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DRESDEN: PARADOXES OF MEMORY IN HISTORY

by

Elizabeth A. Ten Dyke

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

1997

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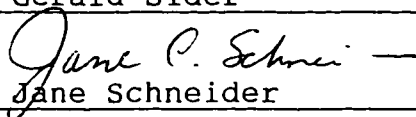
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ABSTRACT**DRESDEN: PARADOXES OF MEMORY IN HISTORY**

by

Elizabeth A. Ten Dyke

Advisor: Dr. Gerald Sider

This study is an ethnographic investigation of social and cultural aspects of memory and history in Dresden (eastern) Germany during 1991-2. The collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1989 forced men and women of all ages into an abrupt and painful confrontation with their personal pasts as well as their national, cultural and political histories. Oral history interviews and ethnographic case studies illustrate how many of the themes which emerged in debates about the past in the former GDR reprise unresolved issues in German history. These include the goals of socialism, the nature of daily life under what some consider to have been a dictatorship, and the complicity of ordinary people with the state. In the concluding chapter the author explores paradoxes of memory in history expressed in this empirical study of social change, personal memory, and the politics of historical representation.

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PROLOGUE

The Museum

Michael, Karl and Sabine (pseudonyms) are students at Dresden's Technical University. Their demonstrated aptitude for technical things (door locks), a pioneer spirit and a healthy disrespect for authority won them their current apartment on a quiet side street in the Neustadt¹, an area of Dresden on the northeast side of the Elbe populated in part by artists, intellectuals and other students. They observed that the apartment was empty, easily broke in and occupied it; then they won the legal challenge raised against them by the office that administers the property.

The apartment, located in an old building whose facade is blackened by decades of soot, has spacious rooms, tall ceilings bordered by elaborate trim, large windows and a majestic coal oven which presides over the living room. A small child's room is located off the kitchen. This modest space is stuffed full of FDJ (Free German Youth) shirts, Young Pioneer scarves², Winkelemente³ (flags) and other

1. German terms will be underlined and translated the first time they appear in the text. Subsequently, nouns will be capitalized as they are in German. Most foreign terms are translated or explained in Appendix II. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German are my own.

2. The Young Pioneers and the Free German Youth were nationwide youth organizations in the German Democratic Republic.

worldly goods which practically tumble out of the room as if it really were occupied by a teenager who had crammed a short lifetime's worth of material possessions into its tiny space. Yet upon more careful inspection one sees that all the stuff squeezed into the room is carefully and deliberately displayed.

Shelves groan with the weight of German Democratic Republic (GDR) electronics such as tape recorders, adding machines and record players. Cassettes and records by GDR musicians are stacked next to GDR novels, textbooks, pamphlets, manuals and reference works. A bulletin board is decorated with bureaucratic documents ranging from applications for travel abroad to order forms for Trabants⁴ and a memo detailing the organization of a professional conference. Photos of Wilhelm Pieck⁵ and Mikhail Gorbachev round off the bulletin board display. On the opposite wall hang poster displays on themes such as worker productivity and friendship with citizens of other socialist countries. A teacher's pointing stick is carefully positioned to lean against a poster board as if frozen forever in the midst of an imaginary lesson. Shoes and boots fill the floor, along

3. Winkelement (from winken, to wave) is a GDR neologism. The GDR created many such terms as part of its effort to create an ideological demarcation, through language, from National Socialism and the capitalist West. See Röhl 1991.

4. GDR cars.

5. Chairman of the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) after World War II and, with Otto Grotewohl, Joint Chairman of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) after 1946.

with objects simply too heavy to display at a higher level: a case of unopened bottles of GDR cola, a GDR vacuum cleaner, an overhead projector complete with transparencies for a talk on the development of the socialist economy in Cuba, a carpet honoring Erich Honecker⁶ and the fortieth anniversary of the GDR on October 7, 1989. On a small table household goods such as pudding, rice, flour, spices, canned goods, cigarettes and toilet paper are displayed. A complete set of plastic and aluminum tableware that someone had received as a wedding gift lies in its original box, invitingly open as if for sale. Magazines and newspapers are piled in the little leftover space. Erich Honecker, gazing resolutely forward from an oversized portrait faded to yellow and green from its once revolutionary red color, presides over the entire collection.

Michael initiated the museum project in about 1990, motivated by the awareness that there had been an Alltag (daily life) in the GDR that was fading so fast that soon no one would remember it. He, along with Karl and Sabine, observed that everyone they knew had authentic evidence of this Alltag in their homes but they felt that the separate, individual things would have no special meaning until they were assembled in one place. Only then would they provide a complete impression of what daily life in the GDR was like. The three students spend most weekends collecting

6. General Secretary of the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) from 1971 until October 18, 1989.

GDR artifacts from friends, schools, factories, offices, flea markets and house sales. Often donations are made spontaneously by people who visit the museum and then return with a crucially missing object. Some of the items, such as a class diary from Karl's second grade, were "borrowed" and never returned.

"Every piece in this room is more than just the thing-in-itself," Michael explained when I asked about the collection. "Each piece is an episode. We've created a museum of episodes."

I picked up a copy of Sputnik⁷ and asked, "What is the story behind this?"

"The Sputnik-Verbot (Sputnik prohibition)!" they cried in unison without hesitation.

Michael continued, "Sputnik was a good magazine, a very popular magazine. It was when Sputnik was prohibited that it became clear that the GDR had approached a point of irreversible change, perhaps even crisis!"

I asked the obvious question, "Why was the ban so significant?"

Michael and Karl thought for a minute, clearly puzzled, then, with a flash of insight, Karl replied, "Because it was so concrete, so black and white. In the months, even in the years preceding the Sputnik-Verbot, the

7. A Soviet magazine published abroad in numerous languages in which articles from the U.S.S.R. press were abridged and reprinted.

GDR had distanced itself from Poland, from Russia, from Perestroika. In speeches politicians would say things like 'We'll stay on the old path.' Then there were the justifications of barbarous acts such as the massacre in China in June 1989. But these statements and justifications weren't really concrete and clear--you had to try to figure out what they meant, what path they indicated this country was going to follow. Then Sputnik was prohibited and it was published in the newspapers-- 'Sputnik verboten!' and suddenly it was clear. The GDR was not going to follow the path of Poland and Perestroika."⁸

Karl remembered an article which he thinks spurred the ban. "In it, Stalin was compared to Hitler. That was unthinkable here. Sure, the state had distanced itself from Stalin, but to go ten steps beyond that and say Stalin had been as terrible a dictator as Hitler, well that was too much."

The ban did not prevent them from reading Sputnik, however. A friend of Karl's continued to get the magazine secretly through an acquaintance from Hungary. It would be circulated from trusted friend to trusted friend, perhaps until it appeared as dog-eared and worn as the copy in the museum.

Other objects have humorous stories. The toilet paper

8. In contrast to the chronology Karl presents, Sputnik was actually banned in November of 1988, seven months before the massacre on Tiananman Square.

was so rough, I was told, that it irritated your skin.

"That was how the state made sure that even your ass was Red," they teased.

Sabine murmured in response, "I remember when people who were allowed to visit the West came back and said the toilet paper there was soft, that it had double sheets and was decorated with flowers. 'My God,' we thought, 'can you imagine?' And we couldn't! We couldn't imagine a world where the toilet paper was decorated with flowers!"

Some of the objects recall stories about the so-called Versorgungsloch (gap in supplies) or Mangelgesellschaft (shortage society) as well as the social solidarity and Beziehungen (relationships) that assisted people in obtaining material goods. For example, this is the "episode" evoked by a particular mail-order fashion catalog: it was difficult to obtain the catalog, as one had to be a member of a club. It was even harder to order from the catalog as each catalog had only one order form and orders were accepted only on that form. When one person in an apartment building received a copy of the catalog it would be passed from apartment to apartment until four or five families had leafed through it and written down their order.

"All orders would be placed together on the single order form," Sabine explained. "Weeks, perhaps months would go by, then one day a HUGE package would arrive . . . !" Her eyes lit up with obvious delight at the

recollection.

Two of the most striking aspects of the museum were the evident care with which all of the articles were displayed, despite the extreme overcrowding, and how lovingly they were handled and shown. Michael glanced around the room, then said gently, as if talking to a child, "Look here! That's Putzi⁹, the GDR children's toothpaste, and it didn't taste bad at all; in fact it tasted good! There was a special Putzi toothbrush that went with it [and naturally they had one--factory new and wrapped in plastic], and a spotted plastic cup--everyone had those!"

Then we sat in the living room at the foot of the great coal stove, drank (bitter) GDR schnapps and talked--about growing up in the GDR, about school, family, teachers and the church. Michael, Karl and Sabine recalled some of the choices they had made in the past such as whether or not to participate in the Jugendweihe, the state's coming-of-age ceremony for fourteen-year-old members of the FDJ in which the gathered youth swore, en masse, their allegiance to socialism.¹⁰ Young people who chose to complete the Jugendweihe received months of preparatory instruction in

9. A pun on the verb putzen, to polish or clean.

10. A brief description can be found in Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (ed.) 1975: 291. See also Krisch who comments "[a]mong the rituals of control and socialization [in the GDR], the most important is the Jugendweihe" (1985: 155).

subjects such as history, political economy and Marxism-Leninism. The Jugendweihe itself was a special day in that "you had to have something nice to wear" and, after the ceremony was over, relatives gathered for coffee and cake. Gifts were customary too and Sabine identified some of the things she had received: "perfume, clothes, a tape recorder."

While many young people completed the Jugendweihe with little or no inner conflict (one male respondent commented on the instruction: "in one ear and out the other!"), others struggled with the decision. For Christians in particular, the Jugendweihe, in which one avowed atheism, presented a direct conflict with confirmation in the church. Sabine decided to be confirmed and to participate in the Jugendweihe, explaining that she felt the Jugendweihe was just for show and she wanted to guarantee her admission to college.¹¹

When asked what motivated the frenzy of conservation work which consumes so much of their time and energy, Michael replied, "Think about the thirties, about fascism. We ask our grandparents what it was like then and they don't say anything, or they can't remember. Someday our

11. While successful completion of the Jugendweihe was not an official prerequisite for college, it was evidence that a student was "socially active," that is politically compliant or even enthusiastic. These qualities were favored by administrators who determined which students would be allowed to study for an Abitur, the advanced high school diploma necessary for college admission.

kids will ask us what life was like in the GDR and we want to be able to tell them." He recalled a visitor who walked into the museum and said, "It smells like Konsum¹²!"

"Is that a nice smell?" I asked.

They laughed, then said, "Maybe yes! It wasn't all bad and, after all, that's the world we grew up in."

Finally Michael, Karl and Sabine asked me to sign their guest book. "It is a museum after all!" they insisted and I obliged, adding my name and comments ("Toll! Sehr eindrucksvoll!" [Great! Very impressive!]) to a small notebook already initialed by dozens of others.

12. A nationwide chain of cooperative grocery stores.

INTRODUCTION

This Study

Based on oral history interviews and participant observation, this dissertation is an empirical study of memory in the unique cultural, geographical and historical contexts of Dresden, (eastern) Germany during the year from July 1991 to July 1992.

In recent years issues of memory and history have been addressed by a considerable and rapidly growing body of literature in the social sciences. In this introduction I discuss relevant contributions to this literature.

Categories including "individual" versus "collective" memory, and analytical strategies such as viewing memory as the expression of a "past-present relation" (Popular Memory Group 1982) provide a starting point for an anthropological study of memory. But, ultimately, these approaches to memory and history prove to be inadequate when confronted with the multi-dimensional, conflicted practices and processes of memory evidenced by ethnographic data such as those presented in the Prologue.

The practices and processes of memory through which the students created the museum were occasioned by a singular historical conjuncture, the Wende, and the tumultuous and disorienting year that followed it.¹ While

1. Meaning "turn" or "change," Wende is the term most commonly used to describe events of the fall of 1989 in the GDR that led to the collapse of the state and, eventually, the unification of East and West Germany.

all ethnographic research is situated in unique historical circumstances, during the year after the Wende profound changes in the culture of daily life hurled East Germans into difficult and painful confrontations with their personal, cultural and national pasts.

Although East Germans responded differently to this experience, some, like Michael, Karl and Sabine, actively preserved the past by collecting elements of its material culture. But, as the Prologue illustrates, things alone do not comprise history; the museum was also a "collection" of the "episodes" recalled by the objects displayed in it. Artifacts evoke memories as people accumulate, possess, display, touch, discard, smell and talk about them.

Representations of the GDR captured by the things in the museum and the recollections of visitors are factual, sentimental, humorous, subversive, strategic and, often, inaccurate. They are shaped by and accord with or challenge ideologies of history which are, themselves, specific to particular times, places and processes including political struggles and the negotiation of identities.

Finally, the museum is a place where individuals can come together and share reminiscences. By doing so, they create and modify memories through social interaction. Their activity is social, and intersubjective, in another sense too--it is inspired in part by memories of past conversations with grandparents and it anticipates future

conversations with as-yet-unborn children.

In this study I argue that memory is engendered at once by the present, future and past. It emerges from complex relationships and processes that are historical in two senses, both context specific and diachronic.² Because it is inherently paradoxical, memory is a dynamic and powerful resource for individuals who must simultaneously respond to and engage themselves with a rapidly transforming environment such as that of eastern Germany after the Wende.

In the next section I briefly summarize events of the Wende and describe some of its social, economic and political outcomes.

The German Democratic Republic

The Wende

The year 1989 in the German Democratic Republic is perhaps best known for the destruction of the Berlin Wall--literally. At midnight on November 9 of that year, tens of thousands of East Germans crossed the flood-lit "death strip" on the east side of the border; some conquered the wall by climbing it while others chipped away at it with hammers and chisels. Newscasters stood before the west side of the wall and proclaimed that "freedom" and

2. I use the term diachronic as a synonym for one of the meanings of historical (occurring over time) in order to minimize multiple, confusing uses of the words "history."

"democracy" had prevailed in what was recognized to be one of the Soviet Union's most dutiful and materially successful satellite states.

The events of this night took place within the broader context of Soviet Glasnost and Perestroika. At the same time that Mikhail Gorbachev was initiating widespread reforms in Soviet politics and economics, SED General Secretary Erich Honecker had dashed East German hopes for reform by making it clear that the state would stay on the "proven path." On January 19, 1989 he "assured" the East German people that the Wall (which stands synecdochically for the GDR's closed borders) would remain another fifty and one hundred years (Fischbach (ed.) 1990: 178). Then, in the following months, long-simmering, mostly silent discontent gushed forth, catalyzed by disclosure of widespread fraud in national elections that May.

In June, free elections in Poland, in which the opposition party Solidarity triumphed, unleashed a new hopefulness among East Germans. Some disgruntled GDR citizens began to express their clear dissatisfaction with the status quo by occupying West German administrative offices and embassies in cities such as East Berlin, Warsaw, Prague and Budapest, where they demanded to be allowed to emigrate. On August 3, Hungary notified the GDR's foreign ministry that it would explore the possibility of offering East Germans asylum. While hundreds of thousands of East Germans took to the streets

in major cities in the GDR, thousands more began to flee by travelling (visa-free) across Czechoslovakia³ through Hungary to Austria and eventually to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

On October 3, 1989, the day before festivities celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the GDR were to begin, authorities attempted to stem the torrent of refugees (or deserters, depending on one's point of view) by closing the Czechoslovakian border to East Germans traveling without visas. One of the consequences of this move was an escalation of protest particularly in Dresden as the city is located about one hour by train from the Czech border. In the city police officers brutally assaulted hundreds of protesters including teenagers and women.

During the fall the crisis deepened. Gorbachev made it clear that the Soviet Union would not deploy military force to crush the conflict and, at a press conference in Berlin, stressed the urgent need for reform in the GDR. Numerous major political figures resigned, including Erich Honecker, who cited ill health as the reason for leaving his position as General Secretary of the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) on October 18, 1989. An

3. Though Czechoslovakia no longer exists as a nation-state, it did exist at the time the events described took place. Hence in references to the GDR-Czech border I utilize "Czechoslovakia" to name the state that controlled the border at the time.

increasingly vocal citizenry called for the recognition of the alternative political party Neues Forum (New Forum). In major cities such as Leipzig, Berlin and Dresden, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators risked incurring violence by demanding to emigrate--Wir wollen raus! (We want out!) they chanted.

The border to Czechoslovakia was reopened on November 1 and tens of thousands of East Germans began pouring through central Europe into West Germany⁴, while hundreds of thousands more proclaimed their commitment to reform in the GDR by chanting Wir bleiben hier! (We're staying here!) in demonstrations. With the chant Wir sind das Volk! (We are the People!) East Germans asserted their authority to lead the political process. Workers' collectives began to debate and formulate positions on topics as obscure as the deleterious effect of price subsidies on the East German economy and as compelling as the role of the police in a time of civil unrest.

Finally, on November 9, government minister Günter Schabowski announced that, as of midnight, East Germans would be issued visas for foreign travel with neither a waiting period nor the requirement that they demonstrate a compelling reason to go abroad. While his announcement in no way specified that the Berlin Wall would be opened, the new policy meant that this most prominent and

4. Almost 50,000 East Germans crossed over between November 1 and November 9 (Fischbach [ed.] 1990: 281).

unsurmountable barrier to the West could now be overcome.

The triumph of the people over the Wall was one of the high points of the Wende. Additional crucial developments followed, including the establishment of Round Table Debates during which members of the Bürgerbewegung (citizens' movement), among others, raised social, political and moral questions concerning the GDR's past and future. As cries for unification came to overwhelm appeals for reform, new issues emerged, not the least of which was under which of two possible sections in West Germany's Grundgesetz (Basic Law) the nations would be joined, and whether the joining would be a unification or confederation. Over the winter a small minority of East Germans clung to the hope that the GDR could remain autonomous and pursue a "third way" of reformed socialism. Then, in elections on March 18, 1990, the overwhelming success in the East of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the dominant political party in West Germany, cinched unification. Currency union followed on July 4 of the same year. Finally, the Wende came to some kind of resolution with the unification of Germany on October 3, 1990, on which day the final transition to West German law and social policy was initiated.

I write "some kind of resolution" because, in many cases (for example, health insurance or regulations concerning automobile inspection and safety), the complete transition to West German law and policy would last months

or years. In the most controversial case (abortion law), intensely emotional, often slanderous public debates almost made it seem that GDR law might influence West German law. In the end, though, that was not the case and West German abortion law came to prevail throughout the united Germany.⁵ In an extremely small number of relatively trivial cases the newly unified Federal Republic of Germany agreed to "test" East German regulations--for example, at certain intersections allowing drivers to turn right on a red light after coming to a full stop. Finally, as I discuss in the body of this thesis, the social, economic and psychological fallout from the transition to private property and production would devastate East Germans for years after German unification in October 1990.

After the Wende

The Wende brought about the demise of the GDR and the onset of intensely political and conflicted nation-building after 1989. Collateral social and cultural phenomena included the breakdown of work collectives, institutions such as the Party (SED), and forms of authority including the dominance of "the worker" in ideology and practice.

5. In the FRG women were required to demonstrate an economic, social or emotional need for abortion and their petition could be denied by the physicians or judges who evaluated their application. In the GDR abortion was available on demand at any time during the first trimester. See Birkenfeld-Pfeiffer (1991-2), Böhm (1991-2), Nelles (1992-2) and Nimsch (1991-2).

Personal and social expectations, values and norms were also abruptly transformed.

The awareness and use of history was also significantly altered after the Wende. There was marked amnesia concerning both positive and negative aspects of the GDR; in some cases this was expressed as powerful nostalgia for daily life in socialism, or its virulent condemnation. In addition, the perception of the passage of time (without which there would be no past, present or future) changed as a result of the Wende. The sense of the duration of the present, the distance of the past, and the advent of the future all were transformed. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, this change in perception can be directly related to new life circumstances compelled (or occasioned) by the Wende (compare Boyarin 1994).

In the former GDR, new life circumstances after the Wende also resulted in pervasive anxiety. In fact, the year during which research for this dissertation was conducted (1991-2) was a particularly odd and disturbing time. The euphoria and drama of the Wende clearly had come to an end, yet no new era had been definitively established. This was a year of confusing and overwhelming disturbances of everyday life as various aspects of German unification were realized in mundane matters, down to the kinds of fruit and vegetables available for sale in the East, and devastating processes such as factory closings and waves of mass layoffs.

These vast, multiple, simultaneous changes in daily life led to what East Germans came to call a "crisis in orientation," that is, the loss of certainty in one's self and environment. At the same time, fervent efforts to fix the GDR in history, to establish what the state had been and how it had functioned, led to a fierce focus on the personal history of individuals--what people did or did not do, for or against the GDR, during its forty-year existence. As personal history was highlighted men and women responded in many different ways. Some fell into deep depressions as they realized that a lifetime of training and work, motivated by energetic commitment to the ideals of socialism, had been for nought. East Germans who had resisted socialism or felt that their lives had been unfairly hampered by its ideology, laws or policies, responded exuberantly to its end. Certain individuals sought to eradicate the past by purging attics and curio cabinets of incriminating souvenirs (for example, scarves from the state youth organization). Others selected and stored items associated with positive memories from the GDR.

In real life these quite different responses were never as clear-cut as the preceding paragraph makes them seem. In some cases actions undertaken after the end of socialism were contradictory, motivated by deeply ambivalent sentiments about the past that cannot be boiled down to a simple opposition of nostalgia for the good old

days versus the unequivocal censure of the GDR. Moreover, after the Wende East Germans struggled to create a new society while maintaining some semblance of continuity with the old. In all cases unresolved controversies of German history shaped and influenced these processes.

In the following sections I clarify my approach to memory in history by situating this work in the context of relevant literature in anthropology and related fields.

Memory and History in the Social Sciences⁶

Memory: Types and Issues

Social scientists often identify "types" of memory that facilitate the analysis of particular research questions. For example, Connerton's (1989) focus on the ways representations of the past legitimate present social orders leads him to explore ritual (commemorative) performance and what he calls "habit" memory. He contrasts habit memory with personal and cognitive memory, explaining that personal memory refers to the recollection of one's own life history (for example, a first date) while cognitive memory refers to knowledge in general--not necessarily knowledge of the past but knowledge acquired in the past (for example, how to order from a menu in a

6. As this literature is growing rapidly what follows is, necessarily, a highly selective discussion and not a literature review per se.

restaurant).⁷ Habit memory, on the other hand, is the "capacity to reproduce a certain performance" such as riding a bicycle or appropriately greeting a social superior (Connerton 1989: 22).

Habit memory is "sedimented, or amassed, in the body" and communicated through posture and movement (Connerton 1989: 72, see also Stoller 1994). These "incorporated" practices (contrasted with inscribed [written] practices) are socially learned: "[h]abit is a knowledge and a remembering in the hands and in the body . . ." (Connerton 1989: 95). Through his exploration of habitual practices Connerton calls attention to the fact that social memory often "gets passed on in non-textual and non-cognitive ways" (Connerton 1989: 102-3).

Connerton's classificatory scheme can be understood as an expression of the different ways memory is acquired, the possible locations of memory (in the body or mind⁸), and media for expressing memory (in performance or texts). While these distinctions are useful, they become problematic when one attempts to describe and understand mnemonic practices that are simultaneously incorporated and inscribed, personal, cognitive and habitual. For example, Connerton includes being able to read and write in the

7. Psychologists sometimes differentiate between episodic and semantic memory, terms that accord with Connerton's categories "personal" and "cognitive" (see Baddeley 1989).

8. Also a problematic distinction.

category of habitual or incorporated memory despite the fact that these skills are clearly premised by the successful acquisition and deployment of cognitive memory. This problem reflects the inexact nature of his classificatory scheme and begs the question of how practices that require the simultaneous exercise of many different types of memory should be understood.

The title of Connerton's study, How Societies Remember, announces his focus on collective or social memory. Peter Burke comments that

[t]he analogies between individual and group are as elusive as they are fascinating. If we use terms like 'social memory' we do risk reifying concepts. On the other hand, if we refuse to use such terms, we are in danger of failing to notice the different ways in which the ideas of individuals are influenced by the groups to which they belong (Burke 1989: 99).

There are very specific and clearly identifiable ways that individual memory is shaped by collectivities. Remembering and recollection are learned as a normal part of childhood socialization (Nelson 1989). Forms of recollection (for example, sequencing events), practices of recollection (such as telling stories in certain contexts), the priority of particular subjects of recollection (including the self), and the media or technology of recollection (ranging from the performance of oral history to the collection of photographs) are social as well, or culturally and historically specific (see Carruthers 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Crapanzano 1980; Yates 1966). Individual memories are also social in that they bear

influences of the intersubjective processes through which they are generated. Thus, even though the most private memories must be seen as social, and social memory requires the participation of individuals, literature on social or collective memory tends to neglect the mutual influences of individual and collective memory (Passerini 1987 and Popular Memory Group 1982 are two exceptions).

Publications on social memory often focus on the ways strategic remembering and forgetting contribute to the construction of shared identity, collective interests and, therefore, social cohesion (Anderson 1983, Butler (ed.) 1989, Fentress and Wickham 1992, Goody 1987, Hobsbawm 1972, Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.) 1983, Middleton and Edwards (eds.) 1990, Tonkin 1992, Vansina 1965, 1985). Many of these authors take the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992 [1952]) as a starting point. Halbwachs, who was strongly influenced by the thought of Emile Durkheim, explored memories held by groups such as families, ethnic groups and religious communities. He was attentive to the fact that members of such groups not only construct the past through memory, but also actively reconstruct that past according to present and future needs and interests; society "rearranges its recollections in such a way as to adjust them to the variable conditions of its equilibrium" (Halbwachs 1992 [1952]: 182-3, see also Hill 1988, White 1992).

Thus social scientific research on memory is concerned

not only with identifying and describing types of memory (incorporated and inscribed, individual and social) but also with the functions or uses of the past. Hobsbawm (1972) systematically addressed many of these in a brief but comprehensive essay. He observed that the past can serve as a pattern for the present, though because recollection of the past is normally incomplete and contradictory it has "interstices" in which innovation or change can take place. The past can also be "stretched" or "modified" to accommodate change, whereby innovation "can be reformulated as non-innovation" (Hobsbawm 1972: 4). Radical change may be construed as a return to a past that previously had been forgotten or, when changes bring about a break with the past, they may be viewed as resulting from a force superior to that of history, such as a transcendent moral imperative.

In other cases, when societies are transformed so greatly that the past can longer function as a "pattern" for the present, it may become a "model" instead (Hobsbawm 1972: 6). Now the present is seen as clearly different from the past but prior relationships (for example, ownership of land or tools) or principles (belief in the autonomy of certain population groups) become aspirations that motivate present choices and actions. When the present is removed even further from the past, and history can no longer offer goals for the future, innovations in the representation of history can mobilize individuals to

participate in movements that require the creation of cohesive communities for the purpose of bringing about social change.

When history is viewed as a course of evolutionary development yet another sense of the past is at work, this being "the past as a process of becoming the present" (Hobsbawm 1972: 11). When social movements seek to establish a world that has never previously existed, past social forms can be used as analogies for what is sought in the future. Hobsbawm explained:

[n]ineteenth- and twentieth-century socialists doubtless used "primitive communism" merely as an analytical prop, but the fact that they used it at all indicates the advantage of being able to have a concrete precedent even for the unprecedented, or at least an example of ways of solving new problems however inapplicable the actual solutions of the analogous problems in the past (Hobsbawm 1972: 11).

Finally Hobsbawm identified genealogy and chronology as possible social uses of the past. Genealogy represents the need to locate oneself, one's group or revolutionary movement in a lengthy tradition, in some cases "buttress[ing] an uncertain self-esteem" (Hobsbawm 1972: 14). Interestingly, chronology is often irrelevant to the use of the past, particularly when the past is conceived as a "repository of experience, wisdom and moral precedent" (Hobsbawm 1972: 15). The advent of chronology in a society is indicative of changes in social relationships such that sequences of events become materially or ideologically significant--the birth order of siblings, distributions of

property, payment of tribute or taxes. Additionally, the ability to recognize and interpret chronology is a prerequisite for those who seek to explore causes and effects of events.

Finally, Hobsbawm observed:

[t]o be a member of any human community is to situate oneself with regard to one's (its) past, if only by rejecting it. The past is therefore a permanent dimension of the human consciousness, an inevitable component of the institutions, values and other patterns of human society (Hobsbawm 1972: 3).

In some cases, the past may be a permanent dimension of human consciousness because it is embodied by the physical environment in which people reside. Ingold (1993), Rotenberg (1995) and Yoneyama (1994), among others, have explored the ways memory is symbolized in physical landscapes. Local politics of urban, suburban and rural development often implicate the representation, or erasure, of the past. In addition, physical environments may serve as powerful cues for the recollection or repression of memory (Smith 1988).

A number of authors have examined the development and use of different media or technologies of recollection. Yates (1966) and Carruthers (1990) excellent and highly regarded studies of memory in the classical and medieval period in Europe. Anderson (1983) contributed his well-known exposition on the relationship between the development of print media and nation-building in early modern Europe, while Melion and K  chler (1991) is a

provocative essay on the perpetuation of memory through the creation of mortuary sculptures in a New Guinea society.

A study of media or technologies of memory in different historical periods begs the question of the relationship between historical change and the emergence of new forms of memory. This question is central to the work of Pierre Nora (1989), who is deeply concerned with the influence of changing historical contexts on the representation of the past. In particular, he writes, the "acceleration of history" and the "increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good," accompanied by "a movement toward democratization and mass culture on a global scale," are leading to a collapse of memory (Nora 1989: 7). Nora mourns the loss of memory, describing it as the loss of tradition, of stable communities and the "ancestral," and he observes that in place of "natural memory" we now have history and the "lieux de mémoire," or sites of memory, spawned therefrom: archives, museums and monuments.

Nora focuses on the creation of sites of memory as a response to trends in historical research. In the past, he argues, positivist history served an important function in establishing the legitimacy of institutions such as nations. Historians were "preachers" and "soldiers," responsible for establishing the "pillars of continuity" upon which the nation (or other institutions such as the church) would stand (Nora 1989: 11). The emergence of

critical historiography, or the history of history, casts doubt upon the enduring stature historians were able to grant social groups. "To interrogate a tradition . . ." Nora writes, "is no longer to pass it on intact" (Nora 1989: 10). Consequently,

in disclaiming its national identity, [history] also abandoned its claim to bearing coherent meaning and consequently lost its pedagogical authority to transmit values. . . . The memory-nation was thus the last incarnation of the unification of memory and history (Nora 1989: 11).

