

## **Chapter 7**

### **Flight from East to West Germany 1945–1962: Personal, Political, and Economic Causes**

Helga W. Kraft

When Germany celebrated the twentieth anniversary of uniting its eastern and western regions in 2009, the media showed a growing interest in the question of why most people in East Germany had participated in the peaceful “revolution” in 1989. After all, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) citizens’ nostalgia for their life during communist control in the now defunct state has intensified since the collapse of communist rule. This nostalgia might stem from the actual and perceived lack of expected economic advancement, compounded by a high unemployment rate in the eastern part of Germany (13.5 % in January 2010)<sup>1</sup> and lack of opportunity for individual development during the world economic crisis. Yet, most Germans are aware of the generally bad living conditions inside the GDR that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall. The novel *Moskauer Eis* (2000; *Moscow Ice*) by Annett Gröschner describes the younger generation and their situation during the communist regime:

We were in waiting mode. [...] We waited for an apartment, a letter, a request to appear at seven a.m. at police headquarters. Some of us waited for a piece of paper allowing us to leave the country for a longer time. Others waited for any minute change, for a bomb attack,

for the death of a secretary general. For a package from the West. [...] We waited for a good book, an admission to a university. (9)<sup>2</sup>

These conditions were the reason for the urge of so many East Germans to flee to the West. Right after World War II, a significant number of residents living under Soviet military occupation in the eastern part of Germany were motivated to leave their home region in order to escape economic hardship, accusations, incriminations, personal persecution, or even arrest.

The first part of this chapter presents general information and a review of existing research data on this migration. While the emphasis of this section lies on lesser-known facts of political oppression, economic motives are considered as well. The second part examines literary representations, autobiographical texts and documents, personal reports, as well as interviews that were conducted with my family members and relatives who had reasons to leave. These reports are designed to add an individual, distinctive dimension to the general facts and figures reflecting the reasons why people left. They include information about the adversities some people encountered and their personal motivations to flee from their homes in the Soviet-occupied zone and, later, from the communist-ruled GDR to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), both independent states established in 1949. Many of these escapees considered themselves victims either of World War II or the communist regime. Others were drawn to the many new opportunities available to them through their flight. These refugees deemed themselves winners rather than victims.

A major study on the subject of flight from East Germany was published by historians Bisping and Melis in

2006, entitled *Republikflucht: Flucht und Abwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR 1945–1961* (Flight from the Republic: Flight and Emigration from the Soviet Occupied Zone [SBZ, Sowjetische Besatzungszone] and the German Democratic Republic 1945–1961). The authors presented commonly used terminology for the concept of leaving the area that people often called the “Ostzone” (Eastern Zone).<sup>3</sup> The expression *Republikflucht* (flight from the Republic) was coined by governmental agencies already in the late forties and early fifties as it became evident that citizens “valuable to the state” were leaving at a time when they were needed for building up the war-torn area. Governments of the Western world were accused of encouraging such flight to strengthen their stance in the Cold War. When it became clear around 1957 that there were other personal reasons to leave the country, the expression “illegal emigration” was substituted as an alternative to *Republikflucht* (Mellis 15). In 1945 and the following few years, it was not overly difficult to migrate to the western part of Germany, mainly into the so-called American or British Zones, since the French Zone did not accept refugees. Although the borders were patrolled, they were not fortified. Even in 1949 when the controls were tightened and orders were given to shoot border-crossers, movement within Berlin was still unrestricted; it was easy for people to get to West Berlin and from there fly to the West with commercial airlines. Only the Berlin Wall, built in 1961, dividing the two parts of the city and insulating Berlin from the East German regions surrounding it, effectively prevented Germans living in the communist-ruled part of Germany from escaping.

At the end of the war, many individuals had good reason to leave the “Eastern Zone.” For one, the Zone had been flooded with new German refugees expelled from formerly German

regions that now belonged to Poland and Russia, as stipulated by the Allied Forces Pact of 1945 (*Potsdamer Kommuniqué*), which included the establishment of the Oder/Neiße border. These refugees added a significant 25% to East Germany's population and were often forced to live in unreasonably cramped substandard quarters, subsist on a starvation diet, and see their freedoms curtailed.<sup>4</sup> Historian Andreas Kossert (197) writes about the situation of the displaced German refugees from eastern Europe: "Not only were they forbidden to assemble, but they were prohibited from singing songs from their homeland" (222). Shortly after World War II, such songs—which seemed to be indirectly questioning the new German borders in the East—were considered taboo. The reason for such restrictions came from the occupiers of East Germany, who wanted to avoid any dispute regarding land and property located in a territory that had belonged to Germany only for some time in the past. Thus, many of the refugees from this area quickly continued their flight farther to the West. (See, for instance, the chapter by Martha Wallach in this volume.)

This displaced population was soon joined by politically persecuted or harassed East German residents, including those hoping to improve their career and economic chances. Over the next ten years following WWII, living conditions did not improve in East Germany, since industry was being dismantled. The GDR *Planwirtschaft* (state-directed economy) was inefficient, as there was no Marshall Plan funded by the US or its equivalent to jump-start the economy. The Soviet Union had lost the greatest number of people during the war, and its economic situation was in dire straits. Individuals in East Germany saw their freedom of expression, choice, and mobility increasingly curtailed by the socialist government. An important source that describes these conditions is the book *Der Turm von*

*Babel: Erinnerung an eine Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (1991; *The Tower of Babel: Memories of a German Democratic Republic*) by Hans Mayer (1907–2001), a renowned German literary scholar who also studied law and political science. Like the writers Bertolt Brecht and Stephan Hermlin, Mayer lived in the West after the war but left the area for the communist-ruled part of Germany in 1948. As a professor in Leipzig, he even became a winner of the *Nationalpreis der DDR* (National Prize of the GDR). His book can be seen as an obituary to the GDR. He acknowledges that the country started with great promise, for which he had worked at first, as he was influenced in his youth by the writings of Georg Lukács and Karl Marx. However, by the late fifties, frictions with those in power caused him to recognize that the promise for a better society was broken, and he returned to the FRG in 1962.

While West Germany had started to recover seemingly miraculously,<sup>5</sup> the economy in East Germany—drained by the long-persisting dismantling of factories sent to Russia as war reparations—could not provide needed supplies until the mid 1950s. As a consequence, many people suffering from malnutrition left for the West for reasons of health. Food supply was still far below that of West Germany, even though this area, too, saw a lack of food. “Food production per capita in 1947 was only 51 percent of its level in 1938, and the official food ration set by the occupying powers varied between 1,040 and 1,550 calories per day” (Henderson). While in the FRG ration cards were used until 1950, in the GDR they were not abolished until 1958. Until then, customers had to stand for hours in long lines for occasional food distribution, search for uncollected potatoes or grain from harvested fields, exchange their valuables for food in the farming areas, or go to the black market. Also, infestations, such as lice and scabies, pained a

population unaccustomed to such scourges. In the early 1950s, the promises of the new communist government began to ring hollow. East German residents became dissatisfied with certain oppressive governmental regulations that had dire repercussions for business owners, university students, and professors, as well as for the general work force. As a consequence of the governmental decision to promote the intellectual capability of the working class and to accustom children from formerly bourgeois or academic families to the life of labor, only the children of the working class were allowed to go to high school or study at universities. Of course, there were exceptions made for those connected to the ruling powers, another reason for mistrust and ill feelings among the population.<sup>6</sup> The nationalization of farms and small businesses caused more and more disapproval all around as the quality of working conditions declined because supervisors had no personal stake in the production. For the hard work of dismantling and shipping German factories to Russia as war reparations, former Nazis and their family members were preferentially drafted. These shipments started right after the war.<sup>7</sup> A study by Richard Bessel, entitled "Hatred after War: Emotion and the Postwar History of East Germany," enumerates details of the difficult life in the Eastern Zone, but the study also shows how hatred was functionalized by the government through political propaganda. Bessel writes,

