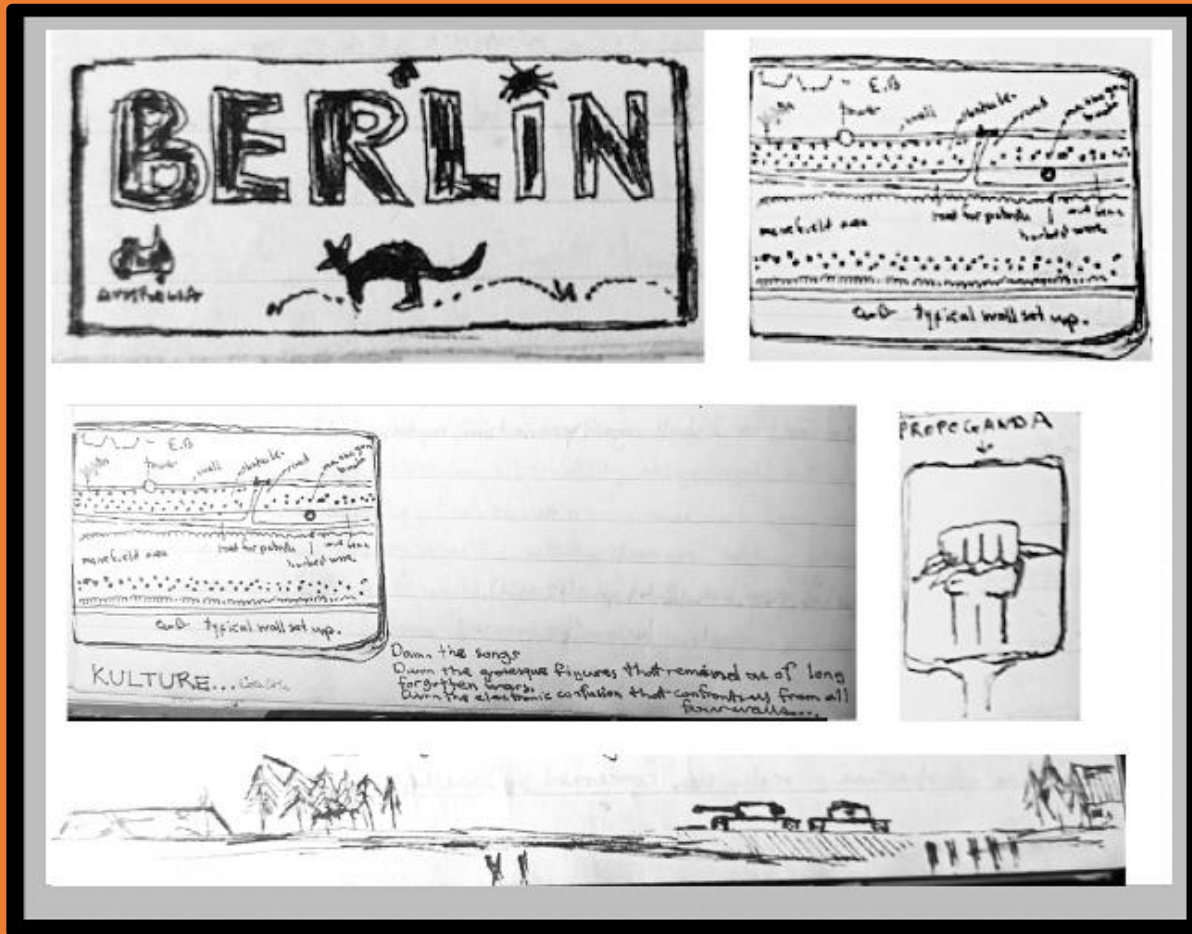


A Reflection On The Novella's Dystopian Setting With An Alternative Historical World.

In regards to these sketches I do also include a somewhat detailed map of the Berlin Wall which is just as well as I have misplaced any photos if I took any). Perusing through these cursory observations I made of the 'other side' of the Iron Curtain which maybe of some historical I can't help but muse to see how they have been written by a young, naïve 'suburban boy'; (thus I suppose they should not be taken too seriously). I don't think the illustrations are that particularly good as they were 'done on the run' before my mental memory buried them to some lower murkier level of my mind and in any case they were never meant for wide public viewing yet finally decided to include them. Anyhow, apologies for their poor quality.



