

Youth ambassadors in Japan

Ten school pupils between the ages of 16 and 18 took a two-week trip to Japan in the role of "youth ambassadors." While in the country, they met both Japanese young people and key decision-makers, and took part in a varied cultural program.

After returning from their visit, the ten youth ambassadors reported back to the students and teachers in their schools by giving presentations about their experiences in Japan. More than 250 students applied to take part in the Youth Ambassadors to Japan project, which took place from October 11 to 26, 2009.

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1989-2009



Twenty years after

Václav Havel, a leading figure of the Velvet Revolution in former Czechoslovakia and President of the Czech Republic until 2003, joined former German President Richard von Weizsäcker in early October for a panel discussion at the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin. The topic was **20 years of freedom**.

German-Russian meetings

Twenty-six young managers from Germany and Russia recently took part in the second Baden-Baden German-Russian Meetings event. During the week-long October seminar, the managers held discussions with top leaders, entrepreneurs and academics from both countries on possible joint **ways to resolve the current economic crisis**. The event was organized by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, and the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations.

Chinese stories from Frankfurt

Frankfurt Book Fair 2009: A literary introduction to the largely unknown culture of China

Here the author and blogger Kolja Mensing reports for *Bosch-Zünder* on selected Robert Bosch Stiftung events and his impressions of the Frankfurt Book Fair as a whole.

Wednesday, Oct 14, 09:46am

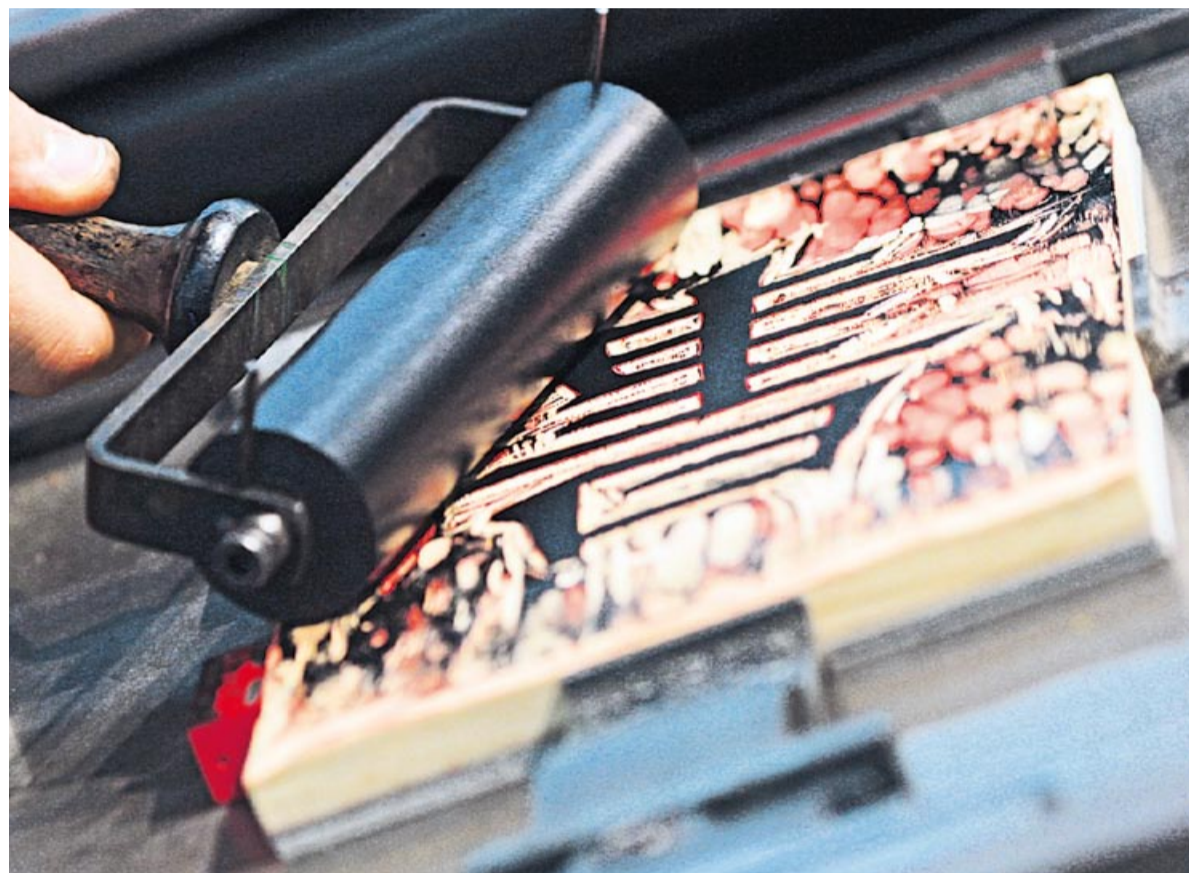
The train journey to Frankfurt is sobering. Half of the passengers are reading Dan Brown, the other half have their noses in the sports pages of the newspaper.