The political, social and cultural history of postwar East Germany was framed by profoundly disturbing developments: the occupation by Soviet armed forces, the need somehow to absorb a huge number of uprooted refugees from east of the Oder-Neiße (comprising roughly one quarter of the GDR's population in 1950), the division of Germany, the imposition of a socialist-

Stalinist political and economic system against the will of a large proportion of the population, the suppression of free expression and with it many possibilities for dealing with the personal trauma arising from what had happened in the recent past. Nazism, war, destruction, defeat, suffering, loss of "Heimat," military occupation, mass rape, and political repression created a huge potential reservoir of hatred in postwar East Germany. It seems more than just coincidence, therefore, that the political leadership in the GDR so frequently drew upon hatred as a basis of allegiance. (195–96)

While some GDR citizens believed in Marxist and Leninist doctrines, accepted temporary sacrifice for the people during revolutionary times, and hoped that their struggles and hardship would soon cease, others questioned the economic skills of the communist regime, the efficiency of a state-planned economy, and the benevolence of the ruling cadre. People saw that they had no input in governmental matters run by only one-party block, the SED, the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany), a system in which other parties, such as the still existing CDU or Bauernpartei (Farmers' Party), had no chance.<sup>8</sup> The SED was established in 1946 when the SPD and KPD merged and thus virtually eliminated any opposing parties. No other choices were available, as voters were marched under supervision to the election booths. Even invalidated ballots counted as a vote for the pre-chosen candidates (Weber). This situation led to the strikes, demonstrations, and public protests by the people on June 17, 1953, when performance norms in factories and farms as well as working hours were increased drastically and unreasonably, while pay and food supply remained low. Also, students at universities were required under political pressure to

enroll in courses many considered undesirable, as they included what was regarded as indoctrination into a flawed ideology. The Federal Republic of Germany in the West strongly supported those demonstrations by the people in the East and subsequently expressed opposition to the GDR crackdown on the demonstrators by instituting a national holiday in 1962 called *Tag der deutschen Einheit* (Day of German Unity), to be celebrated on June 17. It was to commemorate the 1953 uprising and remained in effect until reunification in 1990. Also, a major thoroughfare in West Berlin was renamed *Strasse des 17. Juni*, a name it continues to bear.<sup>9</sup>

As the following chart indicates, the exodus into the West rose sharply during the year of the 1953 uprising and again during the year of the Hungarian rebellion in 1956 (see figures in bold in the chart below). As these uprisings were squelched, many participants had to fear for their safety, and others did not want to take the oppressive style of government anymore. Thus, in this time span, more people fled their home countries than in other years.

Escapes from the GDR to the West 1949–1961:<sup>10</sup> Refugees Registered in the FRG and West Berlin from the GDR

| Year | Via West Berlin | Inner-German Border and from Abroad | Total          |
|------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1949 |                 |                                     | 129,245        |
| 1950 | 193,227         | 299,454                             | 197,788        |
| 1951 |                 |                                     | 165,648        |
| 1952 | 118,300         | 64,093                              | 182,393        |
| 1953 | 305,737         | 25,653                              | <b>331,390</b> |



|               |                  |                  |                  |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1954          | 104,399          | 79,799           | 184,198          |
| 1955          | 153,693          | 99,177           | 252,870          |
| 1956          | 156,377          | 122,812          | <b>279,189</b>   |
| 1957          | 129,579          | 132,043          | 261,622          |
| 1958          | 119,552          | 84,540           | 204,092          |
| 1959          | 90,862           | 53,055           | 143,917          |
| 1960          | 152,291          | 46,897           | 199,188          |
| To 08/13/1961 | 125,053          | 30,349           | 155,402          |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>1,649,070</b> | <b>1,037,872</b> | <b>2,686,942</b> |

A total of close to 2.7 million people “voted with their feet,” as Germans called their exodus from the East at that time. In the 1950s, the total population was approximately 19 million, in the 1970s 17.5 million, and at the end in 1989 the population was below 16.7 million. The following reasons for flight to the West were given in July 1961, when a poll of refugees from the GDR was conducted:<sup>11</sup>

- Rejection of ideology and assignments by the party
- Rejection of the school system, not being admitted to high school or university
- Obligation to become a spy against fellow citizens
- Request to engage in “socio-political activities”
- Obligation to enter the army
- Resistance against the government
- Persecution of relations to the West
- Violation of the passport law
- Political detainees
- Nationalization of the economy
- Collectivization of agriculture

- Difficulties at the work place, increase of work norms
- Violation against the laws regulating the economy
- Reuniting families
- Desire for better income and housing conditions

With the construction of the Berlin Wall in October 1961 and the additional border fortifications between East and West Germany, the mass flight virtually stopped. The well-publicized stories of those attempting to leave after 1961 are beyond the scope of this chapter.<sup>12</sup> The following facts issued by the Federal Center for Political Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung) suffice to briefly point to uncertainties regarding the fatalities of people trying to cross the Berlin Wall:

To date, several lists exist with notably diverging numbers: depending on the type of calculation, the data vary between 86 (Public Prosecutor's Office, Berlin), at least 92 (The Chief of Police of Berlin), 114 (Central Registration Office of the City of Salzgitter), 122 (Central Governmental Office for Criminal Investigation and Unification), and far more than 200 fatalities.<sup>13</sup>

In order to flesh out the reasons for leaving the East before the Wall was erected, it needs to be pointed out that political imprisonment or the likelihood of arrest were strong motivating factors. It is a little-known fact that in the Eastern zone, Nazi concentration camps were used by the Soviet occupational government as soon as Jews and other prisoners of fascism were freed in the spring of 1945. Those persons who stayed in the GDR but suspected, rightly or wrongly, of undermining the postwar governing powers faced detention, a policy initiated through a classified directive by Lawrenti Pawlowitsch Berija on January 11, 1945. It stipulated impri-

sonment of the following “hostile elements” in Special Camps (*Speziallager*) that included former concentration camps among others.<sup>14</sup>

- a) Spies, saboteurs, terrorists of German secret services;
- b) Members of all organizations and groups, who had been left behind by the German government and the secret services of the enemy in order to pursue work of disruption;
- c) Operators of illegal radio stations, weapon depots, and illegal printing offices [...];
- d) Active members of the National Socialist Party;
- e) Leaders of fascist youth organizations [...];
- f) Collaborators of the Gestapo, “SD” and other groups concerned with punishment;
- g) Leaders of area, city and county administrations, and also editors of newspapers and magazines, and authors of anti-Soviet publications. (Kilian 401)

Popular usage continued to refer to the Special Camps as “concentration camps,” a subtle expression of a belief that the Germans were not the only perpetrators. It is important to note that people who did not belong to the groups listed by Berija were also shut away. The camps, hastily readied for internment, were structured more or less like the Russian Gulags, with the main difference that the inmates did not work. While forced hard labor in Hitler’s and Stalin’s camps caused untold tragedies, the lack of work in the Special Camps also constituted a special hardship for the arrested people insofar as their enforced idleness often played a major role in depression, suicide, and illness (Krypczyk). Higher- as well as lower-ranking members of Hitler’s NSDAP, Nationalsozialistische deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers’