Top Left: Sketch of hitch hiking sign with a hopping kangaroo and little Australia map so people would realise we were Australians. (I was with an Australian friend I had previously met by chance in my travels and we travelled together for some of our time in Europe as it was both she and I were surprised to discover we had mutual friends back in Sydney. In Hamburg had stayed with a German friend and family members such as parents and sister and although have long ago lost touch I do still remember her to this day firstly for her generous hospitality and secondly as well as for her extraordinary ability to nonchalantly roll a perfectly streamlined cigarette with one hand). As it was our second lift outside Hamburg that would take us to the West-East German border was with a truck driver who intended going to Australia for family reasons. Our long lift to West Berlin from which would come next would be with a delightful young woman in a green Renault car who was happy for me to play my Australian rock music cassette tape on the car's cassette player system. Once a driver picked someone up from the West German border to cross over to East Germany to go to West Berlin

the East German border guards at either end always did a head count to make sure that there was the same number of people and that no one had left the car at some point while in East Germany. Thus hitchhikers knew once they were picked up by a car they would get a straight through trip to West Berlin (and visa versa). Amongst the other travellers I met most went to and fro from West Berlin by train otherwise it was by car but would not be surprised if designated buses also went to and fro from West Berlin. The trip from the West German border to West Berlin was about three cassettes long and along the way we also listened to some German New Wave music. [A curious cultural difference is while just putting your finger out pointing downwards to the road is a way of hitching in Australia on the other side of the world signalling with your thumb seemed to be the preferred method].

Middle Left: A rough sketch of the Berlin Wall which includes obstacles and minefields etcetera. [A larger image next to the hitchhiking sign]. A photo I do remember taking of the Berlin Wall but on my second visit to West Berlin in 1985 was at Postdamer Platz where from a high vantage point where it was possible to look out across the Berlin Wall to see the no person's land in between there were two young German guys – they may have even been teenagers - and one of them curiously enough had a tourist souvenir boomerang with him. I think they found it funny that I was from Australia and they obliged when I asked if I could take a photo of the both of them with the guy with the boomerang cheerfully holding it up in the air as if he was about to throw it over the Berlin Wall.

Top Right: Large road sign with a Soviet hand crushing a U.S. fighter jet. sketch of some of the Russian tanks and accompanying soldiers seen from the autobahn as going through the East German countryside.

Middle Right: A large propaganda road sign with a hand crushing a U.S. fighter jet.

Below: Russian tanks and soldiers sighted next to the autobahn while what is not drawn is army trucks and mobile missile carriers on the road with missiles. One gained the impression that some sort of small scale military exercise was on the way throughout the day.

As for the actual car journey through East Germany which as stated was about ‘three music cassettes long’ I saw some wonderful forests (‘unreal’ is the word I use to describe them and I called them ‘fir forests’ although common tree species include spruce, birch, pine, fir, larch, ash, black alder and oak), plenty of old buildings, what appeared to be disused churches, people on bicycles as apparently they could not afford cars although there were many old cars about (much like what I would see in Havana in the early 1990s as well as in Damascus in the mid-1980s oddly enough while Havana is synonymous with old cars); however, I did feel with many of the cars I saw looking as if they were pre-1960 that it felt like I had gone back thirty years in time (although some of the cars that I may have seen may have been the East German Trabant which I had mistaken for being an older car model). Anyhow on the autobahn you ‘just knew’ that all the ‘up-to-date’ modern good cars on the road were West German cars going to West Berlin. There were many police cars everywhere and it was a MUST for drivers to keep strictly within the speed limits otherwise they would be heavily fined with all their highly valued West German marks benefitting the East German economy. (Yet, one now also caustically thinks that averting being fined for speeding is a troublesome ‘universal issue’ for every driver no matter the politics of the state they drive in). The only thing that seemed to be new from what one could see from the road was all the military hardware, truck convoys etc. and it felt like WWII had just ended yesterday. Near West Berlin were many tanks, army barracks and the countryside seemed to be teeming with Russian soldiers on army manoeuvres. There were missiles parked on the side of the road and I couldn’t help but think that the whole DDR economy was so structured as to maintain its military strength. It seemed to be such a tragedy that the wonderful landscape I could see from the highway was being used and controlled for the pursuit of war. It was like a breath of fresh air to finally get into West Berlin. (Yes, one is

also distinctly aware of U.S. militarism but that was certainly not top of mind after passing through a subservient landscape that seemed so ‘over-the-top’ dominated by an opposing war machine that to me was emphatically surrounding West Berlin).

