerin all his life. Andreas was lucky to find a position quickly at a marketing and design firm. Karen's job, on the other hand, is to single-handedly scout locations and open up espresso bars for a Munich-based company that wants to expand to eastern Germany.

The location of Karen's first venture is a place whose prestige, production efficiency and contradictions exemplify the impressive-yet-uneven development that has transformed Leipzig over the last 15 years. The espresso bar is located in the ultra-modern glass-and-steel employee cafeteria of the recently opened BMW plant on the outskirts of Leipzig. Housed in a building designed by famed London architect Zaha Hadid, it has been hailed as a utopian factory where the building's design forces management, autoworkers and engineers to rub shoulders and break down traditional factory hierarchies.¹ Yet as Karen explained to me on the drive from the train station to her home, workers



¹ *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff's glowing review of the building appeared on May 22, 2005 in an article entitled, "The Assembly Line Becomes Catwalk."

in BMW's idealistic plant are walking evidence of the disparities that still remain between Germany's east and west: Workers who came to Leipzig from BMW's Munich plant were offered pay raises and extra relocation benefits that went well beyond moving costs, while newly hired east-German employees have pay packages that the company calls "locally competitive" (*read,* "significantly less"), fewer benefits and roughly half the vacation time of their transplanted western counterparts.

Fragments of History: Two Monuments of a Kind

Karen and Andreas were anxious to show me a around town, and because the art extravaganza wouldn't really get going until early Saturday evening, we piled into their car for a city tour. Our first destination was the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* (Battle of Nations Monument) on the outskirts of Leipzig. The monument was inaugurated in 1913 on the 100th anniversary of a decisive 1813 battle



View of the Völkerschlachtdenkmal

between the "Allied Forces" (German, Russian, Austrian and Swedish armies) and Napoleon's army, in which 100,000 Allied soldiers were killed. It is a beloved people's monument, in part because citizens, supplanting the Kaiser's traditional role as the sole benefactor of such public displays, privately raised the construction costs. Karen and Andreas mentioned that the monument has become something of a pilgrimage site for neo-Nazis, and as we approached the massive structure, I began to understand why.

The Battle of Nations Monument is the largest monument in Europe, though that distinction does not come close to expressing its grandiosity, or the way it dominates everything and everyone around it. It is the most imposing and threatening monument I have ever seen; its imagery and sheer bulk embody an alluring mixture of undaunted national pride and an unflinching threat of violence. Take the relief on the lateral retaining walls, 60 feet high and 200 feet wide, which depicts a gory battle scene complete with thousands of skulls, a sculpture of St. Michael with a sword of flames and two enormous eagles rising victoriously skyward. These are the images you pass, shoulder to stone, on your way up to the crypt.

Viewed from the outside, the monument is indeed impressive, but I did not really get a sense of its possible appeal to radical right extremists until we entered the crypt, 136 stairs above ground level. Adorned to recall ancient temples, the crypt is shadowy and dank and a



Detail of the relief on the Völkerschlachtdenkmal depicting layer upon layer of dead bodies

single wreath of flowers lies on the floor. Surrounding the circular center are 16 life-sized warriors with their heads bowed, keeping the deathwatch. These figures stand in front of eight death masks, each 20 feet high. The upper level is framed by four 30 foot-high sculptures representing Bravery, Faith, Power and Sacrifice. The solemnity and victory represented here have captured the imagination of a number of prominent "theoreticians" of the neo-Nazi movement who have suggested that the



View of the crypt in the Völkerschlachtdenkmal. The small, illuminated door in the background gives an idea of the crypt's larger-than-life proportions.



(Left) Detail of the crown of the Völkerschlachtdenkmal with 12 warriors (each, made of 47 granite blocks, is over 40 feet high) depicting the readiness of the population to defend their freedom. The sign draped on the crown says 'Stop Nazis hier in Leipzig und überall' (Stop Nazis in Leipzig and Everywhere). It was placed there by an anti-neo-Nazi group that organized a concert at the monument on April 31, the night before the May 1 neo-Nazi demonstration. (Right) A bird's eye view of Leipzig from the viewing platform atop the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, a dizzying 300 feet above ground.