Nora's essay reiterates several important themes: first, the fact that memory, a capacity of living creatures and not objects, can, nonetheless, be embodied in things such as monuments and places such as museums. Second, he reminds us that the past is often subject to critical interrogation and argument.⁹ Finally, he initiates a discussion of the relationship between processes of social change ("the acceleration of history") and transformations in the representation of the past.

Also in the 1980s Eric Hobsbawm explored this last point in some detail (Hobsbawm 1983a, 1983b). He coined the now well-known phrase "invented traditions" and described these as "responses to novel [historical] situations" (Hobsbawm 1983a: 2). Hobsbawm elaborated:

[invented traditions are] a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a

9. Though he does not make this point explicit, representations of the past often become the focus of heated debate (see Aagaard-Mogensen 1988; Karp et al. (eds.) 1992; Berdahl 1994).

ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition (Hobsbawm 1983a: 1).

Unlike routinized practices which become traditions simply because they are frequently repeated, invented traditions are created out of the symbols and habits accumulated by societies over time and, most importantly, they establish a sense of continuity with those societies' pasts, particularly in times of historical rupture.

Referring to a wave of tradition-production in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Hobsbawm wrote

[q]uite new, or old but dramatically transformed, social groups, environments and social contexts called for new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations (Hobsbawm 1983b: 263).

As responses to such transformations, invented traditions are "evidence" and "important symptoms" because they indicate social problems and developments that might otherwise be missed (Hobsbawm 1983a: 12). Some of these include the consolidation of new social groupings (such as the working class or nation-states), the legitimization of new forms of authority, or the imparting of new or modified values (Hobsbawm 1983a: 9).

Gillis (1994) elaborates on the relationship between historical change and representations of the past by taking into consideration commemorative practices during three different "phases." He differentiates the "present, post-national phase" from the "pre-national phase" (to the end of the 18th century) and the "national phase" (late 18th

century through the 1960s). His model is problematic on its face in that the emergence and cessation of commemorative practices do not neatly coincide with the end or beginning of eras, nor do eras cooperatively begin and end with particular decades. Nonetheless, the three periods he identifies typify trends which he extends by analogy from collective commemoration to personal memory.

Like Hobsbawm and Nora, Gillis romanticizes pre-national memory. While Hobsbawm refers to traditions that are not invented as "genuine" and Nora differentiates between "true" and "false" memory and calls peasant culture "that quintessential repository of collective memory" (Nora 1989: 7), Gillis professes that in the pre-national period "[o]rdinary people felt the past to be so much a part of their present that they perceived no urgent need to record, objectify, and preserve it" (Gillis 1994: 6).¹⁰

Also like Hobsbawm and Nora, Gillis focuses on the unifying effects of national memory, adding the observation that the establishment of any collectivity requires amnesia as much as recollection:

[n]ational memory is shared by people who have never seen or heard of one another, yet who regard themselves as having a common history. They are bound together as much by forgetting as remembering . . . (Gillis 1994: 7, compare Anderson 1983).

And Gillis overtly emphasizes political aspects of national

10. This is contradicted of course by the existence of important oral traditions in pre-literate cultures (see D'Azevedo 1982, Goody 1987, Petrov 1989, Vansina 1965, 1985).

commemoration: groups compete with each other over representations of the past (what will be included, what will be excluded) as part of ongoing struggles for power and influence in the present and future.

According to Gillis, in the post-national period, fragmentation (of society, family, communities, time, careers, nations, ideologies, identities and so on) is associated with the personalization of memory work, driven perhaps by a sense of desperation.¹¹ There is increasing pressure to remember a past which seems to vanish more and more rapidly every day--as in Nora's "acceleration of history." Our obsession with archives reflects the anxiety of our age or, as Nora puts it, the "[fear] of a rapid and final disappearance [of the past] combin[ed] with anxiety about the meaning of the present and uncertainty about the future" (Nora 1989: 13).

Partly as a result of the breakdown of stable forms of collective memory (extended families, secure communities) post-national remembrance is increasingly individual. It is expressed in diaries, collections of memorabilia, photographs, videos and other kinds of stuff with which people fill their closets, drawers, attics and basements. Ironically and sadly, however, collecting things does not necessarily ensure memory's perpetuation; rather, it is an expression of its loss. The obsession with storing things

11. Harvey (1989) probably best describes this fragmentation.

represents an effort to preserve memories we can no longer trust ourselves to recall.

Gillis summarizes:

[t]oday everyone is her or his own historian . . . the reality is that the nation is no longer the site or frame for memory for most people and therefore national history is no longer a proper measure of what people really know about their pasts. In fact, there is good evidence to show that ordinary people are more interested in and know more about their pasts than ever before . . . shopping for that which best suits their particular sense of self at the moment, constructing out of a bewildering variety of materials, times, and places the multiple identities that are demanded of them in the post-national era (Gillis 1994: 17-18).

While Gillis emphasizes the construction of individual identities through memory work, the Popular Memory Group¹² explores memory as a "dimension of political practice," a cultural medium of class struggle (Popular Memory Group 1982: 205, emphasis deleted). They view "memory" as a term that refers not to the past but to the "past-present relation" (Popular Memory Group 1982: 211, emphasis deleted). They differentiate between academic history and history that is "more popular or politicized," expanding "the idea of historical production well beyond the limits of academic history writing" (Popular Memory Group 1982: 206-7).

12. The Popular Memory Group met at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1979 and 1980. "The group consisted of: Michael Bommes, Gary Clarke, Graham Dawson, Jacob Eichler, Thomas Fock, Richard Johnson, Cim Meyer, Rebecca O'Rourke, Rita Pakleppa, Hans-Erich Poser, Morton Skov-Carlsen, Anne Turley and Richard Wright. This piece was written by Richard Johnson with Graham Dawson" (Popular Memory Group 1982: 205).

They distinguish public representations of the past from private memory (which, they observe parenthetically, may also have social aspects) and they summarize some of the dimensions of the public production of history: state institutions such as the government and the military promulgate historical representations explicitly by decree or implicitly through tradition and ceremony. Institutions more loosely associated with the state including museums, national societies for history or departments of education promote versions of history through cultural policy or curricula. Members of local historical societies invest considerable amounts of time, energy and money in the discovery, creation and/or preservation of the past as well (Popular Memory Group 1982: 209-220).

But the Popular Memory Group brings its attention to the "knowledge of past and present . . . produced in the course of everyday life" (Popular Memory Group 1982: 210):

[t]here is a common sense of the past which, though it may lack consistency and explanatory force, none the less contains elements of good sense. Such knowledge may circulate, usually without amplification, in everyday talk and in personal comparisons and narratives. It may even be recorded in certain intimate cultural forms: letters, diaries, photograph albums and collections of things with past associations. It may be encapsulated in anecdotes that acquire the force and generality of myth. . . . Usually this history is held to the level of private remembrance. It is not only unrecorded, but actually silenced (Popular Memory Group 1982: 210).

Thus the Popular Memory Group suggests fertile ground for future inquiry, namely the historical, social processes through which different and competing representations of

the past (academic or dominant and popular or oppositional) emerge. Yet, rather than theorizing these processes, they focus on two "sets of relations":

the relation between dominant memory and oppositional forms across the whole public (including academic field) . . . [and] the relation between these public discourses in their contemporary state of play and the more privatized sense of the past which is generated within a lived culture (Popular Memory Group 1982: 211).

Ultimately, the Popular Memory Group suggests the need for a diachronic approach to the social production of representations of the past. But while they explicitly state that memory is "a profoundly complicated construction and a very active process" (Popular Memory Group 1982: 243), the static dichotomy of dominant versus oppositional memory, and the focus on "relations" as opposed to processes, confine the Popular Memory Group's inquiry to synchronic dimensions of memory.

In the preceding discussion I have identified some of the problems in social scientific literature on memory. In particular, the reliance on reductive typologies results in inadequate attention to memory's multiple dimensions. As a result, the mutual influence of types of memory (such as individual and social, or dominant and oppositional) often receives only parenthetical reference.

However, this literature does provide a wealth of insight into the many ways memories are produced and recalled, as well as the roles of memory and history in society. In addition, Hobsbawm, Nora and Gillis call

attention to the fact that representations of the past are themselves historical phenomena. Because they are motivated by, and occur in response to, social and cultural transformation, recollections of the past must be studied in history. In the next section I explore how certain influential anthropologists have brought history to ethnography.

Anthropology and History

Anthropologists have been concerned with history for more than a century though their conceptions of the past and approaches to it in method and theory have shifted dramatically over time. When Maitland made his oft-cited remark, "[m]y own belief is that by and by anthropology will have the choice between being history and being nothing" (Maitland 1968: 249), he was concluding a criticism of the speculative historical reconstruction undertaken by some of anthropology's founding fathers, who sought to determine evolutionary laws for social and cultural development. Though he does not cite particular works he reproaches assumptions such as "the history of the family can be written and . . . it will come out in some such form as this: We start with promiscuity, the next stage is 'mother right', the next 'Father right' and so forth" (Maitland 1968: 248, emphasis in original). Evans-Pritchard suggested that other anthropologists (diffusionists and structural-functionalists) should have

rebuked evolutionists "not for writing history, but for writing bad history." As it was, they "dropped the history and kept the pursuit of laws, which was often precisely what made the history bad" (Evans-Pritchard 1961: 2).

Eventually social structuralism was supplanted by entirely different structuralism, one based to a great extent on linguistic theory developed by de Saussure and applied to cultural analysis by Levi-Strauss, among others. Levi-Strauss' work has been criticized as a-historical and this perception has been exacerbated by a misinterpretation of his differentiation between "hot" and "cold" societies. For example, in introducing the contributions to an edited volume, Johnathan Hill wrote:

[h]ere we add fresh support to the global shadow of doubt that recent research has cast upon the theoretical myth that there are, or were, such things as "cold" societies without history of "hot" ones that have "progressed" beyond myth (Hill 1988: 4).¹³

In fact Levi-Strauss did not go so far as to claim that "cold" societies had no history. He stated:

[i]t is tedious as well as useless, in this connection, to amass arguments to prove that all societies are in history and change: that this is so is patent. But in getting embroiled in a superfluous demonstration, there is a risk of overlooking the fact that human societies react to this common condition in very different fashions (Levi-Strauss 1966: 234).

In differentiating "hot" from "cold" societies Levi-Strauss sought to categorize prevailing types of responses to

13. The essays in this volume explore some of the ways different South American, so-called "hot" and "cold" societies, absorb, accommodate and adjust to change in part through revisions to myth and historical narrative.

historical change, hot societies by "resolutely internalizing the historical process and making it the moving power of their development," cold societies by seeking "to annul the possible effects of historical factors on their equilibrium and continuity" (Levi Strauss 1966: 234). Thus Levi-Strauss did not abandon history but, rather, his apparently a-historical analysis focused instead on how systems of meaning change internally in order to maintain continuity in the face of external or internal pressures (such as war or demographic shifts).

Marshall Sahlins (1985) followed in the footsteps of Levi-Strauss but did not limit his historical perspective to study of the ways structures of meaning accommodate change. He introduced social action to the generation of meaning which he explored in particular historical contexts. He stressed that variations in the meaning of signifiers must be taken into consideration by actors who, in any given moment, must negotiate a range of possible choices as they interpret and respond to circumstances that are at once culturally patterned and historically unique.

Sahlins also moved beyond language by recognizing processes of signification in other domains. Material objects, people and even historical events take on multiple meanings, requiring active interpretation. In his well-known work Islands of History he provided this example:

Captain Cook appears as an ancestral god to Hawaiian priests, more like a divine warrior to the chiefs, and evidently something else and less to ordinary men and

women (Sahlins 1985: x).

Social action cannot be separated from social communication: "[s]ocial communication is as much an empirical risk as worldly reference" Sahlins wrote, and social communication implicates history in at least two ways: the local history of signification is entangled in each and every interpretation, and interpretation and actions take place in particular historical contexts (Sahlins 1985: x).

The literature just summarized frames this study as human memory cannot be conceived apart from processes of signification and symbolization. This is true not only when memories are expressed in language but also when they take other forms, for example physical posture or social practices. Because, as Sahlins makes clear, the meaning of symbols, and of symbolic social action, is context-specific, it must be understood in history.

In Europe and the People without History (Wolf 1982), as well as over a lifetime of teaching, research and publication, Eric Wolf restored history to anthropology in a way that is directly relevant to this study. He brought his attention to processes of accumulation, including shifts in the social organization of labor, and the production, appropriation and exercise of different forms of wealth, class and power. After the Wende eastern Germany was convulsed by radical changes in exactly these areas.

Schneider sums up the "central question" of Wolf's work as

how to account for the emergence and persistence of a system [capitalism] whose dynamically unfolding relations can catapult the social and cultural arrangements of everyday life into an abyss of uncertainty as if by an act of nature like an earthquake (Schneider 1995: 16).

An "abyss of uncertainty" aptly characterizes the year after the Wende, during which research for this study was undertaken.

Wolf's investigation of everyday responses to the expansion of capital springs from social history. He, and many of the scholars who followed in his footsteps, focuses on the lives and experiences of ordinary people struggling against, coping with and adapting to conditions created by forces far outside the domain of their control--and outside the domain of control of individuals in general.¹⁴ While he does not develop an analysis of memory in his work, Wolf does conclude that social movements such as peasant rebellions emerge not only out of a "disordered present" but also out of a "disordered past" (Wolf 1969: 301). Evans-Pritchard suggested how this could be when he wrote that history "forms part of the thought of living men" (Evans-Pritchard 1961: 6). His observation echoes themes of the previous section, namely that history and memory are shared by social groups and play important roles in the

14. See for example Kearney 1996, O'Brien and Roseberry (eds.) 1991, Roseberry 1989.

emergence and development of collective conflicts.

What I have not yet broached is exploration of the processes through which the past becomes represented as "histories." In an attempt to analyze these processes, anthropologists have integrated issues addressed by all of the aforementioned authors: the nature, emergence and transformation of symbolic codes, the significance of social action, the dynamics of social and cultural transformation, and the effects on culture and society of the consolidation and exercise of capital and power.

These are issues Comaroff and Comaroff take as central to their historical anthropology. They seek, through ethnography, to achieve a "historically situated mode of understanding historically situated contexts" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 8). They incorporate symbolization, signification and power into their definition of culture and strive to "grasp the constitution of complex social fields" for example by focusing on "the career of everyday goods, of valued things" (such as cattle in African pastoral societies) (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 14). They strive to find ways to connect such cultural "parts" to the "totalities" of social fields and submit the view that

all social fields are domains of 'contest'; that 'culture' is often a matter of argument, a confrontation of signs and practices along the fault lines of power: that it is possible to recover from the fragments, discords, and even from silences, the raw material with which to write imaginative sociologies of the past and the present (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 18).

The fault lines of power to which they refer may be cleavages resulting from historical, political and economic processes; the confrontation of signs and practices along these fault lines reflects the reciprocal influences of economics, politics, signification and social practice, while silences reflect the effects of hegemonic processes which cannot be articulated at least by those who are subject to them.

Here it is helpful to introduce a summary of the Comaroff's discussion of hegemony and ideology. First they differentiate between "agentive" and "nonagentive" power. Agentive power is direct control over the "production, circulation and consumption of signs and objects" while nonagentive power is expressed in everyday aspects of culture that seem to be "beyond human agency" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 28). These might include knowledge or social relationships taken so much for granted they are perceived as "normal" or "natural." Hegemony is the cultural process through which

that order of signs and material practices . . . come to be taken for granted as the natural, universal and true shape of social being . . . it consists of things that go without saying: things that, being axiomatic, are not normally the subject of explication or argument. This is why its power seems to be independent of human agency, to lie in what it silences, what it puts beyond the limits of the thinkable. It follows that it is seldom contested openly. Indeed, the moment that any set of values, meanings, and material forms comes to be explicitly negotiable, its hegemony is threatened: at that moment it becomes the subject of ideology or counter ideology (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 28-9).

In this passage Comaroff and Comaroff do not refer to the production of memory. It is the case, however, that insofar as it is social and cultural, memory is vulnerable to hegemonic and ideological processes. This will become particularly clear in Chapter One when I discuss the intensely political Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit (working-through of the past) that shapes remembering and forgetting in the former GDR.

For decades anthropologists have recognized the importance of viewing culture and society in history in two ways: the current condition of any society is an outcome of prior developments, and all societies are engaged in ongoing transformation. The work of Eric Wolf, among others, provided a theoretical framework for identifying and analyzing the forces and relationships that generate social change and the consequences thereof. At the same time, the resolution or transcendence of dichotomies (such as structure versus process, economics versus symbolization) has facilitated the integrated description and analysis of social actors in structure, power in systems of meaning (ideology and hegemony), and culture as a domain of conflict and discord rather than harmony and integration. It is with reference to these analytical frameworks that I claim that history (what occurred in the past) becomes histories (multiple and competing representations of the past) in history.

Let me untangle this confusing formulation. First,

there is "history" in the sense of the past, or anything and everything that occurred prior to the present. Secondly, "history" also refers to the processes through which social groups are created, transformed and, often, pitted against each other. In the ongoing present, individuals and groups continuously evaluate circumstances, remember, forget or artfully reinvent the past, producing histories that serve a variety of present and future needs.

As Ohnuki-Tierney writes, any historical project requires a "tripartite" approach: attention first to historical processes, second, to historiography and, third, to the "collective understanding and experience of history" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 18). These three elements are essential to the transformation of the past into histories, and all receive attention in the following pages.

Memory in History

In the preceding sections I have identified types of memory (incorporated and inscribed; personal, cognitive and habit; individual and social; dominant and oppositional). I have summarized some of the places where memory is "located" (landscapes, museums, oral histories) and observed that the past can be stored and recalled through a variety of media and technologies. I have stressed that representations of the past are influenced by social change and political struggle, and that they can be powerful and

dynamic resources for social actors (individuals or groups) who seek to establish identities, defend interests or expand spheres of influence particularly in times of considerable social change. I have emphasized the importance of being attentive to the specific historical contexts in which social struggles take place. And, finally, I have suggested that an ethnographically based study of memory must be premised by an understanding of culture in which social structure, historical processes, economics, politics, symbolic communication, hegemony and ideology are seen as dynamically interrelated.

Because I am concerned first, to situate conflicts over memory in their historical context and, second, to explore these conflicts as ongoing processes (not just relations), this thesis is a study of memory in history. For this reason I devote the next three chapters to description of the contexts of this study: debates over the past in Germany (a cultural context), Dresden (the geographic context), and the "ethnographic present" during which research for this study was conducted (the temporal context). Throughout this study I explore the ways memory is mobilized as part of the negotiation, appropriation and transformation of identities, values, relationships, and material and ideological property in the former GDR. Some of the specific questions this study addresses are:

What are some of the different ways the past is remembered and represented in Dresden?

In what ways are remembering and forgetting implicated in social relationships and cultural processes?

What aspects of the past, or issues in history, emerge as being most significant and why?

What ambiguities, contradictions and tensions can be discerned in remembering and forgetting in Dresden?

Research Methodology

Long-term ethnographic research is the method most suited to investigating the intricate and complex dynamics of memory in a period of radical social transformation, including political and moral controversy.

First, exploring memory and history in Dresden required that I explore the city. I spent many hours traveling around its landscape on foot and by bus and streetcar. I also visited major and minor cultural centers ranging from museums and archives to local cafes. And I observed and participated in numerous public events including urban planning sessions, neighborhood festivals, lectures, political demonstrations and commemorative ceremonies.

While these were useful and important activities, the core of ethnographic research lies in the interactions between anthropologist and respondents who often visit each other repeatedly over the course of a year or more. By seeking out respondents in a variety of settings including schools, churches, senior citizens' clubs, women's centers, political groups and unemployment offices, I was able to

speak with people who differed greatly in age, educational background, ideology and social class. Having respondents introduce me to their friends and acquaintances enabled me to gain access to individuals (often senior citizens) who went out only rarely or not at all.

Although approximately twelve men and women became my "key" or "primary" respondents, I conducted approximately one hundred semi-structured and unstructured interviews with an extremely heterogenous population sample exploring, in German, how these men and women recalled, interpreted and understood the past. Respondents ranged in age from approximately nine to ninety and were self-selected in that their cooperation was based on their willingness to talk with me about the GDR, the Wende, and the post-Wende transformation. As I sought to gain a broad perspective on attitudes and approaches to the past, and as I was not attempting to test hypotheses about memory that would have required producing a statistically valid sample of different segments of the population, I felt free to talk to just about anyone who would talk with me. A number of individuals flatly refused to have anything to do with me, answering my queries with comments like "What do you want with our poor old GDR anyway. It's over."

Some interviews were conducted in one session; others took place during numerous meetings over the course of the year I was in Dresden. In general, I sought to lead loosely structured conversations organized around half a

dozen simple questions. I asked respondents to describe what they did in the present (whether they studied, worked, were unemployed, etc.). I then shifted the conversation to the past: the families in which they had grown up, the occupations and political attitudes of their parents and grandparents. I asked them to describe their life course including personal and professional choices and experiences which stood out for them as significant or telling. Then I shifted the conversation to the Wende, asking respondents to describe the way they had experienced it and to speculate about the reasons why it came to pass. Finally I inquired about hopes and fears for the future.

I found that these simple questions provided stimulus for hours of conversation. Often, particularly when speaking with people senior to me in age or social status, I lost "control" of the interview in that respondents assumed the role of tutor and instructed me in what they felt I should know. In other cases I spoke with individuals with their spouses and, in some cases, children present so that the "interview" took the form of a lengthy discussion in which three or more people (including me) participated. In such cases respondents often jointly remembered the past and, at times, contradicted each other.

The Popular Memory Group (1982) provides useful guidelines for the analysis of oral sources. Among other observations they remark on the "paradoxical" representation of oral history as "past":

[w]hat is interesting about forms of oral-historical witness or autobiography [is] the whole way in which popular memories are constructed and reconstructed as part of a contemporary consciousness (Popular Memory Group 1982: 219).

In any analysis of oral histories one must give attention to the social relations of the time remembered, during and through which individuals lived and struggled, but one must also be cognizant of the present circumstances in which memories are recalled, transformed and communicated.

My belief that circumstances during the year after the Wende significantly influenced recollection is evidenced by the fact that I devote a chapter of this study to "the ethnographic present." Another circumstance that strongly influenced the course of interviewing was my status as a real, living, breathing American. I was about as "exotic" as one could be in Dresden after 1989. My presence in any home generated considerable excitement and clearly influenced the course of conversations in specific ways. For example, I brought with me to the GDR a host of assumptions and stereotypes, many of which I was unaware of, that only gradually fell away. I often inquired about life events by asking why a person "chose" to study engineering or move from one city to another. Over time it became clear that the idea of personal freedom and autonomy implied by the word "choose" had little relevance to the limited, highly structured opportunities available in the GDR and the need of individuals to balance a host of desires and aversions, along with the quantity and quality

of personal connections they could manipulate, to end up where they wished in life.

Because I stated honestly that my experience with the GDR dated only from 1989, many respondents assumed they should instruct me on aspects of GDR history, culture and society they considered important. In addition, occasionally I had to overcome a language deficit. Particularly when listening to speakers of the local dialect, or when respondents used technical or uncommon vocabulary, I had to interrupt to ask for explanations. This need had a certain benefit in that explanations usually provided far greater detail than would have been provided otherwise.

My relatively young age (thirty), educational level and gender also influenced the course of interviews, making me a more attractive conversational partner to some, problematic to others including one older man (in his sixties) who eyed me suspiciously, then commented, "You are too young to understand much of what I have to say to you."

While I attempted to offer respondents the opportunity to organize their narratives in almost any way they saw fit, my interests, reflected in the questions I asked, to a great extent structured the interviews I recorded. When discussing daily life in the GDR I probed with inquiries about whether or not respondents had relatives living in the FRG; why (if they were old enough) they had stayed in the GDR after the war--and after the Wende--instead of

going to the West. I explored attitudes toward Marxist-Leninist philosophy, the reasons why individuals had or had not participated in state youth groups, and so forth. My choice of such subjects reflects premises on my part about what the crucial activities and relationships of German and GDR history were.

Often respondents were very apprehensive about the questions I might ask and I attempted to put them at ease by allowing them to control the conversation as much as possible. I did not probe deeply when it became clear that a subject was off limits for one reason or another but, rather, I sought to recognize that resistance to recollection (or resistance to communicating recollections to me) was as significant as willing compliance.

One issue in oral history research is the veracity of memory. To what extent can oral testimony be relied upon as an accurate representation of the past? The Popular Memory Group rejects this approach to memory, claiming that the value of oral history for social science research requires an epistemological shift away from simplistic dichotomies of valid and invalid, true and erroneous. They take as a starting point the position that there exists an objective, knowable social and cultural world, but that the traditional methods of empirical research (observation followed by the formulation and testing of hypotheses) are not adequate to uncover either the nature or significance of this world. The social universe possesses subjective

dimensions and such perceptions and interpretations are "data" too. One must take these and the cultural and ideological processes of which they are a part "seriously" (Popular Memory Group 1982: 227). Thus the interpretation of oral history requires attention to "the conditions, structures, processes that have formed . . . [a] particular lived experience" (Popular Memory Group 1982: 229). I heed this advice in two ways. At times I call attention to the experiences that shaped recollections shared with me, and I provide numerous examples of memories that contradict each other in part because they were recalled by individuals who experienced quite different life conditions and processes.

I transformed German oral data into English written text by transcribing and translating all tapes myself, with the exception of one passage from the interview with Frau Vogel for which I sought the assistance of a professional German teacher (the passage included vocabulary stemming from Nazi bureaucracy-speak pronounced in a thick Saxon dialect). I abridged the interviews, reordered some sections and deleted my questions in order to create relatively seamless quotations. Those readers who have worked with oral history data in the past will recognize that there is a great difference between the narratives as presented here and as they were recorded on tape. However, I am confident that my revisions did not alter the meaning of the narratives and, because I am not attempting a detailed, technical analysis of speech or the production of

narrative, I do not feel my revisions in any way diminish the relevance and utility of these narratives to this study.

Finally, in addition to participant observation and interviewing, I studied historical literature on Dresden and the GDR as well as primary and secondary sources on the Wende in Dresden at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek and the Stadt- and Hauptstaatsarchiv. Library research was supplemented by the collection of a detailed file of clippings on relevant subjects from several local periodicals.

Data Collected

During field work I produced three quite different forms of writing: field notes of daily activities, transcribed interviews in simple question and answer format, and what I call "ethnographic excursions," that is stories of encounters or events that, due to their density, convey far more than I could report by writing in a straightforward, academic fashion. Each of these forms has its own place in this dissertation.

Field notes serve as the basis for my narrative. Respondents whose stories are told most completely, all of whom are identified by pseudonym, are listed and briefly described in Appendix I. Some are referred to by first name alone, others by first and last name, still others as "Herr" or "Frau" so-and-so. These differences reflect

varying degrees of social distance between myself and respondents. Ethnographic excursions include:

The Museum (Prologue)

(A home museum of daily life in the GDR.)

Ruins and Remains

(Mourning and commemoration in Dresden.)

Two Murders, Two Demonstrations

(A neo-Nazi demonstration and a demonstration against rightist violence.)

Frau "Esperanto"

(Conversation with a student and teacher of Esperanto)

The Kaffeefahrt ("Day Trip")

(A day trip by a group of senior citizens to a health presentation.)

Herr Beck's Report

(An eyewitness account of rioting at Dresden's main train station during October 1989.)

Organization of the Dissertation

After this introduction, "Ruins and Remains" describes the ritual commemoration of the anniversary of the bombing of Dresden. This excursion illustrates the multitude of mnemonic media and practices through which the past can be recalled. It also depicts the confluence of public commemoration and private recollection as well as ongoing tensions and disagreements in Dresden concerning the

meaning of the past.

Germany is well known for heated public discussions over the past. As these are an important cultural context for this study, they form the substance of Chapter One. The debates stem from specific eras in German history: the postwar period, the 1980s in West Germany, the life span of the GDR in the East, and the period after the Wende in the former GDR and unified Germany. Issues raised in these arguments frame present-day conflicts over the past in Dresden.

One of the concerns raised in Chapter One is the potential for new rightist or neo-Nazi movements in Germany. In "Two Murders, Two Demonstrations" I describe two quite different protest marches--one attended by neo-Nazis from all over Germany, the other attended by an eclectic group of Dresdners opposed to rightist violence. Powerful memories of fascism and anti-fascist protest are embedded in the social and physical symbolism of the marches.

In Chapter Two I introduce the geographic context for this study. I describe the chaos of Dresden's present-day landscape: baroque palaces, crumbling ruins from World War II, monotonous socialist plazas and the gleaming, perfect facades of well-financed capitalist enterprise evoke hundreds of years of German history. Ghosts from all of these eras jostle for prominence in the present, making Dresden's urban landscape the perfect physical metaphor for

one of the issues raised in this study, namely problems stemming from the coexistence of multiple histories in one place and time.

"Frau 'Esperanto'" describes how this environmental context inspires memory. As I ride through the city on one of Dresden's streetcars, a woman I had just met is roused by the landscape to remember the past and criticize the present.

In Chapter Three I outline the conditions of the peculiar year during which research for this study was undertaken. It is in this chapter that I introduce those respondents whose stories are told most fully in the balance of the thesis. I specify the ways they have been affected by German unification and summarize important memories from their family histories and early life experiences.

In "The Kaffeefahrt" (The Day Trip) I tell the story of a high-pressure sales presentation of West German health care products. This excursion illustrates the rupture of memory that occurred as a result of the Wende, and the resulting vulnerability of a group of senior citizens to a form of West German marketing new in the East.

In Chapter Four respondents remember daily life in the GDR by reflecting on choices, actions and inactions made during socialism. Their memories convey what "everyone knew" about socialism, or what the Popular Memory Group (1982) refers to as the "common sense" of a past world.

In "Herr Beck's Report" I describe a man's decision to write an eyewitness report on one night of rioting and violence at the Hauptbahnhof (main train station) during October 1989. This excursion depicts the ways both past experience and future considerations strongly influence present choices concerning recollection.

Chapter Five is concerned with the Wende, the "turn" that produced the confrontation with the past documented in this study. Respondents' narratives create a complex portrait of the events of the fall of 1989 as factors such as gender, generation, family history, educational level, employment history, political inclinations and religious views influence their interpretations of that time.