In regards to East Berlin it was usual to go on a one-day trip into this side of the city from then the Checkpoint Charlie border control. Along the way we had gone by Postdamer Platz and it must have been from there where sighted the Berlin Wall from a lookout which is actually two walls with a wide ‘no person’s land’ in between them where there are many obstacles, minefields and all covered by machine gun posts so could see that it would be virtually impossible to cross. At Checkpoint Charlie there was the usual passport procedure and the East German customs officers actually came across as pleasant enough to two Australian tourists. We walked the East Berlin streets noticing the drab greyness of the city which was actually accentuated due to it being a grey, cloudy day. Anyhow, it seemed time had stood still since WWII. I noted in my travel diary that this observation seemed so true as it really felt we had walked into a time machine and gone back 35 or so years...the style of clothes, cars old, 1940s buildings, nothing new, no ‘capitalist’ advertising, no colour, the only colourful lights were the traffic ones...grey buildings, no leaves on dark brown trees, grey skies, cold winds, khaki soldiers...a rather barren environment...historic building bombed out, constant reminder of ‘the war’. (Most of these observations straight from what is written in the travel diary. 1982. To think in a few years this whole world was going to change and be swept away yet it was hard to imagine on this day that it would ever disappear in one’s lifetime). After walking around for awhile it was decided to get rid of our 25 East German marks [exchange rate was 1:1 when it actually can be up to 4 East German marks to 1 West German marks in West German banks]. We went to a restaurant and ordered the most expensive things on the menu, waiters, deco style all seemed to be set in a 1940s style. Had a good meal and spent time just sitting at our table talking and met an East German couple who was sitting on a table next to us and they could speak some English. They told us of their desire to leave East Berlin but the guy explained ‘bang, bang’ in reference to ‘the wall’. They graciously gave us apple schnapps to drink. After the restaurant we walked around some more and went to the tomb of the unknown soldier and saw the guards who were standing very still at attention and assumed they would have to do so for hours. We walked up backstreets, bought apples and chocolate at a fruit shop and walked back to see the wall from this side. At 8 pm it was darkening and it seemed as if we were in a ghost town, quite amazing knowing West Berlin was close by where there was a busy nightlife unlike in East Berlin where there seemed to be no night life at all. I tried to take a photo in an attempt to capture the silent urban atmosphere yet without much success. While we were standing at a corner we were spoken too by the police who stated we were loitering. Thus there was not much else to do but to head back to West Berlin and the contrast was incredible when comparing the differences between the two parts of the same city. In West Berlin to suddenly notice the colourful billboards, lights, people, theatre, music etcetera. To escape from the cold by going inside a place where Greek food was available to see the walls covered with cultural and political posters. To have Greek coffee. To be whimsically reminded of Glebe an inner-city suburb near Sydney University. To see a busker who was playing the blues. (To now be writing about where I was over forty years ago). To then head back to where we were staying.

While in West Berlin when looking out for residual signifiers of WWII to thus see the Russian war memorial at the Brandenburg Gate with its two T-34 tanks which appear as historical emblems while to also wistfully comprehend how on the other side of Berlin and beyond in East Germany they could still exist as an everyday reality. According to travel notes to have sighted not too far from the Reichstag by a river and the wall to see crosses for those who had

tried to swim across it from the East Berlin side. The latest cross was dated 1980. To also visit close to Checkpoint Charlie the museum dedicated to escape attempts.

To come across a travel diary excerpt based on the impressions of the friend I was with when we eventually left West Berlin to go back to West Germany. A late night time trip that gave what was otherwise a straightforward journey a mysterious sense of surreal otherness; it was not a matter of hitchhiking but of having the fortunate opportunity to take up a lift offer due to where we were staying. On our arrival to West Berlin there had been a mix up over an accommodation possibility so as to end up at a community house for young male engineers (as it was the green Renault driver who was very helpful and patient with us took us to this place). We befriended in particular one young mining engineer who had quite a philosophical outlook on the world and when he said he was going on a visit West Germany he offered us a lift back; so at 1.30 am on a late March evening the three of us in his Alfa Romeo drove through East Germany with this time only listening to eerie German new wave music while yet again watching out for speed radar traps. The Braunschweig approach (north-west Germany) was taken to leave East Germany and while crossing into West Germany we could sight spotlights shining on the so called 'iron curtain' e.g. wire fencing, guard towers etc. it was explained to us that to stop defectors there were sharpshooters, walls, barbed wire, five rows of mines, dogs, other military paraphernalia etc. It all sounded incredible to us. As it was there was an interesting collective reaction when we were finally on West German soil with all three of us independently letting out a sigh of relief with our driver also immediately fingering the volume knob on the car stereo so as to put the music up loud while also pressing his foot down on the accelerator; in our 'capitalist car' we realized how much we had not relaxed while driving through what seemed a politically ominous nightscape. (a) Or as mentioned from what I copied down 'to sense the oppressiveness of the DDR's environment, penetrating our western...attitudes'. (b) As to the speed traps from memory a 100 km speed zone would suddenly drop to 40 km so a driver had to be alert not to be caught out otherwise a heavy fine would entail. (c) 'New wave' is the best description I can come up with German rock music with an electronic sound. Although I have no written verification in my travel diary of having done my mind keeps recollecting that Kraftwerk's *Trans Europe Express* (1977) and also recollect a distinctive 1980s anti-war song - by some other German band - of a German soldier lost or forgotten on the Eastern Front. Yet have failed to discover such a song in any search). (d) It is somewhat tragically ironic to now see since the downing of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall which was built to keep people in there are now so many walls and other national barriers being built this time - along with maritime pushbacks - to keep people out. It could be cynically surmised that perhaps it was only in the Cold War that there were 'good refugees'. (e) DDR stands for *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* while GDR which can also be used for the former republic stands for in English for the German Democratic Republic.