

## The eighth Chapter of my German Adventures

# Aprilbericht

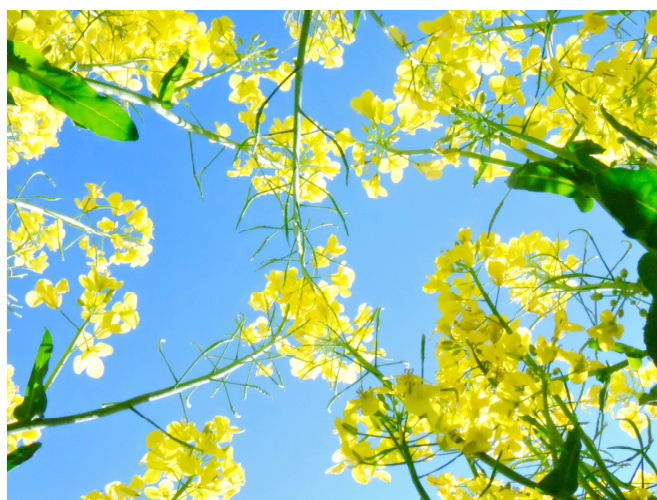
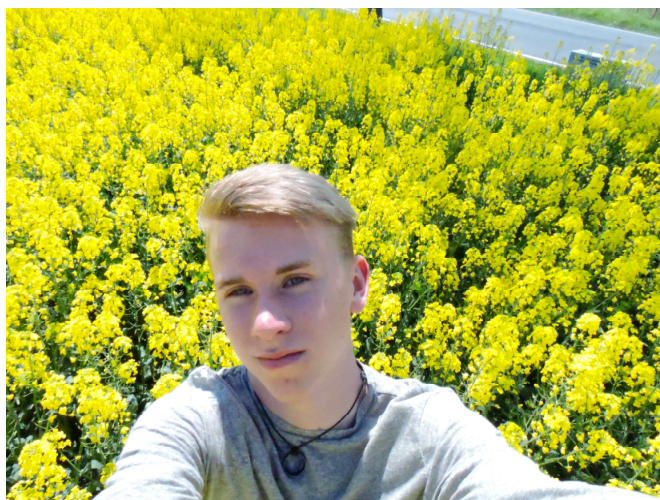


**Pflaumenblüten** (*plum blossoms*)



**Zwei Störche in ihrem Nest** (*two storks in their nest*)

With spring in full swing and nature awakening all around, my morning bike rides to the bus, when not rushed because of my tendencies to always yell at my alarm clock for “Seven more minutes!”, have been beautifully refreshing. Along the main road from Estorf to Nienburg, the “Rapsfelder” (canola fields) are in full bloom giving the landscape a wonderful yellow glow in the morning rays. The canola blossoms usually come later in the year, but even if they are a little early, they are just as “schön” (beautiful).



**Im Rapsfeld** (*in the canola field*)

Even the Lesemann farm got an unexpected surprise this year - lamb triplets - and this after we all thought baby sheep were done for the year; we already had nine or ten little ones. Although one of them died shortly after birth, the other two are, though small, full of energy and very adorable. From this year on, the family has decided to only sell sheep or lambs as long as the buyers promise to keep them alive. They previously had sold lambs to the local “Dönermann” (Turkish-German restaurant owner), who would most certainly have taken a few this year as well.





**Weiß und schwarz** (*white & black; Stracciatella is in the middle*)



**Frühlingsblumen** (*spring flowers*)

Though my seventeenth birthday was on April tenth, I chose to celebrate on the sixteenth. Deciding to pull out all the stops, I went to great lengths to decorate. I had originally hoped to host outside in the sun and then maybe grill as the sun arced to the horizon, but then I set up neon tube lighting and rope lights inside to add ambiance and ordered (way too much) pizza. In any case the party was great – five classmates and seven other friends joined me in playing games and listening to good music featuring DJ Simi - and somehow even cleaning up at four in the morning was fun - with music, of course.



**Am Maschsee in Hannover** (*on the Masch lake in Hannover*)





On April 23, Wolfgang, Simon, Birte, her boyfriend René and I, as an observer, went to Hannover, the capital of the state of Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) to protest against the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Plan or TTIP. According to the police there were 35,000 demonstrators; the media put the number at 50,000 while the organizers announced 90,000. This may sound familiar because I also went to a similar demonstration in Berlin back in October. The April protest was planned to correlate with the opening of the “Hannover Messe”, which is the world’s biggest trade fair for industrial technology, because this year President Barack Obama visited on that day in order to continue the TTIP discussions with Chancellor Angela Merkel. In the United States, the focus is currently on the TPP, which is similar to the TTIP, and as one speaker at the protest described it, a “Scary preview of the horror film TTIP will come to be”.



One of the main points presented against TTIP by many Germans is the loss of European jobs, which would be brought to the US only to be degraded because they would not pay as much nor provide universal healthcare as they do in a “soziale Marktwirtschaft” (social market economy) such as Germany’s. Even these jobs could then be further exported to countries like Mexico under NAFTA. The British fear the probable demolition of the National Health Service (NHS) under TTIP, which could further diminish healthcare standards in the coming years.





Many Germans worry this agreement would be a huge setback for the environment and food safety. TTIP would drastically change laws for the regulation of food, including GMOs, and the use of pesticides. Not only food and consumables would have regulations and safety testing reduced or eliminated, also car manufacturers and even electricity producers would be able to sell their products without having to abide by current strict environmental laws. Another large concern is about the severe lowering of standards for privacy, including electronic and internet security. This is a huge deal in Europe where people are extremely cautious with any online information or photos. One of the more frightening consequences of TTIP, expressed by some Germans I talked to, could be the deregulation of both American and European banks by elimination of measures put in place to help prevent crises like the one in 2008. The biggest and most important issue I have with TTIP is that the details were held secret for so long by the governments involved. TTIP documents were only recently made public, and now the everyday people can have a say in the dialogue. This is all very complex and exciting at the same time; I'm getting great lessons in current European government and politics.

Anyway, the winds are calming down and the temperature is hitting the mid twenties Celsius, which is mid seventies Fahrenheit. The world outside is calling my name. I think this is the right moment to say "Bis zum nächsten Mal" (until next time).



**Gelbe und grüne Felder, grüne Bäume, ein blauer Himmel – heute ist ein wunderschöner Tag in Norddeutschland.**  
*(Yellow and green fields, green trees, a blue sky – today is a very beautiful day in northern Germany.)*