

Franz Herbert Rieger

Alan Griffiths

I first met Franz Rieger in October 1989 when a group of lecturers from our College in Cambridge came to Berlin to set up a joint degree with the Fachhochschule für Wirtschaft. I am the only member of staff left in our University who was present at that inaugural meeting in Berlin and am happy to record both the events of that period, and also my recollection of Franz Rieger who is now about to retire as Rector of the Berlin School of Economics and Law.

The joint degree set up between Cambridge and Berlin required students to study both at Cambridge and in Berlin. The course would eventually lead to the award of a BA in European Business Administration (BAEBA) from Cambridge and a Diploma Kaufmann from Berlin. The course structure was developed by both institutions in close conjunction with one another. The reason for our visit to Berlin in 1989 was for the staff from Cambridge to meet and discuss the course content with their counterpart in Berlin. My counterpart was Franz Rieger and we developed two specific modules together – Franz would be in charge of two modules in Berlin and I would be in charge of the same two modules in Cambridge. They were entitled ‘Organisational Design’ and ‘Organisational Strategy’.

Our Cambridge group flew into Berlin Airport at 3.40pm on Monday the 30th October 1989 and stayed in a hotel not far from the Kurfürstendamm where we saw many department stores and fashion designer shops. Our team was led by David Kinnear, the Head of the Business Department and also by the course leader, Derek Marshall. On the plane over to Berlin, our group spend some of the time singing a recently released song by Kylie Minogue entitled ‘Enjoy Yourself’ and that was, ironically, to be an accurate foretaste of our positive experience in Berlin! On Tuesday morning we all met at the Fachhochschule where I first introduced to Franz. I remember two things about that morning; first, the Fachhochschule building was very big compared to the Coslett building where I worked on the Cambridge campus and, second, I remember my first meeting with Franz. When we were introduced, Franz looked me up and down and seemed a little shy at first. I always had too much to say when meeting people for the first time but I remember Franz as being more measured and reflective – probably puzzled at seeing a person like myself who could not stop talking! However, once we started to discuss the two modules which we were to develop and share, the tempo changed and we began to work well together.

I found Franz a person who listened and weighed things up in a logical and reasoned way – his aim was always to be constructive and supportive. We agreed on the content, the type of delivery and the type of assignment which students should expect. What I thought might have been a difficult time turned out to be very enjoyable and rewarding thanks to Franz's positive attitude towards the need to nurture links between the Fachhochschule and other educational institutions outside Germany. During that time, it was also a great pleasure for me to meet with Bernd Pfeiffer who was to remain the backbone of the link between our institutions for many years to come.

Our time in Berlin was new and exciting for us and with the help of some of the staff of the Fachhochschule we were able to enjoy some meals and drinks in the capital. A walk up the Kurfürstendamm to the Kaiser Wilhelm memorial and also to the Berlin Wall were eventful and this gave me the chance to use the only six words of German which I possessed! I remember that every person who served us drinks in Berlin seemed to understand when we ordered a beer!! Our group flew back from Berlin on Thursday 2nd of November 1989 and landed back in the UK at 6.10pm having had a very fruitful educational and human experience. The only real pity was that exactly a week later on the 9th November I saw on my television set in Cambridge the breaching of the Berlin Wall. Had our group arranged to visit Berlin just one week later we would have experienced that amazing event!!

The validation of the BAEBBA degree scheme took place in Cambridge on the 16th of March 1990 and soon afterwards the course began. The students from Germany were taught completely separately from the rest of our University students until around 1995 when our course structure changed, and the BAEBBA group had then to join the same modules as other home students. In those early years Bernd and Franz would come over to Cambridge and we would meet, discuss courses, and had some suitable refreshments. Franz, if I remember correctly, used to like to wear a sport jacket and looked very relaxed and at home in Cambridge after a visit or two.

After those early years, I finished teaching on the BAEBBA course and went on to lecture on other University modules so I did not meet up with Franz so often. This was a pity. I was told that he was rising up the educational ranks in Berlin and that he had, by the year 2000, become Rector of what was eventually to become the Berlin School of Economics and Law. I was not surprised at his elevation into the educational hierarchy. He seemed to me, even many years ago, to have a combination of skills which could be harnessed for the benefit of his educational institution in Berlin. He had academic credence, quiet determination, a personable outlook, and a will to communicate his valuable educational experience to others. It was therefore no surprise for me to hear that Franz had become an early leading light in the UAS7 consortium formed in 2005 which

was committed to excellence in teaching and research in an international context. He had already accumulated nearly 21 years of experience since he was first involved in the early experiment with us in Cambridge in the late 1980s. By now it has become a twenty year old educational relationship which has endured the test of time. The baton has now been passed to new people like Tim Froggett at our University and others in your School who will, I am sure, continue the relationship for many years to come.

Dale Carnegie the American writer and lecturer once said ‘Success is getting what you want: happiness is wanting what you get’. Franz has already obtained success in his professional life – a factor which he wanted, enjoyed, and well earned. Now, during the next phase of his ‘new’ life, I wish him all the happiness I am sure he would want, and hopefully get. In conclusion, I, and my colleagues here in Cambridge, would like to wish him a healthy and enjoyable time in whatever pursuit he follows in the years to come. In addition, we would like to thank him for being such an essential foundation stone in the relationship which subsequently flourished between Berlin and Cambridge

With very best wishes