In Chapter Six I elaborate my claim that an understanding of the complexities of memory in history requires that memory be viewed as internally contradictory and inherently paradoxical. In this way it is possible to understand the ways people can respond to dramatic social change by generating and transforming recollections, representations and repressions of the past.

ETHNOGRAPHIC EXCURSION: RUINS AND REMAINS**February 13**

Because it is the anniversary of the bombing of Dresden, it seemed like today would be a good day to take a city sightseeing tour--this one concerning Jewish life in Dresden. These tours are offered periodically by the local society for Jewish history.¹ The advertisement I saw indicated that the tour was free and that interested people should gather on the small plaza in front of the Museum for Transportation. At the specified time I joined a group of roughly a dozen men and women who ranged so widely in age it was clear that some of us had lived through the Nazi period while others had learned about National Socialism only in school and through books, movies and talk. It was a grey day; later it would begin to rain.

Karin, our tour guide, told us that 1010 was the year when Jews were first mentioned in official documents as residents of the region. In 1263 the first synagogue was opened in Dresden and, until the bubonic plague swept through Saxony in the 14th century and Jews were burned as punishment/warning in the hysteria surrounding the epidemic, the Jewish community flourished. It is not clear whether or not Jews were also burned in Dresden but, if they were, it is likely that the burnings took place on

1. Significantly, most of the members of the society are not Jewish.

Shrove Tuesday in 1349.²

In 1430 most of the Jews were driven out of Saxony by Elector Friedrich II "der Sanftmütige" (The Mild); some stayed behind, going into hiding and using false names. By the 18th century the Jewish population had returned. The plaza on which we were standing then became a local market, as Jews who traveled to the trade fairs in Leipzig brought wares back to Dresden and sold them there. In 1751 the first Jewish cemetery was established in Dresden and in the next century Gottfried Semper, the architect who designed the magnificent Dresden Opera House, designed and built a new synagogue in Dresden which was opened in 1840.

The Semper synagogue was serving a community of roughly 5,500 Jews just before Hitler came into power in 1933. It was expertly torched on November 9, 1938 and burned thoroughly, leaving only smoking ruins. An old man in our group remembered that, after the Kristallnacht, he and his school classmates were brought to view the heaps of charred timbers and ash and told that was an example of the thoroughness with which Jews would be dealt with in the future. The Jewish community was charged the cost of cleaning up the synagogue site; Nazis filmed the removal of the ruins and this footage was used as a training film in

2. Reference to burnings in Dresden can be found in a variety of works such as Klemm (1834: 73-74) and Lindau (1859: 180), along with the caveat that specific documentary evidence of the brutal repression has not been found.

socialist Germany because, Karin said, it illustrated prototypical technical problems for that kind of demolition work.

A second and younger Jewish cemetery which surrounds the new synagogue built after World War II contains bitter reminders of how Jews were dealt with later. Headstones read: "Murdered by the Nazis" or "Died in Auschwitz" or "in Treblinka" or "in Theresienstadt" or "in Ravenbrück." Karin tells us that the graves probably contain no bodies but that the families of the deceased created and commemorated them just the same.

Because it is February 13th we talk about the bombing. The last transport for Jews out of Dresden was to take place on February 17th, four days later. There were, on February 13, 1945, roughly one hundred twenty Jews still living in Dresden. Some were known to the Nazis; some were in hiding; it is estimated that approximately seventy survived the firestorm that followed the incendiary, Allied attack. Then the chaos afterward enabled these seventy to survive the last days of Nazi Germany until the Russians arrived and "liberated" the city just months later.

There is a lot of music being performed tonight in commemoration of the destruction of Dresden: St. Matthew's Passion by Bach in the Opera House, Mozart's Requiem in the Kulturpalast, Stabat Mater by Dvorak in the Kreuzkirche. One of the local theaters is showing documentary films of old Dresden. An exhibit "Lebenszeichen--Dresden im

Luftkrieg 1944/45"³ was opened in the foyer of Dresden's city hall. A wreath was laid on the cemetery monument commemorating victims of the bombing. But perhaps the most important event is the ecumenical service in the Kreuzkirche at 9:00 pm.

At 9:00 pm the church was already crowded with people who had heard Stabat Mater beginning at 7:00 pm. Several hundred more waited outside in the cold, drizzly rain. The media arrived; cameramen, photographers and journalists pushed through the throng in order to get a shot of it from a position inside the church's atrium. Someone shouted out, "No special rights for the media!" but they got their shot, then pressed to the front of the church where they filmed and photographed parts of the ceremony.

While the Kreuzchor (Boys' Choir) sang the refrain "Holy Father God, Holy Powerful God, Holy Undying God, have Mercy upon Us" over and over, nine pairs of men and women took turns carrying simple, handmade wooden crosses to the front of the church and placing them on the bleachers that the choir had used during the concert that evening. Then each of the pairs spoke for a moment, following the same form.

"We mourn the senseless destruction of our beautiful city," the first pair intoned as the choir quieted to a

3. Lebenszeichen, literally "life sign." This refers to Red Cross post cards and telegrams sent out after bombings on which people could scribble a note to family or friends indicating simply that they had survived.

hum, "And we protest all senseless destruction that takes place in the name of war."

Two men mourned the death of refugees and foreigners who were murdered in Germany in the last year and protested the indifference of Germans who let the deaths take place. Two women mourned the loss of a friend who committed suicide because she could not bear the pressures of the new market economy--unemployment and debt--and then protested the social conditions that lead to such suicides.

After all the crosses were in place, each was decorated with colored ribbons to represent the unity of different faiths, a burning candle for peace, and a flower for hope. A man played the guitar and sang "Let Your Kingdom Come." One of several ministers read a passage from the Bible. Another spoke about having to accept the challenge of changing ourselves if we want to change the world; then the Priest of Dresden's Russian Orthodox Church concluded the ceremony with a blessing.

We were requested to leave the church in silence, accompanied by pealing bells. Then the thousands of men and women who had attended the ceremony drew candles out of their coat pockets. They lit the candles and, in an act of astonishing (for Germans) disregard for normal traffic regulations, blocked traffic as they crossed Wilsdrufferstraße and proceeded silently to the ruin of the Frauenkirche.

The Frauenkirche, built from 1726 to 1743 according to

a design by George Baehr, was once one of the world's best known and most beautiful baroque churches. Its massive stone dome commanded the Dresden skyline and is immortalized in 18th and 19th century portraits of the city. Now the church is an imposing mountain of rubble with two carefully scaffolded remnants of walls that is located in the center of the old city. In the hearts of Dresdners this ruin is the most prominent and painful reminder of the four separate attacks on February 13th, 14th and 15th that killed tens of thousands of men, women, children and refugees, and left Saxony's "Florence on the Elbe" a smoldering pile of bricks and ash.

The love of Dresdners for the Frauenkirche was epitomized in a lecture on the church given at a meeting of a local historical society by a slender, soft-spoken, grey-haired man who did not introduce himself. He was born in Dresden, he said, and is so devoted to the city it is as if he is married to it. During his talk he rapidly showed hundreds of slides, pausing only to point out details or tell a particularly poignant story. He showed views of the church from below and above. He had views from summer, winter, spring and fall, interiors, exteriors, architectural plans and cut-away sketches, as well as slides of Canaletto paintings in which the church's dome elegantly presides over the Dresden skyline.

As he showed the slides he related the history of the church designed by Baehr, completed in 1743 and totally

renovated in the 1920s and 1930s. He depicted the intense competition between 18th century architects for the right to design the church, related debates over whether the dome would be made out of stone or wood (stone won out), praised the decision by Elector August the Strong to financially support the church's completion, enumerated rumors about Baehr's mysterious death, which may have been a suicide and, finally, described the church's elaborate dedication in 1743.

Two hundred years later the church urgently required both aesthetic and structural restoration. Though the sandstone pillars which supported the heavy stone dome were strong, sufficient in number, and well-placed, they were nonetheless slowly sinking. The pillars had to be strengthened while the dome itself was bolstered by the replacement of some of its wooden beams with steel. It was characteristic of the church's prestige that the scaffolding constructed for the renovation of the Frauenkirche was itself a masterwork of the finest European experts.

The basement of the church also required special attention. For two centuries it had served as a tomb for several dozen prominent members of Dresden society. Opened during the restoration, the catacombs were discovered to be in excellent condition. Baehr had secretly included a natural ventilation system into his design of the basement and the cool, dry air which circulated there had mummified

the corpses. The discovery of the ventilation system was quite a surprise because Baehr had discussed it with no one and it appeared in no surviving plan of the church's design.

When the renovation was complete the wooden scaffolding was carefully removed. It made excellent firewood for Dresdners in those war years and local children came to wheel away pieces of it in their hand wagons. One of the "most charming" slides in the lecture, according to the gentleman speaker, is the one which shows several children, mostly girls, standing in front of the partially dismantled scaffolding with their scrap-loaded wagons.

The church was rededicated in an elaborate ceremony in 1944, only a year before the firestorm that destroyed Dresden. In February 1945 the church burned with the rest of the city; its design caused it to act like an enormous chimney, intensifying the already incredible heat of the fire which raged at about 2,000 degrees centigrade, melting the sandstone pillars which supported the dome. On February 15, 1945, two days after the first devastating Allied attack on Dresden, the church collapsed.

The tragedy of the destruction of Dresden is an essential, if difficult, part of the city's identity. It cannot be forgotten, it may not be forgotten, as long as the people who survived that night still live and as long as the ruins, the visible reminders, continue to stand.

But the old people will die someday and now the ruins will not be allowed to remain. Recently there have been months of significant public debate on whether or not the Frauenkirche should be rebuilt. Opponents and proponents of the reconstruction have made speeches, distributed literature and collected signatures on petitions. Finally the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony concluded that the Frauenkirche will stand again.

The decision to rebuild is not new. Already in 1945, after Dresden's fires were finally extinguished, the church's congregation resolved that they would not forsake the Frauenkirche. As rubble was slowly removed during the general clean-up after the bombing, stones from the church were carefully numbered so that, as much as possible, in the reconstruction, they could be restored to their original positions. Unfortunately, in the intervening years, more than half of the stones originally saved from the church were appropriated by the state and used for other purposes, but at least forty percent remain. These stones, fired red and charred black from the fire which burned almost half a century ago, will be incorporated into the new church; it will have a mottled appearance and anyone who looks at it will see the old and the new Frauenkirche simultaneously. A permanent exhibit on the history of the destruction and reconstruction of Dresden and the church will be located in one of the church's wings.

The new Frauenkirche will be a replica of the old, down to the types of materials used in its construction and the technology used to rebuild it. This is partly why the project will take more than a decade and be very expensive. Even before construction can begin, the present mountain of rubble has to be carefully excavated; recovered stones have to be sorted, catalogued and prepared for use; new materials have to be purchased; craftsmen have to be located and employed and apprentices have to be trained in archaic construction techniques. Despite the fact that Dresdners remain divided over whether or not the project should be undertaken at all, when excavators recovered the battered, rusted cross that used to crown the church's dome, word traveled so quickly that by the end of the day hundreds of Dresdners had gathered in jubilation at the site (Brand 1993).

Estimates of the cost for the reconstruction range between 160 and 250 million DM (Deutsche Marks). One of the efforts to raise money paradoxically includes the sale of a commemorative watch: a symbol of the passage of time and therefore also of the passage of memory. While the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche is an attempt to restore not only the church itself but also Dresden's renown as a city of stunning baroque beauty, it will, at the same time, obliterate the most potent symbol of World War II that remains in Dresden. Despite the plan to incorporate charred remains of the old church into the new one, despite

the permanent exhibit on the destruction of Dresden which will be located inside the church, the erasure of the ruin will push aside memories of the war held in the hearts and minds of Dresdners.

The city of Dresden will finance ten percent of the cost of the reconstruction. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony will contribute substantially and an enormous sum must be raised from private donors. Many Dresdners hope that wealthy Americans and English will make contributions as well.

"They haven't worked through their past either," the gentleman speaker claimed, referring to the fact that in London that summer [1992], the Queen Mother would dedicate a controversial monument to "Bomber" Harris, the British Air Force Commander who led the attack on Dresden. "The Allies brutally fire-bombed a city of children and refugees--Germans aren't the only criminals of World War II!" he concluded, to cheers and applause from the audience.

Tonight, on the anniversary of the bombing, thousands of Dresdners press their burning candles into molten wax dripped on the rocks of the ruin. Some lay roses, tulips and daffodils on the ruin, and some softly sing "Dona nobis pacem."

Slowly, somewhat hypnotized by the candlelight, the silence and the singing, I became aware of a shrill voice coming from the other side of the rubble. Curious, I moved

through the crowd until I saw a tiny, stooped-over old woman in a black coat with steel grey hair gone wild in the mist.

"I was there!" she screamed, "I was there in forty-five! Right on top of the people, they dropped the bombs, on top of the people who were trying to swim into the Elbe to escape the fire! So many people died on that night! I saw it! I was there!" A tall man in his fifties approached the woman and embraced her. She began to sob.

Another woman came up to her and said softly, "I know, I was here too, I saw it too. I was five and a half years old and I lived over there," she said, pointing to a street that doesn't exist any more. "I lived over there and I saw it too."

It grew late. It began to rain again. No one was singing anymore. Young people recognized friends in the crowd, greeted one another and decided to go for a beer. Slowly people dispersed from the ruin. The old woman was still sobbing, "My friends, my school friends, so many dear people . . ." I walked past the statue of Martin Luther that stands before the ruin and thought about what Karin had told us that morning, that there are only 25 to 30 Jewish people living in Dresden today. I thought it would have been a good idea if someone had nailed a charred Star of David on a cross and placed it on the bleachers with the other crosses during the church ceremony and said, "We mourn the Dead and protest the Forgetting."

Later that night I returned to the ruin alone. A handful of West Germans were talking quietly at its base. The remains of the Frauenkirche were covered with rows of burning candles wedged into every nook and cranny of the rocks, stuck onto the ground, hundreds, thousands of candles, mostly white, some red, some yellow. The melted wax dripped down, shaped by the gentle wind into turned and twisted shapes. One old man moved slowly along the ruin, trimming wax away from some of the candles, re-lighting others that had gone out. I took pictures and more pictures and more.

After a while the man came up to me, tapped me on the shoulder and said politely, "Excuse me, may I bother you for a moment?" He had been in Dresden during the bombing in 1945, he explained, and he wanted a picture to show that he had been at the ruin tonight. He had asked a newspaper photographer to take a picture of him but the photographer had refused. "He wouldn't indulge an old man who wanted a picture," he explained. "Would you?" I said of course, but that I had only slide film in my camera and besides, I was concerned that the pictures wouldn't come out at all because, except for the candles, there was so little light.

"I have a slide projector," the man countered. "And if they don't come out, well . . ." he shrugged his shoulders.

"Stand close to the candles," I instructed him, "lean in."

The slides did come out very dark, but it is possible to discern the outline of an old man's wrinkled face as he carefully and lovingly tends a memorial to the sorrowful past.

CHAPTER ONE: "WORKING THROUGH THE PAST" IN GERMANY

Introduction

In "The Frauenkirche" memory and history are represented in many ways including the chronology of events narrated by the tour guide, empty graves, absent records (concerning the burning of Jews in medieval Dresden), public ritual, the ruin itself, the psychotic break experienced by the woman at the ruin, and a man's desire to have a picture from that night. These narratives, places and activities reflect multiple, often incomplete and contradictory histories. The Elector who drove the Jews out of Saxony is remembered as "mild" or "kind." The commemorative ritual at the church contained no references to the suffering of victims of National Socialism. Some Germans demand that the Americans and the British also shoulder a portion of the burden of the history of World War II.

The past is subject to considerable dispute not just in Dresden but throughout Germany. While this is the case in other parts of the world as well, Germany is particularly well known for conspicuous public battles over historical representation and interpretation. An overview of these battles discloses issues at stake in memory and history in Germany. In addition, these debates over the past reflect the influence of present social, political and economic contexts, as well as the ways issues previously raised in historical arguments are reiterated, echoed and

modified in subsequent arguments.

The Postwar Period

The uniquely German expression "die Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit" (the working through of the past) can be traced back at least as far as 1959 when Theodor Adorno gave a lecture on the subject.¹ Of course the "past" Adorno referred to in 1959 was 1933-1945, the period of National Socialism and World War II. Because debates during the postwar period on National Socialism anticipated many of the issues raised after 1989 about the GDR, and because Adorno's essay remains particularly germane, it is worth discussing in some detail.

At the most superficial level, Adorno's essay illustrates the confusing and complex nature of debates on the past in Germany if only by virtue of the fact that he weaves, without skipping a beat, through topics ranging from the psychology of individuals to the group psychology of Germans, the particular nature of Nazi society, political, economic and social theory, and the intricate machinations of international hostilities and alliances. At the conclusion of the essay one feels enlightened, as if stimulated by an intellect of the highest caliber, yet profoundly bewildered.

In answer to the question posed by the title of his

1. The lecture was published subsequently as an essay and has been translated (Adorno 1986).

essay, "What does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?" (the translation of "die Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit" favored by the editors), Adorno suggests "wiping [the past] from memory." That is, "a serious working through of the past" is not part of the project. The desire to repress or forget the Nazi era stems from a defense against the guilt provoked by the memory of its horror.

This train of thought leads Adorno into a discussion of the guilt complex associated with the crimes of National Socialism. The complex is evidenced by neurotic behavior:

defensive gestures when one isn't attacked, massive affect in situations that do not fully warrant it; lack of affect in the face of the most serious matters; and often simply a repression of what was known or half-known (Adorno 1986: 116).

Adorno also associates denial, delusion and irrational rationalizations² with this guilt-complex.

He points out that the effort to wipe National Socialism from memory has a concrete end, namely the rehabilitation of (West) Germany in the eyes of the world and that the effort is, then, more a conscious than an unconscious project. A crucial aspect of West Germany's rehabilitation is the establishment of a successful democracy based on an expanding capitalist economy. This is a difficult project for Germans because they lack "strong emotional connections" to democracy despite the

2. For example, what he refers to as the "'settling of accounts' about guilt, as if Dresden made up for Auschwitz" (Adorno 1986: 116).

fact that, Adorno claims, National Socialism actually paved the way for German democracy by destroying the Junker "caste" (Adorno 1986: 118).

The claim made by some Germans that they are not yet ready for democracy actually discloses their capability for sophisticated political manipulation. This "ideology of immaturity" illustrates the fact that Germans feel powerless before forces such as those of international politics--or they pretend to be powerless in order to escape personal responsibility. Thus Adorno illustrates a component of the authoritarian personality: the weak ego. Other components include

thinking within the paradigm of power-powerlessness; rigidity and the inability to react; conventionality; conformist behavior [and] lack of self-reflection . . . (Adorno 1986: 120).

The Germans' weak egos necessitate identification with "large collectivities whose protection they seek" (Adorno 1986: 120). For this reason the encompassing order and regimentation of National Socialism satisfied German cravings for reassurance and security.

Adorno observes that, according to Freud, the breakdown of collective identification (in this case with Nazism) normally results in panic. The absence of psychological panic after World War II indicates that, while Germany was defeated, individuals did not acknowledge that loss at a personal, psychological level. Instead, the Germans' collective identification with National Socialism

continued to smolder, albeit secretly. Adorno states, "[t]his is the social-psychological relevance of the talk about an unmastered past" (Adorno 1986: 122).

Presumably this remark refers to the essay's introductory statement that "working through the past" is actually a euphemism for wiping it from memory. The failure to work through the past is symptomatic of denial--denial of the fact that National Socialism is over and of the fact that it was depraved to an unprecedented degree and Germans should feel ashamed for having been a part of it.

Not only are Germans unable to come to terms with the past but they are uncomfortable with the present as well. The real conditions of democratic society, in which individuals are vulnerable to the vicissitudes of powerful forces such as the market economy, contradict the ideology of democracy which extols the effectiveness of autonomous individuals in the political sphere. At some level West Germans know that their post-war economic "miracle" could vanish as rapidly as it materialized.

"Even in the midst of prosperity . . . ," Adorno wrote, "most people, it seems, see themselves as potentially jobless, as welfare recipients." The discontent Germans have with the present could be used at any time as a basis for a renewal of "a disastrous politics" (Adorno 1986: 123).

The lasting influence of Adorno's insight can be seen

in the fact that many of the concerns he raised were echoed three decades later in debates on the former GDR. These include guilt and denial, the nature of the crimes of the GDR state, outcomes of the transition to democracy and the market economy, and the attempt to understand the relationship of individuals to their pasts through the use of psychological models. A discussion of the continuing relevance of these follows in the section "History and Memory in the Unified Germany."

The Historikerstreit (Historians' Controversy)

In 1959 Theodor Adorno bemoaned the fact that West Germans were failing to come to terms with their Nazi past. In the 1980s, almost twenty-five years later, intense controversy over the events and significance of National Socialism made clear the fact that West Germans were still far from done with this period of their history.³

The debates that became known as the Historikerstreit were initiated when Ernst Nolte set forth the contentious position that the Third Reich, and particularly the Holocaust, should not be studied in historical isolation.⁴

3. The articles, essays and letters-to-the-editor which constituted the debate are collected and translated in Knowlton and Cates 1993. In addition, major contributions to the Historikerstreit are summarized and discussed by Bartov 1992, Eley 1988, Evans 1987, Kershaw 1989 and Maier 1988.

4. Nolte 1993a and 1993b. Nolte also added that condemnation of the Third Reich should not be motivated by a cynical desire to criticize postwar West Germany, and

It must be possible or it may even be necessary, Nolte wrote, to ask questions which would situate the Holocaust in the context of events which preceded and followed it. In particular, he hypothesized that the Nazis might have created Auschwitz in order to stave off a possible "Asiatic" threat from the East, and that the Nazi persecution of Jews was preluded, in both theory and practice, by Bolshevik class murder. Yet Nolte also clearly stated that

[t]here are some precedents and parallels to the concentration camps. . . . But the extermination of several million European Jews--and also of many Slavs, mentally ill, and Gypsies--is, judged by its motivation and its execution, without precedent (Nolte 1993a: 2).

Despite this qualification, Nolte's essays incited scathing responses accusing him, and others, of "apologetic tendencies in German history writing" (Habermas 1993a) of denying the "singular aspect of National-Socialist crimes" (Jäckel 1993) of "relativizing" those crimes (Kocka 1993 and Mommsen 1993b) and of perpetrating a "new Auschwitz lie."⁵ One of Nolte's primary accusers was Jürgen Habermas, who claimed that Nolte, along with historian Andreas Hillgruber⁶, "would like to place revisionist

that the Third Reich should not be "demonized."

5. Augstein 1993. "Auschwitz lie" (Auschwitzlüge) is, in Germany, understood to be the position that there was no Holocaust and claims to the contrary are propaganda disseminated by a world-wide Jewish conspiracy.

6. Hillgruber had recently published a controversial book (Hillgruber 1986).

history in the service of a nationalist renovation of conventional identity" (Habermas 1993a: 42). Dozens of prominent academics and intellectuals responded to Nolte and Habermas with attacks and counterattacks, the intensity of which made it clear that fundamental issues concerning the interpretation of National Socialism in German history were far from resolved. However the insulting and slanderous character of many of the contributions, which reveal profound professional acrimony, also show that there was much more at stake in the debate than historical analysis and interpretation.

Issues raised included who had the right to participate in the arguments: Jürgen Habermas, a philosopher, was scorned as an "outsider" whose "polemic" "should be rejected as an unwelcome denunciation" (Broszat 1993: 125). The professional conduct of participants was criticized and again Habermas bore the brunt of the attack.⁷ The classification of participants in the debate into the "fossilized categories" of "conservatives versus progressives, or German national versus liberal historians"

7. Klaus Hildebrand accused Habermas of failing to "set [himself] above desire and aversion and [failing] to be committed to objectivity" (Hildebrand 1993: 50) while Michael Stürmer charged Habermas with combining "sloppy research with patched-together quotes" (Stürmer 1993: 61). Habermas replied with the counter-accusation that Hildebrand criticized him in a venue (a newspaper different from the one in which Habermas had originally published) that did not provide Habermas with a fair hearing (Habermas 1993b: 58), and that Habermas' accusers were as sloppy in their research on his failings as they claimed Habermas had been in his work (Habermas 1993c: 260).

was attacked as well.⁸ These, along with other foils employed in the essays, suggest that translating "Historikerstreit" with relatively neutral terms such as "debate" or "controversy" is far from adequate-- "Historians' melee" might be better. In fact, the rancor of the debate recalls the passage cited above in which Adorno listed symptoms of neurotic behavior including "massive affect in situations that do not fully warrant it." In this case, the massive affect unfortunately makes it very difficult to discern the substance of the debate.

Certainly one of the questions was whether or not referring to the Holocaust in the context of other cases of attempted genocide served as an apology for Germany. Joachim Fest, co-publisher of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, firmly concluded that it did not. "No one else's crimes diminish one's own," he wrote, "and no murderer has ever been able to exculpate himself by referring to another murderer" (Fest 1993: 70).

Another matter was identifying the roots of the debate as well as the reasons for the recent, intense concern with history in Germany. Jürgen Kocka observed that a significant motivation was the "search for aids to establishing national identity . . . and building a

8. Fest 1993: 70, though even membership in these categories is subject to contention. Again attacking Habermas, Hildebrand refers to his "ridiculous mischaracterization" of historian Jürgen Kocka as a "liberal" (Hildebrand 1993: 50).

consensus" (Kocka 1993: 85). In a complex and comprehensive response Hans Mommsen similarly remarked that the "transmission of history" is becoming "the object of fundamental controversies" as the period of postwar growth in West Germany comes to a close. There is a legitimization crisis in West Germany's political system and therefore a crisis in the understanding of politics itself (Mommsen 1993a: 101). Because Mommsen's analysis of the politics of historical controversy in West Germany anticipated subsequent problems with history after German unification, it is worth looking more closely at his position.⁹

Mommsen disputed a claim made by historian Michael Stürmer that there is a "loss of history" in the Federal Republic. On the contrary, he asserted, interest in history has never been so great. There was no "zero hour" after World War II, and therefore no "epochal new beginning" for German history (Mommsen 1993a: 102). His analysis of the debate, then, explored the continuum of political history in Germany from before the Weimar period up to the present day, focusing primarily on the changing configurations and alliances of the conservative Right.

It was the Right, Mommsen claimed, which bracketed the period of National Socialism out of German history, viewing that period as aberrant and developing the theory of "total dictatorship" to support its exclusion. By doing so they

9. Though Mommsen's essay was published in English translation in 1993 it appeared in German in 1986.

placed blame for Nazism (tellingly re-named "Hitlerism") on the passivity of the German people, on their subjugation by a charismatic leader and their willingness to be manipulated by him. In this fashion, the Right pardoned the "the predominantly conservatively predisposed functionary elite" whose dutiful service sustained the regime (Mommsen 1993a: 103-4). This pardon was evident, in part, in the failure to aggressively prosecute war crimes and criminals after 1945, that is until foreign pressure prevailed.

The theory of total dictatorship served to explain not only National Socialism but also Communism. This met

the need in the cold war to gain a stalwart ideological platform that could not only decorate itself with the epithet "anti-Fascist" but could also rule out and criminalize leftist efforts (Mommsen 1993a: 103).

The Right's staunch anti-Bolshevism necessitated rejection of the GDR, culminating in West Germany's claim to be the only authentic German state while the GDR symbolized the "anti-cliche" to the "liberal-democratic order" (Mommsen 1993a: 104). During this time, up until the 1960s, the Federal Republic's self-understanding stemmed primarily from long-term economic growth. Questions of historical legitimacy were subordinated to the project of economic development--until the critical Left emerged in the 1960s. Then, after the 1982 success of Helmut Kohl and the Christian Democratic Union, the new, conservative national government had difficulty developing a long-term outlook

that would provide "an ideological cloak for advancing the politics of naked self-interest" (Mommsen 1993a: 105). To do so would require a historical perspective; concurrently the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II (in 1985) brought external pressure to bear on Germany's struggle with history.

For these reasons, among others, Germans sought to reconceptualize the Nazi period from 1933 to 1945 as a "tragic but, in the face of Bolshevik aggression, understandable entanglement" (Mommsen 1993a: 106). According to Mommsen, the "spectacle" at Bitburg, when American President Ronald Reagan, accompanied by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, laid a wreath at a cemetery in which former SS soldiers were buried, was supposed to serve not only as a ritual reconciliation of former enemies but also as a symbol of the readiness of the United States and Germany to struggle together against the Communist world threat.¹⁰

Hence in West Germany, just before 1989, some of the complex, difficult and unresolved controversies over history included the singularity of the Holocaust; the motivations of ordinary Germans and the German state before and during World War II; the question of whether or not Germans and Germany have been or ever can be exculpated for the horrors of that time; the relationship between

10. For additional perspectives on the significance of Bitburg see Hartman (ed.) 1986, Maier 1988 and Morris 1995.

political transformation, economic crisis and interest in history; the influence of future outlooks on interpretations of the past; the stance of West Germany vis-à-vis the (communist) East as well as the (capitalist) West; and, not the least, who has the right to narrate, interpret and judge history.

History in the German Democratic Republic

As is the case with other socialist societies, in the GDR the production of cultural knowledge such as history was controlled by the SED toward many ends, one of which was the legitimation of the state. History in the GDR avowed one truth: the GDR was heir to all humanistic and progressive trends in German history and socialism was foreordained by laws of social and economic evolution. These laws guaranteed the inevitable victory of the working class led by the Party: "The Socialist Unity Party is the conscious and organized vanguard of the working class and the working people of the socialist German Democratic Republic," begins the Party's history of itself (Kommission des Politbüros des ZK der SED 1978: 5). The paragraph continues:

Over a long course, in difficult but successful battles, the Party has achieved greatness in order to realize the historical mission of the working class, founded by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, in our land as well. . . . To establish communist society--this is the goal of the Party (Kommission des Politbüros des ZK der SED 1978: 5).

