

# *Frankfurt News*

*Frankfurt am Main, 17th January 2014*



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## North Korea Restores Christmas

by Milan Prnjic

PYONGYANG — People must wonder what Christmas stands for in North Korea. A day of reconciliation, not among family members (forced to live together in overcrowded homes or torn apart by emigration to South Korea), but between the Communist Party and the generation our grandparents belong to – possibly a sign of changing political direction and acceptance of Western liberal values.



It is also a time in which the country's service sector looks redder than usual. One needs only to pass near the door of a cafeteria to be startled by waiters wearing hot, red caps they will have to endure until early January. There are all sorts of such hats. Some are shaped like triangles, others like deflated balloons, yet others are excessively liberal adding other colours. The newly established Ministry for Forced Celebrations kindly warns employees to wear uniforms decorated with stars, hammer and sickle.

The question that arises naturally is - did North Korea actually prohibit Christmas at one point? International public is almost certain that no written document will testify to this. According to Mr. Kluge, East Asia expert from Goethe University in Frankfurt, "abandoning the Christmas tradition was similar to getting rid of excessive baggage from the sinking ship named "The Last Communist Resort". This can be understood in the light of economic hardship faced by the isolated state. Another explanation is that 24 December coincides with the birthday of "The Sacred Mother of the Revolution" - Ki Jung Suk, grandmother of the current "more" liberal leader Kim Jong-Un.

Although for some North Koreans Christmas is an unusual and strange tradition, they happily wear their uniforms, welcome and greet many foreign tourists who enjoy this time of the year in "the world's best kept tourist secret" - Pyongyang. The leader himself has demonstrated so far unseen humility by banning public executions on Christmas Eve, a move embraced by western leaders as an "opening up to all citizens of the world".



That's the opportunity Weixie Travel is pitching. The Chinese tourist agency is advertising a unique holiday getaway. This is the first opportunity to spend Christmas in North Korea after a long time. "Despite the utopian image the tiny country enjoys abroad, we need to warn that some missionaries were sentenced to hard labour. That aside, North Korea is the safest country in the world if you are not a soldier, journalist or a foreigner," says Emily Qiu, who works for Weixie Travel.

Christmas in North Korea, today devoid of any negative connotations, comes with strong commercial awareness but also a high dose of frustration. Western news agencies reported complaints of roasted pork made of rice and Christmas carols performed by Dance Ensemble of the Korean People's Army.

### **The *food* joke of the day: The Family of Tomatoes**

A family of three tomatoes were walking downtown one day when the little baby tomato started lagging behind. The big father tomato walks back to the baby tomato, stomps on her, squashing her into a red paste, and says, "Ketchup"!

## Our Christmas Eve

by Brigitte Horvathova

Before I start to describe Christmas traditions in my family, let me explain some basics. I come from the south-western part of Slovakia that pretty much resembles west Europe but still has some traditional features. Therefore, there are many interesting traditions when celebrating the feast of Christmas, but not as many as in more traditional families especially in middle or east Slovakia. Also, I have to add that our Christmas Eve is based on a Christian tradition.

NOVE ZAMKY, SLOVAKIA, 24<sup>th</sup> December:

All of the preparations for Christmas Eve start a week before Christmas. That is because there are many delicious specialities which have to be prepared in advance, for the longer they rest, the better they taste, for example ginger bread. My mother prepared my favourite recipe from walnut dough. After finishing baking, the ginger bread tastes delicious but within an hour it becomes hard as stone. Therefore, it has to rest in a humid place; I remember my grandma advising me to put some slices of traditional white bread between the ginger bread pieces. To my surprise it worked – the ginger bread was tender and the loaves of bread were even harder than the ginger bread originally was.



Yummy ginger bead

Another speciality my mother had to prepare in advance is the traditional cabbage soup that is eaten on 25 December. The secret of its great taste is both that it rests three or four days before being served and also that it contains some pieces of dried plums. Dried plums are

necessary, even if the cabbage soup is salted. There is also the potato salad that my mother prepares the night before the 24<sup>th</sup>.



Now that the preparations are done, we finally arrive at the 24<sup>th</sup> of December. Adults have to fast and are allowed to eat only once this day. Furthermore, eating meat is not allowed. An exception are children and the elderly so my brother Teddy does not have to fast and eats his regular meals. I also have to point out one thing that is different in our family – on Christmas Eve we eat dinner at 3 pm so that there is more time to enjoy unwrapping presents and being together. Other families eat even later, about 7 pm.