Thursday, Oct 15, 4:03pm

The poet Xiao Kaiyu has traveled from Shanghai to Frankfurt to attend the launch of the audio book *Schmetterlinge auf der Windschutzscheibe* ("Butterflies on the windshield"), a lovingly compiled anthology of Chinese poetry from the last 20 years – in other words, since the troubles in Tiananmen Square. According to Xiao Kaiyu (born in 1960), his generation has been greatly inspired by Western literature, particularly by writers such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, and they have learned to write about pain. *Butterflies on the windshield* documents this cultural transfer. Literary modernism – which hardly anyone in Europe is interested in these days – has been widely tapped into in recent Chinese poetry. Heavy symbolism is made as light as a butterfly, which edges slightly nearer to death with every beat of its wings. It is an unusually poetic massacre that Xiao Kaiyu's colleague Xi Chuan describes in the title poem: "No sooner have I driven onto the freeway than I commit a massacre of butterflies... They are smashed to pieces on the windshield. On my windshield."

Friday, Oct 16, 6:28pm

What has changed when a country's literature is presented as prominently as China's is at this year's book fair? This was the question posed at the ARTE stand – taking the example of Turkey, which was the guest country in 2008. Müge Sökmen from the Metis publishing house packed



Guest country China at Frankfurt: Traditional book art, modernist poetry, and the large and small tragedies of everyday life. Photo: Frankfurt Book Fair / Alexander Heimann

The Robert Bosch Stiftung at the Frankfurt Book Fair

Literature takes the richness and allure of foreign cultures and presents them as art. It provides an opportunity to discover new things and gain some understanding of them. For the Robert Bosch Stiftung, literature is an important tool for promoting cultural understanding and education. The Stiftung runs a variety of special support programs intended to promote cultural exchange across borders – from the creation of literature to its distribution, to meetings with

authors and translators. In Frankfurt this year, the Stiftung organized a range of events that provided an insight into these issues and its own work. The focus was on China, which was the guest country at this year's book fair. China is an excellent example of how major cultural differences demand a greater effort to build bridges and establish an open dialogue.

► www.bosch-stiftung.de/buchmesse

up her answer in a little story. When she studied in Germany back in the eighties, the customs officials at Frankfurt Airport always asked her the same question: "Hashish? Carpet?" Later, she at-

tempted to sell novels by Turkish authors to German publishers and this provoked similar reactions. The publishers and editors had a very definite idea of what kind of literature they wanted. It had to

feature a violent Anatolian husband, anything else would have been "too Western" for her contacts. According to Sökmen, this is something that has thankfully now changed. The invitation to the Frankfurt Book Fair has led to people in Germany gaining a much better understanding of the breadth of Turkish literature.

Müge Sökmen is not the only representative of the Turkish literary scene with a pleasantly dry sense of humor. Next to her sat the young literary agent Nermin Mollaoglu. When she was asked how she had managed to sell no fewer than 152 Turkish titles to other countries, she answered in perfect English, and with just two words: "I worked."

Saturday Oct 17, 1:20pm

You need to think carefully about which route you want to take from

one hall to another today. It's the public day and the exhibition is packed. It's like the first day of the January sales. Mao's words ("in a mass of people, swim like a fish in the sea") are of little or no use to anyone here. If you are unlucky, you simply get stuck among the crowds of people in one of the corridors.

Saturday Oct 17, 3:10pm

The Berlin journalist Susanne Messmer worked in Beijing thanks to a Border Crossers grant from the Robert Bosch Stiftung. She conducted interviews with older people, and these have recently appeared under the title *Chinese Stories*. At first glance, these stories are less about politics than about the large and small tragedies of everyday life.

At the fair, Susanne Messmer reads from her interview with Zhang Lingru, born in 1930. Her family was very poor, and Zhang Lingru was forced by her stepmother to marry at the age of 15. The man who was chosen for her was 39 years old and the marriage was "cold and loveless" from the very first day. At 20, Zhang Lingru decided to file for divorce, and this is where politics comes into the story. A judge ruled in favor of the young woman – a judgment that would have been unheard of in her country ten years previously. "That was when I first realized how much our society had changed following the liberation," recalls Zhang Lingru. That was back in 1950, the year of a very personal revolution in China.