The emphasis on the role of the GDR in bringing

communism to fruition was expressed in the dominant trend in GDR historiography, the "Werden und Wachsen" (Becoming and Growing) of the GDR. Wolfgang Küttler, who argues for the continuing validity of Marxist perspectives in history, nonetheless criticizes Marxist history in the GDR (Küttler 1992). He identifies numerous errors in theory, method, perspective and analysis including the unquestioning acceptance of the premise that the world was en route to a revolutionary upheaval brought about by contradictions internal to capitalism, and that communism would inevitably follow that upheaval. Some of the prevailing (and confining) corollaries to this premise included extending an undifferentiated black-and-white portrayal of capitalism and socialism to West and East Germany; the practically "ritualized" glorification of the rise of the GDR as the "peak and culmination of the entirety of German history"; and, in its international perspectives, the embrace of the view that socialism and imperialism were absolutely contrasted (Küttler 1992: 70).

These historical perspectives were

strongly oriented toward political-ideological and consciousness-raising functions. . . . At the basis of this mechanism was the Stalinist idea that the transition to socialism and then to communism had to be achieved--following objective laws, and under the leadership of the working class and its Marxist-Leninist Party--by means of a dictatorship of education and development (Badstübner 1991: 81).

The dictatorship of education and development reflected autocratic elements in GDR culture and society.

These are exemplified in an observation by Rüdiger Thomas, who wrote:

As late as May 1989 Hanna Wolf, until 1983 director of the SED's Party College, put forth in Neues Deutschland this dogmatic pronouncement against the entreaty to critically engage herself with the history of Stalinism: "Anti-communists are always wrong, we, the communists, despite some failures and defeats, are always right" (Thomas 1992: 80).

It was through history that the SED granted itself the mandate to rule and endowed itself with this distinction: not only were its members heir to great communist leaders, but they traced their ancestry back to the anti-fascist resistance as well. This was one of the bases for their self-differentiation from the Feind (enemy)--the West--which was viewed as a direct descendant of Nazi and capitalist fascists. In a brief but fascinating analysis, Sigrid Meuschel explores the relationship between the Party's anti-fascist claims and its stalinistic elements. In fact she titles her essay "Antifascist stalinism" (Meuschel 1992).

Meuschel begins by reproducing a quotation from (East German novelist) Christa Wolf in which Wolf explains the anti-fascist values she and other members of her generation held. They identified so strongly with the emerging, socialist GDR because they had intensively confronted their fascist past in the postwar period, Wolf claims, more so than was done in West Germany. This had a strong effect on society as a whole, Wolf continues, because they saw no other alternative. Meuschel explores what she calls this

"Alternativlosigkeit" (lack of an alternative) by linking it first to the rejection of democracy.

Democracy was understood only as a cover for capitalism which would continue its relentless cycle of crisis and war until an entirely different, "harmonious, conflict-free society, the 'political-moral unity of the people'" emerged (Meuschel 1992: 164). Anti-fascism incorporated the desire for this society--but from a specific perspective. The fascism opposed by "anti-fascists" in the GDR was not only National Socialism but more generally the "dictatorship of the most reactionary part of imperialistic finance capitalism" that sought to defeat the communist workers' movement through terror and war (Meuschel 1992: 165). Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust were forgotten in this formulation and, therefore, the "singularity of Nazism and its political-cultural roots in Germany" were not taken into consideration (Meuschel 1992: 165). In this way the fascism despised by the GDR became a western phenomenon in general, a byproduct of capitalism and its superficial, cosmetic democracy.

Democracy in the GDR would be a true democracy but, before the "people" could rule themselves, the basis for a just and equal society had to be established. This required not only reforming former Nazi perpetrators and supporters but also enlightening the entire populace. The quickest and most efficient means to this end would be to bring the populace under the domination of the working

class and "its" Party.

All the measures bound up with this goal in the post-war era counted as anti-fascist, even though they were imposed with increasingly terroristic methods and because they created a basis for the power of the Party. In this way the Party became stalinized (Meuschel 1992: 165).

Such measures included appropriating property from landowners and private enterprises. As a result, former Nazis were dislodged from positions of power and influence as were many others who had neither resisted nor actively supported the Nazis. Such actions led to the end of middle-class control over private property in the GDR and to the dominance of Party cadres in administration and bureaucracy. Opportunities for upward mobility for previously disadvantaged classes fed the system's legitimation and strengthened the Party's dominance not only in economic sectors but also in politics and society. This domination was expressed in part through control over education, the arts and associations. In this way, Meuschel concludes, the "double motif of anti-fascism and stalinism . . . commandeered society and robbed it of any autonomy" (Meuschel 1992: 166).

It is in part because the GDR was built through stalinistic terror that East Germans are accused of having failed to work through their Nazi past--presumably if they had they would have had the sense to resist a second dictatorship, this a dictatorship of the proletariat. But the GDR's narrowly conceived, aggressively promulgated

anti-fascism had faults other than the totalizing conflation of capitalism, democracy, imperialism, fascism, terror and war. Wilfried Schubarth, once a member of the GDR's Central Institute for Research on Youth, states that anti-fascism in the GDR was so instrumentalized, monopolistic and ritualized that it became discredited.

The aggressive promulgation of the myth of a zero hour at the end of the war, at which time the "victors of history" established the GDR in the "shelter (Hort) of anti-fascism," thereby effecting a "turning point in the history of the German people," eventually caused many East Germans to turn a deaf ear to history (Schubarth 1992: 174).

Additionally the population of the GDR became saturated ideologically through compulsory activities such as visiting concentration camps or participating in meetings with resistance fighters.¹¹ Such activities became viewed as

obligatory exercises, rituals which were celebrated only because they were scheduled on the lesson plan or calendar. Particularly in the '80s such events and educational measures were, in part, even counter-productive . . . (Schubarth 1992: 174).

More specifically, Schubarth continues, anti-fascist

11. Visits to concentration camps did not contradict the GDR's neglect of the Holocaust. At Buchenwald, one of the camps frequently visited by Saxon youth groups, the museum exhibit and accompanying film stressed the experiences of communists and socialists imprisoned there. The murder of Ernst Thälmann (communist party leader) was recalled by a plaque outside the cell where he was detained, while the liberation of the camp was portrayed as the result of a courageous uprising by organized socialist prisoners against the fascist guards.

curricula for school children and workers lacked crucial elements such as study of the ways ordinary Germans accommodated the dictatorship, the experiences of soldiers, opportunities for advancement in Nazi Germany available to functionaries as well as specialists in intellectual and technical fields and, finally, the charismatic power of Hitler with which he easily seduced the German people (Schubarth 1992: 175).

Schubarth claims that the one-sided portrayal of fascists as agents of capitalism and fascism as a regime of terror, demagoguery and racial hatred actually led school children to view the German people as victims and to sympathize with them. This was enhanced when the blame for fascism was placed overwhelmingly on the economic crisis of the Weimar era. In interviews with GDR youth in the late 1980s, young people portrayed Hitler as a savior and the people who followed him were held to be exonerated by their desperation (Schubarth 1992: 176).

As history is not represented solely by books and educational curricula, the GDR's view of the past was reflected in numerous areas of daily life as well. One could not travel anywhere in the GDR without encountering with monuments to "liberation by the Red Army, to persecution and resistance, and to fascist crimes" (Kleßmann 1993: 196). The Berlin Wall was referred to in official statements as "the anti-fascist protection wall"; streets, bridges, plazas and even cities bore the names of

socialists, communists and members of the resistance. Statues commemorated Marx, Lenin and other prominent figures of socialist history while plaques mounted on city streets and buildings recalled the achievements of less celebrated heroes of socialism and the resistance. Museum exhibitions and displays at memorial sites such as Buchenwald recounted the (victorious) struggle of workers against Nazis and other enemies of socialism.¹² Parades, public celebrations, holidays and anniversaries of tragedies such as the bombing of Dresden all explicitly or implicitly conveyed similar historical lessons through the display and use of visual symbols, rhetoric in speeches and the organized participation of masses of cheering, chanting students and workers (compare Nothnagle 1993).

As one well-known maxim maintains, in socialist societies the future was never in question, rather it was the past which kept changing according to the requirements of the present. Streets were renamed, plaques removed and exhibitions revised when required by new circumstances such as the downfall of Stalin's reputation. These activities regarding the past not only kept historians employed, but provided numerous opportunities for bureaucrats, union leaders, students and others to garner resources, extend their influence and, ultimately, promote themselves in

12. Though characteristically through a very selective and instrumentalized interpretation of actual events. See for example Nothnagle 1993.

intensely political milieus where enthusiastic participation often counted far more than qualification and performance (compare Verdery 1991: 236-8).

Historical debate in western societies can, for the most part, take place freely in public fora as the nation-state's legitimation is located in parliamentary procedure and public consent demonstrated through voluntary political participation. In state socialist societies legitimation (which Terrill refers to as "quasi-legitimation"¹³) is founded on a combination of "'threats of punishment and promises of rewards'" (Pakulski quoted in Terrill 1994: 353). The "right" of the state to punish and reward is granted by history; disagreement with official historical accounts and interpretation is tantamount to treason. For this reason there is an additional dynamic in debates over the past in state-socialist societies, one created by the existence of what Watson variously refers to as "unauthorized representations," "alternative remembrance" and "unsanctioned remembrance" (Watson 1994: 2). These are histories, or versions of the past, which contradict officially sanctioned accounts or at least provide alternative points of view.

In the GDR alternative remembrances existed in a variety of forms--personal memory, underground texts,

13. Terrill summarizes a position taken by Pakulski (1986) who argues that the Weberian notion of legitimation is not applicable to Soviet-style societies. See Terrill 1994: 352-3 and also Knabe 1991.

clandestine art--and they competed with official versions of history to different extents, determined in part by the degree of risk an individual or group was willing to assume. These unofficial histories were responsible for creating cognitive dissonance in individuals who struggled to come to terms with competing realities. They contributed to the production and maintenance of careful boundaries between public and private discourse, engendering profound social alienation in many East Germans. And as historical understanding engenders identity, norms and values which, in turn, shape everyday conscious and unconscious choices, official and unofficial versions of the past contributed to conflicts for many individuals. In some cases these conflicts resulted in significant personal, social and political problems for people of all ages.

History and Memory in the Unified Germany

Issues in history and memory in Germany raised during the postwar period, in the Historikerstreit and in the GDR are now inextricably entangled in encounters with the past in the former GDR (or eastern Germany). These encounters take many forms. There is ongoing investigation and prosecution of acts defined as crimes according to GDR law; scholarly journals are replete with articles that undertake an academic *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* and several excellent collections have been published (Bürrichter and

Schödl (eds.) 1992; Eckert (et al., eds.) 1991; Faulenbach (et al., eds.) 1994; Rauschenbach (ed.) 1992). The German parliament established a blue-ribbon committee bringing together panels of scholars, intellectuals and politicians to jointly research and write on aspects of GDR history (Enquete-Kommission (ed.) 1995). Authors, artists and performers have tackled GDR history through their creative work while millions of former East Germans have confronted and have been confronted by their memories and consciences.

Throughout these different projects several themes emerge over and over as if in infinite refrain. One of the most prevalent problems is the matter of Täter und Opfer, that is perpetrators and victims. Is it possible to clearly identify individuals or classes of people as perpetrators? Or is it the case that everyone who did not actively resist was a perpetrator? And who were the victims? Particular individuals against whom clearly identifiable transgressions were committed? Or were all East Germans collectively victims of a stalinist dictatorship? If so, did they suffer enough in the GDR, did they "serve enough time" in the GDR, that they can now be "paroled" to freedom--both political freedom and freedom of conscience?

Prominent victims of stalinistic persecution such as artists, intellectuals, members of the Lutheran Church, and men and women active in opposition groups justifiably criticize the state and Stasi (Staatssicherheitsdienst,

state security service) for the anguish they suffered, betrayed in some cases by their professional colleagues, closest friends and most intimate companions.¹⁴ Yet, as one author has observed, not all Stasi employees were engaged in criminal activities. Assuming the undifferentiated collective guilt of categories of people such as Stasi employees and informants on the one hand protects real criminals and, on the other hand, "delays the process of self- and historical understanding" (Behrend 1991: 79-80).

While it is true that individuals and agencies in the GDR grossly violated the privacy and trust of East Germans, it is also true that this affront only superficially resembles affronts perpetrated in Nazi Germany. Joachim Gauck, the East German Lutheran pastor who was appointed after the Wende to the position of Federal Commissioner for Documents of the State Security Service, is, now, curator and guardian of the GDR's most criminal past. Yet even he observed that the GDR did not leave a legacy of "mountains of corpses and oceans of blood," as did Nazi Germany (Gauck 1993). The GDR never armed itself for, initiated or carried out a "total war" that resulted, directly or indirectly, in the deaths of tens of millions of human

14. In one well-known instance, Vera Wollenberger, active in the opposition and elected Press Secretary of the Green Party in February 1990, learned that one of the Stasi's primary informants in her case had been her husband. Additional literature on the Stasi and intellectuals includes Loest 1991 and Walther (ed.) 1991.

beings as well as incalculable material and environmental damage.

In a thoughtful revisiting of Adorno's 1959 lecture, Jürgen Habermas characterized Nazi and GDR crimes as being not only of a different degree but also of a different kind. At least 125,000 cases of human rights violations committed in the GDR have been registered with the Berlin branch of the federal archives (Habermas 1992). These, Habermas asserted, even though they include murder, torture, kidnapping, compulsory adoption, and surveillance of telephone and mail communications, are categorically different from the "rupture of civilization associated with the name Auschwitz" (Habermas 1992).

Prosecution of violations of GDR laws is ongoing, if slowly. Even in this respect there are vast differences between trials in the postwar period and those of the post-Wende period. Today, both civil and criminal cases are of little more than national interest, not international, and few prominent figures have been implicated. There have been comprehensive efforts to remove (and ostracize) "politically-burdened" politicians, administrators, educators and other professionals which superficially resemble the Entnazifizierung or de-nazification of the post-war period. But these efforts result largely in the public display of so-called "white lists"--names of individuals whose pasts have withstood scrutiny for political and moral transgression--not criminal

prosecution. Even so, because West Germany was so lenient toward many social and occupational groups that did not resist the Nazis (and in many cases aided them), it seems as if the post-Wende routing of socialists is far more extreme than anything undertaken in the West after 1945.

In addition to the question of guilt and responsibility, Adorno's essay also anticipated some of the problems experienced by East Germans struggling with democracy and the market economy. As Adorno pointed out, the idea of democracy is quite different from its reality. During 1989 and 1990 East Germans engaged in democracy to a degree never before seen in German history. They organized at the grass-roots level, argued over a multitude of issues, formulated positions, took to the streets, demanded accountability from their leaders, and seized personal responsibility for the future of their society. The overwhelming success of Helmut Kohl and the Christian Democratic Union in 1990 ushered in a political system that is democratic in name but not remotely as participatory or revolutionary as the democracy effected by East Germans during the Wende. The memory of the real, exhilarating and terrifying democratic work undertaken by East Germans during 1989-90 contradicts the present powerlessness felt by individuals and groups before the extraordinarily influential and well-connected economic and political interests of West Germany and the world.

For this reason, a discussion of the capability of East Germans to embrace democracy must take into consideration what is meant by that term. When western newscasters and journalists rejoiced in the advent of democracy in the GDR in 1989, in this context "democracy" functioned as a thinly veiled synonym for the market economy.

If Adorno is correct, that West Germans could never fully savor their postwar economic miracle because they remained constantly aware of its possible end, surely in East Germany, after 1989, East Germans cannot fully enjoy the promised Aufschwung (recovery). This economic upturn, heralded by politicians and the press since 1990, apparently has been indefinitely delayed. As a result, East Germans are not subject to the fear of possible future economic problems; rather they are overwhelmed by the reality of widespread unemployment and underemployment. Even the briefest tour through East German communities which surround crumbling factories or silent mines provides ample opportunities to meet men and women forced into early retirement, unemployed youth, single mothers who cannot find jobs because they are viewed as unreliable (due to the exigencies of child care), and many more people who are despondent, frightened, driven to drink, batter other family members, commit suicide, or--interestingly--decline to reproduce (Sächsische Zeitung 1991j, 1991k, 1991l). When asked, many of these men and women extol the manifold

changes which have occurred since 1989 but, when the economic problems of unification are seen as inextricably linked with the political transformation, many are, as Adorno observed in 1959, "indifferent to democracy, where they don't secretly hate it" (Adorno 1986: 125).

An additional significant parallel between postwar and post-Wende debates is the attempt to understand the behavior of people during and after the historical periods in question through the use of psychological models. Many characteristics of the authoritarian personality Adorno described seem to apply to East Germans. These include a weak ego, rigidity, conformism, conventionality, and the penchant to subordinate one's self to larger groups. Working from a model very similar to that of Adorno's, after World War II Margarete Mitscherlich, together with her husband Alexander Mitscherlich, published The Inability to Mourn on the German personality (Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1975). Later, now writing as Mitscherlich-Nielsen, she uncritically reproduced Adorno's model of the authoritarian personality. She assumed that East Germans engaged in a form of psychological repression after World War II similar to that of West Germans and she feared that a similar repression had been taking place in the East since 1989 (Mitscherlich-Nielsen 1991).

Mitscherlich-Nielsen wrote that Germans adored Hitler; they invested their own egos in him and, after the war, they were unable to acknowledge the inhumanity of his

ideals or their horrifying consequences. East Germans suffered a triple defeat in this regard--not only was Hitler, their idol and hero, defeated, but they also had the misfortune of ending up on the wrong side at the end of the war (in the Soviet Occupation Zone). Now they have lost their socialist heroes and ideals as well.

Mitscherlich-Nielsen does acknowledge that the majority of East Germans did not love their socialist leaders the way they loved Hitler but they nonetheless subordinated themselves to their state and "certainly took part in the mutual spying to a massive degree. Nothing new in the East and after Hitler" (Mitscherlich-Nielsen 1991: 9).

East German psychotherapist Hans-Joachim Maaz takes an alternative approach. Rather than blaming East Germans for being psychologically predisposed to sustain authoritarian regimes, he states that GDR society functioned through force:

[t]here was direct, open violence through murder, torture, orders to shoot [at the border], imprisonment and expatriation, and there was indirect force through insecurity in the face of the law, repression, threats, humiliation, through indoctrination and through a system of coercion, intimidation and fear (Maaz 1990: 13).

Compelled to survive in this harsh and frightening world, East Germans recast external oppression as inner oppression. In this way, the system "secured the psychological mechanism of self-enslavement and self-destruction" (Maaz 1990: 13). Maaz then analyzes specific aspects of daily life, such as encounters with bureaucracy,

in order to illustrate the process of the internalization of negative sentiments and to explore its psychological consequences. A later work, Das Gestürzte Volk (The Overturned People), enlarges this thesis by exploring some of the specific psychological characteristics East Germans developed which now render them incapable of thriving (or even staying afloat) in a market economy (Maaz 1993). Throughout his work Maaz is harshly critical of the blanket condemnation of the GDR as "stalinistic," viewing this as a form of denial of the degree to which ordinary people shared responsibility for the conditions of life under socialism. He cautions against Gefühlsstau, a term he coined, which can be translated literally as "feelings-jam" or blocked emotions, and he exhorts both parts of Germany, East and West, to engage in psychological healing in order to achieve authentic, emotional liberation.

One of the significant differences between East and West German perspectives on the GDR stems from the versions of history taught in these respective nations. Both the western condemnation of the GDR and the East German self-glorification strongly influence men and women struggling to find the truth about their history, which is located somewhere between official and unofficial representations. Either perspective on the GDR, positive or negative, strongly influences interpretations of the Wende--what it was and why it happened--and biases individuals for or against certain memories and conclusions.

Definitively establishing the FRG as a cornerstone of what Mommsen refers to as the liberal-democratic order required painting a dark portrait of the GDR. East-West; communist-capitalist; totalitarian-democratic; complicity-resistance: these stark oppositions are a familiar echo of the cold-war era. Members of the German parliament's blue-ribbon commission on GDR history clearly fall into this camp when they unequivocally state that the GDR was an "SED-dictatorship." They go on to credit the West with weakening and eventually shattering this "dictatorship" through long-term political strategies though, at the same time, they acclaim the opposition in the GDR and the "historic achievement" of the Wende for doing the same (Faulenbach, et al., eds. 1994: 281-2). This instrumentalist perspective on history, where outcomes result from conscious, goal-oriented action, exemplifies what is referred to as the Sieger-mentalität (victors' mentality). This view does not allow for the possibility that the collapse of the GDR might have resulted from an unpredictable, perhaps even random interaction of contradictory trends, forces and processes.

If one approaches GDR history from such an instrumentalist stance certain questions follow, such as why did the East German opposition emerge so late? Why did western political and economic strategies, along with the efforts of the internal opposition in the GDR, fail to bring a Wende about much earlier? How did the corrupt SED

dictatorship maintain power for four decades despite the existence of an opposition movement, even if that movement did emerge relatively weakly and late? Possible responses have been intimated above. For some, the fact that active resistance in the GDR was almost completely absent has emerged as a particularly difficult issue.¹⁵ Do the German people have a psychological or cultural predisposition to accede to authority? Or does the answer lie in the success of the particular methods employed by the state to secure its power? These methods included ideological seduction; social strategies such as the promotion of early marriage and childbearing to bring about forms of interdependency within families and between individuals and the state; or, not only physically restraining the population (as in closing the border), but also deploying intimidation and terror through the Stasi.

Habermas counters with the observation that the Stasi did repress and control the population, but that it also served as the state's primary bureaucracy of patronage and privileges. The population of the GDR was caught in what he refers to as an "ambivalent entanglement,

15. See for example Dahn 1991. The translator of her essay notes that the German title, "Zettelfalter wie ich," is a pun. Both "butterfly" and "paper folder," Zettelfalter refers to the practice of voting in the GDR in public (that is, not secretly in a private booth) by simply folding one's ballot and dropping it in the box. Those who chose to enter a voting booth were presumed to be voting "No" to the single slate on the ballot and their names were noted accordingly by poll observers and communicated to the Stasi.

characteristically post-stalinistic" (Habermas 1992). In some cases complicity with the state's repressive apparatus stemmed from the desire for advantages for one's self or one's family. Under these circumstances, viewing the state as uniformly dominating and the population as uniformly dominated, a perspective derived from the simplistic equation of communism with totalitarianism, makes it impossible to understand the far more complex and subtle machinations of East German society.

Many East Germans deeply mourned the end of the GDR. The state never achieved its lofty, Marxist ideals; in fact, in recent years, modified expectations summarized by the phrase "actually existing socialism" came to substitute for dreams of communist utopia. Nonetheless, after the Wende, when the Deutsche Mark arrived with the force of a hurricane bringing with it, among other distasteful aspects of West German culture, unemployment, homelessness and conspicuous (and wasteful) consumption, an awareness that the GDR had striven toward important, humanist goals was hammered home to many East Germans, some of whom had supported the GDR, some of whom had been ambivalent about socialism but were extremely traumatized by unification. The GDR's goals included achieving relative social equality; guaranteeing shelter, food, work and medical care to all citizens but particularly to those who were vulnerable because they were very young, ill or elderly; and valuing social solidarity and cooperation over

individualism and competition. For those who had dedicated their lives to supporting a political party and state which purported to strive toward these goals, recognizing and admitting the terrible degree to which the GDR failed in its efforts was both shocking and humbling.

Wondering what individuals or the Party might have done to enhance economic development and social satisfaction in the GDR requires recalling, or in some cases hearing for the first time, those alternative remembrances and unofficial histories which told of a GDR radically different from the one in which its supporters believed. These remembrances include humiliation by petty bureaucrats; betrayal to the Stasi by colleagues and "friends"; devastating conditions in old age homes and other health care and social service institutions; regular shortages of essential goods and services; and widespread irreverence toward sacrosanct holidays such as the First of May (the socialist labor day). Sifting through what one was taught in the GDR, what one wanted to believe, and what one encountered on a daily basis is the daunting task being undertaken as part of the East German *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*.

If one does view the GDR as having been a totalitarian regime, it is tempting to assume continuity with the "total dictatorship" of the Nazi era or Leninism/Stalinism, thus echoing the problem of political continuity raised by Mommsen with respect to West German history. In response

to the suggestion that the GDR was a natural successor of previous "total dictatorships," Habermas again seized the opportunity to assault Ernst Nolte, quoting him as an extreme example:

"[The GDR was o]lder than the Federal Republic, older than the Third Reich, older even than the Weimar Republic. . . . [T]he GDR was the state of which Lenin dreamed as he called the German workers to rise up against the bloodspattered ruling classes just after his October revolution. . . . [A]nd it was the state which all the countless 'middle class' organizations meant when they convinced themselves and others that the 'People's Chancellor' Hitler had rescued Germany at the last minute from the 'abyss of Bolshevism'" (Nolte in Habermas 1992: 82).

Habermas is making the broader claim that struggles with history in the former GDR are different from those in other former Soviet-bloc nations; he reproduces this quotation to illustrate the fact that these struggles inevitably renew questions about National Socialism. But, as noted above, he believes there are crucial differences between Nazism and the GDR: not only the entirely different nature of crimes committed under the two regimes but also the fact that, over forty years, life in the GDR gained a degree of normalcy never achieved during the 12 years Hitler was in power.¹⁶ In addition, despite its rigidity, Marxism-Leninism does have a self-critical, intellectual potential that was absent from National Socialism.¹⁷

16. Although the normalcy of daily life during National Socialism remains a difficult subject for many. See for example Bessel 1987, Broszat 1987 and Lüdtke 1983, 1995.

17. Habermas 1992. See also Obenaus 1992 for a similar critique of the comparability of Nazi Germany and the GDR.

Despite these and other important differences between Nazi Germany and postwar East Germany, these periods of German history are often lumped together as the two pasts that Germans now must overcome (see Hoffmann 1992). In this way the project of working through Germany's "second past," or GDR history, is modeled on the postwar coming-to-terms with the past, and issues discussed above, including the nature of the state's crimes and degrees of individual complicity and responsibility, come to the fore.

Other issues in history and memory in the unified Germany are inextricably entangled with nation-building and nationalism. Here the question of continuity with German history, raised in the West German Historikerstreit, reemerges, along with the perception that approaches to the past in Germany both shape, and are shaped by, future considerations. To cite members of the Enquete-Kommission, the experience of "total domination" in the GDR must lead Germans to protect human and civil rights in the future and these rights, along with basic social rights, must form the basis for a democratic political culture.

After the experiences of the N[ational] S[ocialist] era and the era of division, Germans have to understand themselves as a nation that sees itself as a democratic society of responsibility and values, that feels closely tied to western European nations, that enters into similar relationships with neighboring nations in the East, and that desires to create a future together with other European nations. The peaceful revolution in the GDR has given a new impulse to the free foundation of the nation (Faulenbach, et al., eds. 1994: 282).

Stefan Berger (1995) provides a thoughtful discussion

of debates on the relationship between historical perspectives and ideas concerning the future of Germany as a nation.¹⁸ He identifies four primary positions on German national identity after the Wende: first, rejection of the Sonderweg (atypical route) thesis for German history; second, revisionist interpretations of National Socialism; third, negative perspectives on West German history; fourth, calls for research methods that will prioritize the development of national identity through history over critical historiography (Berger 1995: 196).

Berger asks whether or not the nation is the most suitable frame of reference for present-day and future German identity. He observes that the German "Volk" is "characterized by specific collective historical and cultural memories"; patriotism that is grounded in political participation and constitutional values will never be as compelling as national identification based on ethnic sentiments (Berger 1995: 200). Moreover, Berger observes that many German academics view the nation-state as "a chimera, a product of the nineteenth century unable to solve the problems of the late twentieth, and wholly inadequate for the political and economic realities of the 1990s" (Berger 1995: 218). Of course, even if historians were to pronounce "the nation" obsolete, the possibility of

18. Berger 1995. For readers interested in this subject, Berger's article is replete with references to relevant German sources.

an ethnically-based, renewed German nationalism is chilling for many, Germans and non-Germans alike. Nonetheless, Berger writes, "more and more historians (largely male and politically conservative) come to perceive their task as shaping national identity according to political expediency" (Berger 1995: 221).

One of the problems confronting the German nation after unification is the construction of a pan-German identity. While the position taken by Mitscherlich-Nielsen is extreme, she does convey the considerable tension between East and West Germans by claiming that there is no basis for trust and affection between the two peoples. Even though they share a common language and cultural heritage, she argues, in the forty-five years that Germany was divided, East and West Germans experienced entirely different political and economic systems, values and forms of interactions. As a result, entirely different cultures emerged. "What to one is practically self-explanatory is to the other foreign and vice-versa," she summarizes (Mitscherlich-Nielsen 1991: 6-7).

One of the consequences of this tension is resentment by East Germans toward West Germans who attempt to narrate, evaluate and judge GDR history. As a result, some GDR scholars and intellectuals have taken on the task of critically evaluating the East German past on behalf of society as a whole. They have called for individuals to confront their own pasts and the pasts of their

communities. This endeavor has resulted, among other efforts, in the establishment in Leipzig of a tribunal of journalists, pastors, politicians, writers and philosophers. In calling for a tribunal, Joachim Gauck and others observed that any encounter with GDR history releases sentiments of "rage and outrage, mourning and a desire for revenge . . . but also shame and despair, stubbornness and defensiveness" (Gauck, et al. 1992). Gauck and his colleagues proposed that discussion groups meet locally, regionally and nationally in order to personally document incidents, collect evidence and hear witnesses in fora other than that of government courts and committees. They wrote:

We who experienced, facilitated and bore [the GDR], can not allow ourselves to be represented [by others] in the confrontation with the GDR's criminal history (Gauck, et al. 1992).

Gauck's vision of nationwide cathartic meetings between victims and perpetrators did not come to pass, but the efforts of Gauck and his colleagues epitomized an attempt on the part of intellectuals to strive for extra-judicial political and moral justice in eastern Germany after the Wende.

Conclusion

The Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit is not a neutral activity. It is situated in particular material and ideological contexts which are, themselves, historic; they

emerge from and obtain in relation to specific conditions and processes. For example, the choice of sites for debates over the past reflects suppositions about the nature of the history which should be worked through. Gauck and others called for the establishment of informal tribunals on GDR history precisely because they felt that the issues which needed to be addressed were categorically different from those normally dealt with in established fora. In addition, access to debates is controlled by professional "gatekeepers" (think, for example, at the attacks on Jürgen Habermas, the lone philosopher who brazenly interjected his views into historians' controversies).

As individuals participate in, or are excluded from debates over the past, different social groupings emerge. These range from the geo-political ("the West," "the East") and the socio-political (conservatives, progressives, liberals, German nationals, the Left, the Right), to what might be called moral-political (communists who claim descent from a century of socialist political activity, or individuals who condemn the GDR as stalinistic). Membership in these groups is won in part through the active adoption or rejection of particular stances vis-à-vis the past, while the groups themselves vie for moral authority and material power (including political influence) in a period of rapid and radical change in German history.