Party), were herded in those camps after they had gone through denazification by order of SMAD, the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland), a process that was officially completed in the Soviet Zone in March 1948.<sup>15</sup> More than half a million former Nazi party members, identified on lists kept by Hitler's efficient bureaucracy, had lost their jobs at public and state institutions by 1948, although not all of them were imprisoned. These individuals were likely to leave their hometowns in order to go to West Germany (*in den Westen gehen*, as people usually referred to their flight) as soon as they could. Melis and Bispinck write about the treatment of those who had been academic, administrative, and economic elites under Hitler in this way:

Since they were seen first and foremost as “remnants” of the capitalist society that was destined to go under, many engineers, administrative specialists, professors, and teachers lost their positions and found themselves as a consequence of the “anti-fascist-democratic revolution” in detention camps, prisons, subordinated jobs or—if they were lucky—the West. (20)<sup>16</sup>

Many passive members (*Mitläufer*)<sup>17</sup> of the NSDAP party, against whom no wrongdoing could be proven, were released without trial by 1950. Many others remained in the Special Camps, and 3,342 of these former inmates were accused and sentenced in 1952 during the so-called *Schauprozesse* (show or propaganda trials) in the East German city of Waldheim. Since the law of the country was often blatantly disregarded by the judges, these trials, which were typical in this regard, were severely criticized in the West (Rainer

Schröder). They were actually mainly designed to demonstrate to the world the government's antifascist stance.<sup>18</sup>

However, many prisoners who remained in the camps did not have a sinister Nazi past, as documented for instance by the catalogue of a permanent exhibit at the Buchenwald camp (Ritscher). Some inmates had been accused of criminal activities against the communist state and stood trial, often only after a long period of incarceration. A large number of prisoners languished in those camps for years without formal accusations, while their relatives were informed neither of their whereabouts nor whether they were alive or not. In addition, many incarcerated people were not criminals according to the law, nor had they been active collaborators in the misdeeds of the Nazis and their henchmen. Minor offences were at times sufficient for unreasonable punishment. For instance, offenders ended up in the camps after they were caught illegally procuring firewood, food, or other items from public property in order to survive. Also, defamation of the state was punishable, political opposition was not tolerated, and it was easy for anyone to be denounced by malicious neighbors or by people expecting advantages in their careers or a profit in exchange for such untruthful denunciations. It is important to note that such practices of totalitarian government were also quite common in Nazi Germany. The population continued to live in such a climate. Thus, quite a number of people were branded *Volksfeind* (public enemy), despite their innocence or well-meaning efforts to improve the social system. The writer and entertainer Wolf Biermann, who had also chosen the GDR over the FRG in 1953, at the age of seventeen, is an example. He was expatriated from the GDR in 1976 after he sang songs in Cologne during a concert trip to the West that had been censored in his home state. Some of his songs, in which he

compared the government to Nazi government, could not be tolerated:

Die DDR, mein Vaterland, ist sauber immerhin.

Die Wiederkehr der Nazizeit ist überhaupt nicht drin. So gründlich haben sie gefegt mit Stalins hartem Besen, dass rot verschrammt der Hintern ist, der einmal braun gewesen.

The GDR, my fatherland, is clean after all.

The return of Nazi times can't happen.

Because Stalin's brooms swept so thoroughly that the buttock

that used to be brown now carries red scars. (Biermann 3)

The Special Camps thus became depositories for those who, despite denunciation and torture, could not be proven guilty through the quite thorough efforts of the NKWD or MWD<sup>19</sup> (Fricke, *DDR-Staatssicherheit* 135–36). One result is certain: large numbers of detainees in this group fled to the West after their release. Recently published histories of the GDR, such as *Was war die DDR? Die Geschichte eines anderen Deutschlands* (2008; *What Was the GDR? The History of Another Germany*) by political scientist and journalist Rolf Hosfeld, have started to fill in the actual facts. Further details and consequences still need to be researched. The following two, of a total of ten Special Camps, had been former concentration camps under Hitler: Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald. Others had been penitentiaries, such as the *Speziallager* Bautzen.<sup>20</sup> These Special Camps were closed down in 1950. During a visit before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1986 at Buchenwald (called Special Camp #2 after the war), I could

not miss the prominent display of a memorial exhibit in honor of former communist inmates during the Hitler era. The Jewish inmates who were interned or had perished there were mentioned more or less as a footnote. It was easy to overlook a bronze statue in remembrance of the Holocaust. Since the communist government was still in place, it was not surprising to me that there was no mention of those German inmates who had languished here after the war or the approximately 43,000 people who perished in the Special Camps between 1945 and 1950 (Kempowski). The website of today's Buchenwald museum states the following about its inmates at that time:

According to present research, the following groups were among the inmates: a small group of main culprits of NS crimes, a larger number of former lower and middle [...] officials of the NSDAP, of the national socialist state and economy, a group of members of the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend) and Hitler Youth leaders, Members of the Weapon's SS (Waffen SS), members of the police, officers of the army, as well as a multitude of persons who ended up in the camp due to denunciations, mix-ups, and arbitrary arrests. Among the 28,455 people (official Soviet information) that were incarcerated between 1945 and 1950, there were also approximately 1000 women. (Buchenwald)<sup>21</sup>

Historians during the GDR era were not allowed to research the history of these institutions. Besides a general survey, an exhibit mentioned the total number of inmates in those camps. It is assumed that the actual numbers might have been higher. It was not until 1990, after the collapse of the GDR, that an official Soviet exposé provided concrete information for the first time:

Documents in Soviet archives prove that in the camps 122,671 Germans were imprisoned from 1945 to 1950. 45,262 were let go again. 14,202 inmates were transferred to the Mdl of the GDR. 12,770 people were taken to the USSR. 6,680 were transferred to prisoner-of-war camps. 212 inmates were able to flee. According to existing information, 42,889 inmates died due to illness during the time, especially during the years from 1945 to 1947. A military court sentenced 756 persons to be executed. (Fricke, *Hans Warnke*)<sup>22</sup>

A few inmates were released without trial, especially in the year of 1948. However, many stayed until the closing of the camps in 1950. Hans Warnke, Secretary of State of the GDR Ministry of the Interior, described during a press conference the extent of the detentions in 1950, when the camps were dissolved:

According to the a ruling of the government of the USSR, 15,038 people were released from the three existing camps, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Bautzen, of whom 5,504 that were sentenced by Soviet courts will be handed over to German institutions to serve their terms. Further, 3,432 persons will be taken over, against whom German authorities have started an investigation in order to adjudge their crimes. If guilt is proven, German courts will sentence them. (Fricke, *Hans Warnke*)<sup>23</sup>

Of the 3,432 persons who remained in the camps until their dissolution, most were simply sent home without ever being tried in court. After their release, many of them fled alone or with their families to the West. Among the reasons for leaving was the uncomfortable life that many had to endure in



their hometowns after their release, where they, innocent or not, continued to be suspected of Nazi crimes or offences against the GDR. In addition, they could only obtain the lowest kinds of job, while life in the FRG promised a continuation of a career they had started in former years. Not all political detainees sentenced by the GDR government were imprisoned in the Special Camps. Many had to do time in various penitentiaries. “[A]t the present state of research it is possible to estimate the total number of political prisoners to be between 170,000 minimum and 280,000 maximum” (Wilhelm Schröder). This number is overwhelming.

