

REPORT

After 5 days in Switzerland we headed towards the North. 800 kilometres separated us from our destiny, Berlin.

We spent one day on the never-ending German freeways, and after many hours, service stations, fast meals and more kilometres, we finally arrived at the capital. Awaiting us was the restored communications tower of the old Berlin-East.

The first impression when entering the city is the apparent chaos of the traffic. Crossings and strange roundabouts, the possibility of turning where you want e.t.c. In spite of everything, but the surprising thing was that you couldn't hear the noise of horns or see upset drivers, except when we made some mistake because even the GPS is not infallible; -)

When you have spent some days driving around Berlin, covering many kilometres along its avenues and streets you realize how large it is. For example, to go from our campsite, in the west of the city, to the centre, we crossed about 20 kilometres. That explains the impeccable network of public transport that they have; the innumerable tramlines, underground, train and buses arrive to all the corners of Berlin. What attracted our attention was the lack of barriers and "security" in order to control the sale of tickets. We assume that they consider that it really is a "public service" and the action of paying for the ticket is the contribution of each one to maintain it. A good public transport means less traffic and therefore less pollution (acoustic and of the atmosphere); something that unfortunately is not applied too much in our lands, where often the lack of efficient public transport and/or the prices force people to use the car.

In this sense, the bicycle lane pleasantly surprised us. It crosses the city from one end to the other. Such good roadways and the kind of land- quite flat- mean that the use of the bicycle is very common as much in the city as outside it.

Indeed, cycling along one of these ways, we observed that they had built the track, respecting the surroundings, integrating itself into it completely; avoiding the trees instead of getting rid of them.

Immediately we commented that in our country it would be done without that environmental care. In spite of its enormous size Berlin has plenty of extensive green areas so that more than parks they are forests within the city.

The first impression of Berlin was strange. It seems strange that an old city, or historical constructions or monuments do not exist. In terms of the city the mark left by the wars of its recent history lasts. On the other hand World War II devastated the entire city, its churches, monuments, and their old districts. And on the other hand, the "cold war" and its famous Wall divided it into two parts with different systems to it.

In spite of being already history, still today the consequences of the Wall can be seen, you are able to distinguish perfectly in which of both sides you are only by its aspect. They even commented to us, and we saw it, that peculiar city retains everything in duplicate: 2 city councils, 2 courts, 2 airports (now 3), and 2 big hospitals.

High buildings, not particularly attractive, most of them white and with no type of architectural style, council houses constructed by socialism for the workers, and that still lasts and gives a communist air to the zone; they serve as reference to know what side you are on. However the part of the west is a cultivated field of banks and jewellery shops with guards in their doorways, Mercedes cars everywhere and also limousines... the presence of money is evident, however, and as opposed to the east, does not involve cultural or political movements.

And so from this standard but prefabricated and rather snobbish atmosphere we immediately found our place that is... the lands of the old G.D.R.

Indeed, in the eastern block, cultural and politic social movement was seen much more. We saw several squats, which is how we found out how some became public with the aid of the city council, becoming something similar to cultural centres.

Also the presence in the street of support to the countries of Latin America such as Chile or Chiapas was remarkable, as was the considerable number of immigrants mainly the Turkish. So Silvio, one of the contacts that we had along with Marie in Berlin, jokingly told us how before there wasn't a typical food from Berlin. The nearest was the kebab (our main food during our stay there) since you find more stores than sell it than taverns.

It is a lively area. A place of work in the morning and a haven for ravers at night, since there are many crowded clubs.

There was certain nostalgia when they spoke of their experience of the fall of the Wall. In our opinion, the differences between the East and the West, and all that it represents are still present.

There is a very representative history of this, as Silvio told us called the "Ossie" (East's people's nickname). He is a music lover but in the old GDR it was very difficult to obtain new discs, and with the fall of the Wall and the expansion of the markets towards the GDR, he had the opportunity to buy what he wanted. What's more the first thing they did was to give money to the newcomers from the East so that they could shop. So that for them it was like a small material liberation. Although, in time, those that at first were glad with the change, later saw that not everything was a bed of roses, and that they had lost the relationship with other people and the close contact they had when they lived in the East. They felt that they had moved from a human community to a consumerist society.

The inheritance of the old RDA seems to live on not only graphically in the streets, dishes, bars e.t.c. but also in the memory of people.

In this way we could verify the effect of the resistance that both systems opposed and imposed for years in Berlin.

Referring to the idiosyncrasy of the Germans, we must say that at first they appear rather cold, or at least they seemed so in their contact with the people.

Although it goes without saying that those we had contact with treated us very well. Mainly our fabulous contacts Marie and Silvio that have helped us a lot. Thank you very much to both of them.

The truth is that we felt at ease there, but we had a duty and soon we set off for our next destiny... Denmark.

EKOGLIA PROJECT

To continue with what we began in Switzerland, in Berlin we used our time in completing the infrastructure necessary to work from our caravan, as well as in visiting those places of which we had reference (and some more that we were discovering in Berlin)

As far as the infrastructure, we had no problem locating the material as well as the necessary advises in a type of supermarket of caravanning equipment. There we could confirm our idea that in Germany they are more familiar with renewable energy.

So we already have our solar generator that allows us to save energy.

On the other hand, referring exactly to the Ekoglia project, we got to know closely diverse experiences around renewable energy: two powerboats comprised of the network of

distributors of biodiesel; the UFOP, an organ of management created by associations of farmers and producers of rapeseed; and UFA FABRIK, an eco-district that has been self-sufficient for years.

