

**DAAD Alumni Event 24 May 2013: NZ/Germany: 60 Years  
Establishment of Diplomatic Relations: a Diplomatic Perspective**

*Speech by Helen Fawthorpe*

**Early Days**

New Zealand, though at the antipodes, had its part in the early stages of the post-war evolution of modern Europe in January 1953 when the Government advised Bonn, through diplomatic channels in London, that it agreed to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. Germany's first representative, Dr Erich Boltze, presented his credentials in Wellington on 10 November 1953, the formal date being celebrated now. Only 8 years earlier these two peoples had been at war for 5 years, and for the second time in 50 years. But the end of the Second World War left Europe split down the middle, geographically and ideologically. Through its experience of war and the peace process, its entry into new sovereign alliances and especially its role as a founding member of the United Nations, New Zealand had acquired a more assured grasp of international affairs and what they meant for us. Establishing diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic made sense.

New Zealand's foreign service was in a fledgling state in 1953. We had only a few posts and governments were sceptical of the need to spend money on more. In the first few years useful agreements such as a Convention on the Maintenance of War Graves (1956) and a bilateral Trade Agreement (1959) could be negotiated without a post in Bonn.

For background on the next key stage - **the opening in 1966 of the NZ Embassy in Bonn** - I recommend Michael McBryde's excellent survey in James Bade's 1998 book "Out of the Shadow of War". In 1961 Britain had decided to enter the European Common Market, EEC. NZ's economy depended heavily on our preferential access to the British market for our quality agricultural products, especially butter, cheese and lamb. Key EEC members would be our direct competitors and we needed to get special provisions from the Community to protect that preference. NZ diplomatic strategy in Europe was focused on this issue from the 1960s on. We needed people on the ground in more EEC capitals than just Paris and The Hague now. Our first Ambassador in Bonn, Dr Reuel Lochore, presented credentials in 1966.

## **Diplomatic Highlights**

Peter Ustinov once said that a diplomat these days is nothing but a head-waiter who's allowed to sit down occasionally. But there is more to it than that! Diplomats work on creating the setting for the governments and peoples of the countries involved to enjoy productive political, economic, cultural and other relationships. Primarily the governments but also increasingly the peoples. What are the ways by which the threads of a relationship can be strengthened and multiplied? How to build up a durable partnership so that in the event of problems arising, we know how to resolve them without damage to the fabric? The diplomats at an Embassy will lay the foundations for all those discussions and programmes which will, when successfully carried out, signal "Our two countries respect each other, can do business with each other, understand each other, like each other".

So ... In 1966 the Bonn Embassy was set up to get Germany on side in our bid to avert economic disaster as Britain entered the Common Market. It's fair to say that this task - though the specifics changed over time - stayed at the top of the to-do list throughout the 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s, until the point where a binding agreement safeguarding NZ quotas was negotiated under GATT and carried over into the WTO. Most of the NZ Ministers and Prime Ministers who visited Bonn throughout that period had sheepmeat and butter on their minds. And Germany was pretty responsive. High-level visits from North to South were naturally fewer, though possibly even more significant as symbols of a developing friendship: 1978 President Scheel, 1993 President von Weizsäcker, 1997 Kanzler Kohl.

There is a wider angle to the relationship than this EU-focused story. For example, in the 1980s and 90s we studied MMP; and Germany was interested in our economic reforms. And from the very beginning, diplomats on both sides worked on the nuts and bolts by which to build further on what started out as a rather thin bilateral relationship. I've already mentioned a couple of early (treaty) achievements. Others include: 1972 Visa Abolition Agreement; 1977 the very important Agreement on Scientific and Technological Co-operation; 1978 Agreement on Avoiding Double Taxation and Stopping Tax Evasion; 1981 Agreement on Scientific Co-operation in Antarctica; 1987 Air Transport Agreement; 1992 opening of the NZTE office and Consulate-General in Hamburg; 2000 Working Holiday Scheme.

The opening of Germany's **Goethe-Institut** in Wellington in 1980 rates a chapter of its own, marking a quantum leap in the profile Germany can present in NZ in all aspects of culture (their website will tell you more). Many

have benefited from their high-quality language teaching programmes. NZ has been very fortunate in qualifying to host this valuable asset.

Another chapter would cover NZ's diplomatic links with the GDR, which were conducted *via* accreditations to East Berlin and Wellington from Vienna and Canberra after the establishment of relations in 1973.

Every year sees further steps to consolidate and expand what is now, for NZ, one of our most diverse and durable relationships. Since the move to Berlin things have gone ahead in leaps and bounds. When NZ was selected to be Guest Country of Honour at the **Frankfurt Book Fair** last year, we even had the rare phenomenon of extensive NZ media coverage of a German-NZ event. I'm sure our Embassy was running flat out to ensure the success of that unusual project, but as well as that they were anchoring the programme of PM John Key's visit in June, including wide-ranging talks with Chancellor Merkel, and separate visits by Deputy PM Bill English and Arts Minister Chris Finlayson in the Book Fair context. Mr English also officiated at the re-opening in Hamburg of the **wharenui Rauru**, one of the finest Maori meeting houses outside NZ, which has been in the Hamburg Ethnology Museum for 100 years. So all in all, our Ambassador Peter Rider and staff should be feeling pretty satisfied with their 2012 record.

### **Personal Highlights**

The outstanding feature of my posting to Germany as Deputy Head of Mission from 1998-2001 was the Embassy's **move from Bonn to Berlin** in late summer 1999. Planning had begun well before – for example, the Ambassador's residence on the banks of the Rhine in Bad Godesberg had been sold; and a Wellington-based project team was overseeing the building of the official residence in Berlin and the fitout of the office - but there were innumerable details to be sorted out; while the normal business of Ministerial visits, representations to German ministries, monitoring the political and economic scene etc also had to be accommodated. We were also accredited to six other countries. It was a unique situation and the move to Berlin dominated our lives in Bonn.