### Why They Left: Literary and Personal Accounts

In this section I turn to individual accounts about the conditions in the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany and the GDR that prompted many people to leave. In his report “The Inmates of the Soviet Special Camps during the Years 1945–1950: Summary of Presently Known Reasons Pertaining to Numbers, Whereabouts, and Types according to Reasons for Internment,” Achim Kilian mentions a number of published memoirs from people who were imprisoned for years in such Special Camps:

Ernst-E. Klotz wrote in the early 50s a report on his experiences in Buchenwald that was published by his son in 1992 with the title *So Near to Home: Imprisoned in Buchenwald 1945–1948*. Bodo Ritscher was one of the first Germans in Moscow to find secret files. His book is *Special Camp #2 Buchenwald: Contribution to the History of the Buchenwald Camp 1945 to 1950*. It is available, since 1995, in a second, re-edited version. (397)<sup>24</sup>

Renowned German writer Walter Kempowski (1929–2007), who later escaped to the FRG, was one of the first authors who published accounts on the continued use of Hitler’s concentration camps after 1945.<sup>25</sup> As a nineteen-year-old teenager, he was imprisoned in the SBZ for having transmitted information to the West on the dismantling and transporting of German factories to the Soviet Union. He had done so because the spoils of war taken to Russia exceeded the agreement with the Allied Forces regarding war reparations. Subsequently, he first published his experiences in *Knast: Protokollarisches Fragment* in 1958, a publication, which he states, did not receive much attention at that time. In 1975, he followed this with the book *Deutsche Chronik VII: Ein Kapitel für sich* (German Chronicle VII: A Special Chapter), in which he recounts his own and his family’s experiences in the camps to a more elaborate degree. His style is descriptive and, as in all of his *Echolot* books, he avoids metaphoric, literary, or argumentative language. He sees himself as a chronicler of history. The book includes monologues from the author himself, his brother, and his mother, as well as a few letters from relatives in Sweden and West Germany. Despite a lack of expressed emotions in his account, the combination of the different facts he selected nevertheless allows the reader to fill in the gaps of the narration, and it makes for a stimulating read. These stylistic choices doubtlessly account partially for the critical acclaim Kempowski received and for the success of the text on the book market.

The environment of his childhood is significant, as it explains why Kempowski crossed the border to the West more than once. He had grown up in Rostock, a port at the Baltic Sea, where his family owned a shipping business. His father was killed during the last days of the war in 1945, and his elder

brother then ran the firm. Machinery from the family company was dismantled and sent to the USSR as part of war reparations. Kempowski learned the printing business, and for lack of career opportunities in Rostock, he left for the western zone in 1947, at the age of 18. He was first employed at the Rowohlt publishing company in Hamburg. Since he could not obtain a permanent work permit for this position, he worked at the American PX store and for the US army in Wiesbaden. As late as 2009, news stories claimed to have information about a “newly revealed” shady past of Kempowski. He was more of a spy than a refugee from the SBZ, they said, because he had provided the US news service CIC with secret information from the East (*Spiegel Online*). Such stories actually demonstrate the continued importance of the writer, but they are also a sign of a renewed and growing interest in the struggles of Germans after WWII. The news item can be considered media hype, because the fact that Kempowski had obtained information about unlawfully disassembled and confiscated German machinery by the Soviets—for instance from his family’s company—had never been kept secret by him and is included in the writer’s earliest published accounts. It is true that he was arrested by the Soviet NKWD (Narodnyi Kommissariat Wnutrennich Djel), or People’s Commissariat, when crossing the German border again in the eastern direction to visit his mother in 1948 in Rostock. A little later, his brother and, a year later, his mother were imprisoned as well.

As his publications indicate, he himself was locked up at first in penitentiaries in Schwerin and Bautzen for half a year before he was brought to trial. Then he was accused of espionage, and a military tribunal sentenced him and his brother to serve for 25 years. Their mother was sentenced to ten years of forced labor because she had failed to notify the government

about her sons' so-called activities as "agents of foreign secret services." The nineteen-year-old Kempowski languished in Soviet Special Camp #4, the former penitentiary of Bautzen, Saxony. Most of the time he was not allowed to work. Kempowski recounts in detail the incredibly sad story of his term in camp, which eventually was reduced to eight years. His activities certainly did not warrant such extensive punishment. When he was finally released, in 1956 (Schröder),<sup>26</sup> he fled to the FRG to join his mother, who had been set free earlier and was living in Hamburg.

Literary scholar Patricia Haas has interpreted Kempowski's autobiographical accounts as a new type of *Bildungsroman*, showing in what way a young man could become educated and develop into a decent human being even under the most complicated and restrictive of circumstances. It is a text showing an educational process contrary to the ideal development of a young man as described by Goethe in the original *Bildungsroman*, *Wilhelm Meister*, written in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Haas). Kempowski thus indicates that the form of educational development presented in Goethe's novel—a book informed by the ideals of the bourgeoisie and by Enlightenment thought—does not necessarily constitute the best way of educating our young. The value of hardship, suppression, and exposure to injustice within our society, as experienced by young Kempowski, might also be a way of becoming a mature citizen. This book does not speculate if potential traumatic effects might have a rather negative influence on other young people.

An example of another young man's reason to leave the Eastern Zone to "go to the West," is recounted in the autobiography of Karlheinz Franke (born in 1930), who later

became a deacon. He and his family were refugees from the part of Germany that became Poland. After an apprenticeship as cabinetmaker, he was fired, at the age of eighteen, by his employer. A governmental agency assigned him to an undesirable job as a laborer in the mining industry. Not only did the young man fear the authorities, but he also saw no future in his profession:

When I was laid off by the employer who had trained me, I inquired at the state employment agency about work. I found out that in Müllrose there were no jobs and was directed to work in a uranium-mining job in the city of Aue in the Erzgebirge [Erz mountains]. But instead, my friend Edgar Witzke and I decided to go into the Western zone of Germany. My mother was excited about this plan, since [...] she feared that the Russians might get me and send me to Russia one of these days. (Franke)<sup>27</sup>

In other words, young people lived in constant fear of being deported to Russia, and they experienced cruel hardships, as did this eighteen-year-old cabinetmaker, which made the decision to flee into the West easy.

These personal memoirs suggest that in East Germany a dictatorship-like rule existed at this early date after World War II. When the GDR was founded in 1949, it might have been called an *Arbeiterstaat* (workers' state), but it was not governed by the workers (DDR Lexikon). In Marxism, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" denotes the transitional socialist state between the capitalist class society and the classless communist society. Yet, in the case of the former GDR, there was no democratic process, as the dictatorship was exercised by members of the government.

In the following, the experiences of several members of my own family, who lived in and around Berlin in communist-governed East Germany, are presented. The information in this section stems from formal interviews I conducted and from informal conversations I had with relatives and friends, as well as from my own memories. Some members of my family had been in opposition to certain aspects of the government that they considered oppressive or unfair. Like that of such opponents in general, their life before the fall of the Wall was difficult indeed. Several of them moved to the West early; others, who chose to stay in the GDR, suffered dire consequences. Not all of them wanted to be named in this publication.