The content of debates over the past strongly reflect the historical contexts in which they occur. It was the fact that National Socialism had just recently come to such a devastating end that Adorno expressed concern about the apparently inadequate emotional response of Germans, hence his cynical definition of "working through the past" as erasure or forgetting. At the time of the Historikerstreit, the FRG appeared to be approaching the end of its postwar economic miracle. In order for the CDU to fashion a new outlook for the nation it had to modify its stance toward National Socialism. In the GDR, the state sought to assert a national identity through history, constructing itself largely in opposition to the West. Finally, the post-Wende period was framed by the sudden and unexpected end of the cold war. At the same time that capitalism appears to have triumphed, the market economy is plagued by more problems than ever before. In a passage included in Chapter Four, one respondent objects to the present obsession by the media with socialism's failures, arguing that this reflects an effort on the part of the state to divert attention from social problems stemming from capitalism including unemployment and homelessness.

At the same time that debates about the past are influenced by present contexts, each set of debates reiterates, echoes or challenges previous debates. This is most apparent in the view that the GDR past is comparable to that of National Socialism and that it must, therefore,

be "worked through" in the same way. But East Germans are burdened with a double responsibility--they are accused of having failed to work through their Nazi past as well. In response, some East Germans counter-accuse West Germans of the same failure.

Underlying such accusations is the assumption that if a people successfully "work through" its past that history will, finally, be laid to rest. An East German social scientist conveyed a similar sentiment when he said to me, "We thought we had extirpated Nazism here [in the East] and now there are all these little seedlings." He was referring to a rightist demonstration that had taken place the previous weekend in Dresden; it and a demonstration against rightist violence are the subject of the next ethnographic excursion.

This excursion illustrates some of the ways the past (both distant and recent) remains very much alive in the present. It also depicts the power of symbolic social action to evoke, or challenge, memory and history.

ETHNOGRAPHIC EXCURSION: TWO MURDERS, TWO DEMONSTRATIONS**The Murders**

On March 31, 1991, at about four o'clock in the morning, Jorge Gomondai, a twenty-eight year-old exchange student from Mozambique, was riding home in the number seven street car through Dresden's Neustadt, a neighborhood known for cafes, artists and skinhead attacks. At one stop all the other passengers in Gomondai's car got off and a half-dozen skinheads got on. What happened next is subject to debate. The skinheads claim that all they did was sing a beer-drinking song together and that Gomondai decided to force open the doors of the moving street car and jump out onto the tracks, losing consciousness and suffering multiple injuries when he landed. The police, media, friends and supporters of Gomondai claim that the skinheads brutally beat Gomondai and then shoved him out of the moving car. Police and politicians insist that an ambulance arrived within minutes and that Gomondai was rushed to the intensive care unit of the nearest hospital where he received the best possible medical attention. Left-wing activists disagree, saying the ambulance wasn't called until much later, that it was slow in arriving, and that Gomondai received second-rate medical care at best. Whatever the case may be, Gomondai never regained consciousness and died a week later of severe head injuries.

It was weeks before Gomondai's murderers were

arrested, despite the fact that one eyewitness claims to have immediately informed the police what happened and that the skinheads were still riding along in the same streetcar (Hesse and Juhnke 1991c: 9). A year later, on the anniversary of Gomondai's death, the suspects had not yet been brought to trial.

Late one night, two months after Gomondai's death, Rainer Sonntag, a thirty-six year-old man, arrived at a sex shop slightly outside of town. Sonntag was a native of Dresden who had been imprisoned in the GDR for various offenses, including Republikflucht (attempting to flee) and theft. In 1986 he was allowed to emigrate. In West Germany he made contact with the Hessen neo-Nazi party Nationale Sammlung as well as its leader, Michael Kühnen, and the family of the deceased Rudolf Hess. Sonntag worked as a pimp, ran on the Nationale Sammlung political ticket, borrowed 6,000 DM from Gerald Hess for a pornographic video venture, and never repaid the debt. In December 1989, after the GDR opened its borders, Sonntag returned to Dresden where he founded his own neo-Nazi group.

Sonntag's group undertook relatively trivial actions in Dresden that nonetheless won both popular and police support. For example, he and his adherents chased foreign shell-game players from the Prager Straße, one of Dresden's two main pedestrian thoroughfares. A newspaper account observed that the police did not arrest the skinhead thugs for terrorizing foreigners, but instead arrested the

foreigners (Hesse and Juhnke 1991a: 5). Despite this early success, Sonntag's career as Führer of the right-wing scene in Dresden was short-lived.

It is not clear what business Sonntag had at the sex shop on the night he was murdered. One report claims that he had come to collect an installment of protection money from the shop's owner (Hesse and Juhnke 1991b). Another version charges Sonntag with a plan to incite skinheads to demolish the bordello (Sächsische Zeitung 1992i). What remains undisputed is that, while he was outside, two men from Mannheim drove by in a Mercedes Benz. One of them, the son of a Greek fur-trader and purportedly a pimp himself, blew off half of Sonntag's head with a shotgun.

It could be that Sonntag's murder was related to the death of Gerald Hess, who had been found shot to death in his West German apartment. Kühnen and others believed that Sonntag had committed the murder, which the police called a suicide. Despite the fact that circumstances surrounding Sonntag's death were murky, the response of the right-wing community to his murder was plain. Followers held a week-long watch on the site of his murder and gave their hero a martyr's funeral that included a massive skinhead march through Dresden.

The men suspected of Sonntag's murder were apprehended in Thailand after an international search. They were tried in March 1991, nine months after the murder, and acquitted on the grounds that the shot had been fired in self-

defense. The judgement shocked and confused Dresdners in general--not only neo-Nazis--but it was the neo-Nazis who organized a protest march a few days later.

The Demonstrations

The demonstration for Gomondai was held in April 1992 on the first anniversary of his death to protest the fact that, at that time, no one had yet been brought to trial for his murder. At five o'clock that evening there was a short ecumenical service in the Kreuzkirche, a Lutheran Church in the center of the Dresden. Students from Mozambique spoke in both Portuguese and German, organ music was played, and the prayer, "Oh God, why hast thou forsaken me!" was recited. After the service hundreds of young people, including many dressed in ragged clothes topped off with nose rings and green or purple hair, gathered in front of the church. More than a token representation of men and women in their fifties and sixties was also present. The crowd was loosely surrounded by dozens of police officers, who didn't look terribly interested in what was going on. A few people had banners with messages such as "Ausländer--laßt uns mit diesen Deutschen nicht allein!" (Foreigners, don't leave us alone with these Germans! The "s's" in "diesen" and "Deutschen" were written with the double lightning bolt that signifies Hitler's SS troops).

Except for the dress of some, the crowd was extremely orderly. In fact orderliness (Ordnung) was the rule of the

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march. March leaders instructed the gathered masses to proceed in an orderly fashion along the right side of the street, past Dresden's Postplatz, over the Augustusbrücke to Albert-platz, the sight of Gomondai's beating. As the crowd moved off, the antics of numerous photographers running around in order to get the best shots of the crowd created the most drama. There were neither chants nor songs and, if organized silence was intended, it was broken by a number of casual conversations.

Despite the fact that few police officers wore riot gear at this march, and their stance and manner suggested that they were bored by the entire event, a large police van crept alongside the demonstrators as they walked. From it, uniformed officers filmed the marchers with tripod-mounted video recorders. In addition, a police helicopter flew fairly low over the demonstrators instilling a creeping sense of fear and anxiety in them.

Half an hour later, at Albert Platz, the demonstrators gathered in an orderly fashion around the little lawn where Gomondai had been thrown out of the streetcar, carefully avoiding treading on the grass because it is forbidden to walk on the grass there. A woman and a man told the story of Gomondai's death, talked about the deaths of other foreigners in Germany, accused the police of murderously slow response time when called to the aid of foreigners in trouble, and demanded that the judicial system abandon its delaying tactics and bring Gomondai's killers to justice.

No one applauded. In fact, the lack of reaction was notable. A small girl in a bright purple sport suit stood on the grass with a picture of the murdered man; she was avidly photographed by members of the press corps. Some people laid flowers on the ground in front of her. Organizers assured us that, after the demonstration, the flowers would be made into an orderly arrangement. Some anarchists, dressed in their uniform black, calmly pulled bright yellow bananas out of their bags, peeled and ate them.¹

The "orderly" demonstration came to an orderly end as people laid flowers on the site, slowly walked away and boarded streetcars home.

Several days later Dresden's main train station was the starting point for the right-wing march in protest of the acquittal of Sonntag's accused killers. Dozens of police vehicles and possibly a hundred or more officers were present. The officers, outfitted with riot helmets, conveyed an mood of alertness, even nervousness, that starkly contrasted their ennui at the previous demonstration.

Mostly men who ranged in age from approximately fifteen to twenty-five years began to gather in small groups in front of the train station. They wore a variety

1. This was beautifully ironic--anarchists (radical anti-statists) chomping down on ripe, yellow bananas, fruits of capitalist West Germany generally unavailable to East Germans until after the 1989 Wende.

of right-wing uniforms varying from crew cuts, bomber jackets and black, laced army boots, to the "young romantic" hair cut (trim behind the ears and a little long on top), slacks, nylon jackets and loafers with white socks. A few teenage girls stood around, drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. Three men, already drunk, staggered out into the open, saluted "Heil Hitler," then leaned back and gestured as if to shake their penises in the air. A crowd of observers with tight, anxious faces kept a careful distance.

Suddenly a little parade arrived out of the direction of the Newa, one of Dresden's hotels. About twenty-five men, roughly twenty-five to forty years of age, including a flag and drum corps, marched up to the statue of Lenin that was still standing in Dresden at the time.² They halted and stood silently in formation, waiting. One man in a button-down shirt and tie carried a sign that said (in German) "Against the Multicultural Society." Another man, whose grey hair betrayed his age, gave them instructions: "No interviews!"

A van pulled up. As men wearing white armbands climbed out of it the structure of the march became clear. These were the organizers. Others were just youth, maybe inclined to the political right, but not necessarily

2. A respondent with whom I spoke after the march pointed out that the distinctive pattern of flames on the drums was evocative of Nazi symbolism.

coherently organized. Still others represented established groups. The leaders announced that the march would start in front of the Hotel Newa and that all marchers should line up in rows of five. In what seemed like an instant all the demonstrators, hundreds at least, possibly up to two thousand, lined up exactly as ordered, and with a drum roll they took off. Roughly two thousand neo-Nazis, skinheads, and youthful "Mitläufer"³ stepped forward in unison with flags and banners from parties such as the recently banned (rightist) Deutsche Alternative and Nationale Offensive. One banner identified Rudolf Hess and Rainer Sonntag as martyrs for Germany; another called for work camps for drug dealers. The marchers enthusiastically saluted "Heil Hitler" and chanted "Germany for the Germans, foreigners out!" Despite the fact that it is illegal to make the Hitler Grüß (Hitler greeting--that is, salute "Heil Hitler") in Germany, no one was arrested. An old man, clearly agitated, vented his fear and anger not at the young Nazis but at me when he shouted that it was nicht in Ordnung (not in order), or improper, that I was standing on a bench to photograph the march.

At this demonstration police officers were fully outfitted with riot gear. They limited casual conversation

3. "Mitläufer" refers to a person who rejects active participation in a group in favor of passive participation. It is a term used either to absolve individuals (as in, "He was just a Mitläufer") or to accuse them ("Even though he was just a Mitläufer . . ."), particularly with reference to Nazi crimes.

among themselves and responded to questions with terse answers or refused to give answers at all. Then, during the march, they stepped alongside the demonstrators, carefully dispersed in equal distances, creating the appearance that they were part of the demonstration, rather than simply serving as a barrier between demonstrators and spectators. There was no helicopter present, nor was there any obvious police filming of the demonstration.

Approximately half an hour later, at Dresden's main courthouse, demonstration leaders stood below their banners and made speeches calling for justice for Sonntag. The sight of neo-Nazi symbols draped across the courthouse was dramatic and, at least for me, chilling.

CHAPTER TWO: DRESDEN

Introduction

In both of the demonstrations just described, the participants actively employed symbols, powerfully evocative of memory, to represent particular political and ideological stances. The members of Dresden's eclectic, grass-roots opposition rebuffed a number of forms of authority through their decidedly un-orderly (anarchistic) organization. They rejected cultural standards of dress and conduct (with their purple hair and pierced noses), ignored march leaders who continuously implored them to be orderly and, it's possible, rebuffed parents, teachers or other figures who, in the past, had told them to stand up straight and follow instructions.

The rightists' Hitler salutes established kinship with previous German rightist movements. Their highly structured formation (five abreast) and rhythmic chants demonstrated the "order" they claim they would restore to Germany (for example, by deporting or interning foreigners).

The state was powerfully present in the marches as well, though it conveyed a mixed message. The dress and conduct of officers on foot suggested that the rightists were viewed as far more threatening than the leftists; yet the decision to obviously video-tape the leftists, and to apparently disregard the rightists, suggested that it is the former who are viewed as more threatening to the state.

Indeed--the officers even appeared to march alongside the rightists.

As Marshall Sahlins observes¹, in order for such social action to be meaningful, participants and observers must at least partially share and deploy a repertoire of knowledge and, I would add, accumulated memories.

The significance and utility of memory and history are illustrated by another aspect of the marches as well. In both cases participants made use of particular sites to facilitate constructions of memory advantageous to them, thereby affirming present and future concerns. Dresdners who marched for the murdered student started at the Kreuzkirche (as will be discussed in Chapter Four, a powerful symbol of political autonomy and opposition) and ended at the small patch of grass where Gomondai lost consciousness after hitting the ground. The rightists and neo-Nazis marched from the train station (where they convened from all over Germany) to the courthouse (the site of the alleged injustice perpetrated against Sonntag).

In both cases, the impact of the demonstrations stemmed in part from their dramatic action in a unique landscape. Through the use and manipulation of dress, posture, organization (or the lack thereof), movement, slogans written on banners and a photograph, marchers simultaneously evoked and transformed memories as they

1. See the Introduction to this study.

moved through Dresden's spaces. In this way members of Dresden's Left and Germany's Right² clashed over the past and asserted claims in the present.

Yet the symbolic potential of Dresden's landscape is far greater even than this. Processes of preserving, destroying, renovating, disfiguring, neglecting and renaming buildings, statues, streets, bridges and plazas are laden with significance for individual Dresdners and social groups (such as classes and generations). Moreover, as the stories of Dresden's places are taught, revised or silenced, histories are celebrated and forgotten.

In this chapter I introduce the city and its multiple, coexisting histories. I first describe the physical evidence of Dresden's most recent history of the transition to capitalism. I then offer a narrative tour of the city as it is most commonly represented in school books, encyclopedias, or tourist guides, namely the Dresden of the German Baroque. Its history, as "told" through its monuments, is a history of the flowering of human civilization in the arts, architecture and culture. After a discussion of histories left untold (because they are not embodied in the physical landscape or evidence of them is missing or veiled), I turn to a historical moment definitive for Dresdners: February 13 and 14, 1945, when

2. Despite the fact that these are grossly oversimplified categories, "Left" and "Right" roughly convey the location of these participants on Germany's political spectrum.

the city, and tens of thousands of the residents and refugees crammed into it at the time, were incinerated in a night of fire and terror. Finally, I describe Dresden's reconstruction and experiences of its residents under Soviet occupation (1945-1949) and in the German Democratic Republic (1949-1989). In conclusion, I discuss one of the ways Dresdners deal with the problem of the simultaneous presence of so many pasts.

Dresden Today

Dresden's most recent history--that of the Wende and German unification--can be seen in the numerous new shops that have opened and the old shops which have been extensively renovated since 1989. Sparkling windows have been filled with all the brightly colored, western merchandise available in metropolitan centers throughout the world, ranging from Levis and Coca Cola, BMWs and Japanese electronics, to all manner of newspapers, maps and literature once forbidden in the GDR. An influx of capital (often in the form of loans) is enabling local merchants to "modernize" their storefronts by installing bright new facades imported from the West that stand out in Dresden's grey streets like a "fist in the eye" as some Germans say (Die Union 1991a).

Depending on one's point of view, this modernization is sometimes referred to as the "third destruction" of Dresden. The first destruction took place in the bombing

of February 1945, the second as buildings and streets slowly crumbled due to inadequate maintenance under socialism. The present "third destruction" disturbs traditionalists who hoped that the hard currency available after the Wende could be put to use to restore the city, rather than to supplant its historical architecture with incompatible materials and designs.

Other changes in the city include the appearance of banks and other West German enterprises temporarily located in squat steel trailers that can be described only as ugly blots on the urban landscape. A bazaar of white tents in the downtown area is populated by merchants selling items that range from sausages and jewelry to appliances. The city center is being renovated; the Frauenkirche is being rebuilt; other ruins are being restored and Dresden's architects and planners promise that the Prager Straße will become the "largest shopping mile in Saxony" (Sächsische Zeitung 1992d). Here, respect for Dresden's architectural integrity has led the city to prohibit ultra-modern glass facades and require the use of local sandstone instead--though it is difficult to see how this requirement can be reconciled with the presence of the brand new McDonald's restaurant ensconced in the middle of the Prager Straße. Finally, Dresden's sidewalks, streets and walls are inscribed with history and memory in the form of graffiti. Swastikas, political slogans and ideographs (for example, a figure labeled "socialism" hanging from gallows), even

hostile verses (". . . die Türken erwürgen" [strangle the Turks]) are constant reminders of recent and more distant pasts, social divisions, brewing conflicts, disaffected youth and traumatized East Germans: "Ich will mein Alu-Geld zurück!" (I want my aluminum [GDR] money back!) reads another message.

One monument noticeably absent from post-Wende Dresden is the massive, red granite statue of Lenin that used to stand on the plaza before the main train station. This was carted away in May 1992 by a private collector who has taken to amassing unwanted socialist statuary and who agreed to finance the cost of the statue's removal (Richter 1992). New concrete slabs cover the site where the socialist leader once stood, his coat blowing open as he strode forward before two workers, one of whom held aloft a fist clenched in struggle and victory.

Socialism in Dresden is veiled yet visible in the enormous mural (approximately 100 by 35 feet) completed on the west side of the Kulturpalast (Culture Palace) in 1969 and entitled "Der Weg der roten Fahne" (The Way of the Red Flag). The central figure is a woman, her hair bound in a kerchief, who bears a red flag aloft in a triumphant stance. Behind her images of famous socialists including August Bebel, Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin are surrounded by pictures of peasants, workers, soldiers and a concentration camp inmate represented by a skeletal torso peering through a tangle of barbed wire. Numerous other

red flags and socialist symbols are integrated into the design, as well as slogans such as "We are the Victors of History" (see Kober 1973).

After the Wende, the mural was draped with sheer green netting that simultaneously masked and revealed the pictures underneath it. Typically, given the multitude of startling conjunctions in Dresden's urban landscape, this idealized representation of socialist history is situated almost directly across from a small plaque commemorating the fact that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart once dwelled in the small pension there.

Often, when tourists visit Dresden, they come in search of the city brilliant figures such as Mozart knew. In the following section I describe this Dresden by exploring it as a visitor might, that is by taking a narrative "stroll" through the city's historic center.

Resplendent Dresden³

Once a small fishing village on the banks of the Elbe, Dresden was awarded the status of city by the Margrave of Meißen in 1216. Today Dresden is working energetically to make itself attractive to tourists in part by restoring the city's architecture and arts. As a result, during the year

3. In this section I draw on Löffler (1992) and Wotte and Hoyer (1978) for dates of monuments and sites, Naumann (1991) for dates of events, and Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung (ed.) (1991) for an overview of historical processes.

that field work for this dissertation was conducted, its once acclaimed skyline was masked by cranes and scaffolding, and the din of construction work overwhelmed the old city center.

When tourists visit Dresden they can follow a route published in a pamphlet by the Dresden Information Center, "Dresden in Three Hours by Foot" (Dresden-Information n.d.). The tour starts at the main train station which was built in the late 19th century. Then tourists following this guide stroll down Prager Straße to the Altmarkt (old market), formerly a plaza used for royal sporting games, now a parking lot, a weekly farmer's market and, in December, Germany's oldest Christmas market. Dating back to 1434, the Christmas market is noted particularly for Dresdner stollen and finely detailed crafts from the nearby Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains).

At the Altmarkt tourists visit the Kreuzkirche (Church of the Cross) Dresden's most prominent, existent Evangelical Lutheran church which has stood, in one form or another, on its present site since 1168. It is not clear exactly how the Kreuzkirche got its name. Local legends attribute the name to a crucifix found floating in the Elbe possibly in the 13th century then bestowed upon the church. The name may also stem from the fact that the church possesses what is, purportedly, a sliver of Christ's cross.

The original church on this site burned in 1491 but the cross and the sliver were saved. Then the cross burned

with the church during the Prussian assault on Dresden in 1760. A third church was erected between 1764 and 1792; a fourth after yet another fire in 1897. The present Kreuzkirche is the fifth church built on this site; it was constructed largely out of ruins remaining after 1945. It still possesses the purported sliver of Christ's cross and is home to Dresden's Kreuzchor (Boys' Choir), which performs regularly in the church and tours internationally.

The narrow cobblestone alleys behind the Kreuzkirche lead tourists across Wilsdrufferstraße to the Neumarkt (New Market) and Dresden's most conspicuous ruin, the imposing mountain of rubble that used to be the Frauenkirche (Church of our Lady).

The Christianization of the local Slavic population, the Sorbs, was begun as early as 968 as part of the efforts of Emperor Otto I to incorporate conquered territory into his domain. Otto I established local dioceses in forts such as Meißen and commanded his Margraves to provide for the clergy and their staff. Presumably, the Frauenkirche was established as part of the activities of the Meißen diocese; it is believed to date back to the eleventh century at which time it was a tiny wooden church "Zu unserer lieben Frau" (Of our Dear Lady), in the modest fishing village here.

Continuing their three hour tour, visitors stroll behind the ruin of the Frauenkirche to an elegant, partially hidden flight of stairs between the Albertinium

and the Kunstakademie (Academy of Art). Displayed in the Albertinum is Dresden's dazzling collection of coins, crystal, gems, exquisite jewelry and inestimably valuable sculpture. In this collection gold, silver, ivory and mahogany pieces are decorated with chunks of raw and finished emeralds, diamonds, sapphires, rubies and pearl. One of the most stunning pieces is a small-scale model of a Byzantine court, complete with golden palace, diamond studded elephants and more. Known as the Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vault), the collection is extraordinary.

The Green Vault is evidence of the riches accumulated over centuries by Saxony's rulers. But it represents not only their passionate investment and the extraordinary skills of the local jewelers and craftsmen who, over years of meticulous labor, designed and made the pieces. The collection also represents the increasingly severe pressure experienced by miners, workers and peasants whose labor had to satisfy their rulers' growing appetites for pleasure, luxuries and extravagance.

At approximately the same time that the Green Vault was established, Elector August I⁴ made an alliance with Poland through his coronation as King of that state in 1697. The Polish crown cost Saxons a great deal as August I won it in part by bribing Poland's electors with one

4. Member of the royal house Wettin, Elector of Saxony Friedrich August I, also known as August the Strong. As King of Poland, August II (born 1670, ruled 1694 to 1733).

million Taler. The alliance required that Saxony heavily increase military spending; thus yet another burden was shouldered by local workers and farmers. As a result Dresden saw not only the establishment of the Green Vault at the end of the 17th century but also the construction of the city's first poorhouse in 1717.

The wide, marble steps between the Albertinum and the Kunstakademie lead to the Brühlsche Terrasse, "Europe's Balcony," a lovely, tree-shaded promenade along the Elbe. Count Heinrich Brühl, for whom the terrace is named, was given it by August II⁵ in about 1738 as a reward for years of faithful service as prime minister and foreign minister. When visitors stroll along the Brühlsche terrace or the "ring," an angular roadway that circumscribes the historic city center, they are actually tracing the path of some of Dresden's old city walls. Like many other medieval cities in Germany, Dresden was once fortified against outsiders and invaders, such as Slavs from Poland and Bohemia, or Turks who threatened German dominion in the region.

Under August II, Count Brühl foolishly embroiled Saxony in numerous military conflicts which devastated the land. Though Brühl is remembered in history as a corrupt blunderer who made many political errors, he was a great friend of Saxony's aristocracy. He transformed the

5. Member of the royal house Wettin, Elector of Saxony Friedrich August II, as King of Poland, August III (born 1696, ruled 1733 to 1763).

Brühlsche terrace into a garden intended for exclusive use by the local elites. It afforded Dresden's nobility and their social peers panoramic views of the Elbe and Dresden's Neustadt (New City) across the river.

The terrace was opened to the public in 1814--except that both dogs and Jews were prohibited from setting foot on it until the second half of the 19th century. According to legend, at this time a distinguished, elderly lady fought for permission to walk on the terrace with her dog. When this was allowed, members of Dresden's Jewish community invoked a medieval law granting Jews the same rights as dogs; hence they were also permitted access to the terrace--at least until August 1940 when the city, politically dominated by National Socialists, reinstated the prohibition of Jews.

The tree-lined surface of the elegant terrace bears no resemblance to the dark caverns beneath it. Ongoing archaeological excavation in the catacombs here is revealing a wealth of riches, including scattered construction tools and materials from the 16th century, furnaces and forges used for munitions manufacturing during later centuries, jail cells and even a prince's outhouse.⁶ The workshop used by chemist Johann Friedrich Böttger is also located in the catacombs. Held captive by August I, who sought to increase his wealth through alchemical magic,

6. Adam 1991.

in 1709 Böttger serendipitously discovered the secret of porcelain manufacturing enabling August I to turn mud into "gold" after all--in the form of Meißen porcelain.

While strolling along the terrace, visitors can stop for ice cream or view sketches and paintings offered for sale by local artists. At the end, they descend a broad staircase that leads to the Georgentor, an elaborately carved gateway whose construction was begun in 1530. This is an entrance to the former royal residence, the Taschenbergpalais, in which two small museums are presently located: one for gems and minerals and one that depicts aspects of the history of the Saxon monarchy.

It was in the era of August I, remembered as August "The Strong," that this Elector commissioned architect Matthäus Pöppelmann to build the Taschenbergpalais. Dresden had become the residential seat of the Albertine line of the royal house Wettin in 1485, when the region was divided into Thüringen and Saxony. At the time the region was one of the leading principalities in medieval Germany in trade and industry, education and the arts. For this reason it is, perhaps, appropriate that the Taschenbergpalais houses a museum of mineralogy; after all, it was the silver, copper and other ores extracted from the nearby Erzgebirge that enabled Saxony's rulers to amass the riches they did.

Silver mining stimulated not only advances in technology and the sciences but also the development of a

cash economy and a medieval Bürgertum (middle class). Additionally, after August I became Elector of Saxony in 1694, he was able to amass enough capital to afford not only the Polish crown, but also to sponsor development in Dresden's architecture and arts, winning for Dresden the designation "Florence on the Elbe."

Across from the Georgentor is Dresden's oldest river crossing, the Augustusbrücke, which has joined the two sides of the Elbe at this location since the thirteenth century. The bridge leads to Dresden's Neustadt. Many tourists never learn that the Neustadt was originally Dresden's Altstadt (Old City). After it was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1685, the new city designed for this side of the Elbe was called "Neue Königsstadt" (New King's City) by its architect, Wolf Caspar von Klengel, and later became known simply as the Neustadt. At this time the portion of the city on the other side of the Elbe was christened the Altstadt.

Dresden's Neustadt was significantly less damaged by the 1945 bombing than the old city center, so many of its historic buildings still stand, although they are sadly dilapidated. Nonetheless, the narrow, winding cobblestone streets and varied architecture here offer glimpses of how the old city once appeared. The Neustadt is also where a golden statue of August I, sitting astride a Lippizaner⁷,

7. The breed of horse favored by the Spanish Riding School.

faces east and the Elector's kingdom Poland. The Golden Rider, as this statue is known, is positioned at the foot of Dresden's second main pedestrian thoroughfare, the Hauptstraße (Main Street), a wide promenade lined by shops and cafes. The Hauptstraße was designed to be significantly wider at its entrance than at its exit, thus creating the illusion of sweeping length and breadth.

A stroll along this pleasant, tree-shaded walkway leads tourists past the Dreikönigskirche built from 1732-39 by George Baehr, the architect of the Frauenkirche, and Pöppelmann, another important architect of the era.⁸ At the other end of the Hauptstraße stands a monument in commemoration of Soviet soldiers fallen in the war against fascism.

Returning from the Neustadt to the Altstadt, visitors stroll around the foot of the elegant Hofkirche, the Catholic cathedral built from 1739 to 1755 in the style of the Italian baroque. Despite the fact that Protestantism was born in Saxony, in 1697, four decades after the end of the thirty years' war, August I converted to Catholicism in order to improve his chances for winning the Polish crown. The cathedral was built shortly after his conversion and now contains the legacy of his descendants--literally. The coffins of forty-nine former Wettin rulers and their kin are stored there, with the exception of August II. While

8. The important role this church played in the Wende is described in Chapter Five.

he was buried in Cracow his heart was returned to Dresden and its desiccated remains hang in a silver capsule on the wall of the cellar.

Just around the corner is the Semper Oper, the 19th century opera house in which Wagner's "The Flying Dutchman," Strauss' "Der Rosenkavalier" and other masterpieces premiered. Here tourists pause for pictures around the equestrian statue of King Johann, an amateur translator of Dante, which prevails over the plaza in front of the opera house.

Like most of Dresden's monumental architecture, the Semper Oper has been built and rebuilt many times as well. Originally finished in 1841, it was destroyed by fire in 1869. The second opera house was completed in 1878. It stood sixty-seven years until 1945 when it was destroyed again. Relying on old sketches and plans, architects and construction workers completed the third opera house in 1985. It was reopened on the fortieth anniversary of the bombing of Dresden in an elaborate ceremony attended by numerous dignitaries, including Erich Honecker.