After waking up in the morning of 24 December we divide the work we have: My father and Teddy are responsible for setting up the Christmas tree and my mother and I for the cooking. At exactly 14:26 we finally finish frying the Christmas fish (usually a carp but we prefer pangasius) and cooking the traditional milky lentil soup. A tradition is to keep a scale of the carp in your wallet so that money is multiplied in the following year. Meanwhile, I help father a little with the Christmas tree and I take some snapshots too, so that everything is recorded.





Now that everything is ready we dress up, admire the neatly lit Christmas tree and sing some traditional Christmas songs. As I already mentioned, the influence of the West has meant that we also sing familiar songs like 'Jingle Bells' or the German 'O Tannenbaum'. They have become a tradition in our family.

It is 15:21 when we sit to the set table and say the prayer as grace for food. Afterwards we start with some waffles with honey, nuts and, it might sound weird, garlic. This combination is really tasty even if you think that would not be so. The garlic symbolises health, nuts wealth and honey kindness. Now fruits continue that are also symbols of health. Apple is cut horizontally – if the pips form a star, our family will be fit and sound during the following year. In case the pips form a cross, that means illness or even death... but this is only a legend.

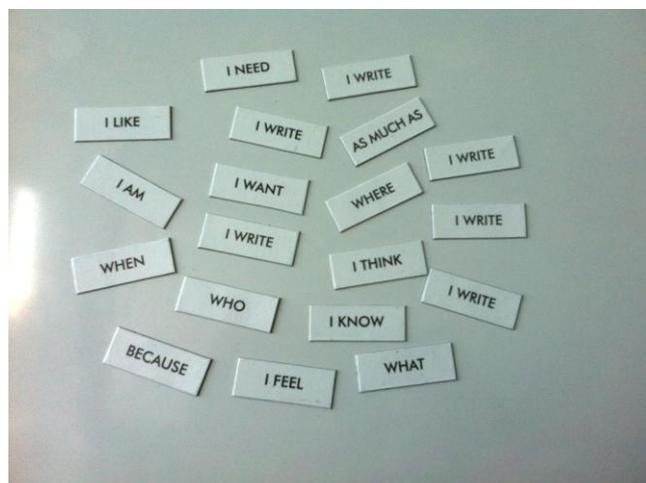
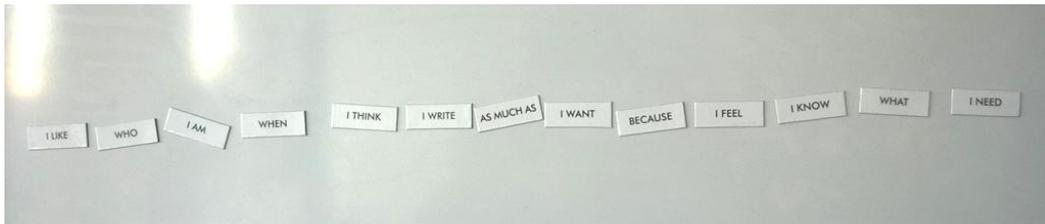
After finishing dinner at 16:33 we are full, happy and ready to please our beloved with presents we prepared and we sing some Christmas songs too. This year I really surprised my little brother Teddy for he expected only a small present from me. Instead he got a large Lego set.

Oh, I nearly forgot an important thing: children are told to receive presents from the little Christ for their nice behaviour and great effort at school. Every year when I was little I would write a letter to little Jesus and so does my brother today, even if he knows that Christ does not bring the presents anymore. Today it is more like a formality because our parents are still happy to receive such letters and they keep them.

Our tummies are full, the presents are shared and everybody is happy. It is about 18:06 and our family tradition follows. Each Christmas Eve we watch the film ‘Three Hazelnuts for Cinderella’ that is a Czechoslovak-German production from the 1970’s. It is a must for us and for many other Slovaks too and according to a German friend even a must for her. If you are interested, the original title of the film is: ‘3 Haselnüsse für Aschenbrödel’ or ‘Tři Oříšky pro Popelku.’

The Midnight Mass is the last thing on 24 December we usually do. When we arrive home we are tired but grateful for the beautiful day we spent together. The less time you spend with your family the more you realise how valuable and beautiful the time spent with your beloved ones is. Care about them, love them and appreciate them.

## Classroom philosophy



## Never been to Cardiff?

by Natalie Bournonville

*Did you know that Cardiff is the capital of Wales and did you know that it is the biggest city there?*

Cardiff, or in Welsh “Caerdydd”, is located in the south next to the seaside. About a three hour drive to London, the lively city is surrounded by beautiful landscape and has a space for everyone. When crossing the border to Wales, you will immediately notice that all signs are written in Welsh and in English. Moreover, when you get in contact with Welsh people you will find out that the inhabitants are very proud of their independent country and do not want to be counted as a part of England.