Two different stories of relatives from the older generation illustrate the situation right after WWII in East Germany regarding persons with a past connected to the Nazi party. My relative Bruno Heinzel (1895–1947) had to suffer the ultimate consequences. The story of his past began in the Depression, when he became unemployed but later was able to obtain a good job as an expert in tool and dye making in a large factory, Schwartzkopff, in Wildau near Berlin (Berliner Maschinenbau-Actien-Gesellschaft, formerly L. Schwartzkopff, Berlin) by joining Hitler's National Socialistic Workers' Party. It was not known to most employees of Schwartzkopff—nor did it matter to the Soviets, when they arrested the department's higher-ranking employees—that the Schwartzkopff factory near Berlin and its surroundings were located on confiscated Jewish property. My family found this out only a few years ago. It mattered more that war machinery had been produced there and that

especially the prisoners of war and the deported people from the Soviet Union were treated inhumanely and had to work at Schwartzkopff for ten to twelve hours daily. There were brutal reprisals by the fascist power wielders and wardens if there was resistance or unwillingness to perform even the hardest work. (Schäffer)<sup>28</sup>

Trying to find out about Bruno's past, I learned only that he was one of the 97,161 low-ranking *Zellenleiter* (organizers of a small local division of the party),<sup>29</sup> and his job was—as relatives assured me—to collect membership dues. No one mentioned any involvement or activity on the part of Bruno that would suggest his having been a perpetrator needing punishment. Since I was but a nine-year-old child when he was arrested in 1945, I have only vague firsthand knowledge. Bruno was incarcerated in a NKWD Special Camp and was never tried. In 1947, at the age of 52, he died in Special Camp Sachsenhausen, near Berlin, of malnutrition and dysentery. No official light was ever shed on his guilt or innocence. For many years, I never talked about the incarceration of my relatives in camps after World War II for fear that my family might be accused of Nazi crimes, which in fact was quite unimaginable to me. Only after I had immigrated to the US in the 1960s did I break my silence.

Another relative was Hugo Reinhardt (1898–1986), also a member of the NSDAP. He had been unemployed for two years when Hitler came to power. It was not surprising that he, too, perceived mainly the good sides of the new governmental activities. For instance, new jobs were created and he could see the Autobahn being built near his house. Most importantly, he was able to secure a job as a skilled lace operator right away. His career developed, and he advanced in the large factory (also

Schwarzkopff) to become a plant engineer. Was it necessary to belong to the party? Not everyone did. At the end of the Nazi era, in 1945, one in five adult Germans made up the 8.5 million members of the NSDAP party (Deutsches Historisches Museum). Many of them became implicated as *Mitläufer* (nominal members) trying to further their careers or provide well for their families.

Of course, there were those who closed their eyes to the horrors and thus allowed them to happen. Not all of the party members belonged to Hitler's "Willing Executioners" or were active or passive collaborators involved in murder, as described by Daniel Goldhagen and Dan Browning. Many of them, though, were truly naïve and believed the propaganda of Hitler's tightly controlled media machine. There were also *Mitläufer* who personally were never actively involved in harming anyone. Thus, some individuals in this group felt like victims, as they were punished after the war beyond any measure of a just law. It will never be known exactly how my relative Hugo Reinhardt behaved under Hitler. Toward the end of the war, he had been the head of the Department of Quality Control at the Schwarzkopff factory, which had formerly produced locomotives but then also built war machinery. He had participated in WWI, and because of a war injury and advanced age, he was ineligible for military service in WWII. Just as Bruno Heinzl, he felt innocent. Even friends suggested that he go to safety in the West when the war was over because he had worked with prisoners of war in his company. He would say that this was not necessary, since he had neither committed any crime nor done anything bad. Soon after the arrival of the Soviet troops, he was called to the Russian *Kommandantura*, but he was released again. He was called two more times within several weeks, and after a third interrogation, he still believed



his innocence would become evident and be recognized. However, four months after the end of the war, during the night of August 8, 1945, at 4:00 a.m., his home was thoroughly searched, and he was arrested and taken to an undisclosed location. His wife and his two small daughters were left behind, never knowing if he was alive until his release five years later, in 1950. Since most German men served as soldiers toward the end of the war, the needed workforce at the Schwarzkopff factory was made up by approximately 3,000 prisoners of war and forced laborers from France and Poland. Originally, I felt very unsure as to whether Hugo might not have been jailed for mistreatment of foreign laborers or possibly for active participation in the NSDAP. As a member of the next generation, I had to rely on information from others, but no one from the older generation was willing to talk extensively or even indicated knowledge of the facts. After the war, most everyone claimed to have been nothing more than *Mitläufer*, even if they were members of the Nazi party.

I interviewed many relatives and acquaintances about Hugo and asked several people what I considered to be trick questions. All I found out is that he never went to party assemblies and that he often took bread or other food items for the workers to the factory. Everyone noted how well he had treated the laborers. On such evidence, I could only consider him a *Mitläufer* when I grew up. Unfortunately, Hugo Reinhardt seemed to have had a certain unwarranted, perhaps naïve trust in government and in legal protection of the individual. After he had been called to the *Kommandantura* twice, and after his friends had again advised him to go to the West, he trusted in a fair system and contended, "My conscience is clear, I don't have to flee." Since he had been in charge of the Department of Quality Control in his factory, he often had to criticize faulty

production, and as a consequence he also had potential enemies. We found out later that someone had denounced him to the Russians, who finally arrested him together with all the other division and department heads of the Schwarzkopff factory.<sup>30</sup>

Scholars have shown that as a consequence of losing a war, most people accept their fate with resignation, as it is considered the right of the victors to punish the conquered people for their war guilt. Such a general attitude has become normalized over the centuries, and a mood of guilt also prevailed in Germany.<sup>31</sup> Hugo's wife Erna was drafted soon after the end of the war to perform many weeks of unpaid labor to disassemble machinery sent to Russia. No financial aid for her small children was received. Although special meals were at times served to children of communist party members at school, Hugo and Erna's children were excluded. A few weeks after Hugo was arrested, the remaining family received the order to vacate their apartment right away. The whole residential block was assigned to house Soviet soldiers. Erna and her two small daughters were only able to remove the belongings that they could carry out within six hours, between 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. They transported a few items with a small handcart to the house of their grandfather, who lived half an hour away. From then on they shared his two-room apartment in rather cramped living conditions. In 1947, Erna decided to flee Berlin with her malnourished daughters, then 13 and 11 years old, to stay with relatives on a farm near Fulda in the West German state of Hesse. She could not afford airline tickets. They took the train from Berlin to the city of Bebra, located at the border, and sneaked out of the train and onto the opposite platform to hide from the police. It was well known that self-appointed local guides would lead groups across in exchange for valuables or food. At that time, even the border guards could be bribed with

cigarettes. It was easy to cross to the other side. After half a year in cramped quarters on the farm, sharing a bedroom with a refugee from Pomerania, the relatives could not support Erna and her daughters any longer. The three women went back to East Berlin, again crossing the border illegally at Bebra. They survived back at home by growing food in the backyard and through Erna's rudimentary skills in dressmaking, a highly desirable expertise at that time.

In 1949, when the youngest daughter had become rather malnourished and was suffering from various illnesses, Erna decided to send the twelve-year-old across the western border to her aunt in Dortmund, Westphalia. The GDR was about to be founded in 1949, so the borders were already very strictly patrolled when the child arrived there on February 12, 1949. She had come by train with an older neighbor from Berlin, Frau Brösemann, who wanted to visit her own daughter living in Helmstedt. The border town Helmstedt was the first town on the West German side. At that time, the border checkpoint Helmstedt–Marienborn (*Grenzübergang Helmstedt-Marienborn*), called *Grenzübergangsstelle Marienborn* (GÜSt; border-crossing Marien-born) by the German Democratic Republic (GDR), was the largest and most important border crossing on the Inner German border. The child and her neighbor joined guides and a group of border-crossers that had gathered but had to walk detours for four hours, because shots were heard in the vicinity of the shortest route. When the neighbor twisted her ankle, the girl decided to continue alone with the group, as she thought that she could not help the old woman anyway. When the group dispersed in Helmstedt and left the twelve-year-old girl, she waited alone for help. Fortunately, Frau Brösemann managed to hobble across the border on her own and arrived two hours later, putting the girl

on the train for Dortmund. Her relatives' apartments in this city had been bombed four times during the war—laying to ruins the houses they lived in—and they now had been assigned a small place consisting of a kitchen and a bedroom in an apartment shared by three families.