Völkerschlachtdenkmal should be revered as a monument to the stolen glory of the Third Reich.

Many Leipzig citizens and local politicians are horrified that the monument has been co-opted by radical groups. Previously, neo-Nazi marches through Leipzig have ended at the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, where it became the site of speeches, hard drinking and occasionally violent clashes between neo-Nazis and left-wing protesters, as well as fights between various neo-Nazi gangs themselves. This year, an anti-neo-Nazi concert was organized by a coalition of protest groups in an attempt to reclaim the monument from the movement. The Leipzig government has also banned the neo-Nazis from marching to or gathering at the monument in great numbers.

Noticing that I was sufficiently impressed and duly overwhelmed by the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Karen and Andreas decided that we needed to do something a bit more light-hearted and quotidian. I think Karen's understanding words were, "Maybe Jill needs an ice cream." They know I have a special fondness for the remnants of the Socialist past, and Karen wanted to do some grocery shopping for an upcoming barbeque in the park, a beloved German summertime activity. Our disparate needs were to be met a five-minute drive from the monument, at the old Leipzig fair grounds.

During the East German period, an annual fair was held on the grounds. Each nation belonging to the Soviet bloc had a pavilion in which it proudly displayed the country's latest scientific, cultural and technological innovations and presented its model citizens and workers to the rest of the fold. The fairs were popular events, providing a kind of World Fair without the West for

the local population. It also had an East-West Contact Center, of the kind located in many cities across the Soviet Empire. The centers were notoriously staffed by members of the secret police who filled requests for travel information and general news from the outside world, often recording the identities of the curious citizens in the process.

The Leipzig fair ground, left to rot after 1990, has re-



(Left) The crumbling Soviet Pavilion at the old Leipzig Fair Grounds. Once the dominant centerpiece of the grounds, it is surrounded by more modest national pavilions of countries in the Soviet bloc, almost all of which have been untouched for 15 years. (Below) The shell of the East West Contact Center at the fair grounds. The name of the center appears in German, Russian and English on the façade.



cently been the site of redevelopment efforts by some companies that have come up with a way to take advantage of the unusually spacious buildings. This redevelopment is just one example of the way that the city is re-inventing itself, slowly turning what was once a highly politicized location into a shopper's paradise. Besides a bowling alley and gym, the most popular store on the grounds is a Hit Hypermarket. Although it is perhaps a quarter of the size of a Super Walmart in the states, the Hit supermarket is a bit of a novelty item in Leipzig. Most German grocery stores, even in Berlin, are very small shops (not much bigger than the size of a 7-11) where consumer choice is limited and the aisles are slightly wider than the shopper (forget about carts). Larger "hypermarkets" have sprung up on the outskirts of cities, but they are still relatively rare. I realized how long I've been away from home when I felt utterly overwhelmed by the dozens of aisles, endless variety, and specials announced over loudspeakers found in just about every suburban grocery store in America.



Leipzig's more modest version of an American supermarket, a clever reclamation of the shell of an empty pavilion at the fair grounds

On to *Die Spinnerei*

Before heading to *Die Spinnerei* we decided to have a quick coffee at a local art-deco café, famous for its original fixtures and enormous *Windbeutel* (cream puffs) the size of dinner plates, near Karen and Andreas's apartment. They happen to live along the demonstration route and the police were already taking up their posts. Dozens of green vans clearly labeled *Polizei* lined the streets. Local businesses along the route were also taking some extreme precautions, boarding up their windows and removing displays of the most tempting products (like alcohol and cigarettes) from the sales floor. Although protests are common in Leipzig, there was a definite feeling of tension in the air.