After visiting the opera house, our tourists continue to Zwinger. This palace, built by August I from 1709 to 1732, was designed to encompass an enormous courtyard suitable for equestrian tournaments and other royal pastimes. Destroyed during World War II, it was rebuilt in the postwar period though certain details have yet to be finished. Numerous carved figures from myth and legend

have not yet been restored to their final location. They stand in a group on one of the upper walkways and their assemblage looks for all the world like a charming social affair attended by cherubs and sprites. Another notable sight in Zwinger is the recently restored Gemäldegalerie (picture gallery) which houses Dresden's trove of rare paintings and other fine arts collected primarily by August I and August II.

From Zwinger, the now tired and footsore tourists stroll back past the Hofkirche and the Georgentor to the end of the tour, the Fürstenzug (Parade of Princes)--a 330-foot-long mosaic on the wall of Augustusstraße. Composed of 24,000 tiny tiles of Meissen porcelain, the mosaic illustrates generations of royalty from the house of Wettin. The Fürstenzug was conceived as part of the celebration of the 800th anniversary of Wettin princes and kings in 1889; it was finished in 1907. The parade marches from right to left; it is led by the past while the "present" of the early 20th century straggles on foot behind centuries of mounted royalty.

Street vendors and a barrel-organ player congregate in the alley beneath the Fürstenzug. The organist is a red-cheeked man from a nearby village who, after I told him I was from New York, said he dreams of playing his organ there. Vendors market a variety of semiprecious stones mined from deposits in the nearby ore-rich hills as well as souvenirs of Dresden. Most of the calendars and postcards

offered for sale here illustrate one of two themes--baroque Dresden or the bombing of Dresden. Socialist Dresden is noticeably absent from their racks.⁹

Late at night this historic city is empty of tourists. Floodlights illuminate the historic buildings while flocks of white river birds from the Elbe soar high above the church and palace towers. At this hour the streets are delightfully quiet except for an eerie moan animated by breezes passing across the omnipresent scaffolding. The murmurs and wails of this moan seem to summon histories quite different from the resplendent Dresden of the German Baroque with its monuments to centuries of royal affluence, cultural preeminence and international renown.

Dresden's Other Histories

Dresden's other histories include those of numerous domestic and international conflicts. Saxons often bemoan the fact that they have always made bad choices in war, siding with the eventual losers. After its citizens fought with Prussia against Napoleon, Dresden was occupied by French troops in 1806 and forced to participate in the assault on Prussia. Subsequently Saxony lost a significant amount of territory to expansionist Prussia in the Vienna Congress in 1815.

Despite this loss, Saxony's economy flourished.

9. Postcards of socialist Dresden are available in certain bookstores, particularly in the "alternative" Neustadt.

Small, primarily family-owned enterprises blossomed, producing chemicals and pharmaceutical products, candy and food, sewing machines, cameras and typewriters. The children of middle-class or elite owners of small businesses probably enjoyed the development of arts and education that took place in Dresden in the 19th century. The children of workers, in contrast, labored alongside their parents, especially when families produced piecework at home, for example finishing textiles, rolling cigars, pressing felt hats or working in any of the other numerous trades that flourished in Dresden at this time.

In the nineteenth century, class and cultural conflicts between workers, the Bürgertum and the aristocracy were expressed in cycles of economic crisis, civil unrest, liberal reform (including the ratification of Saxony's first constitution in 1831) and conservative reaction. In 1844 railroad workers struck for higher wages. The years 1845 and 1846 were marked by crop failure, while 1847 was a year of economic depression with high unemployment. Revolutionary crises in France influenced social unrest in Saxony in 1848. Dresden became a meeting place for German, Polish and Czech insurgents who, led by the Russian Mikhail Bakunin, planned a pan-German uprising which never came to pass; however a bloody uprising occurred in the city in May 1849. While the King and his ministers abandoned Dresden, Prussian troops fired upon revolutionaries and hurled them off bridges into the

Elbe.

The SDAP (Social Democratic Workers' Party) was founded in Eisenach, a Saxon city, in 1869. Karl Marx sojourned in Dresden in 1874, attended workers' meetings and visited the editors of a local socialist paper, the Dresdner Volksboten. From 1877 to 1896 socialists were represented in the Saxon parliament. The last Saxon monarch, King Friedrich August III, was forced to abdicate his throne in 1918, ending almost 1,000 years of royal dominion in the land.

There are few landmarks in Dresden that evoke the recollection of these pasts. While the names of streets and plazas in the GDR reminded Dresdners of important figures or events in socialist history, these were replaced shortly after German unification with names borne before 1933. For example, in the GDR the "Street of Liberation" led directly to "Unity Place" (and a statue of Russian soldiers in World War II). Now that socialism has been vanquished, one walks down "Main Street" to "Bautzner Place." (In 1992 the statue still stood here, though there was talk of removing it.)

There are no plaques, monuments or architectural triumphs to commemorate the ravages wrought by the economic depression that spread throughout Germany after World War I. And there are no statues or plazas that herald the success of the NSDAP (National Socialist Democratic Workers' Party) which, in 1933, won forty-five percent of

the popular vote in Saxony, three percent more than the national average.

If workers in industrial Saxony voted for the NSDAP in part because they were concerned about jobs, then they must have been pleased with the result of this election. The arms buildup initiated by the Nazi party made extensive use of the region's industrial potential. The mining of brown coal was intensified as energy needs multiplied. Textile production, paper, publishing, transportation and chemical industries, and auto manufacturing all bloomed. At the same time, however, social democrats and communists were actively and viciously persecuted, arrested, shipped to internment camps or directly executed. One respondent, who was a teenager during this time, recalled:

Germany was dominated by Fascists from 1933 until 1945. In this period the very word "socialism" was almost punishable by death. There were no books, no discussions, no gathering places, no meetings, no alternative political parties, no possibilities. Everything was fascist. In addition, casual gatherings were forbidden. If women came together to knit or sew and talk, and there was any possibility of political discussion, the meeting would be broken up and all the participants arrested. The same with men and card-playing clubs. For listening to the radio you could be arrested, interrogated and sent to a concentration camp. The smallest 'soc . . . ' [he breaks off the word "socialism"] was taboo.

Dresden's landscape contains few references to the Nazi era. One of these is a plaque, designed to resemble a menorah, that commemorates the 19th century synagogue designed by Gottfried Semper, the architect of Dresden's opera house, and decries the Kristallnacht of November 9,

1938 when the synagogue was burned to the ground. The Nazi period is also recalled by a small sign at the site of the National Socialists' biggest book-burning in Dresden. This took place on March 8, 1933 outside the Dresdner Volkszeitung, a local newspaper and publishing house.

The end of the Nazi era can be seen in the ruins still crumbling in the city's center, as well as the broad wasteland of ruts and mud located roughly between City Hall and the Rundkino, a multiplex movie theater. Here there aren't even any ruins of the Dresden that once was. There is only an empty, open field that, presumably, some day will be developed.

The Bombing of Dresden¹⁰

While Dresden was bombed several times during World War II, the four attacks that took place from February 13-15, 1945 are central in the memories of Dresdners.

The first of the four attacks was initiated at 10:03 pm on February 13, 1945 when a lead plane from the British Air Force dropped a red signal bomb only thirty to forty meters off its target, a sports stadium on the northern periphery of the city center. Two hundred forty-three planes flew in waves of sorties from the north and fanned outward from the red signal flare in a southerly to

10. The dates, times and tonnage of attacks are drawn from Bergander 1994. In addition, Weidauer 1983 was consulted for this section.

southeasterly direction, creating a triangle over Dresden's oldest streets and buildings which, at the time, were overflowing with refugees.

The city center was illuminated from the sky with what people refer to as "Christbäume" (Christmas trees). These were cones of eerie yellow light that assisted planes in finding their target. The first attack, during which a total of 1,477.7 metric tons of high-explosive demolition bombs were dropped on the city, ended before 10:30 PM and ignited such an inferno that "already, dozens of kilometers away, one could see the blood red sky, the beacon of the firestorm raging in one of the most beautiful cities of the world" (Weidauer 1983: 49).

The second wave of sorties began less than three hours later at 1:23 am on February 14. This wave, which consisted of 529 planes that dropped 1,181 metric tons of incendiary devices, was followed by a third attack approximately eleven hours later, commencing at 12:17 pm on February 14. At this time 311 planes dropped 771 metric tons of high explosive and fire bombs (combined) on parks and cemeteries where Dresdners had gathered, fleeing the firestorm in the city, and Allied soldiers machine-gunned hundreds, perhaps thousands more Dresdners from the air. Finally, on the 15th, a fourth wave of 210 planes inundated the city with 463 metric tons of explosive bombs.

The destruction of Dresden is especially controversial not only because the city's historic center was targeted,

rather than industrial or military sites, but also because, at the time, the city was overflowing with refugees, primarily women, children and the elderly.

One respondent was living with her mother and father on the outskirts of Dresden at the time of the bombing.

At the time my mother and I had train station duty here in the city. The refugees! They all came here from everywhere! The city was stuffed full! And the refugees got supplied with food and sandwiches. And we hauled trunks and got packages of sandwiches and said here are the noodles and there is the toilet, just like that. We helped. That was our work.

On that night we worked late. Then at home, in the little house, the cellar. And I saw it, they placed these Christmas trees--we called it Christmas trees, that light--that was an abominable yellow, like poison yellow. It was truly hell.

My father [who was deaf] wouldn't go in the cellar. He went outside and around. Maybe it was too spooky in the cellar. I don't know what he thought. I never asked him why he didn't go in the cellar. He didn't want to. He watched, he saw the flashes and a couple of the bombs fell near us. We had a little wash house. There was a big bathtub in the house, aluminum, you could pick it up easily. And he stood at the wall of the house and he took the bathtub and held it in front of himself. He stood and watched. He told us! Sure, we had luck nothing happened to him, but oh was I scared!

My mother had two buckets from the wash house with cardboard over them, so you could sit in the cellar. So there was a place to sit, and a very small light. And so it started, the first attack. Then it started again with the second. Then there was the fire, and the high explosive demolition bombs, the detonation, and nothing happened to us! The Elbe was between us [and the city center], these shockwaves, they came from the other side! And from pretty far away too, they came under the Elbe, the earth, these waves, these waves from the explosive force! We felt them in the cellar! Kilometers away! Oh that makes you afraid! In my fear, and that helped, in my fear I crawled under a board.

And then there was the all-clear signal. No, there was no all-clear. But at some point you noticed that the noise stopped. But then there were the sparks, they flew over the Elbe, over the meadows, from kilometers away. A lot of the houses near us

were damaged from the explosive force, walls and windowpanes broken.

And then there was the next one [the next attack]. The next one came, and then our street was grey with people. The sidewalk was too small! The entire street, its entire width was a Völkerwanderung [migration of people]. And how they looked! Grey and dirty and tired and they hardly had anything with them at all.

Many published accounts of the bombing are available for those who wish to read more such stories (Friedrich 1990, Hoffmann 1956, Landeshauptstadt Dresden (ed.) 1994, McKee 1982; Seydewitz 1955, Weidauer 1983). Hundreds of unpublished oral histories have been collected in Dresden by members of the group "13. Februar 1945" (excerpts have been published in Neutzner 1994). Photographic records are available as well (Schaarschuch 1945, Fischer 1990). All of these accounts tell the same story and all have the same horrifying conclusion: a once beautiful city left a moonscape of smoking ash and rubble, and tens of thousands of residents and refugees cremated by the fire. Corpses that remained were hauled to public squares such as the Neumarkt, heaped onto each other, showered with fuel and set ablaze.

There was little time for mourning after the city was bombed. Already, as the last fires were extinguished, the sound of hammers and chisels against brick and mortar echoed across the acres of ruins. Dresden's "Trümmerfrauen" (literally "rubble-women") bent over on their hands and knees and began the excruciatingly laborious process of scraping bricks clean and stacking

them for use in the reconstruction.

Gerhart Hauptmann, a local poet who observed the bombing of Dresden from a hill overlooking the city, wrote,

Wer das Weinen verlernt hat, der lernt es wieder
beim Untergang Dresdens. . . .
Von Dresden aus . . . sind herrliche Ströme durch
die Welt geflossen, und auch England und Amerika haben
durstig davon getrunken. Haben sie das vergessen?¹¹

Numerous controversies over the bombing ensued in the decades after the war. Why was Dresden bombed at all? Did the United States actually plan to drop an atomic bomb on Dresden? How many people died in the bombing, and which bombing resulted in more casualties--the bombing of Dresden or of Hiroshima? Did Dresden "deserve" to be bombed as punishment for the horror inflicted on Europe by the Wehrmacht? Some of the different positions taken include¹²:

The Soviets urged the British and American air force to bomb Dresden in order to punish the Germans.

Dresden was bombed because the British and Americans anticipated that Dresden would be occupied by the Soviets after the war. They wanted to make the postwar period as difficult as possible for the Soviets, hence they sought to destroy the city.

The British and Americans bombed Dresden as a punitive act for Germany, and as revenge for Luftwaffe attacks in Britain, but with no urging by the Soviets.

11. "He who has forgotten how to cry learns again with the ruin of Dresden. . . . Delicious streams have flowed out of Dresden throughout the world and England and America have drunk thirstily from them too. Have they forgotten that?" Hauptmann 1950: 109.

12. These are summarized in Seydewitz 1955 and Lehweß-Litzmann 1963.

The bombing of Dresden was intended to intimidate the Soviet Union during the Yalta conference and facilitate negotiations in favor of Britain and the United States. The fact that the conference ended on February 11 and Dresden was bombed on February 13 and 14 can be explained by the fact that the bombing had been delayed several times due to poor weather conditions.

Dresden was bombed as a result of the cold-blooded, imperialistic aspirations of Great Britain and the United States for territory and influence in postwar Germany and Europe. The bombing was supposed to impede Soviet progress across Germany, thereby increasing the amount of territory the British and Americans would occupy after the war beyond those boundaries set at Yalta.

With respect to the question concerning the atomic bomb, there is speculation that this weapon was intended for Dresden but that delays in its development prevented it from being used in Europe (Neues Deutschland 1965: 4). Motivation behind the use of the atomic bomb in Europe might have been to intimidate the Soviet Union in anticipation of subsequent, postwar negotiations.

Estimates of the number of dead range from a low of 35,000 to a high of 400,000 though 35,000 is the number most commonly given. One rumor holds that Soviet occupation forces recorded 135,000 dead and the initial "1" was later lost in a typographical error. David Irving reported 135,000 in The Destruction of Dresden (1963) but then revised his claim to 25,000 in the London Times on July 7, 1966.¹³

After Irving's initial claim of 135,000 dead,

13. He justified his revision with the claim that he had received new, more accurate information (Irving 1966).

subsequent discussions of the bombing in American and West German newspapers elevated the number to the figure of 400,000 mentioned above. Purportedly, extreme rightists were most disappointed by the later revision to a lower figure, claiming that

"While the number of dead Jews can't ever be high enough, it appears that certain people value holding the number of dead Germans as low as possible, and this even though no one demands reparation for them [the Germans]" (quoted in Bachmann 1966: 128).

Finally, an additional consideration in the manipulation of numbers of dead is the emergence of social movements against nuclear war. A higher number of casualties in Dresden, for example 135,000, makes the bombing of Dresden appear to be worse, in terms of loss of life, than the bombing of Hiroshima in which supposedly 70,000 to 80,000 lost their lives.¹⁴ With these numbers the anti-nuclear movement could be assured that atomic warfare is not significantly deadlier than warfare with conventional weapons.

Two footnotes to the story of the bombing of Dresden should be noted. Today, Dresden and Coventry, England are sister cities. In correspondence in the 1950s the mayors of these cities expressed sorrow for losses suffered during World War II. The letters also communicated hope that Germany will be reunited and that Germany and Europe can live together harmoniously in the future. In a different

14. This figure does not take into account subsequent deaths due to illness caused by exposure to radiation.

correspondence the mayors of Dresden and Hiroshima voiced profound concern at the development of the hydrogen bomb and appealed to the world for peace.¹⁵

The final, disturbing footnote to the bombing of Dresden is an event that transpired in 1992. On May 31 of this year, Great Britain's beloved, ninety-one year-old Queen Mother unveiled a nine foot tall bronze statue of Marshall Sir Arthur Harris, also known as "Bomber" Harris. Commander of the British Air Force during World War II, Harris ordered the air attacks against German cities from 1942 to 1945, including the bombing of Dresden. While the Queen Mother urged Britains to remember Harris with "pride" and "thankfulness," in Dresden Mayor Herbert Wagner laid a wreath at the foot of the Frauenkirche in remembrance of the dead. Protests against the dedication of the statue also took place in Hamburg, Köln and other German cities destroyed by Allied bombing raids (Sächsische Zeitung 1992c).

In a newspaper editorial Bernd Kuska observed that the commemoration of Harris, the "Butcher of Dresden," was unfortunate, particularly in light of impending European unification, and that it clearly was the most inappropriate method of facilitating international understanding in Europe today. He added:

It is precisely examples such as this that make clear

15. These letters are reproduced in Seydewitz 1955: 359-368.

what differences and deficits exist between nations in the working-through and evaluation of such historical periods (Kuska 1992).

The ethnographic excursion "Ruins and Remains" depicts the centrality of the memory of the bombing of Dresden to the city's identity and describes how that night was recalled and ritually commemorated in 1992. Yet despite the unimaginable destruction and suffering caused by the bombing, and the overwhelming importance of this memory to the city, it comprises just one moment in the history of Dresden during World War II. Then, after the war, the city would undergo four more decades of change before the Wende in 1989.

Dresden after 1945

Russian troops marched into Dresden on May 8, 1945, initiating the Soviet "liberation" or "occupation" (depending on one's point of view) negotiated at Yalta. One respondent, who was about twenty-five at the time, remembered:

Well, that was a liberation from war, the bombs wouldn't come any more. Naturally we would have preferred it if the Americans had come to us. But they were allied, the Americans and the Soviets, and Berlin was in the middle, and we are here.

But if the end of the war brought relief, it brought new problems as well. One woman recalled,

We were sleeping. Then it started with "rum, rum, rum," [she imitates a drum roll]. That was the army, the Russians. And we slept peacefully. You knew-- yes, it's the Russians.

It must have been the next day, I had to go

shopping. It was clear to me that the war was over. The war was gone. Ah, it was such a light feeling, although I hadn't noticed before that I was feeling any pressure. That lasted [while I walked] about three hundred meters. Then I got to the first store and there, in front of it, was a drunken Russian soldier. All at once the light feeling was gone. So that was it. I just felt pressure gone--then pressure back. New problems--drunken Russians.

There were other problems beside drunken Russians. At the same time that an enormous amount of housing had been lost in the bombing, refugees poured into Dresden from East Prussia, Poland and the Sudetenland. Families were required to double-up, sharing their homes and apartments with strangers.

"Naturally," respondents explained to me, "there were problems that stemmed from the strain of living in such close quarters with strangers." Food was a source of great tension due to extreme shortages after the war. Arguments that resulted were often petty in nature, such as bickering over who got to cook whose dinner first. Some people, in anticipation of possible air raids, had prepared by storing precious possessions and supplies with family or friends in outlying areas. In such cases families had emergency accommodations prearranged and did not have to move in with strangers.

Hunger was pervasive, though farmers and families who were fortunate enough to have a plot of land available for gardening suffered less than others. Those in Dresden who had no gardens cultivated land along the banks of the Elbe as ration cards limited the quantities of goods families

could receive. One woman recalled a verse:

"Es geht alles vorüber es geht alles vorbei, auf jeden
Dezember folgt wieder ein Mai." Also das war normal.
Dann haben sie gesagt, "Es geht alles vorüber, es geht
alles vorbei, ab Abschnitt Dezember gibts wieder ein
Ei."¹⁶

Even three years later, when the H.O. (Handelsorganisation, GDR stores) opened in 1948, food and goods remained scarce and expensive:

After the war everyone was ruined. You can't imagine that. You've never experienced that kind of hunger, the struggle to get food, a roof, some clothes. Sure there were ration cards but even if you had stamps for so much bread, so much fat, etc., a lot of the time the supplies weren't there and things had to be exchanged.

I worked then; I was learning to be a plumber. I was a simple apprentice and my boss, who was a master, would go into the store and, because he was a master, come out with a whole loaf of bread under his arm. I, on the other hand, didn't even get a slice. I had to take a bag and go out to a village and try and get some bread there, some potatoes. There would be hundreds of people standing around the edge of a harvested field waiting. Then, when they could, they would crawl through the dirt, sifting it to find a forgotten potato, a carrot. We gathered acorns in the woods, dried and roasted them to make coffee.

Despite the intense and pervasive hunger, many of the older women with whom I spoke worked to clear the city:

On the pile of rubble, yes we all worked there, cleaning up the bricks. And then we had to dismantle the railroad--that was material [for reparations to the Soviet Union], the tracks and the wood ties. And the ones from Siberia, the Mongolians, they stood guard and watched to make sure that we worked hard.

When I asked if they had gotten paid for their work this

16. Approximately: "'It all goes by, it all goes away. After every December again comes a May.' That was normal. Then they said, 'It all goes by, it all goes away. After every December you again get an egg'."

woman laughed while her husband shouted in the background,
 "No, we were brothers! Brothers!"¹⁷

"Later we got extra ration cards. A piece of meat or a pound of bread or something else extra for the work," she added.

This is affirmed by Wotte and Hoyer who note that the rubble in the city was cleared primarily by women, but that on weekends "often as many as 80,000, even 100,000 volunteers lent a hand."¹⁸ Here the word "volunteers" has to be understood in the unique context of socialist society where, when work was unremunerated, numerous social and political pressures compelled individuals to participate.

Herr Kleiber, who was a child at the end of the war, was born in East Prussia. In 1943 he, his mother and his two brothers fled west before the advancing Russian army. His father had already died on the front.

In February 1945 my mother, my brother and I were standing on a railroad platform of a small village on the outskirts of Dresden. My other brother, who was already sixteen, had been drafted into the Volkssturm¹⁹ in the meantime. My wife is from the so-called Sudetenland. Both of our families were refugees fleeing along the same route--we first met on that railroad platform in 1945. That's where we were when Dresden was bombed. We saw the whole sky light up. It was so . . . the sky was . . . [he pauses, unable to continue, then sighs].

When the planes and the bombs finally stopped coming my mother, my brother and I continued to a

17. A reference to socialist solidarity.

18. Wotte and Hoyer 1978: 65.

19. Defensive troops established in Germany near the end of the war.

small village where we were taken in by farmers. That's where we were when the war ended. It was insane, the chaos then. The farmers really didn't want us, but every town had to take in so many families. Eventually we were redistributed and that's how we came to live here. We've been here ever since.

No one was happy to see us, the refugees that is. The farmers had their own problems and everything revolved around getting food. Now and then people stole, that's clear. So we were hated. It was especially hard on older people like my mother--my oldest brother had found us again so she had three sons and no husband.

A pastor reflected on ideological conditions after the war as these were salient to him as a young Christian:

And so bit by bit we came under a new ideology again, the one of the Red Army of all things and Communism. But somehow I spent two or three years working through my childhood [in Nazi Germany] in that I took on a very, very strong anti-fascist but also an anti-militaristic attitude.

As young Christians we were prepared to help establish a new order. A more humane order. What bothered me as a Christian was that Christianity was always discredited and people spoke badly about it, and also that belief and knowledge were always represented as contradictory. I found the new wave that came in East Germany in about 1948 ideologically to be a return to what fascism was. And that means, when you understand fascism, no freedom of speech, no freedom of conscience, no freedom of belief, and the persecution of people who think differently. And that began again.

These, then, were the pervasive problems of the post-war period: hunger, inadequate housing, migration compelled by the military end-game being played out on the fronts, surviving the loss of loved ones who died in battles and bombings, intimidation by drunken Russian soldiers, subordination to guards, social chaos and ideological repression. On October 7, 1949, almost two and one-half years later, the German Democratic Republic was founded,

purportedly the culmination of the previous one hundred years of struggle in socialist and communist politics.

After 1945 "reforms" were pushed through, first by the Soviet occupation regime, later by the Socialist Unity Party (SED). These effected radical changes in every area of Saxony's formerly blooming economy and dynamic political life. I provide two versions of this history in order to emphasize the degree to which political agendas and ideological constraints influence the representation of past events and processes. The first version is from Wotte and Hoyer (1978) who present a socialist point of view intended specifically for visitors to Dresden²⁰; the second is from Blaschke (1991a and 1991b) who presents an extremely critical view published after the Wende.

According to Wotte and Hoyer, the most important tasks in the immediate postwar period included restoring water and gas to the city of Dresden, clearing roadways, and establishing a new system for the distribution of ration cards.

Following the initiative of the anti-fascist, democratic forces with "Activists of the First Hour" at the lead, numerous helpers in the reconstruction cleared roads through the rubble of the inner city, reestablished local public transportation, and worked to provide provisional accommodations for the numerous bombed-out people and migrants who came into the city (Wotte and Hoyer 1978: 65).

In August 1945 only 16,000 people worked in production in the city but by the end of the year the number had doubled.

20. Wotte and Hoyer 1978 is a guide book.

"Thanks to the help of the Soviet Commander" Dresden's cultural life was reestablished as early as May 22, 1945 when a daily newspaper was launched (Wotte and Hoyer 1978: 66). The Dresden Philharmonic and the Boys' Choir of the Kreuzkirche gave their first concerts after the war during the summer of 1945.

Throughout the entire Soviet Occupation Zone the KPD (communist party) and the SPD (social democrats) united as the SED (Socialist Unity Party) in April 1946. This was a "decisive prerequisite" for the working class to be able to "realize the establishment of democracy and socialism through its Marxist-Leninist Party" (Wotte and Hoyer 1978: 66). The majority of the population of Dresden supported this measure

in a decision of the people for the disempowerment of monopoly capitalists and war criminals. With this was achieved an important foundation for the development of anti-fascist relations and for the collectivization of the means of production (Wotte and Hoyer 1978: 66).

The first five-year plan was "successfully concluded" in 1955 (Wotte and Hoyer 1978: 67). Then, at the third party conference in March 1956, the SED set forth its objectives for the second five-year plan. Now the scientific-technical revolution would gather momentum particularly through the mechanization and automation of production in different industrial sectors, and also through the development of nuclear technology and energy in the region supported by the local mining of uranium.

The economic sectors targeted for intensive

development in Dresden included electronics, data processing, optics and photography, consumer goods, foods (meat, beer and sweets), and pharmaceuticals. Industrial development and economic expansion consistent with socialist theory required the appropriation of individually held businesses and factories and their reorganization into Kombinate, or large firms created out of the coupling of numerous production locations and administrative centers. This effort peaked in 1972 when the owners of the remaining private, small and medium sized firms were compelled to "voluntarily" surrender their businesses to the state.

Wotte and Hoyer also comment on the reconstruction of the city, including the development of new housing, schools and recreational centers, as well as the restoration of historic monuments such as Zwinger. They note that the ruin of the Frauenkirche would be incorporated into the design of the Neumarkt as a Mahnmal or memorial. In 1955 works of art began to be returned to Dresden from the Soviet Union where they had been stored during the war. Educational institutions were reopened; the former Technical College became the Technical University in 1961. New research institutes were established such as the physics institute "Manfred von Ardenne." Wotte and Hoyer conclude their essay with the claim that Dresden "has again become a city of art, culture and science" (Wotte and Hoyer 1978: 71).

Blaschke has an entirely different point of view on

the postwar period in Dresden and Saxony. He refers to socialist economic theory as "dogmatic"; sarcastically notes that paradisiacal conditions were supposed to prevail under socialism; that certain propagandistic slogans were "primitive"; and that, four decades later, when the GDR collapsed, its end was "ignominious" (Blaschke 1991a: 7). He also makes important observations about particular reforms and their effects in different social and economic sectors in Saxony, stating that

[i]f it had been possible to rebuild the Saxon economy after the war with old property relations [private property], with experienced leadership and in association with the old pan-German and international relations, then the economic consequences of the war would have been overcome here as rapidly as in the Ruhr region (Blaschke 1991b: 37).

"Reform" in the industrial sector was initiated in the summer of 1946 with the appropriation of privately held factories and businesses and their transformation into socialist cooperatives. With "threats, slander, discrimination, administrative violence and individual terror" the SED sought to achieve its goal, dictated by Marxist theory, of eradicating private property (Blaschke 1991b: 37). Competent managers and administrators were replaced by personnel selected more for political-ideological acquiescence than professional expertise. In 1972 collectivization in the industrial sector was completed with a final push against small and middle-sized businesses that was declared a "victory for socialist relations of production" (Blaschke 1991b: 38). With this

the middle class was effectively eliminated; social inequalities were minimized and the overall level of social class was reduced to that of a proletariat subordinated to the planned economy (Blaschke 1991b: 38).

The interest in property and profit as an essential driving force for an efficient economy was supposed to be replaced by a "Socialist Consciousness" corresponding to the utopian, unrealistic view of man in Marxism (Blaschke 1991b: 38).

Planning the planned economy, and administering it, required engaging tens of thousands of politically compliant or even enthusiastic bureaucrats in factories and at multiple social levels. An additional factor in the "development" of industrial production in the GDR was that

the communists, contrary to their own theory, pursued ideological goals more and more in place of economic ones, subjecting the economy to irrelevant, uneconomic forces (Blaschke 1991b: 38).

Progress toward these ideological goals required that workers, managers, administrators and bureaucrats in industry spend an inordinate amount of time on social and political activities, rather than practical matters that would have facilitated the production and distribution of goods for use or sale.²¹ An additional problem is that, as mentioned above, managers and functionaries often had

21. One joke went as follows: on the occasion of the 750th anniversary of Berlin, Erich Honecker wanted to establish a brothel with five women, the oldest of whom was to be the Madam. She declined the post saying, "One of the women will represent the SED, the other will be busy with union activities, the third will be the liaison to the FDJ [youth organization] and the fourth will lead the women's association. I will have to fulfill the Plan alone!

little or no experience in the fields in which they were employed but had won their positions through the manipulation of political connections.

On the physical condition of the city and housing, Blaschke holds the opinion that the slow but ongoing deterioration of the city's housing after 1945 resulted in damage and loss more significant than that resulting from the bombing of Dresden in 1945 (Blaschke 1991b: 38). A particular problem stemmed from the state's reluctance to permit rent increases over the years to generate a fund for repairs and maintenance. As a result, many private homeowners were unable to rely on rental income to maintain their property and were compelled to turn it over to the state, despite the fact that the state had neither the expertise nor the capital to fulfill maintenance functions. As housing deteriorated, so did the city's infrastructure, particularly streets and railroads. Modernization of water, electricity and telephone services was not initiated.