When the father, Hugo Reinhardt, was finally released from Special Camp Buchenwald in 1950—without ever having been formally accused—he was extremely malnourished and needed half a year to recuperate. He had experienced sickness, idleness, and torture at the camp, rendering him sexually impotent. At times he had been confined in such a small space that he could neither sit nor stand, just as Kempowski describes in *Ein Kapitel für sich*. In order to remain psychologically and mentally fit, the inmates had used various methods, such as playing chess with chessmen they had carved from bread. These chess pieces were always confiscated, but new ones were built again and again. Later, his family was in awe of his skill playing this game.

There was no chance for Hugo to get a position in the GDR commensurate with his professional background. Thus, he decided to leave illegally. However, the borders could no longer be crossed between East and West, as his younger daughter had done a year and a half before. Yet, there was still an easy way out in 1950 via West Berlin, as the city was occupied by all four Allied forces, and people could cross from the East to the West side on regular streets or by subway. In West Berlin, Hugo registered at the *Flüchtlingslager* (refugee camp) Berlin-Marienfelde and took a plane to the Federal Republic of Germany. A sister company of Hugo's former Berlin employer, Kraus-Maffei, was located in Munich, and he regained his former position there. For his five-year internment in

Speziallager 2, Buchenwald, he received compensation in the FRG of approximately 2500 German Marks. Many other released fellow inmates from Buchenwald had fled before him and were already working in Munich. By that time, Hugo was 52 years old. Two years later, his wife and oldest daughter were able to leave the GDR and came to Munich, and the year thereafter the youngest daughter joined them from Dortmund. After ten years, the family was together again. Although the relocation improved the lives of this family, there had been consequences: due to the different school systems, the daughters were not able to study in the FRG. Also, due to their experiences, the family continued to harbor mistrust against traditional values and institutions. They also lost their love for their *Heimat* (homeland), a notion so important to many Germans. Neither Hugo nor Erna wanted to go back to visit their hometown near Berlin ever again.

The following examples from my family's experiences in the GDR focus on the next generation—those members who were children during WWII. For instance, my cousin Gerd Schmid (born in 1935)<sup>32</sup> served as an example for other relatives as to what could happen if one did not realize the danger and flee to the West. He was a student of Astrophysics at Humboldt University in the 1950s, where he participated in a demonstration of fellow students in solidarity with the Hungarian uprising in 1956. The Hungarian example gave the young people in the GDR hope for change of their own restrictive university regulations, such as being required to study the unloved Russian language and to enroll in social science courses that taught strict Leninist ideology. Their hope was in vain, however, since the uprising in Hungary was squelched by Russian tanks, some of which were approaching

German cities as well in order to prevent similar civil disobedience.

There were no consequences at first, since Gerd was not caught during the demonstrations. Later, he was a research assistant at the University of Dresden, planning to become a professor of Mathematics. He made the fatal mistake of storing the leftover flyers he had handed out during the demonstration in his apartment as souvenirs. Over time, though, the Secret State Police (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit), called the Stasi, found and arrested one by one all of the participating students, locating them from photos taken during the demonstrations. From their confessions, they extracted additional names. One of them was a fellow student of Gerd, who was arrested by the Stasi two years after the event. He had been coerced as well to provide names of “co-conspirators” while being questioned under what would now be considered torture methods.<sup>33</sup> He gave Gerd’s name, whose home was then searched. Since those old flyers were found, he was sentenced to three years in prison, of which he served two years. The family still has the judgment that was signed by the feared Erich Mielke, Minister of State Security, himself.

In retrospect, Gerd could be called a political prisoner, as he was sentenced for “continued and mutually committed planned propaganda and agitation seditious to the state” (“fortgesetzt und gemeinschaftlich begangener planmässiger staatsgefährdender Propaganda und Hetze”).<sup>34</sup> He and his fellow students had done nothing but express their independent views. They were young and had trust in their state, wanting to help improve it by pointing out errors in leadership.

Of course, Gerd and his friends had secretly read Orwell’s *1984* (1949) and Arthur Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon*

(1940) at a time when it was unlawful to read Western publications. Thus, when reading Walter Hofer's *Der Nationalsozialismus: Dokumente 1933–1945*, Gerd and his alert student friends wrote in their pamphlets that the GDR slogan "good is what is useful for socialism, bad is what is harmful to it" (*Gut ist was dem Sozialismus nützt, schlecht, was ihm schadet*) could be compared to the Nazis' arguments for their actions disregarding humanity and superseding the law.<sup>35</sup> Another pamphlet points to one of the reasons that East Germans fled to the West: "Many farmers are prompted to go to West Germany because they cannot fulfill state demands for production or pay taxes."<sup>36</sup> Especially aggrieving to the authorities was an open appeal to ethical party members in the newspaper for students at Humboldt University (*Zeitung für Studenten der Humboldt Universität*). They were asked to react against Stalin's terror and the Soviet violence used during the Hungarian uprising in 1957: "Party members, if you are honest and desire progress, don't allow others to pursue egoistical interests in the name of the party."<sup>37</sup> While Gerd was in prison, his pregnant wife had to fend for herself. After his release, he was forced to work for several years as an unskilled laborer in a low factory job. His release document from prison did not state the reason why he had been sentenced. Thus, he could just have been a regular criminal, and universities could not hire him. He eventually found a niche in a company working with computers.

My cousin, Werner Köstrin (born in 1936),<sup>38</sup> on the other hand, chose escape. He was studying veterinary medicine, also at Humboldt University in East Berlin. The students of this whole academic unit demonstrated in 1956 during the Hungarian uprising in unison. As a consequence, he was expelled together with this group from the university. He did not wait around to possibly be interrogated and arrested but

rather left by the only route available, via airplane from West Berlin to Hannover, a city in the FRG with a university and a college of veterinary medicine. His whole family had to fear repercussions, since it was customary that close family members were also arrested and accused of not reporting "misdeeds" of their relatives, as mentioned above in the case of the writer Kempowski. Thus, Werner's mother, father, and sister, with her two small children, followed him to the West. Werner completed his studies at the University of Hannover and received a doctorate degree. He later became a researcher at a university and a senior high school teacher with tenure. He still savors his secure life in retirement, living in his own paid-off house, and has never for a moment regretted fleeing from his hometown in East Germany.

For Gerd and his wife, on the other hand, the university careers they had envisioned never materialized. They continued to remain under suspicion by the state because they never attended party-sponsored functions or educational seminars. Their two children had to work in low-status laborers' jobs before they were admitted to a university. Even after the Wall came down in 1989 and the state had collapsed, Gerd experienced additional negative consequences for remaining in his homeland: he was only in his mid-fifties then but lost his job when his company had to close down, as did so many firms in the former GDR. He and his wife have been living in a modest apartment on a very small monthly state retirement check. In comparison, another cousin of mine, who was a strong communist follower and thus had a high position in the GDR with better pay, receives a much higher monthly check during retirement. Even the small extra amount Gerd is allocated each month, in accordance with a law that was passed recently for



the benefit of political prisoners, does not make up for his losses.