At last we made our way to *Die Spinnerei*. Over the last ten years this unlikely location has quietly become



(Left) A small grocery store on Karl Liebnicht Strasse nailed boards in front of its windows to discourage looting along the demonstration route. (Right) Sign in central Leipzig sponsored by Jusos Sachsen, a left-wing political action group. It reads, Touristen statt Nazis (Tourists instead of Nazis).

transformed into the heart of the city's art scene. Heavily promoted by investors, galleries and businesses that have interests in the complex, this once-unofficial location is now accepted more or less officially as the center it has long been for artists and art lovers. When we arrived, it was already full of people and the crowd was an interesting mix of curious locals, museum board members, curators, wealthy collectors and scruffy young artists. It seemed the Berlin art scene had made the trip *en masse*—I bumped into as many friends and acquaintances as I normally see at openings in the capital. People balanced delicate champagne-filled glasses on the chipped brick surfaces of the buildings and turned factory loading docks into ready-made patios. The unusually warm evening and two small beer gardens offering drinks and bratwurst added to the casual atmosphere. It was, as Andreas sardonically noted, a kind of "intellectual Volkfest."

The story of the mill itself, told in a book entitled "From Cotton to Culture," produced for the occasion, shows how historical upheavals and transitions in Germany affected the mill's operations and reflects Leipzig's long reputation as a stalwartly left-wing city. The *Leipziger Baumwollspinnerei* (Leipzig Cotton Mill) was founded in 1884. By 1889, hundreds of workers were spinning cotton, primarily imported from German East Africa. A famously progressive and humane place to work, the mill boasted its own kindergarten, workers' housing, a church, medical clinic and even a choir.

During the National Socialist period, the Communist and Social-Democratic leadership of the so-called "Red Mill" were jailed. During the GDR period, 4,000 people (mostly women) were employed at the mill, although by 1989 it was barely functioning and in serious disrepair. As was the case with abandoned buildings all over eastern Germany after reunification, the complex was "squat-



Visitors walk through the various buildings in the Spinnerei complex. The tracks visible on the ground were used to transport shipping containers full of raw and finished cotton in and out of the mill when it was still in operation.

ted,” or illegally taken over by a group of artists who wanted to use the vast spaces for studios. *Die Spinnerei* has been a *de facto* cultural center ever since, and a group of investors, keen to capitalize on the money-making potential of the space, bought the buildings from the state in the late 1990s.

A number of Germany’s most prominent artists, including painter Neo Rauch, have had studio spaces in



A sign at the entrance of Die Spinnerei helps visitors navigate the maze-like complex of industrial buildings, 24 in all.

the buildings for over a decade and some are a bit nostalgic for the climate of artistic exchange and anonymity that working virtually unknown in the abandoned industrial complex provided. When I asked artist Nina Fischer, who shows with Eigen + ART, what she thought of the developments in Leipzig, she smiled melancholically. Referring to her gallerist, she said, “This is Lybke’s home town and he always wanted to make it an art center. When Neo [Rauch] started working here, we all knew it was only a matter of time before people would come to clean up the buildings, make it more commercial, and try to put the artists in their studios on display like zoo animals. I’m glad Leipzig is getting more attention now, but we’re all looking for the next new place to go.” As is typical in the art scene, once a location makes the transition from “alternative” to “mainstream,” many of the artists who have made the place what it is, desert the area.

In addition to hundreds of artists’ studios, the larg-



Visitors to Die Spinnerei pass under a sign advertising an exhibition of works drawn from the Federkiel and Reinking collections.

est art-supply store I’ve ever seen, a print workshop and a few cafes, two German collectors exhibit parts of their art collections in one of the *Spinnerei* buildings as well. We found our way into studio after studio. While most of the works seemed pedestrian and quite mediocre, the energy of the artists working there, and the ingenuity with which they had transformed the anonymous factory spaces into proper locations for production and exhibition impressed me so much I hardly minded. The high-beamed and vaulted ceilings, large grated windows and vast open spaces of the buildings have also provided beautiful footprints for new, white-cube galleries. The most well-regarded display spaces are those of are Galerie Eigen + ART and Galerie Dogenhaus. While there were dozens of galleries and artists’ studios to tour, the hot-



The entrance to Galerie Eigen + ART, the most prestigious gallery in the Spinnerei.

test ticket of the night was an invitation to the private dinner held after the opening at Galerie Eigen + ART.