Cardiff castle

Students live in the districts Roath and Cathays which are close to University. The University is the biggest in Wales and offers a variety of subjects to study. As Welsh people are meant to be very friendly and the academy offers a variety of societies, sports clubs and fitness courses, foreign students feel welcomed and find it easy to get in contact with fellow students.

In their free time students, tourists and inhabitants can meet in one of the beautiful parks, have a Welsh meal in one of the restaurants or have a cider in a pub. In the modern city centre of Cardiff there is the Castle, the rugby stadium and the shopping mile with many pretty arcades. About ten years ago a lot of money was invested into the centre in order to improve the image of the city. Nowadays, people from all around the city come to the capital to shop or to watch rugby games, the national sport. Furthermore, Cardiff has a football stadium which is located a bit outside the city and attracts many fans.

Moreover, if you are interested in visiting cathedrals and castles, Cardiff's environment offers a variety of these historical buildings. Cardiff Bay with its cafés is a favourite place for tourists and locals.



Cardiff bay

So, if you would like to know more or if you are already keen to visit Cardiff, do not hesitate as you won't regret it!

## “Hello Mister” – a female bule travelling in Indonesia

by Friederike Trotier

One of the first words you can hear on arrival in Indonesia is *bule* – at least if you have a Caucasian face. And most likely, it will not leave you until the end of your visit to this tropical country. In general, the term *bule* describes something white or pale but the most common use is in reference to a white person (*orang bule*). For Indonesians *bule* entails many stereotypical characteristics of Westerners such as rich, important, liberal and with a big nose. They use this word for many occasions, and although some Western people might feel quiet annoyed, usually *bule* does not have a negative connotation.

During my own travels in Indonesia I often encountered this term, especially in the more remote Maluku islands where I stayed for half a year. Sellers of all kind of merchandize or services shouted *bule* to attract my attention. Some just called out to demonstrate their courage or to inform the neighbourhood that something interesting was approaching. Some particularly brave Indonesians, mainly students, even came up and asked me for a photo. Hence, I became quite a celebrity thanks to my fair skin and hair. But once I was clearly outdone by a German boy band giving a concert in Ambon, the capital of the province of Maluku. Since the audience was about 80% female I was not able to compete with the boys.



Indonesian students + one bule

Although many Indonesians know only a few words of English they enjoy testing them whenever they see a *bule*. Very common is the expression “Hello Mister”. Soon I realized that in contrast to the original usage Indonesians do not make any gender differences. I was addressed with “Hello Mister”, just as my mother and other female *bules*. Attempts to teach anyone to say “Hello Miss” or “Hello Mrs” failed miserably.

Surprisingly, another Western language is far more present in Maluku, namely Dutch. In most other parts of Indonesia the colonial past has entirely disappeared, yet in Ambon you can not only find cakes with Dutch recipes and many football fans of the Dutch national team but also speakers of the Dutch language. Once, I accompanied a friend to a church service and almost fell asleep during the sermon but all of a sudden, I realized that the preacher was talking to me. Somewhat dazed, I could not make out a word. Fortunately, my friend stepped into the breach and explained that I was not Dutch but German.

Thus, during my stay in Maluku one of the main issues was the question how to handle the attention centred on me. The best way was not to ignore the people but rather to give them a smile and greet them back. Sometimes “Hello Mister” or “*bule*” resulted in a very nice conversation, not with two or three English words but in Indonesian – a great pleasure for the Indonesians.