I will close this chapter with a few general remarks about the borders of nation-states and their political agenda related to refugees. Benedict Anderson's notions of "Imagined Communities" (1983)—in which he points to the artificiality of borders—have found wide resonance in international scholarly and political thinking. A certain "naturalized feeling" about one's own nation-state, and the safety it is believed to offer, may feed into the unrestricted power of ruling bodies that could lead to abuse. An article published during the Grenzcamp 2001 event comments on the invention of borders as follows:

The existence of borders between different countries is as little "god-given" or natural as the division of mankind into different "races" or nationalities. Borders are an invention that received their meaning after nation-states were founded, and they began serving to keep out refugees only barely 100 years ago.

Despite the fact that nation-building continues in the new millennium, many people have acquired a new feeling of safety not so dependent on the idea of "Heimat." Studies and reflections, such as *Heimat als Utopie* (Homeland as Utopia) by renowned writer Bernhard Schlinck or *Utopie Heimat: Psychiatrische und kulturphilosophische Zugänge* (Utopia Homeland: Psychiatric, Cultural and Philosophical Approaches), edited by Martin Heinze, et al., have analyzed a basic need for belonging but have also shown that a considerable number of individuals voluntarily abandon this concept in its traditional meaning, a concept that is connected to a particular nation-state with boundaries and patriotic exclusivity feelings.<sup>39</sup> For instance, nowadays, in a globalized world, this concept of

belonging rather includes for many people a larger geographical territory or certain locations within their nation of origin; others limit it to their hometowns, their region. Some Germans see themselves as European or as *Weltbürger* (global citizens). The transitoriness of borders and the political geography of Europe since the nineteenth century have contributed to a shift to an unsentimental awareness of and need for *Heimat*. Politicians, functionaries of nation-states, however, continue to use the traditional concept of *Heimat* for emotional appeal. Nevertheless, an increasing number of people build up borderless, worldwide networks in which individuals are not brought together according to ethnic, political, or religious points of views. A proponent of this global concept is the Lufthansa Deportation Class Group, which pleads for the human right to live in a location of choice (Wübben). This group does not consider economic arguments as valid for keeping borders; they argue that these are simply used to encourage hostile feelings of a population against people from another country. Wars have to do with borders and are often followed by an acceptance of traditional consequences for the losing side (such as expulsion), be they inhumane or not. Often, war is seen as an “integral part of human nature.” However, such beliefs have been questioned for quite some time now, especially with the start of the League of Nations, founded by Bertha von Suttner (1843–1914), where rights of individuals in wartime were stipulated. Later, during the Nuremberg Trials that lasted from 1945 to 1949, perpetrators were forced to face responsibilities that had previously been avoidable on the basis of particular laws. No longer was absolute obedience to higher hierarchical powers tolerated as an excuse for violating basic human dignity. In our present century, even a president of a state (Serbia) was tried by the International Criminal Tribunal

for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as the instigator of genocide. Since this political leader, Slobodan Milošević, died before the end of his trial, he was never sentenced.

The full extent of the wrongdoings of functionaries, who were responsible for the unjust treatment of citizens attempting flight from the GDR, is still coming to light. Although ethnic crimes and persecutions continue in certain nation-states, such as Iran and North Korea, the new trend continues to punish those in responsible positions, as was the case after the Balkan War of 1999. A fitting ending to this chapter about fleeing from East to West Germany is the end of Erich Honecker's story. He was the highest GDR governmental leader (General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chair of the State Council)<sup>40</sup> when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. He turned out to be the last refugee from East Germany when he sought asylum in the Chilean Embassy in 1991. Later, he was handed over to the German authorities, and eventually a trial took place. However, due to several illnesses, the trial was cut short, and he instantly fled to Chile after his release, where he died approximately a year later.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The statistics come from the Bundesagentur für Arbeit website.

<sup>2</sup> Gröschner: "Wir waren im Wartezustand. [...] Wir warteten auf eine Wohnung, einen Brief, auf eine Aufforderung, uns um sieben im Polizeipräsidium einzufinden. Einige warteten auf einen Zettel, der sie berechnete, das Land auf Dauer zu verlassen. Andere warteten auf eine winzige Veränderung, auf einen Bombenanschlag, auf den Tod eines Generalsekretärs. Auf ein Westpaket. [...] Wir warteten auf ein gutes Buch, auf ein Studium." Translation by Helga Kraft.

<sup>3</sup> The expression “Ostzone” was of common use but became a derogatory expression.

<sup>4</sup> See Andreas Kossert, who shows that in some East German cities, such as Rostock, Schwerin, and Wismar, more than 50% of the inhabitants were refugees.

<sup>5</sup> Economists contend that the earlier assumption that the Marshall Plan (from its enactment in 1947, officially the European Recovery Program, ERP) was the main impetus for the German Economic Miracle (*Wirtschaftswunder*) was wrong. Rather, the new currency (Deutsche Mark) from 1949 and Ludwig Erhard’s (Minister of Economy in the BRD) insistence on a “Soziale Marktwirtschaft” (social marketing economy) are considered the basis of the unexpected economic recovery in the Western part of Germany. According to Stanford Economics Professor David R. Henderson, two main factors brought on the economic miracle, both of which happened over a period of weeks in 1948: the elimination of price controls and the reduction of marginal tax rates.

<sup>6</sup> For details see Geißler.

<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that machinery valued at 5 billion German Marks was shipped from the Eastern Zone to Russia from 1945 to 1949. See Benz.

<sup>8</sup> See Lapp. The 700 delegates of the *Volkskammer* were elected by the people every five years from 1971 on. The choice of the representatives was already made before the election, which was only secret in appearance. As a result, the candidates of the SED received the leading positions.

<sup>9</sup> After unification in 1990, the national holiday was changed to October 3<sup>rd</sup>, which commemorates the day of German reunification.

<sup>10</sup> “In der Bundesrepublik und West-Berlin registrierte Flüchtlinge aus der DDR bzw. Antragsteller im Notaufnahmeverfahren” (Presse- und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin). Significant figures are marked in bold by Helga Kraft.

<sup>11</sup> This information comes from Presse- und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin.

<sup>12</sup> The figures from the Stasi office (called Die Zentrale Koordinierungsgruppe zur Bekämpfung von Flucht und Übersiedlung) regarding the number of persons who succeeded in fleeing the GDR are revealing. In 1976, approximately 951 persons left the state. In the following years, the number fell to between 600 and 300. However, in 1986 the numbers reflect a growing dissatisfaction, as they rose to 1,540, in 1987 to 3,565, in 1988 to 6,543, escalating in 1989 to 53,576 before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Restriction of personal freedom was a major impetus, especially the desire to travel to locations of choice in the West or East (Eisenfeld 49).

<sup>13</sup> See Chronik der Mauer. "Bislang existierten mehrere Listen mit deutlich von einander abweichenden Zahlen: Je nach Art der Berechnung bewegen sich die Angaben zwischen 86 (Staatsanwaltschaft Berlin), mindestens 92 (Der Polizeipräsident von Berlin), 114 (Zentrale Erfassungsstelle Salzgitter), 122 (Zentrale Ermittlungsstelle für Regierungs- und Vereinigungskriminalität) und weit mehr als 200 Todesopfern." Translation by Helga Kraft. See Hertle and Nooke for a complete report.

<sup>14</sup> There were ten Special Camps: 1. Mühlberg, 2. Buchenwald, 3. Hohenschönhausen, 4. Bautzen, 5. Ketschendorf/Fürstenwalde, 6. Jamlitz, 7. Weesow, later Sachsenhausen, 8. Torgau, 9. Fünfeichen, 10. Torgau.