At the moment there is much ado in the international contemporary art world about *Leipziger Schule* painters like Neo Rauch, Tim Eitel and a few others. Gerd Harry Lybke, owner of Eigen + ART has managed to represent almost all of them. Lybke is a native of Leipzig (although he lives primarily in Berlin) and has had a Leipzig location for his gallery since the early 1990s. He is a consummate businessman, and one of the most powerful gallerists in Berlin, with an enviable list of artists and an uncanny talent for signing unknowns who quickly become the next big thing (artist Tim Eitel is the most recent example). There was a rumor going around that so many wealthy collectors were coming to the *Spinnerei* opening from other parts of Germany and all over Europe



Gerd Harry Lybke of Galerie Eigen + Art, Berlin/Leipzig. Lybke was a driving force behind the development of Die Spinnerei.

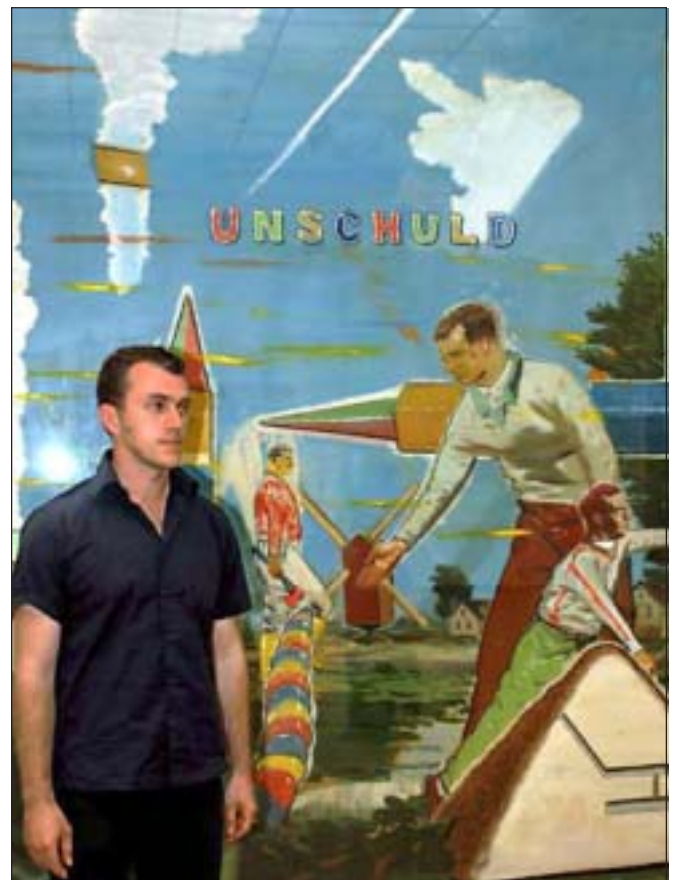
that the landing spaces for private jets at the local airport had been booked months in advance. These collectors were eager to see for themselves the works that have been driving the hype about the *Leipziger Schule*, and ostensibly to snap up works for their prestigious collections. Nearly all of them would be buying from Lybke.

The demand for the most famous Leipzig painter, Neo Rauch, is so great that his work is sold out until 2010 (meaning that collectors have promised sums of up to 1 million Euros or \$1.3 million USD, for paintings that do not yet exist). And the Rauch painting displayed at Eigen for the opening? It

was long off the market and had fetched over 300,000 Euros (\$390,000). Rauch is an enigmatic figure. A painter of brilliant technique, his aesthetic is heavily indebted to the Socialist-Realist style he was exposed to during the Communist days, and was in fact trained in at the Leipzig Art School (*Leipziger Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst*), where he finished his studies in 1990.