The mining and burning of brown coal for electrical energy, desperately needed for industrial production, resulted in the expansion of strip-mines in Saxony. This necessitated the relocation of local populations and the eradication of villages. The coal was not only mined but also burned in a manner which can be described only as utterly contemptuous of the environment.

The environmental problem didn't accord at all with

the world view of the SED which was dominated by unadorned optimism and the focus on accomplishment; it was simply repressed and completely silenced in public (Blaschke 1991b: 39).

Research on environmental pollution, including its effects on local populations, was top secret. Smog warnings were prohibited in order to protect the public from anxiety and concern. And Blaschke calls the casual handling of radioactive substances from uranium mining in Saxony a "crime against the health of the local population" (Blaschke 1991b: 39).

Blaschke concludes by summarizing some of the severe problems Saxony faced immediately after the Wende. These problems, which comprise the "ethnographic present" of this study, include loss of experienced technical and scientific personnel to West Germany; the inability of local industry to compete with the far more sophisticated, wealthy and well-established firms of the west; and the loss of the GDR's primary export market, Soviet-bloc nations. He blames the "unsuitable theory" and the "incompetent functionaries" that prevailed in the GDR, and he refers to Saxony's present-day inheritance from the SED-dominated era as "sad" (Blaschke 1991b: 39).

The history of these most recent decades can be identified by landmarks viewed by few visitors partly because they are not included in guide books. Two of these are a kind of anti-landmark--that is the dilapidation of streets and housing that resulted from decades of neglect,

and the pervasive grey soot staining almost all buildings, stemming from decades of exposure to the smoke from burning coal.

Other landmarks are present by virtue of their absence. For example, when studying old maps and descriptions of Dresden, one frequently encounters references to a beautiful, twin-spired gothic church, the Sophienkirche, which dated back to at least 1265 and originally was attached to a Franciscan "Barefoot" cloister. Yet attempts to locate this medieval treasure are in vain. The Sophienkirche was badly damaged by the 1945 bombing. After the war, the GDR mobilized enormous resources in the form of raw materials, labor and capital to rebuild Zwinger, the Semper Oper, Prager Straße and other sites. But no money could be found to reconstruct this 700 year-old church. Eventually, despite widespread public protest, it was bulldozed by the socialist government in a heavily policed Nacht und Nebel action in the early 1960s and replaced with a squat, square socialist office building.

Finally, the end of socialism in the GDR left behind a host of particularly curious landmarks--shadowy lettering on walls and buildings where signs for socialist enterprises once hung. The surfaces on which the signs were hung were stained by decades of exposure to soot; then, when the signs were removed, patterns spelling out words such as "Kombinat" or "SED" remained, ghostly

reminders of a history that had just recently passed.

Conclusion

As Dresden's physical landscape has been constructed and reconstructed many times, its ideological landscape has undergone numerous revisions as well. In different historical periods empowered groups (such as ruling political parties) have imposed advantageous renditions of history on the population through different practices including destroying or renovating monuments, or renaming streets and plazas.

For this reason the city can be viewed in part as a domain in which different groups vie for self-definition and dominance through the manipulation of its material and symbolic resources. Historical events and processes summarized in this chapter are literally and metaphorically incorporated into and inscribed upon the city. Even where monuments are absent (for example, the Lenin statue or the Sophienkirche) there are signs or evidence of their former presence (the new concrete slabs where Lenin stood, old maps that indicate the location of the church).

In order for a coherent or uniform view of this place to emerge, selective vision and historical amnesia must play a central role in the perception of it. For example, many of Dresden's most important monuments have been destroyed and rebuilt several times. To conceive of these structures as having an unvarying identity is to disregard

the fact that there have been, for example, five Kreuzkirchen (plural) or three opera houses. Thus, to the extent that the city is defined by its physical landscape, its identity is constructed not through historical continuity but through the illusion of such continuity.

At the same time those people who live and move through this city must settle upon an orientation to it that is practical, meaningful and appealing. This need underlies what one woman explained to me as the "Dresden syndrome." Dresdners don't see the ugly apartment buildings, she said, or the faceless testimonials to socialist architecture. What they see is the opera house, the Brühlsche terrace.

"They think of the myth of what the city was and they hope, dream, of what it might be again . . . someday."

But not all Dresdners are beguiled by the romance of resplendent Dresden, the "Florence on the Elbe." The city embodies other myths as well. These include the origins of German socialism in Saxony, as well as the hard work and suffering of men and women who (literally) rebuilt the city after the end of World War II and the aspirations they attached to the GDR. In the next excursion I describe such recollections shared with me by a woman I had just met. As we ride through the city on a streetcar, she remembers the past and criticizes the present inspired, in part, by what she sees as she looks out the window.

ETHNOGRAPHIC EXCURSION: FRAU "ESPERANTO"**Saturday June 21**

The Buntesrepublik Neustadt¹ festival took place this weekend. I arrived in the Neustadt around 5:00 pm and wandered through the crowd. The streets were packed with thousands of people all dressed up in their Saturday festival best--there were punks with torn jeans and jackets and army boots and pins in their noses as well as hippies with saggy, baggy pants and dresses. In general, very little leather and a great deal of cotton made the scene today. Some of the men and women in the crowd wore red, green or violet hair in braids or decorated with beads. A noticeable number of people wandered the streets in bare feet. Lots of children were being toted around in various types of wagons and, occasionally, backpacks.

The air was very festive. Shops displayed their wares on the sidewalks; two women demonstrated basket weaving; at one booth there were ceramic vases, cups and plates for sale. A huge truck that was going to take food, clothes and medicine to the Kurds somewhere was parked along the sidewalk--along with buckets of paint and brushes so that anyone who wanted to could decorate the truck and donate money for the trip. The group needed 2,500 DM to go. There were outdoor cafes set up as well as tables where t-shirts, buttons, flags and bumper stickers were being sold.

1. "Colorful Republic Neustadt"--a pun on Bundesrepublik Deutschland.

Further along, at Martin-Luther-Platz, thirty or forty organizations and groups had booths. DT 64² was there, as well as the local society for Jewish history, a number of ecology groups and alternative political organizations, both of Dresden's Women's Centers and the local Esperanto society where I stopped to chat for a bit.

Artists and theater groups also had booths--these were especially popular with children who could etch and print a copper plate, get their faces painted in theatrical makeup or, at another booth, glue pieces of string and other odds and ends to a piece of board, slop paint over the board, press another sheet of paper on top, then run the whole thing through a roller so that the things and the paint left a colorful impression on the surface paper. The children oohed and aahed with delight when their "art" came out of the press.

A local band was playing some variety of punk or metal music whose only distinguishing feature was its volume. The man running the copper etching booth complained that the music was "aggressive" and a number of people surrounding him agreed. When the band finally finished a group of Latino students put on a salsa show that was received much more favorably.

A troupe of performers with white clown faces performed the Christ story. Jesus was scorned, beaten up,

2. The GDR's youth radio station.

then crucified. After he rose from the dead he picked up a microphone to talk about how all of us should hear his message and live in the Christian way. One bystander commented that the troupe was made up of Jehovah's Witnesses and Wessis³--it was difficult to tell from her tone of voice which she thought was worse.

Three different drumming parades were the highlight of the festival. The first group was dressed entirely in silver and white. They marched and drummed, with hundreds of people dancing behind them, down Boehmische Straße to Alaun Straße to the Scheune⁴ where they drummed for a long time.

The next parade was even more of a show. Six or eight women and one man marched, drumming, wearing resplendent papier-mâché parrot hats with long silk scarves floating down their backs like so many dazzling tropical feathers. They drummed and chanted and chanted and drummed in place for a long time, and only later paraded down Boehmische Straße. Finally, at the very end of the day, another drumming parade came by, this one made up of children who had designed and created colorful masks at an African mask table. They marched and sang to rhythm made with gongs, bells, rattles and other instruments.

Finally it was time to go home. As I waited at the

3. A derogatory term for West Germans.

4. A bar, dance hall, and theater.

streetcar stop for the number eleven, I recognized the woman from the Esperanto table with whom I'd spoken earlier. Her lined face and long, thin, grey ponytail betrayed the fact that she was no longer young. Her clear, bright blue eyes had a magnetic effect, drawing my attention to her when she spoke. They also reflected the unusual blue color of her dress.

"Good evening!" she said, thrilled to see me again. I moved over to give her room on the bench; she sat down. I had just been looking at the pamphlet she'd given me. Wanting to be polite, I asked how she'd gotten interested in Esperanto.

The woman heard my American accent and replied, "You speak a little foreign. Are you a foreigner?" I said indeed I was, and told her that I was from New York City.

She asked, "Well, have you read a little about German history?" When I assured her that I had, she continued, "Does the year 1933 say anything to you?"

"Naturally!" I replied, astonished that she could think that it wouldn't.

"Well," she continued, "I was born in 1927. 1933 was the year I started school; it was also the year that my father was arrested. My father was a Communist; 'they' arrested him. A couple years later my uncle, my father's brother, told me about Esperanto. 'Just imagine,' he said, 'it's a language that could unite all the peoples of the world! If everyone would learn Esperanto as their second

language then everyone could communicate with everyone else in the world! Just imagine!' And I imagined--that was incredible, fantastic!"

"Do you mean the idea of it?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, "the idea that all the peoples of the world could be united through this language!"

She paused to tell me about the history of Esperanto--that it was developed in 1887 by a Polish man; that there are Esperanto societies all over the world; that the 100th anniversary meeting of Esperanto was in Poland in 1987 and that she had been there.

"Did you know that Esperanto was banned under Hitler and Stalin?" she asked. I didn't, and asked why.

"Because it was a dictatorship," she explained. "When you are a dictator you don't want the people to have any information, you don't want them to know about anything, to think about anything except you. You are God; you want to keep the people . . ." She gestured with her hands, pressing them down as if to contain something. "Stalin was a dictator too. We didn't know that until later--at the beginning we looked to the East, we looked to Russia and to Stalin and the Communists as the people that were going to rescue us from Hitler. But did you know that Stalin had communists shot and arrested too?"

"Yes, I've heard," I replied. "In fact I've heard that Stalin killed more Communists than Hitler."

Suddenly the woman looked wounded. "No," she said

firmly, shaking her head. "No, that can't be true; that isn't true. But it is true that Stalin was a dictator too and that's what was wrong with the GDR; it was stalinistic. But it isn't true," she said, almost crying, "it isn't true what they now say, that the GDR was worse than the Nazi dictatorship. That isn't true at all!"

The streetcar came; the woman and I boarded. She sat next to me, opened her bag, and began pulling books, pamphlets and games out of it. She showed me the program from the 1987 100th Esperanto anniversary conference, the program for the conference in Vienna she planned to attend that summer, and a children's picture book with Esperanto names for dozens of animals.

"The feminine always adds an 'in'," she explained. "If 'Hund' is a male dog, what is 'Hundin'?" she quizzed me. She asked other similar questions. I passed each test. Then she explained that "ito" is the diminutive. "What is Hundito?" she asked. "What is Elephantito?" Again, I passed. "There are no irregularities!" she exclaimed. "When you study other languages you have to spend so much of your time learning the irregular cases, the irregular tenses. Esperanto is always regular!"

The Number Eleven continued on its route, cruising past the Neustadt train station, over the bridge, left at Yenidze (an erstwhile tobacco factory with a fabulous domed roof), past Zwinger, over Postplatz. She chatted on and on.

"The GDR wasn't perfect," she said, "we had problems. But look at what we did. We picked up all the rubble from this city; we scraped the bricks clean; we built the city back up. We built housing!" She gestured to the apartment buildings we passed on the way from Postplatz to Dr.-Külz-Ring. "We built that with our own hands, our own backs. We didn't have any Marshall Plan here; we paid all the war reparations back to the Soviet Union and still we managed to rebuild the city. And now they say it's ugly, what we built. But look at that!" She pointed to a pre-fabricated trailer serving as a bank. "Can you say that's any more beautiful! It's just as ugly. It's uglier--and it's a West German bank! These people [West Germans] come in here and tell you that everything you did, everything you built is ugly and a waste and then they put up these 'container' banks all over the place, in the city we rebuilt! Let me tell you, you can get mad about it, you can get real mad about it!

"Sure we had our problems," she continued, "But I never, never thought that I might not be able to pay my rent, that I might not be able to afford to live, that I might end up on the street. Never. And now, well, social security payments are going up, but what good does that do me when the prices are going up even faster? The rent, food, everything. And what good does it do me that all the shop windows are full of things to buy when I don't want to buy anything? You can get mad," she repeated again, "real

mad." She looked angry, and her chin trembled as if she might cry.

"But," I countered, "a lot of people had political difficulties in the GDR."

"What?" she asked, as if she hadn't heard me.

I repeated my comment, carefully enunciating each word, "Viele Leute kriegten doch in der DDR politische Schwierigkeiten." She didn't respond. I tried another tactic to emphasize positive aspects of the Wende. "And isn't nice to be able to travel now to the West?"

"Travel?" she asked. "Let me tell you. Do you know where this dress came from?"

I looked at it carefully for the first time. It was blue, a stunning, deep, clear, robin's egg blue, and it was embroidered. "It is very unusual," I observed. "No, I don't know where it's from."

"Cairo!" she replied, triumphant. "I met some people here once; they were very nice. They said when you are a senior citizen maybe you can come visit us.⁵ And when I retired they wrote me a letter of invitation and everything and I went. For four weeks to Cairo! Official and everything! I was upset, of course, that I could only

5. "Erst vergreisen, dann verreisen! (First turn grey then go away!)." In the GDR it was significantly easier for senior citizens than for younger people to obtain permission to travel to "non-socialist countries." It was said that the state hoped pensioners would emigrate permanently--then the cost of their care would be shifted from East Germany to another nation.

change 50 marks for the trip. You know our money wasn't good anywhere, and I was allowed to change just 50 (GDR) marks into Deutsche marks for the trip. But I went and we spoke German the whole time--they had studied here; they spoke German like their mother tongue. Well, I felt right at home staying with them. They took me everywhere and they gave me this dress."

As we pulled into the main train station the woman began to pack all her books and pamphlets into her bag. When we stopped she was reciting the names of the pyramids she had visited in Egypt, the sites, the cities, everything. The doors opened. I said "Auf Wiedersehen!" She stepped down from the streetcar and stood on the platform. I looked out the window. The blue-eyed lady in blue stood there, waiting. As the streetcar pulled away she waved and waved and waved.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PRESENT

Introduction

It is one thing to live through the revolutionary upheaval that brings down a nation-state; it another thing to endure the subsequent tumult. Other former Soviet-bloc nations suffered impoverishment, civil war and/or partition after 1989. The GDR is fortunate in that German unification protected it from violence, bloodshed or severe privation. Nonetheless, conditions in Germany's "Five New States" were uniquely difficult as unification brought about radical transformations in virtually every domain of daily life.¹

As "Frau 'Esperanto'" illustrates, the personal difficulties experienced by individuals during this time strongly affected recollections and interpretations of the past. The woman in the streetcar appreciated certain benefits of the Wende, such as the end of travel restrictions, but she was concerned about her finances and recalled socialism as a time when she never had to worry about whether or not she could afford to pay the rent. Such concerns led many Dresdners to describe life after 1989 with the word "Unruhe" (disquiet). It was during this time that I asked people to sit with me and talk into my tape recorder about the past, the present and the future. As pervasive disquiet was the prevailing condition for many

1. Merkl (1993) is a useful, fact-filled, English language summary of outcomes of German unification.

during that year in Dresden, it was also the situational context for the oral history interviews I conducted. For this reason it is crucial to describe the "ethnographic present" of this study. I do so by sketching out some of the consequences of the Wende that shaped the year 1991-2.

While it is tempting to inundate readers with information in order to impart the same sense of numbness experienced by East Germans in the months after the Wende, I have selected topics for the following section because they meet one of these criteria: they are referred to directly or indirectly in interviews; they had a significant impact on the lives or experiences of particular respondents; or they support conclusions I draw in the final chapter. Some highly publicized topics, such as the abortion controversy, had little or no impact on respondents and, therefore, are not included in the following discussion.

After this presentation of background material (which will be familiar territory for readers already acquainted with GDR studies) I introduce the five respondents whose narratives are told most fully in the balance of this study. In the conclusion to this chapter I briefly reiterate the relevance of conditions after the Wende to an understanding of issues of memory and history in the ethnographic present of this study.

Daily Life after the Wende

As a result of the privatization of property, plummeting production and ideologically motivated layoffs, after the Wende Dresdners lost their jobs in droves. In mid-1991 slightly more than one million East Germans were officially unemployed (Die Union 1991e). In Dresden during 1991-1992 the official unemployment rate hovered around 10 percent, though this number did not include the tens of thousands of workers on short hours, zero hours, or engaged by the ABM (Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahmen, a public employment program), or workers who had been given notice but not yet fired (Die Union 1991e). Several waves of layoffs took place during 1991-1992 including one at the end of 1991. In mid-December of that year Kajo Schommer, Saxony's economic minister, estimated that by December 31, 135,000 more Saxon workers would lose their jobs. "Not enough ABM-positions" reported the Sächsische Zeitung (Sächsische Zeitung 1991n). While there were 400,000 ABM positions throughout the former GDR in 1991, and 500,000 additional positions planned for 1992, 200,000 more would be needed to accommodate the thousands of workers who would find themselves unemployed after the first of the year (Sächsische Zeitung 1991m). In January 1992 Heinrich Franke of the Federal Employment Commission estimated that, by the end of 1992, the number of unemployed workers in the East would increase by approximately 400,000 to close to 1.5 million (Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten 1992d). Again,

this number included only those East Germans officially unemployed; that is it excluded workers engaged through ABM or other "make-work" programs.

Dorothy Rosenberg summarized some of the problems faced by civil servants:

The West German civil service includes not only the judiciary, public defenders and prosecutors, postal workers and civil administrators, but university professors, teachers, doctors, and scientific researchers. And the East German system was even broader. Civil servants, or Beamte, enjoy[ed] lifetime employment as well as generous pensions and other benefits. To avoid extending these rights to former East German civil servants, who are considered to be ideologically suspect, the Bonn government has defined all former GDR federal civil servants as public employees (Angestellte) who do not share these rights. Over half a million members of these groups have been placed on a so-called "waiting list" at 70 percent of their normal salary until June 30, 1991, after which they will be fired (Rosenberg n.d.: 33-34, emphasis in original).

In other words, at the same time that East Germans are losing their jobs they are also being denied benefits such as unemployment compensation and pensions at levels equivalent to those enjoyed by West Germans. Yet the cost of living in the East is rapidly increasing and will soon equal that of western Germany. After January 1, 1990, East German subsidies for a number of products and services were ended and, with the currency union on July 1, 1990, the cost of food rose to equal or surpass that in the FRG (Neues Deutschland 1991). Rent increases of several hundred percent are expected over the next few years, and those which are carried out are "often incorrect and error-ridden" in part due to ambiguities in the new laws that

regulate the calculation of operating costs for apartment buildings (Sächsische Zeitung 1991g). East Germans turn to tenants' associations or articles in their local newspapers to learn how their rent is now being calculated, or how to interpret their new gas and electric bills.

Unemployment and increases in the cost of living affect the well-being of all segments of the population. Nonetheless certain segments are more vulnerable than others; these include the elderly, women, and workers in their late forties and fifties--too young to retire yet too old to successfully establish new careers.

"The big problem is the uncertainty" reads one newspaper headline. The article is concerned with a 55-year-old woman who worked for several decades in a factory and who describes what it is like to sit at home with no job, and no likelihood of finding another job. She observes, "At my age I won't get anything" (Sächsische Zeitung 1992g). "The Superfluous Generation" reads another headline (Sylvester 1991: 1).

Too young for the Nazis and old enough to build socialism. . . . Suddenly they aren't needed anymore. They're bought out of the production process, paid laughable sums for their experience, their worth. A generation is shoved aside (Sylvester 1991: 1).

Members of this generation who have "accepted" early retirement receive sixty-five percent of their former net income and may earn up to 30 DM a week in addition until they are eligible for pensions. From 1989 until mid-1991 men and women entering early retirement were required to

sign a statement affirming that they were "not prepared to accept challenging (zumutbare) work or to participate in challenging educational programs." This declaration, perceived as a mockery of the circumstances that forced men and women into early retirement, was later changed to

"I wish to take advantage of the opportunity to draw early-retirement income. Due to the unfavorable job market it is likely that I will not find an occupation and for this reason do not wish any more to take part in gainful activity" (quoted in Sylvester 1991: 32).

Not only have hundreds of thousands of men and women in their middle years lost their jobs in the former GDR, but women have been unemployed and forced into early retirement at a rate higher than men. In the GDR close to ninety percent of adult women (under the age of retirement) studied or worked in wage labor comprising, in June 1990, 47.7 percent of employed Dresdners (this and the following statistics are from Kruschwitz (ed.) 1991: 8-27). Almost a year later, in May 1991, 56.9 percent of the over 18,000 Dresdners registered as unemployed were women. One more month later, after the end of short hours at factories and a wave of mass layoffs, approximately 35,000 additional Dresdners, more than half of whom were women, were registered as unemployed. Yet in May 1991, only 170 of 631 Dresdner workers employed through ABM were women.

The situation in Dresden is mirrored throughout the East: in July 1991, 57 percent of unemployed people in the former GDR were women, while only 34 percent of those in ABM positions were women, and only 35 percent of those

successfully referred to jobs outside ABM were women (Sächsische Zeitung 1991i). In March 1991 94.9 percent of unemployed single parents were women who, on average, have two children (Kruschwitz (ed.) 1991: 22). These women are particularly hard hit by increases in the prices of goods and services they require as parents, including child care, clothing, school lunches and books, and after-school activities.

As of the end of 1990 more than half of the 14,000 Dresdners in early retirement were women (51 percent), while almost 75 percent of senior citizens in Dresden were women (Kruschwitz (ed.) 1991: 24). For the most part female senior citizens receive minimal pensions due to differences with men in their history of work and military service. Like single mothers, they suffer more than average from dramatic increases in the cost of living.

Dr. Helga Liebecke, a Dresdner sociologist, described the circumstances of women after the Wende in a report dated November 1991:

On the one hand the market economy requires a great deal of engagement, readiness to take risks and independence. On the other side the plunge into this system brings mass unemployment and disorientation particularly of women. Women are forced out of their professions into long-term unemployment, into the role of housewife without money and social recognition. In particular single women, and single mothers, are threatened by social decline and poverty.

Aggression and violence against women who are unwanted competitors in the job market are increasing. Men take out their frustration, their fears and hopelessness on women. Children, formerly much desired, increasingly appear to be a handicap

(Liebecke n.d.: 1).²

Liebecke's last comment suggests one of the reasons that, from 1989 to 1990, the birth rate in Saxony dropped by almost one half (Sächsische Zeitung 1991l). Dr. Joachim Weller, Chief of Reproductive Medicine at Dresden's Friedrichstadt hospital, attributed the decline to the emigration of men and women in their childbearing years, the new financial problems faced by young families and, concomitantly, the great degree of uncertainty among young people of reproductive age (Sächsische Zeitung 1991k). Children are now viewed as a financial burden and a problem, particularly for women attempting to reconcile paid work with family responsibilities without the widely available and inexpensive day care provided in the GDR (Kruschwitz (ed.) 1991: 28).

One method of controlling fertility is sterilization. Difficult to obtain in the GDR, since unification sterilization is now available in the East and authors of Dresden's Frauenbericht Dresden 1991 (Report on Women Dresden 1991) observed that the fact that all hospitals that performed sterilization of women were booked until early 1992 was a "disturbing" trend that required "deeper investigation" (Kruschwitz (ed.) 1991: 30).

Senior citizens have quite different concerns after

2. For additional perspectives on the consequences of German unification for women see Markovits (ed.) 1991-2 or Rueschemeyer 1994.

the Wende. A discussion group of the PDS (Party for Democratic Socialism, the successor party to the SED) summarized the circumstances of senior citizens in a pamphlet (Seniorenkonferenz der PDS, n.d.). The authors observed that, of 1,300 seniors polled in an informal survey, most expressed an increased sense of freedom and possibility after the Wende. Specifically they were pleased by the wide variety of consumer goods now plentifully available, liberation of the press and new opportunities to travel. Nonetheless they were troubled by disorientation and they found it difficult to adjust to the new world. They felt insecure about the future; they were disillusioned by contradictions between promises made by West German politicians and the reality of daily life after the Wende; they were worried about their children and grandchildren who were unemployed or facing unemployment; some were made anxious or angry by denunciation of the GDR and the people who had built and supported it.³ They were also deeply concerned about the possibility of "the radicalization of society that could or would want to support neo-Nazism and the ambitions of a greater Germany" (Seniorenkonferenz der PDS n.d.: 2).

There is at least one great uncertainty since the Wende that is not specific to certain segments of the

3. "Built" is used literally here, as in the postwar period millions of men and women labored to repair and reconstruct entire towns and cities destroyed in the war.

population. As West German individuals and corporations seek to regain property abandoned or sold by them at almost any time since 1933⁴, the threat of the loss of a home or apartment, or its actual loss, affects all individuals equally. It exponentially increases anxiety, despair and depression, or simply the feeling of being fertig or kaputt (totally overwhelmed, done in, broken) since the Wende.

In one family, whose case was discussed in a newspaper article, both husband and wife were unemployed when a letter arrived in the mail advising them that a West German family sought to (re)claim their house. Thirty of years of residence in this house, including a bill of sale from the East German government and twenty years of ownership, did not protect this Dresden couple from the legal challenge to their property. Over 200,000 other Saxon properties have become the focus of similar disputes and, in just one year since German unification, approximately 2,600 have been returned to their former owners (Sächsische Zeitung 1991h). Fortunately, for many Dresdners this outcome may prove to be the exception rather than the rule. Often those seeking to claim property in the East will receive financial compensation instead. The property itself will be transferred only when it can be proved that it was

4. Claims stemming from the years 1933-1945 and 1949-1989 are eligible for consideration.

purchased fraudulently or deceitfully.⁵

Aside from specific changes following the Wende such as mass unemployment, new street names or the loss of free access to abortion, a host of what could be called "circumstantial" changes have occurred. These are alterations in habits or practices of daily life taken so much for granted they are performed almost unconsciously and one becomes aware of them only when new circumstances render the habits irrelevant or wrong. One example is the disposal of waste, even the concept of what "waste" is.

The GDR had an extensive system in place for reuse and recycling. Children collected empty bottles and old newspapers from families in their neighborhoods, often as part of organized after-school activities. Bottles were returned to grocery stores from which they were shipped to plants to be washed and refilled. Paper, fabric and other materials were recycled. While the GDR's infrastructure was monotonous, shabby and deteriorated there was, on the whole, very little garbage strewn about. Now brightly colored soda cans, packaging from cigarettes, paper and plastic bags, yogurt containers and a host of other detritus overflows from garbage cans and dumpsters.

East Germans had long referred to the West as the "Weg-werf Gesellschaft" (disposable society); now the Weg-werf Gesellschaft has come to them. (More than a few

5. ". . . wenn es sich nachweislich um einen unredlichen Erwerb gehandelt hat." Sächsische Zeitung 1991h.

respondents observed that people have become disposable since the Wende too--that is tossed out of their jobs or homes as if they, too, deserve nothing more than to clog Dresden's gutters.) The "green dot," a small, circular symbol on West German products indicating that the packaging can be recycled, is new after the Wende too. It is viewed cynically by many Dresdners who recognize that much of the packaging on which it appears is unnecessary in the first place, and that recycling is more wasteful than reuse.

Awareness of such problems is spurred by newly available information. A student group "Environmental Initiative" has begun publishing Grünhorn, an occasional newsletter. A recent issue covered topics ranging from the health of the Elbe and automobile traffic in Dresden to the hazards of nuclear waste (TU-Umweltinitiative et al., eds. 1992). This information is a boon but also a burden; it educates Dresdners yet creates new anxieties, for example concerning the distribution and danger of asbestos used in construction in the former GDR (Sächsische Zeitung 1991b).

One of the most noticeable imports after the Wende is western cars. Along with new cars, used cars are finding a huge market here as they are more affordable for East Germans. Driving schools have sprung up all over and one of the results is chaos in the streets including a steep increase in the number of car accidents (Sächsische Zeitung 1991c, 1992e). An increase in the crime rate also

frightens Dresdners unaccustomed to reading such fare in their daily newspapers. Arson, muggings, rape, robbery, vandalism, and skinheads running amok through the city's streets are just some of the incidents reported on a regular basis. Elderly men and women no longer go alone to the cemetery to visit the graves of loved ones as incidents there have instilled fear in them--as well as anger at the new constraints brought about by their concern for personal safety.

Fraud has become a problem as well. "Caution! False Gasmen!" reads a local headline. The story relates an incident in which two men pretending to represent the local gas company gained entry into an apartment by showing false identification. While the tenant accompanied one of the men to the gas meter the other rifled through the living room, stealing cash and other valuables (Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten 1992b). A subtler form of deception has arrived in the East in the form of marketing ventures disguised as sweepstakes, tours and shopping trips. Participation often costs a small amount, 20 DM or so, and naive East Germans are then subjected to high-pressure sales tactics they are poorly prepared to resist.

Another trend, new since the Wende, is a wave of violence against foreigners. For several weeks during the fall of 1991, news stations broadcast nightly reports from Hoyerswerda, a small city in eastern Saxony devastated by the collapse of the brown coal industry. Marauding youths

hurled Molotov cocktails at dormitories housing immigrants and refugees while apparently indifferent police officers stood by. Finally the German government took action and "resolved" the problem--by removing the unwanted, dark-skinned foreigners. By doing so the government rewarded the violent youth and acquiescent citizens and restored to Hoyerswerda the silent despair of economic collapse. In Dresden on November 9, 1991, fifty-three years after the Kristallnacht, the monument commemorating that night of anti-Semitic terror was smeared with feces.

Also compelling to respondents with whom I spoke were political and legal controversies ongoing in the courts. In 1991-1992 Erich Honecker's fate was yet to be determined. At the time he was dwelling in Russia; a warrant for his arrest effective in Germany made it unlikely that he would return voluntarily to the former GDR. It was equally unlikely that he would be extradited to West Germany. Some speculated that he might make his final home in China (Die Union 1991c). Either way many Dresdners were bemused, to say the least, when Erich Honecker and his wife, former Minister of Education Margot Honecker, applied for the retirement pensions to which they were entitled under German law.