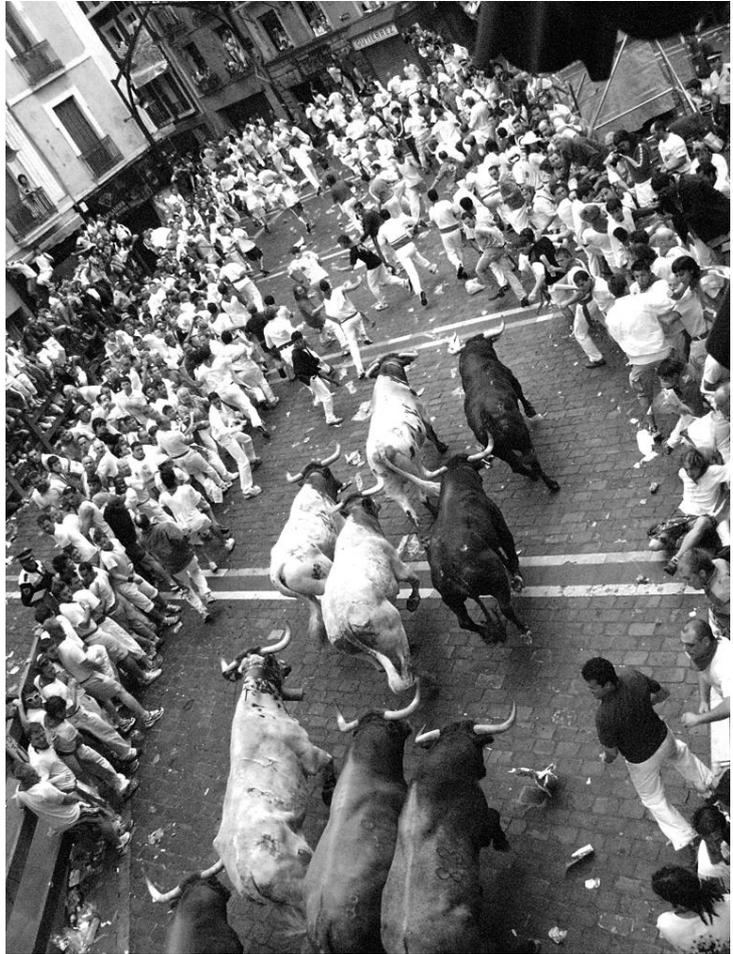


Spice Island

## The “San Fermin” festival in Pamplona by David Unzué

I come from a town in the north of Spain called Pamplona. Since it is not a big town, many people don't know it. However, most of you have probably heard about it due to a festivity called “Sanfermines” or “San Fermin”, which takes place there every summer and attracts lots of foreign people.

The main attraction actually is the Bull Run, and that's the reason why most of you will now think: “Ah! Yes! I know that festival!”. The Bull Run is a bull running and bullfighting festival, where every morning at 8am, the city's brave and the world's foolhardy run ahead of a group of angry bulls. The rest of us (yes, me too) look on in amazement.



But contrary to what most people think, the Bull Run is not the only event, but just a part of the celebrations taking place during the festival. Actually “San Fermin” runs from July 6 to July 14 every year. It all starts with “El chupinazo” at the town hall, a symbolic firing of a rocket in front of the gathered guests.

After that, the festival includes a lot of events apart from bull running and bullfighting, for all kinds of people, from children to adults. Do you want to eat something? Then visit the numerous bars or restaurants and the street markets offering traditional food. Are you looking for some fun and rhythm? Then don't miss the concerts and folk music in the streets. There are also all kinds of exhibitions and shows.



## **Gürültülü! - Traffic in Istanbul**

**by Malaika Thaysen**

During my Erasmus semester in Istanbul, I experienced the giant metropolis in its various facets. It is impossible to describe this city with its influential history, booming economy, delicious foods and drinks and more than 14 million inhabitants who could not be more diverse with a few sentences. So I will give you several small insights into the crazy and loud - “gürültülü” - traffic situation and what I learned from it.

The traffic situation is tense in Istanbul. Turkish people love to go out, discover their city and meet family and friends in restaurants, cafés, bars or malls and so do the masses of tourists. There are traffic jams and full buses everywhere. The problem is that Istanbul is built on two continents with the Bosphorus in between, has nine islands and seven hills and lies in an endangered earthquake area. Therefore, building new tunnels, bridges and metro lines is more complicated than in Germany.