Rauch does not like to discuss the political aspects of his work. He often suggests there is no political aspect to it at all. But it is difficult not to read into his large-scale tableaus depicting stark industrial landscapes, family gatherings filled with foreboding and tension, and people haplessly caught in the midst of natural catastrophe. Critics have labeled his work “post-Socialist Realist,” although I think what he is doing is more complex than that. In an artist’s statement published recently in *monopol* magazine, he enigmatically wrote, “Someone told me once that one is

scarcely able to assume where and when my paintings came into being. And I do not want to conceal how comfortable I felt regarding this statement. Some detect American traces in my works. Others see characteristics from the Far East. Only the nasty colleague living in the neighboring village recognizes the provincial stuff with a look at his surroundings. Somehow they are all right because my arsenal is sturdily constructed so that it is



Painter Neo Rauch in front of his work entitled *Unschuld (Innocence)*. Photo: www.mdr.de



A coveted painting by Neo Rauch (long sold) on display at Galerie Eigen + ART in Die Spinnerei.

able to absorb elements of any kind and consistency.”

When I greeted Lybke at the gallery, I asked if all the rumors were true. He smiled slyly and answered first by joking, “If you have a million Euros you want to invest in art, I could probably squeeze you in at the dinner.” He didn’t let up when I demurred: “Okay then, what about the guys from your foundation...aren’t any of them collecting? Let’s hire you as my middleman!”

The gallery was packed with distinguished older-collector couples who mingled awkwardly with young artists and curators. Everyone was eyeing the one small-scale Rauch painting on display. Lybke told me later that he had hit a gold mine that weekend but that the success was well earned. “No one knew about *Die Spinnerei* a year ago, but I bought one of the buildings here in the mid-1990s. I always saw the potential of artists working in the spaces, and galleries operating side-by-side to merge the production and sale of art. Collectors love this mixture. They can see where Neo paints and then buy a work...”. At that, he laughed, and with good reason.

Lacking the million Euros to buy myself into the Eigen + ART dinner, Karen, Andreas and I took leave of *Die Spinnerei* and headed to a club called Horns Erben, where we could meet up with a few students from the

Leipzig Art Academy and digest all we had seen that day.

Sunday’s Demonstration

I awoke with a start to the noise of helicopters overhead and the distant-yet-threatening sound of neo-Nazi and left-wing protesters chanting and taunting each other in front of Leipzig’s Central Station. We were over a mile away, but the low roar was unmistakable. A number of additional art events had been planned for Sunday: private tours for collectors, lunches with artists and a brunch at *Die Spinnerei*, but most people I spoke to told me they were heading back to Berlin or would try to avoid the chaos and spend the day in the park. I still wanted to see the Museum of Contemporary Art, so we decided to have breakfast in the café there. The museum happens to be on the same block as the American Consulate and we quickly found ourselves wandering through empty thoroughfares in the city center that had been blocked off by barricades and police vehicles. A row of ten tank-like police vehicles with water guns mounted on them lurked just across from the museum building. Hundreds of policeman in riot gear stood in groups along the streets and black police helicopters surveyed the downtown area.

The neo-Nazi demonstration was set to begin at 12:00 noon. Demonstrators would be allowed to walk along a designated route through the city center, accompanied by a police escort that would encircle them entirely. The demonstration had to be finished by 6 p.m. and the neo-Nazis were forbidden to march anywhere near the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* or the neighborhood of Connewitz, a left-wing stronghold where they were sure to be involved in violent clashes with protesters.

