

[Here is a story proposal I sent in September 2014 after receiving my kill fee from the initial publication]

Dear _____,

I would like to write a feature for _____ about two boys who overcame a wall to rewild a continent.

As Kai Frobels walked along the footpath, a pair of heavy, World War II era binoculars tugging at his neck, he had the odd feeling no one was watching him. It was midday, a time when soldiers from both sides of the border often took their lunch break. Continuing on, he came upon a particularly wooded section of the no man's land, the kind of place where a kid could easily disappear.

After taking one last look at the barren agricultural fields behind him, Frobels quickly and quietly slipped into the buffer zone separating his native West Germany from the East. As he crept deeper into the woods, crawling under thickets and climbing over fallen trees, he imagined himself in a vast wilderness.

Several kilometers away on the opposite side of the border, an East German teen learned to band birds in the shadow of the Iron Curtain. The two became pen pals, met for birding expeditions and were taken for spies by East Germany's secret police.

Days after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Frobels and Berwing began organizing environmentalists from East and West Germany to conserve the undeveloped space that once separated their countries. Today the German Green Belt stretches from the coastal dunes of the Baltic to the beech forests of Bavaria. Lynx, moose and wolves travel along this corridor as they reestablish territories they hadn't occupied in centuries.

As the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain approaches, Frobels and Berwing now seek to radically expand the Green Belt along the former division between Western Europe and the Eastern Bloc. Their goal is a pan-European nature reserve extending 8,000 miles from the Arctic to the Black Sea. If they succeed, it will be one of the greatest conservation achievements in history. It could also mark the beginning of a much larger movement to bring back Europe's wild beasts.

Success, however, is far from certain. For forty years the guns of opposing

superpowers allowed an accidental wilderness to flourish because anyone caught inside this no man's land was shot dead. Now that the military imperative for this open space has passed, it remains unclear how much Frobel and Berwing can protect.

I have written for *MATTER*, *Wired*, *Smithsonian*, *The New York Times* and others. Samples of my writing can be found on my website, philmckenna.com Please let me know of your interest.

Sincerely,

Phil McKenna