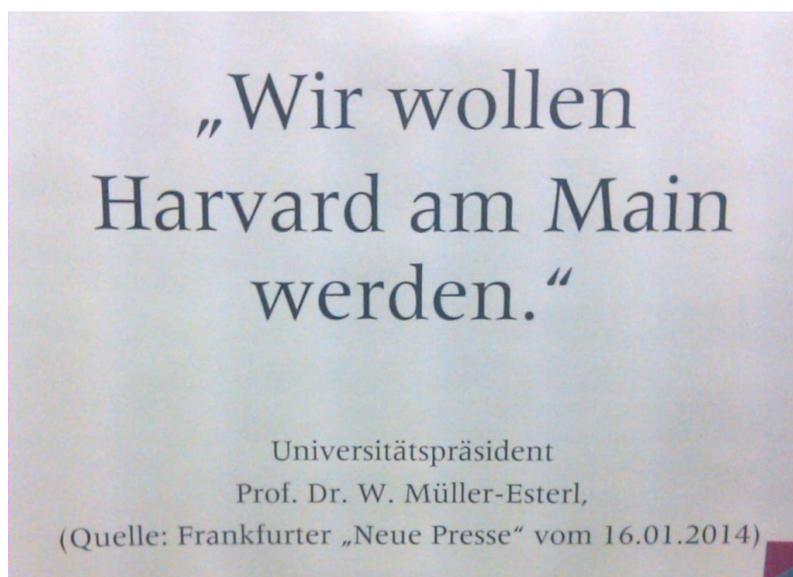
As the biggest city in Europe, Istanbul has many forms of transportation at its disposal. Besides traditional public and private transport such as buses, trams, metro, ferries, taxis and so on, there are unusual ones. Businessmen in particular use water planes, water taxis or small fisher boats to avoid the traffic on the streets. Another new form of transportation to me was the metrobus. It is a very long articulated bus which has its own dedicated lane on the highway so that it will never be stuck in the traffic jam. However, it cannot move from the

metrobus lane. Metrobuses run every thirty seconds. Hence, if there is an accident, a kilometer long traffic jam of metrobuses builds up within a few minutes.

What's more, biking is not a good idea! One of my friends rented a bike once and broke his arm almost immediately. But the accident was not caused by a crazy taxi driver as everybody imagined. It was a pedestrian who wanted to cross the street. He did not hear any car noise and did not expect a bike on Istanbul's streets. So he walked on the street without paying attention to the bike behind him.

When I had an appointment with friends it was very likely that at least one of us was late. Apart from the predictable traffic jams during the rush-hour or when it rains or snows, there are unpredictable ones such as when there is a football match of one of the three big football clubs, an electricity break-down or just like that without warning – at 3 AM. Grumbling about the traffic is definitely a part of an Istanbul's life. But after a while everybody learned that we could not change anything about the situation but we could change our attitude towards it. So we learned to be patient and flexible, accept uncontrollable situations and drink the typical Turkish tea while waiting. Fortunately, traffic jams never stopped us from discovering the city.

***The mission statement of Goethe University:***



## **Olivia Palermo**

**by Sabrina Stumpf**

**She is one of the most photographed women in the world, style icon, model and blogger. Her looks are copied by millions of fans, she is successful and still in love with her lover Johannes Huebl, a German model.**

It is clear: Olivia Palermo is one of the best dressed women in the world. Her name is a successful brand ([oliviapalermo.com](http://oliviapalermo.com)) and she flies permanently around the globe. Her calendar is full. Two months ago she was in Tokyo, two weeks later in Kenya and Tanzania where she visited the Maasai tribe because [oliviapalermo.com](http://oliviapalermo.com) supports the 'Pikolinos x Maasai Tribe Project'. Staying at home in New York for a few days, she and her boyfriend flew to India and at the moment they are on vacation at St. Barts.

But who is this beautiful girl? Where are her roots?

Olivia Palermo was born on 28th February in 1986 as the daughter of real estate developer Douglas E. Palermo and interior designer Lynn Hutchings. She grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut. After finishing school she attended the American University of Paris for one year and then studied media at The New School in New York. She came to prominence after being cast in the reality television series *The City*, which documented the personal and professional lives of Whitney Port and her friends in New York. She also modeled alongside her boyfriend, Johannes Huebl, for the autumn/winter 2010 campaigns by Mango and Hogan.



She is admired for her huge wardrobe and her sense for new trends. She is not shy to combine different materials, patterns, colors and cuts. But although she is famous for these looks she naturally loves wearing casual clothes like jeans, t-shirts and cashmere pullovers.

She and her German boyfriend Johannes Huebl are called the best-dressed couple in the world. Their looks are suited to each other and they look so perfect standing smiling for the cameras, with incredible white teeth and holding hands with perfectly manicured nails, on the international red carpets.



Having a well working relationship seems hard to combine with the full days and long journeys. But for Olivia and Johannes it is a challenge they master. They try to travel together and never be separated for more than seven days. If Olivia is traveling for a job, Johannes accompanies her and vice versa.

Because her boyfriend is German, Olivia can speak a little German. They often visit Johannes' family in Berlin, so Olivia is very close to them. Her style is different to that in New York. It is more 'cool' and she wears, for example, military-jackets, jeans and biker boots. Anyway, Olivia can wear what she wants – she looks gorgeous.

And as grand finale of the successful year 2013, Johannes proposed to Olivia on New Years Eve. There is no question about it. She said YES.