After waiting for an hour near Karen and Andreas’s apartment, we made our way toward the station. It was already 4 p.m. and the demonstration should have passed us hours before. We could still hear chanting and the streets were filled with left-wingers, citizens enjoying the holiday and uniformed police officers, but the neo-Nazis themselves were nowhere to be seen. As it turned out, the police had held the demonstrators at the central station for nearly four hours. First the police had to check every participant. They were not allowed to carry any type of weapon, wear military-style boots (a basic fixture of the neo-Nazi uniform), were required to cover any tattoos, and Nazi symbols were expressly banned. When the demonstration finally began around 2 p.m., the police stopped it after five minutes. Left-wing protesters threw beer bottles and rocks at the neo-Nazis and attempted to break through the police cordon protecting the demonstration. The police sprayed the protesters with water guns and arrested 30 people. Then came two more hours of waiting, until the police felt they had the situation under control.

We were in Leipzig’s central square when the demonstration finally made its way past. It was an unusually sunny day and the heat seemed to make everyone un-



Neo-Nazi demonstrators walk through Leipzig's central square hemmed in entirely by a cordon of police escorts. People lining the streets are protesting against the demonstration. We were prevented from moving closer to the neo-Nazis by another row of policemen.

comfortable and excitable. Policemen in full riot gear were roasting in their uniforms, and drank a liter of water in one gulp when refreshment arrived in an armored vehicle. I stood to one side of the street along with many left-wing protesters and other onlookers. Most of the people were in their teens and twenties, drinking beer from cans and listening to the latest German music

pumped from portable stereos and a nearby stage for concerts sponsored by anti-neo-Nazi youth groups. As soon as the neo-Nazis came into view they started loud chants such as "Nazis raus!" (Nazis out!) or sang a taunting version of a war ballad "Ihr habt den Krieg verloren!" (You lost the war!). What struck me most was how small the neo-Nazi group really was — 1,000 demonstrators and



A mass of left-wing protesters try to rush past policemen to confront the neo-Nazis marching on the street. The police did physically remove some people and threatened to spray the crowd with a water gun, mounted on top of the green police vehicle in the picture.

an estimated 1,500 left-wingers protesting their presence. The 2,500 police personnel stationed throughout Leipzig outnumbered both groups. The demonstrators were not chanting, and banners were scarce. At a glance, the only hint that this was a group of right-wing extremists came from the fact that almost all of them had shaved heads (another traditional part of the neo-Nazi "uniform").

While the neo-Nazi demonstration had been legally registered, the left-wing anti-protest was not, and at times the police seemed to be more wary of the left than the right: seeing the mass of left-wing protesters surge upon the neo-Nazis, it was not entirely clear who needed to be protecting whom from what. I spoke to a few of the left-wing protesters in the square (and later in the train on my way back to Berlin that evening) about why they were there. One 18-year-old student, Tobias, said simply, "It's an embarrassment. I want the world to see that these people are a tiny fringe group who fantasize about the Nazis because they have nothing else to do. You can't feel normal when you see this kind of thing." Anja, a college student who had come from Berlin, was more vague. "I'm against globalization. I'm against the government and the police who want to restrict everything. I didn't come here because of the neo-Nazis *per se*... No one takes them seriously anyway."

Anja's contention that no one takes the neo-Nazis seriously, while misguided, can also be found at the highest levels of the German government. Interior Minister Otto Schily's recent comments have exemplified a shift in the government's policy toward right-wing extremism, one that many people view as extremely dangerous. Responding to a report summing up the nation's intelligence findings for 2004, Schily said that Islamic extremists pose the biggest threat to German security, de-

spite the fact that the number of Germans belonging to extremist groups with neo-Nazi proclivities rose a startling 25 percent last year.² (By contrast, the increase in radical Islamist adherents was under 5 percent.)

Indeed, one woman I chatted with came to Leipzig from Hamburg to show her support for the anti-neo-Nazi protesters because she fears that Germans aren't paying enough attention to the threat that right-wing extremists pose to society. Anna, a 27-year-old teacher, does not consider herself particularly political, but she felt compelled to come to Leipzig. "To me, right-wing extremists pose the greatest threat to our democracy. Christian Worch [the prominent neo-Nazi leader who led the demonstration] lives in my city and appeals to kids who have no job, little education and a lot of anger. He absolutely preys on them. I wanted to come here to show that average Germans, not just punk kids and extremist liberals, find this unacceptable. This problem should be on everyone's lips and at the top of the political agenda. These groups should be marginalized, but not ignored. If we turn a blind eye it will come back to haunt us."