<sup>15</sup> *Entnazifizierung* (denazification) was to proceed together with a complete democratization and demilitarization. The people in question were divided into four categories: criminal perpetrators, suspected perpetrators (activists, militarists, beneficiaries), less-incriminated people, also called *Mitläufer* (followers), and exonerated people. See also Vollnhals.

<sup>16</sup> "Da sie in erster Linie als 'Restbestände' der dem Untergang geweihten kapitalistischen Gesellschaft angesehen wurden, verloren viele Ingenieure, Verwaltungsfachleute, Professoren und Lehrer ihre berufliche Stellung und fanden sich infolge der 'antifaschistisch-demokratischen

Umwälzung' in Internierungslagern, Gefängnissen, untergeordneten beruflichen Stellungen oder—wenn sie Glück hatten—im Westen wieder" (Mellis and Bispinck). Translation by Helga Kraft.

<sup>17</sup> "Mitläufer" is a German term that has been translated as "hanger-on" or "opportunist."

<sup>18</sup> See Eisert. The accused were brought to Waldheim in 1950 from the three Soviet-run special camps Bautzen, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen, where they had been incarcerated since 1945.

<sup>19</sup> MWD is an abbreviation of The Soviet Ministry of the State. On the subject of denunciation, see Plato.

<sup>20</sup> See for instance Fippel; Kirsten; and Hattig.

<sup>21</sup> See Buchenwald Gedenkstätte: "Nach bisherigen Recherchen befanden sich unter den Internierten: eine kleine Gruppe von Hauptschuldigen an den NS-Verbrechen, eine größere Anzahl kleiner und mittlerer ehemaliger Funktionäre der NSDAP, des nationalsozialistischen Staates und der Wirtschaft, eine Gruppe von Mitgliedern der Hitlerjugend oder Hitlerjugendführer, Angehörige der Waffen-SS, Polizeiangehörige und Offiziere der Wehrmacht sowie eine Vielzahl von Personen, die infolge von Denunziationen, Verwechslungen und willkürlichen Festnahmen in das Lager gekommen waren. Unter den zwischen August 1945 und Februar 1950 im Speziallager 2 gefangengehaltenen 28455 Menschen (offizielle sowjetische Angabe) gab es auch etwa 1000 Frauen." Translation by Helga Kraft.

<sup>22</sup> "Sowjetische Archivadokumente belegen, dass in den genannten Lagern in der Zeit ihres Bestehens von 1945 bis 1950 122.671 Deutsche einsaßen, von denen 45.262 wieder auf freien Fuß gesetzt wurden. 14.202 Häftlinge wurden dem MfJ der DDR übergeben. 12.770 Personen wurden in die UdSSR gebracht. 6.680 Personen wurden in Kriegsgefangenenlager überführt. 212 Häftlinge flüchteten. In der gesamten Zeit verstarben nach vorhandenen Angaben 42.889 Personen infolge von Krankheit, vor allem in

den Jahren 1945–1947. Durch das Militärgericht wurden 756 Personen zum Tode verurteilt.” Translation by Helga Kraft.

<sup>23</sup> “Danach werden auf Beschluss der Regierung der UdSSR aus den drei vorhandenen Lagern Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald und Bautzen insgesamt 15 038 Personen entlassen, von denen 5 504 von sowjetischen Gerichten verurteilt sind. 10 513 Personen, die von sowjetischen Gerichten verurteilt sind, werden zur Verbüßung ihrer Strafe an die deutschen Organe übergeben. Des Weiteren werden 3 432 Personen übernommen, gegen die von den deutschen Organen eine Untersuchung eingeleitet wird zur Feststellung begangener Verbrechen.” Translation by Helga Kraft.

<sup>24</sup> “Ernst-E. Klotz hat Anfang der 50er Jahre einen Erlebnisbericht über seine Gefangenschaft in Buchenwald geschrieben, den sein Sohn 1992 unter dem Titel ‘So nah der Heimat. Gefangen in Buchenwald 1945–1948’ veröffentlicht hat. Bodo Ritscher war 1992 als einer der ersten Deutschen in Moskau, um geheime Akten ausfindig zu machen. Sein Buch ‘Speziallager Nr. 2 Buchenwald. Zur Geschichte des Lagers Buchenwald 1945 bis 1950’ liegt seit 1995 in einer 2. überarbeiteten Auflage vor.” Translation by Helga Kraft.

<sup>25</sup> See other literary accounts, for example Taberner.

<sup>26</sup> “Die Aktion ‘Schmetterling’ in der Tauwetterperiode hat im Jahre 1956 vielen politischen Häftlingen, wie SMT Verurteilten, wegen Kriegsverbrechen Verurteilten und anderen wegen Staatsverbrechen Verurteilten eine vorzeitige Entlassung gebracht” (Rainer Schröder).

<sup>27</sup> “Nach meiner Kündigung durch den Lehrherrn ergab eine Anfrage beim Arbeitsamt, dass in Müllrose keine Arbeit zu bekommen war, ich deshalb nach Aue im Erzgebirge in den Uranbergbau sollte. Daraufhin beschlossen mein Freund Edgar Witzke und ich, dass wir in den Westen gehen wollten. Meine Mutter war von meinem Plan begeistert, weil [...] sie Angst hatte, die Russen könnten mich eines Tages abholen.” Translated by Helga Kraft.

<sup>28</sup> “Besonders die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen und Zwangsverschleppten wurden menschenunwürdig behandelt und mußten in dem Wildauer Werk täglich 10–12 Stunden schwerste Arbeit verrichten. Brutal gingen die faschistischen Machtorgane und ‘Ordnungshüter’ gegen Widerstand oder Arbeitsunwilligkeit der Kriegsgefangenen und Zwangsverschleppten vor.” Translation by Helga Kraft.

<sup>29</sup> The *Zellenleiter* ranked sixth in the hierarchy of NSDAP functionaries. He was in charge of four to eight “Blocks,” which were managed by a *Blockleiter*. In 1939, there existed 97,161 of such party cells in Germany. See Benning 112.

<sup>30</sup> See Plato on the realities on denunciations: “Die einen denunzierten aus Eigennutz, die anderen unter Angst, die dritten aus Überzeugung, die vierten, um endlich Recht gegen frühere Willkür zu erhalten, wiederum andere machten Aussagen unter Folter” (195).

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, Moeller.

<sup>32</sup> Not his real name.

<sup>33</sup> Although not absolutely proven, it is suspected that waterboarding belonged to the interrogation techniques. See Mironenko.

<sup>34</sup> I own a copy of the judgment in the case of G. and two of his student friends. It was retrieved from the Gauck-Behörde in 1991, when people involved with the Stasi were able to see their files.

<sup>35</sup> They wrote these words in a pamphlet “Zum Problem der Ethik.” I have copies of these pamphlets and also of student newspapers from 1957. This material was also retrieved from the Stasi file.

<sup>36</sup> “Viele Bauern werden durch Soll- und Steuerrückgänge veranlaßt, nach Westdeutschland zu fliehen.” In a pamphlet by Humboldt students titled “Die Lage unserer Landwirtschaft” (The Situation of Our Agriculture), 1957.



<sup>37</sup> "Parteimitglieder, die ihr ehrlich den Fortschritt wollt, lasst nicht zu, daß im Namen der Partei die egoistischen Interessen einzelner Funktionäre verfolgt werden" (from the pamphlet "Zum Problem der Ethik"). Translation by Helga Kraft.

<sup>38</sup> His real name has been changed.

<sup>39</sup> See also Joisten.

<sup>40</sup> Generalsekretär des Zentralkomitees der SED and Staatsratsvorsitzender der DDR.

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