Sunday Oct 18, 6:22pm

P.S. Travel reading: Xiao Kaiyu was delighted to find that people read books and newspapers on the train in Germany. This is extremely unusual in China, even though the trains have got much more comfortable in recent years. When asked, he told me that the Chinese prefer to make telephone calls. They often have something to eat, or simply just sleep.

Nobel Prize for Müller



Nobel winner: Romania's Herta Müller. Photo: M. Kirchgessner

Stuttgart | pfm | At first, it was pure speculation but then it turned into a resounding reality. An author with limited readership and a determination to address unpleasant issues such as dictatorship and deportation had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Within three days, Herta Müller's latest novel *Atemschaukel* (published in English as *Everything I Possess I Carry With Me*) had sold out.

Out of all Müller's books, this was the most difficult for her to write as it is based on recollection and grief. In 2004, she traveled to modern Ukraine with poet Oskar Pastior thanks to a Border Crossers grant from the Robert Bosch Stiftung. They visited the camp where the young Pastior was transported as a member of the German minority in Romania for "rehabilitation" in the Soviet Union. Pastior died in 2006 during their joint work on the novel, but Müller has included his memories in her moving book.

The joint shaping of society

Stuttgart | hn | The German state of Baden-Württemberg is home to more than 600,000 Muslims, including a large number of children and young people. Who are these young Muslims? What expectations, plans, and fears do they have? These questions were addressed in Stuttgart in the first of five events in the Jointly Shaping Society conference series. Günther H. Oettinger, prime minister of Baden-Württemberg, has been the driving force behind the conferences, which are being run by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Academy of the Rottenburg-Stuttgart diocese, and the Ministry of State.

There was plenty of interest in the event, with more than 150 people from Muslim organizations and groups, communities, and churches, as well as integration officers and academics taking part. The conference focused on cooperation between Muslim-based and community or church youth work. Another issue was the trial model for teaching students about Islam in elementary schools. Education Minister Helmut Rau, who delivered the opening speech, wants to continue with this trial.

The conference highlighted the hopes and dreams that young Muslims have for their lives. Integration of Muslim-based youth work into the existing range of services is important but not always easy and requires mutual openness.

How do we deal with our age?

Japanese study for a second career | Brazilians remain forever young | Study on age trends in seven countries

Heidelberg | ak | In industrial nations, getting older is mainly associated with a loss of capability, innovative capacity, and quality of life. "Anti-aging" has become something of a buzzword, referring to attempts to slow the aging process or even to prevent it altogether. In view of increasing life expectancy, there also needs to be a move towards "pro-aging" – in other words, an affirmation of aging, combined with a lifestyle that has a favorable impact on physical and psychological developments over a person's lifetime.

This raises the issue of "aging trends." What do we think about aging? How do we deal with our own age? These questions formed the subject of the study called "Aging Trends in Different Cultures," which was carried out by the Institute of Gerontology at the Ruprecht-Karl University in

Heidelberg. Under the leadership of Professor Andreas Kruse, the study looked at aging in seven different countries: Brazil, France, the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada, Norway, and the United States. The study was backed by the Robert Bosch Stiftung in cooperation with the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth.

Second career

Demographic change is viewed as a key challenge for policy makers in all countries around the world. But it is not just politicians – companies and businesses are also increasingly being faced with the question of what they can do to train older associates to enable them to remain in the workforce for longer. In the industrial nations that were studied, there was a prevailing conviction that the viability of each



"Anti-aging" or "pro-aging?"

Photo: James Balog/Getty Images

of them as an industrial location can only be secured by systematically training an aging workforce.

The question of which areas are best suited to older people also arose in all of the countries. In the

United Kingdom and the US there is a high level of voluntary activity by older people, often spoken of as "active aging" – something that has a long tradition in both countries. In France and Norway particular emphasis is placed on offering training to older people, while in Japan interest is focused on a "second professional career," which people take up in their sixth or even seventh decade.

Avoiding the subject

A notable phenomenon was observed in Brazil, a country that is seen as "young" by its own population. The term "age" tends to be largely avoided here, and instead there is a focus on efforts not to appear "old."

► The study on the Internet:

www.bosch-stiftung.de/altersbilder_international