The changes that I saw in Leipzig and the cultural development exemplified by *Die Spinnerei* are huge victories that will continue to make the city more attractive to tourists and investors, as well as collectors and artists. But below the surface, the pressing issues faced by eastern German cities 15 years after reunification are as urgent as ever. If there is no place for unemployed locals in the chic new cafes, glistening new factories and posh new art galleries, social divisions and resentment will continue to grow. The fact that the *Spinnerei* opening was followed by a demonstration of right-wing extremism is only one glaring example of how these forces are competing against each other for legitimacy and support. □

² These figures and Schily's comments were reported in an article in *Der Spiegel* entitled "Are Terrorists worse than Neo-Nazis?"

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

Current Fellows and their Activities

Alexander Brenner (June 2003 - 2005) • CHINA

With a B.A. in History from Yale and an M.A. in China Studies from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Alex is in China examining how the country is adapting to economic and cultural globalization following its accession to the World Trade Organization.

Richard D. Connerney (January 2005 - 2007) • INDIA

A lecturer in Philosophy, Asian Religions and Philosophy at Rutgers, Iona College and the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Rick Connerney is spending two years as a Phillips Talbot Fellow studying and writing about the intertwining of religion, culture and politics in India, once described by former U.S. Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith as "a functioning anarchy." Rick has a B.A. and an M.A. in religion from Wheaton College and the University of Hawaii, respectively.

Kay Dilday (October 2005-2007) • FRANCE/MOROCCO

An editor for the *New York Times*' Op-Ed page for the past five years, Kay holds an M.A. in Comparative International Politics and Theory from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Tufts University, and has done graduate work at the *Universiteit van Amsterdam* in the Netherlands and the *Cours de Civilisation de la Sorbonne*. She has traveled in and written from Haiti and began her journalistic life as city-council reporter for *Somerville This Week*, in Somerville, MA.

Cristina Merrill (June 2004-2006) • ROMANIA

Born in Bucharest, Cristina moved from Romania to the United States with her mother and father when she was 14. Learning English (but retaining her Romanian), she majored in American History at Harvard College and there became captain of the women's tennis team. She received a Master's degree in Journalism from New York University in 1994, worked for several U.S. publications from *Adweek* to the *New York Times*, and is spending two years in Romania watching it emerge from the darkness of the Ceausescu regime into the presumed light of membership in the European Union and NATO.

Nicholas Schmidle (October 2005-2007) • IRAN

A journalist and researcher for the Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life, Nick is finishing a Master's program in Comparative and Regional Studies (Middle East/Central Asia) at American University in Washington DC. He is studying intensive Persian — as is his fiancée, Rikki Bohan — in anticipation of his departure for Iran after his marriage in autumn 2005.

Andrew J. Tabler (February 2005 - 2007) • SYRIA/LEBANON

Andrew has lived, studied and worked in the Middle East since a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Fellowship enabled him to begin Arabic-language studies and work toward a Master's degree at the American University in Cairo in 1994. Following the Master's, he held editorships with the *Middle East Times* and *Cairo Times* before moving to Turkey, Lebanon and Syria and working as a Senior Editor with the Oxford Business Group and a correspondent for the *Economist* Intelligence Unit. His two-year ICWA fellowship bases him in Beirut and Damascus, where he will report on Lebanese affairs and Syrian reform.

Jill Winder (July 2004 - 2006) • GERMANY

With a B.A. in politics from Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA and a Master's degree in Art Curating from Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, Jill is an ICWA Donors' Fellow looking at Germany through the work, ideas and viewpoints of its contemporary artists. Before six months of intensive study of the German language in Berlin, she was a Thomas J. Watson Fellow looking at post-communist art practice and the cultural politics of transition in the former Soviet bloc (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia and Ukraine).

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