Two powerboats that offer biodiesel, Sprint and Fox

According to our data, in all Germany there is a network of more than 1600 powerboats that sell biodiesel. So that it was not difficult to locate these powerboats in Berlin.

Therefore, we decided to visit a couple of them and to fill the tank with their biodiesel that was somewhat thicker than ours to be able to verify its yield.

On seeing the wide use of " colza" in Germany, or to elaborate biodiesel for its nourishing use, we remembered the bad image that this oil had for us, in spite of it being verified as one of the healthier ones.

We wish to emphasize the fact that biodiesel turned out to be quite a lot cheaper than the mineral diesel in all the powerboats that we saw. Thus, while the mineral cost 89 cent/euro, we got to find biodiesel for 76 cents. That is the reason why biodiesel is widely consumed in Germany, according to our contact in the UFOP.

On the other hand we noticed the great difference between the great multinational companies and the small chains. When driving around the freeways whose petrol stations were of great oil (Shell, BP e.t.c.) no biodiesel was available. Absolutely the opposite of what we ran into once in the city, where it was in the powerboats of the small chains.

A clear example of the policy of the great multinationals is that they do not want to give up their lucrative businesses, so they bar the way to renewable energy- more ecological and cheaper- exhausting until the last drop of petroleum if it is necessary.

UFA FABRIK www.ufafabrik.de

During the summer of 1979 a hundred people took over land and buildings that had been abandoned in an old factory of cinema, with the intention of creating a place for trying out new forms of life, integrating art, work and daily life.

While they were renovating the place it soon turned into an eco-district within West Berlin and was a pioneer in rubbish separation and recycling, for example. With this philosophy, today we can find there houses, restaurant-cafeterias, a cultural centre, (concerts, theatre, and diverse courses and workshops), a farm, the store with its own ecological products, space for children and all in green surroundings.

A variety of interesting experiences:

- *Earth roofs.* By means of a roof made of a plaque stuffed with recycled paper, where a stone layer is placed, with another layer of earth where the grass is allowed to grow and that replaces the roofing tile, they have obtained a system that adapts to the effects of the climate on the tiled roof and keeps the temperature of the houses warm.
- *Solar panels.* From the entrance of this special centre, different facilities from solar panels could be seen, as much thermal as photovoltaic. They commented that they had installed different types from panels (with polycrystalline, monocrystallines and amorphous cells) to be able to make a comparative contrast of the yield of the different types. Also they experiment with different systems from solar pursuit for the solar panels. One of them is controlled by a computer to follow the solar trajectory. It's more expensive but more efficient than the others; although it was the other ones those that attracted our attention; the first used two small panels facing itself, and the last one consisted of a

simple hydraulic system, where the movement caused by the pressure of the heat causes the plaque to face the sun.

- *Aeolic generator.* As the process to make the blades of the Aeolic generators was very expensive for them, they decided to try something new and thus they were able to patent their own system, which at the moment is being tested and is giving very satisfactory results. Having obtained higher yields than some similar generators as we could verify. Its plan is to put it on the market if they obtain a good product.
- *Filtration and reusability of the water.* In order to reuse the rainwater, they use a system in which, once gathered the rain waters are passed through a filter made up of a land with vegetation that for its growth absorbs chemical substances, partly cleaning the water, that will still have to pass a last filter in the form of stone layers. Once clean, as it is not drinkable this water will be used for various purposes (watering and Toilets). This way a lot of water and money is saved.

Next year they celebrate the 25th anniversary of its creation, so a good celebration is being prepared.

UFOP Union zur Förderung von Oel- und Proteinpflanzen www.ufop.de

UFOP is a managing organisation created by different associations from farmers and agricultural producers, that work in the following areas: such as the element of political pressure in German and international institutions, promoting investigation and innovation for the production improvement, creating new forms of operation, and promoting the use of oil and native protein plantations.

Besides speaking to us about the UFOP, Norbert, our contact there, he spoke to us extensively about biodiesel. About the cultivation and elaboration of rapeseed to produce biodiesel, the laws that govern their commercialisation, as well as of the awareness of the society towards renewable energy.

As the interview was long and pleasant, and in addition very beneficial, we will try to offer you an interview with him to summarize.

There they confirmed the importance of the visit to the Biodiesel plant of Leer, also in Germany, where all the process can be followed, from the harvesting of the rape plant, the pressing of the seeds and the elaboration and distribution of biodiesel. We'll visit it later.

In addition to biodiesel it is to emphasize the abundant presence of the renewable energies, as much Aeolic as Solar, in all Germany including Berlin. In the capital city there is a large amount of panels: as much on the roofs of public buildings as on the private ones, or on the parking meters. The use of the solar panels power contrasts with the idea that we have about Germany as a cold land, demonstrating its capacity and potential. But the Aeolic energy is not left behind, as we could verify during the long trip to Berlin. Along the sides of the motorways (all of which are free) were innumerable dispersed groups of windmills, perfectly integrated in the surroundings.

Finally we do not want to forget to mention the infrastructure that they have regarding the rubbish collection and its selection. In the same way that they prioritise the returnable and re-usable package, (the bottles, the bags of the purchase.) you can find everywhere (in the Underground, airport or in the streets) containers of all types and sizes, for the selective rubbish collection. It would be good for seeing all these advances in our countries.