Berlin will always keep appearing in any aspect of the German story, and here I digress – on a **DAAD** angle. In November 1974, midway through my one year Stipendienzeit in Marburg, I took part in a week-long DAAD study tour to Berlin. We travelled to West Berlin by bus along the thumping concrete road of the corridor from Hannover. The rules against stopping en route were so well-advertised that I actually felt pretty uneasy when our bus developed a

puncture and we had to stop and pile out. The week was a mindblowing experience, imprinting indelible images of what the Cold War meant in practice. Of these one of the sharpest is crossing into East Berlin via Checkpoint Charlie, heading along Friedrichstrasse to Gendarmenmarkt on the left; plucking up the courage to go into a bookshop (once having figured out that it actually was a shop!); noting the weeds sprouting from empty blocks of land and the pervasive greyness and grim concreteness. A feeling of needing to hold one's breath till the safe return to the other side, and anxiety that one might run out of it. I owe a particular debt to the DAAD for giving me that unique experience.

Then - fast forward to 1999: Berlin 10 years after Mauerfall: Friedrichstrasse again a golden mile of new or restored old architecture; Galeries Lafayette where the weeds had sprouted; Checkpoint Charlie a bustling tourist attraction with a nearby museum to show what used to be; and the new NZ embassy in a brand new glass and steel Atrium building on the corner of Friedrichstr and equally historic Leipzigerstrasse! There was a sense of unreality about it for me. I felt as though I had visited two parallel universes. But in that new Embassy, as part of that new/old capital, we felt we were helping to celebrate the new Germany, and could share in the pride and delight of so many German people to be moving forward - facing many challenges, admittedly - **but progressing with the evolution of post-war Europe**. A peaceful Europe.

Other highlights of my posting included the visits of PM Shipley for bilateral discussions with Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schröder in Bonn; PM Helen Clark's visit to Berlin to take part in the Community of Democracies Leaders' meeting; and in late 2000, reaching agreement with German officials on a Working Holiday Scheme to enable young NZers and Germans to visit Germany and NZ for up to a year, with work permitted. NZ was only the second country (after Australia) to secure such an agreement.

### **Current Snapshot**

Obviously we've come a long way since 1953. I think we can safely say Germany no longer views NZ as a little colonial chip off the old block of Britain. The vast disparity in size remains; but from a foundation of pragmatic mutual respect which diplomats and governments have worked hard on on both sides, the relationship has grown into a friendship of easy openness and frankness. In a global community of 193 states, this is something NZ has with only a handful of countries, and most of those would be English-speaking.

Trade has certainly flourished. Germany is globally our 7<sup>th</sup> largest export market, getting towards \$1bn in value when counting products entering

through other EU countries. Tourism is strong, with Germany our second largest visitor market in Europe (nearly 65,000 visitors here in the year to last month, 8 to 9 thousand of them using the Working Holiday Scheme.) There's a dynamic NZ German Business Association based in Auckland. NZ and Germany work closely in the UN, and are like-minded on most issues.

Tourism, business travel, immigration, scientific and education exchanges, the Working Holiday Scheme mean New Zealanders and Germans see a lot more of each others' home countries than ever before. So diplomats carry out an increasingly diverse range of **consular** functions. A knack for handling media interest is then often an extra skill needed in the diplomat's toolkit.

### **Outlook**

What will be the highlights of the coming decade when we look back from the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary? On the NZ side, the diplomatic task in Europe becomes ever more complex. It's never been easy for NZ to get noticed in non-English-speaking Europe. Even more difficult when the European integration project is grappling with its own huge challenges – with Germany the lead player in many of the debates. How is NZ to sustain the profile that it has achieved with Germany? how to keep Germany engaged, when both our countries have so many other important foreign policy goals? Putting it another way – what have we got to talk with Germany about? **EU** topics will inevitably dominate because there is so much happening, which affects the whole world. NZ is trying to negotiate a Framework Agreement within which to run the broader relationship and once again Germany's support could be key. Senior officials will meet in Berlin in June for Economic Consultations. Future discussions between Ministers will perhaps cover a larger element of third party issues, sharing views on our respective areas of experience, such as for NZ the Pacific, Asia Pacific, China; or the Middle East and Africa on the German side. Environment, climate change and sustainable development are other obvious themes, especially with Germany host to a range of related international agencies.

At the most practical level, there's the question of resources. In the Internet and jet age some have suggested NZ doesn't need Embassies now, or could rationalise in Europe by centring everything on Brussels and save on posts in other EU capitals. These will probably be perennial debates. The German relationship is about so much more, that I find it unthinkable we would succumb to that viewpoint with regard to Berlin. And even if our resources are limited, the key is to appoint high quality Ambassadors. We're very well

served on both sides at present: a proactive, capable and imaginative Ambassador in Wellington and Berlin. This does matter. It's good for each capital to see that it "ranks" a topflight professional.

In closing, I note the increasing role for cultural diplomacy. All sorts of people-to-people links between NZ and Germany are pushing the roots of the relationship deeper and wider. Both Embassies play an active role. German international initiatives such as the **DAAD** and the **Goethe Institute** demonstrated years ago how well German policymakers understood the importance of these links. Being here tonight as alumni of the DAAD and other exchange programmes, sharing a keen interest in contributing to the future successes of the relationship between our two countries, demonstrates how long-term investments in "human capital" can pay off. I look forward to being part of the next chapter.

Danke für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit.

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