However, of far greater concern to Dresdners is the fate of four soldiers of the GDR People's Army who are on trial in Berlin for murder. At issue is the shooting in February 1989 of two young men attempting to flee across

the Berlin Wall; Chris Gueffroy died while his friend, Christian Gaudian, was injured in the incident. The trial is complex not the least because acts committed in one nation-state are being judged in another. The case raises legal and moral questions about the unification treaty between East and West Germany and implicates matters of constitutional law in the united Germany. Additionally, even if acts committed in the GDR are to be judged in the unified Germany, and even if these are judged solely according to law prevailing in the GDR at the time the acts were committed, applicable GDR law is subject to interpretation. One of the issues of this trial is whether or not the soldiers were constrained to shoot and, if so, if they should have shot to kill or simply to hinder the two young men (Vogt 1991).

Newspaper headlines about the case reflect these ambiguities: "Justice in the Labyrinth: Disputed Legal Status in Wall Defense Trial" (Vogt 1991); "Judged According to What Law? Constitutional Questions follow Border Trial" (Sächsische Zeitung 1991e); and "Overtaxed Justice" (Templin 1991) are just a few. Dresdners with whom I speak are sharply divided between those who feel that a universal human right to liberty should prevail at any time over the laws of a "dictatorship," and those who defend the soldiers for having performed their duty while on watch at the Wall.

The trial of the four soldiers is intensifying deeply

ambivalent feelings about political justice in the unified Germany. Nonetheless, the CDU seems so powerful that the chances of any other party such as the SPD (Social-democratic Party of Germany) or the PDS to effectively challenge the CDU and adequately represent the interests of East Germans appear to be nonexistent. Some wonder if East Germans should unite in the "Committee for Justice" being established throughout the East. An offshoot of political activity by the Brandenburg representative Peter Michael Diestel, the committee would not be a formally established political party but, rather, a citizens' forum that would seek to influence local and national politics in matters such as unemployment, rent increases, the unique problems women face as a result of unification, and so forth. Yet feelings about the Committee for Justice are mixed. Some believe it could achieve improvements in the lives of Dresdners, others find it an unnecessary political provocation in a nation clearly dominated by the CDU. Others, for whom the post-unification suppression of their democratic initiative is an all-too-recent memory, have had quite enough of "democratic" politics and wish to have nothing to do with yet another social movement.

Finally, East German radio and TV broadcasts had often been spurned in favor of signals from the West, when they

could be captured by East German equipment.⁶ But when GDR radio and TV stations were taken over by western broadcasters protests ensued, particularly for DT 64, a radio station for young people.⁷ Despite the efforts of thousands of youth who led protest marches, encamped on city streets throughout the former GDR, collected more than one hundred thousand signatures on petitions and engaged in every other possible democratic action to protect their radio station, the "Power from the East Side" (DT 64's slogan) was silenced as of January 1, 1992. With a majority of just one vote the parliament in Thüringen (the state neighboring Saxony and home to DT 64) voted to reject an application to extend the station's license and funding beyond the end of 1991, and promoted the development by MDR (the West German Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk, Middle German Radio) of a youth program. Saxony's parliamentary opposition, Bündnis 90/Grünen, called the decision a "missive" intended to "silence youthful protesters" (Sächsische Zeitung 1991o).

Even children lost a beloved friend as a result of the Wende. "The Sandman," a program broadcast every evening at 6:00 pm, was cancelled. Evidently this was the last straw

6. Dresden's geographical location made the reception of western radio and TV signals difficult at best. As a result, the city and surrounding region earned the nickname "Thal des Ahnungslosen," roughly "Valley of the Ignorant."

7. The call letters, DT 64, are an abbreviation for "Deutschland Treff 1964," a nationwide meeting of East German youth in that year.

for one family, who delivered this passionate letter to a local newspaper:

We cannot understand with what right and arrogance those in charge decide what broadcast is good for us former GDR citizens and what is not, all the more because 70 percent of households watch the [Sandman's] Evening Greeting--a percentage other programs only dream of. . . . We are told over and over that we have to overcome the psychological consequences of 40 years of SED domination. How can we, when even what was good about the past is taken away from us and overcoming the past is carried out through termination (Kramer 1991)?

There are other cases in which the past was "terminated" as well. After the Wende the exhibit of recent history (1945-present) at the Museum for the History of the City Dresden was cordoned off. The explanation proffered to me by a staff member was that the old history was false and had to be rewritten. Later, remaking this history included placing on display artifacts of daily life from the GDR such as a mock living room decorated with GDR wallpaper and furnished with a GDR couch and chairs, GDR end-tables, a GDR television and even mannequins modeling GDR clothes.

Despite this peculiarity, in general the democratization of society has led to a flowering of leisure and cultural activities in Dresden, some of which represent not only continuity with the past but also a renaissance of local traditions. In May 1992 the city's twenty-second annual Dixieland Festival, a four-day event, included a cavalcade of about two dozen bands from all over the world, dozens of outdoor and indoor concerts as well as

workshops for aspiring jazz musicians. In June the "Provisorische Regierung der BRD [Buntesrepublik Deutschland]" (Provisional Government of the Colorful German Republic) organized the weekend festival described in "Frau 'Esperanto.'" After a day in the Neustadt Dresdners could stop for a beer or dinner at any of dozens of new cafes and restaurants in the city, see a movie that did not have to pass muster with GDR cultural censors, or even attend a lecture by notable figures such as Rudolf Bahro.⁸ Unfortunately, while some of these activities are free or offer reduced admissions for certain classes of people, many others are prohibitively expensive for students, senior citizens, or unemployed men and women. To these people, many of the new activities available after the Wende are irrelevant if only because even the cost of transportation to and from the events has become prohibitive.

The overwhelming number of simultaneous changes affecting every aspect of daily life resulted in a very high level of stress for East Germans. Some were not able to cope. Consumed by depression, despair, fear or other debilitating emotions, some chose suicide. Local newspapers reported the discovery of corpses in the Elbe and along railroad tracks (Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten 1992c, Schade 1992). Respondents whispered to me about the

8. Author of the controversial volume Die Alternative: Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus (Bahro 1977).

butcher who was found hanging from a tree. He had borrowed tens of thousands of dollars to renovate and expand his shop, I was told, then killed himself in despair over the debt. Due to the unreliability of statistics collected in the GDR it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain whether or not the suicide rate increased after 1989. However, because information about suspected suicides, taboo in the GDR, began to be published in local papers, the rate was perceived to have increased by Dresdners with whom I spoke. The uncertainty of life after the Wende, debt and unemployment stemming from the transition to capitalism were most frequently identified as possible motivating factors.

This, then, was the situational context for the oral history interviews I conducted in Dresden during 1991-2. I now introduce the respondents whose stories are told most fully in subsequent chapters. I have ordered them by age and begin with the youngest.

Respondents' Narratives

Helga

I met Helga at a dance club in a high school gymnasium where an instructor played music on a portable cassette player and led the participants through folk dances from countries such as Greece and the United States. Toward the end of the evening a woman approached me. I wrote in my notes:

She is thirty or so, and was dressed casually in a peasant-style loose cotton shirt and skirt. She asked me who I am and what I'm doing here in a way that seemed really mistrustful, suspicious. Her face was screwed up and she was frowning or at least she had her mouth clenched as if she were unhappy or mad. So I was very surprised not only when she invited me to come over for coffee but also when she did so in a way that was really friendly.

As I learned Helga, who is 34, is unhappy and mad.

Both she and her husband are unemployed, she explained.

They are having financial difficulties. Once an artisan employed in the porcelain factory in Meißen, Helga later worked as an aide in a retirement home. Now she is at home full-time with young children and finds life as a homemaker to be monotonous and depressing. She is angry because she feels she was fired unjustly from her job in the retirement home.

Why did they fire me? Why, when so many people are needed to care for the elderly? All the old personnel [from before the Wende] are still in place in the nursing homes, just like in the factories, and they don't want people around who don't fit in with their ideas.

She is fighting the dismissal in court but she is not optimistic that her case will be heard anytime soon, or that she will be reinstated.

Helga's mother was a beautician; her father worked as an administrator in a factory and she says she knows very little about what he did. He died of cancer when she was eleven; her mother passed away six years later. In the next chapter I discuss the circumstances of her mother's death and how the memories of this time strongly affected

Helga's political views and choices in the GDR.

Helga's maternal grandparents and an aunt had been murdered by Russians at the end of the war; her paternal grandparents lived far away. Hence there was little family for the children to rely upon after the death of their parents. Helga's stepsister, who is eleven years older than Helga, cared for Helga and her younger sister, who is retarded as a result of childhood meningitis.

Helga was not yet born at the time her maternal grandparents were murdered by Russian soldiers but she knew the story well. Her mother was never able to forget the horror of the experience, particularly because it was she who found the bodies.

Yes [it was] as the Russians advanced here at the end of the war. My mother and her two brothers, fortunately, just at that moment they weren't at home. This massacre, it must have been horrible. I spoke with my father-in-law about it. He thinks the Russians saw what the Germans did to them and they let loose against the Germans with exactly the same force, full of rage and hate. And my mother's home, it was right in the middle of it. And my mother found them [the bodies]. The hate my mother had toward the Russians, she could never let go of that. That was deep inside her.

Though Helga assumes her mother was Christian, religious practices were never a part of Helga's daily life until, as a school girl, she herself chose to attend Sunday school, a decision her mother allowed. Then, as an adult, Helga was baptized. Her husband, once a member of the SED, resigned from the Party and was baptized as well. Christian beliefs and worship play a central role in

Helga's life today; she enjoys traveling as well and recently returned from a four-week trip in South Asia where she and other members of a group visited Christian missions. She wants very much to return to work, perhaps in the field of health care. To do so she will have to return to school, a possibility she is seriously considering.

As will become clear in Chapter Four, Helga lived in the GDR with a deep-seated ambivalence toward the state that stemmed largely from familial socialization, in particular long exposure to her mother's hatred of Russians. As a young woman other life experiences, including her eventual decision to be baptized in the church, strengthened Helga's opposition to the state. Yet, as with many East Germans, Helga's antipathy toward the state did not result in active opposition until quite late in the 1980s.

Jürgen

An acquaintance invited me to attend a session at the adult education center where she was taking classes. There I met Jürgen, a former lecturer in history at one of Dresden's colleges. He had taught Marxism-Leninism primarily to students from so-called "non-socialist countries" in Africa and Asia. His department was dissolved and he had been fired at the end of 1990. His wife worked in hotel management, though she is also

presently unemployed; together they have two school-aged children.

At the educational center Jürgen is enrolled in a program in interpersonal communication and organizational psychology. He describes it as

Verhaltenstraining [training in social interaction] in conjunction with adult education, based on a model from West Germany. It would include training in sales, or assertiveness training and other measures such as counseling people in crisis situations. It's not quite psychology but it approaches psychotherapy; it also borders on personal development, management training, training to facilitate leadership, to improve communication, how to communicate with co-workers, what to watch out for so that one can communicate with as little interference as possible. These are essentially the objectives.

The program lasts two years. When he has finished he will not receive any form of state certification as there is none--it is a new field. But he will be able to apply for a variety of positions. He is aware that his prospects will be determined by the demands of the market as much as anything else. The only sure thing is that politics in the former GDR make it impossible for him to return to Marxism-Leninism anytime soon.

Yes, and now that I am, as in bourgeois society, the head of the household, I also have to attempt to be able to finance my children's education. If they both go on to get their Abitur then I will have to finance a few more years until they learn a profession themselves or go on to college. I'm in a little bit of a tight spot and naturally in my age it's not so easy for me to jump into something new even though I think I can do it.

Jürgen is a former member of the SED. He came to his political views, intellectual interests and professional

choices largely as a result of family history. His father never had a chance to study as his father (Jürgen's paternal grandfather) died at a young age from an injury to his lung incurred during World War I. Thrust into the position of male head of the household at the age of thirteen, Jürgen's father went to work at fourteen as a manual laborer with no special qualification or training. Though uneducated he was not unintelligent; in fact he was a local chess champion.

Both Jürgen's father and grandfather were members of the local SPD. Jürgen's father was also a member of a youth association that engaged in recreational activities such as hiking and camping, and opponents of the Nazis counted among his friends. But he, his family and friends distanced themselves from the Nazis without "systematically" resisting them. An exception is that Jürgen's father was briefly imprisoned in 1933, at the age of 19, for delivering anti-Nazi pamphlets from the Czech border to Chemnitz.

Just before the beginning of World War II, Jürgen's father was drafted into the German army. He fought the entire war, "from Poland to France to Russia," Jürgen summarizes. He was severely wounded in Leningrad, then spent four years as a prisoner of war in Yugoslavia. During his imprisonment he had a considerable amount of time to think about things and came to the conclusion that he had to work toward building an anti-fascist, democratic

Germany. Once he was released from prison he joined the SED and sought to work toward that end. He and his wife, Jürgen's mother, both identified strongly with the GDR and all that it stood for as an alternative to fascism and capitalism.

Jürgen's mother also came from a politically active family. "It goes back to my grandmother," Jürgen recalls. Her father, Jürgen's maternal great-grandfather, worked in the textile industry doing piece work at home. There was a large machine in the house and the family's children were expected to work busily too. He was a Social Democrat as early as the Bismarck era. During the era of the Socialist Law he was blacklisted and couldn't get work as a result of his views and activities.

"The Social Democratic Party developed here in Saxony," Jürgen instructs me. "August Bebel was elected to the Parliament here."

Jürgen recalls,

I was raised by my grandmother and a lot of what I learned politically I learned from her. She told me a lot about my mother. And what Grandma tells you is the real story, right? More so than what you learn in school. She told me these things very casually, just how it happened. How her father had conflicts with the police, how he founded the Konsum [consumers' cooperative] in his community. That was a trade organization that was supposed to protect workers from corrupt merchants, a kind of collective. My mother's brothers, grandmother's sons, were all very active politically, essentially in the communist direction. They were known in the city, then in prison, then in the internment camp in the early Nazi era.

Jürgen's mother attended the Free School, established

by the socialist city council in Chemnitz (a Saxon city) as a part of a program of educational reform. The majority of the teachers were members of the SPD or KPD and the instruction was "progressive." But when she graduated in 1933 the Nazi Party had already come to power. Her teacher, a communist, had been imprisoned. She went to the jail to receive her final grades from him there. Then, because she had attended the Free School, she was denied the opportunity to pursue the course of study she desired and become a teacher.

"That's how it was then," Jürgen comments. "Then with the backing of my uncle she learned to be a bookbinder. That was possible but only with the support, no, with the intervention, of my uncle, a respected publisher in the city. Certainly these are events that left a strong impression on her politically," Jürgen concludes.

Other family stories Jürgen recalls include his mother refusing to sing "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles" at her graduation in 1933. Parents of graduating students remained seated in protest while the school choir sang this song "which is now our national hymn." When the Nazi flag was raised for the first time at the school students threw spitballs at it.

"This is the background from which I won my political orientation," Jürgen remarks, concluding with the observation that it was only in the GDR that his mother was finally able to fulfill her dream of becoming a teacher.

Herr Kleiber

A friend introduced me to Herr Kleiber. They had become acquainted through a local soccer club and my friend thought that Herr Kleiber's story, typical of many skilled factory workers, might interest me.

Herr Kleiber, his wife and their college-aged son live in a small apartment. Their daughter is married and works as a clerk at the post office. The Kleibers welcomed me into their living room where we made small talk over tea and beer. After a few minutes I introduced the subject of my dissertation research and the interview.

"Let me get one more beer--then we can start!" Herr Kleiber said confidently, retrieving a beer from the kitchen and then settling back into the soft, brown armchair where he had been seated. He began by remembering fleeing East Prussia with his mother and two brothers in 1943. This story, which illustrates some of the hardships refugees suffered late in the war, is recounted in Chapter Two. Herr Kleiber continued:

Yes. And so we came here. I went to school until 1954. There wasn't any high school then, or even middle school, so I went to Meißen for two years to get my tenth grade certificate. From 1956 to 1959 I apprenticed as a metalworker, then I went to work in the former Siemens factory here. Eventually, when I was thirty-seven, I studied afternoons and evenings to become a master. That was three times a week, from 2:00 to 7:15 pm for two years. Then I was employed as master metal worker for ten or fifteen years until the Wende when I was let go.

Herr Kleiber observes that after the Wende workers like him were not fired right away. First they were put on

reduced hours, then no hours. Herr Kleiber was officially terminated on December 31, 1991. Now he is enrolled in ABS or Arbeitsbeschaffung und Strukturentwicklung (like ABM, a public employment program).⁹ He consigned his severance pay to ABS and receives the same stipend that unemployed workers receive: 68 percent of his former salary because his son is still in college, otherwise he would receive 63 percent. ABS is an occupational association but he doesn't have any work. Nonetheless, he is not included in unemployment statistics and he has not lost his eligibility for 26 months of unemployment benefits. Eventually, if he becomes officially unemployed, his severance pay will be returned and he will begin drawing benefits.

I would like to find work again but I probably won't. I'm too old, and age is very important here in Germany. All the newspaper ads are for young people in their twenties and thirties--people who are "flexible" and "willing to travel." So now I am a house-husband. When my wife comes home at the end of the day everything is done--the shopping, the cleaning, the laundry, everything.

The ABS program is administered through his former factory so, once a month, Herr Kleiber returns to sign for his check. He observes that the factory is "completely quiet." Sometimes a whole week goes by when there are no orders to fill. He only rarely sees any of his old

9. "Workers" registered in ABS and ABM may be assigned to government subsidized positions in different economic sectors. The fact is, though, that many members of ABS receive no assignments.

colleagues; of the 1,400 men and women formerly employed by his factory only 300 remain.

"I find that to be a drawback," he observes. "In the new system the collegiality, the camaraderie of the old system is disappearing more and more."

Herr Kleiber's wife is still employed as a factory administrator. Between her salary and Herr Kleiber's ABS stipend they are able to meet their living expenses and support their son while he finishes college. Herr Kleiber is not distraught over the loss of his job; nor does he seem particularly depressed or anxious. He is clear about his decision to join ABS and preserve the 26 months of unemployment benefits he can draw in the future.

In the meantime Herr Kleiber keeps himself busy rising early every day, finishing chores around the house, shopping, cooking and, every Thursday, he has a night out with his soccer club.

Frau Vogel

After I first arrived in Dresden, before I had a place to stay for the year, an elderly woman I call Jolanta took me for a walk around her neighborhood. We called on her neighbors and inquired as to whether or not a room was available to rent. At one house a small, grey-haired woman in her seventies answered the door. She squinted at us through very thick glasses, wrung her hands and worried out loud to Jolanta. She didn't have a room for me, it was

clear. She was frightened that she might lose her apartment to a West German family attempting to claim the property as their own. She didn't know how the matter would be resolved, when it would be resolved and, if it was resolved in favor of the West Germans, where she would go.

Yes, it's very upsetting. There are a lot of families with these problems now. There's one woman, she lives over there, who was told that her house might be sold but they don't know for sure. She says come what may, they can't just throw me out. But people worry, worry a lot. You always have that feeling, "What's next?"

Frau Vogel observes that properties formerly owned by factory owners and businessmen are located on the side of the street where she lives, while ordinary workers lived on the other side.

"That's why there are so many houses here where relatives of the old owners live in West Germany now." She estimates that almost every other house is affected by questions of ownership.

Frau Vogel is retired. She worked for several decades as what she calls a "political functionary" for the DFD (Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands, the Democratic Women's Association of Germany) in a local health care center. She married twice; she and her first husband were divorced, and then she survived her second husband who passed away a few years ago. She bore no children. Her brother, a niece and an adult stepson who has his own family all live in the vicinity. Her family has offered her money and a place to live but she prefers to maintain

her independence for as long as she can.

Frau Vogel does not get out much. Her very poor eyesight has made her apprehensive about going out for reasons of safety; she has also become increasingly reserved due to the difficulty she has recognizing acquaintances. She does belong to a local senior citizens' club and very occasionally participates in an activity or excursion. These social events afford her the opportunity to discuss her housing problem as well as other concerns with her peers. While these conversations do little to alleviate her anxiety, at least they assure her that she is not alone and she has learned about resources available to her for help.

It's advised that you go to the tenants' association. It was founded to help tenants during this transition period. They accompany you to court, they help you fill out forms for rent subsidies, they give advice. They held a meeting to clarify tenants' rights and so forth, so it's a society that protects people a little, gives them a little security.

Though Frau Vogel has found the tenants' association helpful, it took a while for her to gain confidence in it, particularly because she was required to pay 60 DM to become a member. She notes that, after the Wende, groups, associations and societies have sprung up "like mushrooms in the forest." It is hard to know which are legitimate and when the dues are substantial one is doubly suspicious.

"You can't believe everyone," she cautions. "It says so over and over in the newspaper."

Frau Vogel has also found assistance and opportunities

to socialize at a group for people with visual handicaps. She wishes she could organize an afternoon get-together with her former colleagues from the DFD. At first the new, very high cost of postage seemed to be prohibitive. She could not imagine how she would be able to send 160 postcards, at one mark apiece, to her former co-workers (very few of whom have phones). I mentioned that I had a little extra cash from my stipend every month and volunteered to pay for half the postage. But Frau Vogel spoke with a few of her former colleagues and found that they were so overwhelmed by their own, individual problems that they had little interest in a social afternoon.

It was at the end of a four-hour interview that Frau Vogel blurted out the story of why she never had children. I had asked whether or not she was satisfied with her life and she replied that she was--that is, with her professional work. Her personal life had caused her great pain and anguish:

I was too young the first time I married--twenty. That was 1938. My husband, and this is the origin of the conflict with my father, my husband was a professional soldier, an officer with the Wehrmacht. They tried to prohibit the marriage, not my father, but from my husband's side, that is his superiors. My husband didn't just take it lying down. That is why he had to go to the front where, from what he told me, he had to do horrible things . . .

When we applied for the marriage license they checked to see if I had money. I had to put down a deposit, I couldn't save the money so I had to borrow it. There was always a reason why we couldn't go forward with the marriage. Then I had to go for a physical examination [Ehetauglichkeitsuntersuchung, examination for suitability for marriage]. I woke up from the exam in the clinic. That was December '38 .

. . [a few months later] I knew I couldn't have children anymore. And the right to take legal action, because of my father's political [communist] views that wasn't possible.

After '45 we tried to find the doctors who had done that to me. We found one who could have possibly given a statement but the records had been destroyed by bombings and the doctor was over 80 years old [and couldn't remember]. I went back into the clinic and they tried to fix everything but it didn't work.

My husband came home in 1949 and he said to me pack your things and come along [to the West]. I didn't pack my things and my husband went over [the border] anyway. It was still possible then. And I know, I can imagine, that everything he saw and did [on the front], he didn't want to stay here. Three years later we were divorced. It took three years because he didn't want to consent. Then I lived alone until I married my second husband at 60. I didn't want to marry earlier because of the problem with children, for me that was a taboo subject. So that is how it was.

This is why the private side of my life, so to speak, was never the nicest. I always threw myself into my work and found fulfillment there. The fear or getting to know a man who wanted to have children, that was very hard for me, and you can't tell just anyone about that, that's why I only talk about this very, very rarely.

I regret that I did not question Frau Vogel more deeply about this story. After investigating the politics of marriage and forced sterilization in Nazi Germany, I realized there are many elements of it that beg clarification (Bock 1986).¹⁰ For example, it is not clear whether she was intentionally sterilized or whether the sterilization resulted accidentally from the physical examination to which she was subjected. If she was

10. I am grateful to subscribers to the H-German internet discussion list who responded to my plea for information and assistance: Gabriele Czarnowski, Atina Grossman, Elizabeth Heineman, Michael Kater, Claudia Koonz, P. Pommerenke, Mark Roseman and Doug Skopp.

intentionally sterilized the fact that the procedure took place in a "clinic" instead of a "hospital," and the fact that it took place during a physical examination, makes her case very unusual. However, because marriage between a sterilized and an un-sterilized individual was not permissible under Nazi law, it seems likely that the sterilization, if it occurred, was accidental.¹¹ In addition, Frau Vogel did not specify the exact reason for the sterilization. It is possible that her father's political views had a great deal to do with it; it is also possible that there were other factors she did not mention.

Yet the details of Frau Vogel's experience are irrelevant to the lifelong trauma and pain it caused her and the way it shaped subsequent choices including her overwhelming commitment to work for socialism in the GDR (that is, against fascism). It was, however, not only this political crime that led Frau Vogel to commit her life to socialism. Earlier experiences had a strong impact on her as well:

There was the experience of fascism, of the war. My father was imprisoned in 1933. I was fifteen at the time, my brother two years younger, my sister ten years younger. Then, when my father came home from prison, and he hadn't done anything he was imprisoned just for his political views, he didn't have any skin on his back anymore. He slept leaning over a table and he had turned pale white and he had developed a stutter. That is what prison did to him and we children said it has to be different. We wanted to

11. There is also the possibility that Frau Vogel was infertile and unaware of this until she married and then failed to conceive.

kill the people who had done that to my father, that is the revenge we wanted. But when we said that to him he said if you do the same as the fascists then you are no better than the fascists, you are worse than they are. You can't do to them what they did to you. Be better than them, be a model, that has to be your goal. And I oriented my entire life around that. So now that it has come to this [the Wende] my disappointment is unmeasurable.

Frau Vogel's willingness to share deeply personal stories was strongly contrasted by her refusal to discuss her political work in any detail--she provided me only with a cursory overview of her responsibilities (included in Chapter Four). Apparently, after the Wende the taboo against open discussion of work undertaken for socialism was far greater than any taboo she felt against revealing horrors she experienced as a girl and young woman.

Frau Klemm

When I asked Frau Vogel to talk more about her political work she declined, but then suggested I return another day when a friend of hers, Frau Klemm, a retired police officer, could be present. She explained that Frau Klemm had always acted as a kind of advisor to her. As it turned out, Frau Klemm was averse to talking with me as well but she relented as a favor to her old friend, Frau Vogel.

I arrived at Frau Vogel's apartment at five minutes past three with a bouquet of flowers (a customary hostess gift) and a small package of cakes. Frau Klemm arrived a few minutes later. While Frau Vogel busied herself in the

kitchen making coffee, conspicuously avoiding my tape recorder, Frau Klemm grilled me about my research. She asked about the subject of my study, the source of my funding, where and how long I was staying in Dresden, what I planned to do with my dissertation when I finished it, and what kind of position I would seek when I was done with my degree.

"Wes Brot ich ess', des Lied ich sing'","¹² she replied, when I asked why she wanted this information. Apparently my answers satisfied her because she settled back in her chair and began to talk.

Frau Klemm was born in 1921 near the city Halle.

Today it is Halle, it was incorporated. Then it was still a village. I call it an industrial village because most of the people were workers in a brown coal mine. That was a pretty big factory for us then. They didn't just dig coal, they also made briquettes and there was a refinery that produced fuel and paraffin.

She and her parents lived together with her maternal grandparents. In 1935, when she was fourteen, her father, who was a metal worker in the refinery, died. Frau Klemm recalls that he had contracted tuberculosis during World War I and became increasingly ill as a result of exposure to fumes and dust in the plant. The death of Frau Klemm's father left her mother alone with three children at a time when preparations for war were already having a deleterious effect on the domestic economy. Frau Klemm recalls that as

12. "Whose bread I eat, that song I sing."

early as the following year [1936] there were restrictions on food and consumer goods and it became difficult to shop for basic foodstuffs such as butter.

Frau Klemm's maternal grandfather was a miner, a member of the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) and a local political leader who established the Konsum cooperative in their village and led the managerial committee. She comments that before the Nazi Party came to power, Konsum cooperatives grew so big that they even established their own factories.

"It was directed a bit against the capitalists," Frau Klemm comments. She also remembers that at the time Social Democrats believed they could achieve socialism through such cooperatives but before their experiment could come to fruition Hitler appropriated the factories and stores.

Frau Klemm remembers her father as being "relatively a-political." He became fully disabled in 1927 as a result of his illness. He attempted to recuperate at a sanatorium, paid for by the Knappschaft, or miners' society.

As I said, he was an iron worker and the miners had health insurance. They still do today--it's called a Knappschaft. The Knappschaft paid for my father. If he had been able to spend six months or a year in this home then maybe he would have been healed. They only paid for four months and we didn't have the money ourselves to pay for private care. So he had to die.

Frau Klemm's mother, who lived from 1897 to 1983, worked at home, sewing dresses, shirts and linens. Frau Klemm recalls that her grandparents also had some land

which they cultivated but that as the brown coal industry expanded farmland was destroyed by the development of strip-mines.

Frau Klemm attended school until 1935; that is, for two years after the Nazis came to power.

Then I went to business school for another year, then I went to work. Then there was the war and during the war I married, in Dessau, where I was conscripted to work. In 1944 my husband disappeared. Never came back. Gone. "Notification of Missing Person." I still have the original. Yes, so that's how life was.

In 1945, near the end of the war, the front steadily approached the factory where Frau Klemm worked. Then the factory was shut down; workers received a month's pay and were released. Dessau was bombed. Frau Klemm was able to get transportation to Bitterfeld, about 25 miles south, then she walked the remaining 20 miles home to Halle. During this time she contracted diphtheria and suffered through a long, slow recovery. Finally, when she was able, she began to seek employment.

I didn't have any specific ambitions. I was unemployed. Then in Halle I saw the first female traffic police officers on the street! I looked and thought, "You could do that too!" I wrote to the railroad as well. I would have liked to start there, maybe as a conductor. Then in the newspaper there was an ad for applicants to learn to be Russian teachers. My sister [who was much younger] had already had a Russian teacher, a former governess from a rich St. Petersburg family. I took a couple lessons with her. She said that I had a talent for languages, "Do continue!" She wanted our preserves--we couldn't pay her money so we gave her strawberry jam. So I applied to study to be a Russian teacher, and with the police. The police answered first. After I started, eight days later, I was notified to report to class to be a Russian teacher.

When asked what she would have preferred, Frau Klemm commented that she really didn't know anything about either profession and that it was just chance that she ended up as police officer instead of a Russian teacher.

It was after the war, through her training in Party programs, that Frau Klemm became well-versed in Marxist-Leninist theory and politics.

My Grandfather didn't do anything for his grandchildren, at least in that respect. Our father, when he still lived, used to have us read the newspaper together evenings. Then there were my experiences during the war, the loss of my husband and so forth. Naturally that led me to think a little bit about politics. But that was not theoretical, just sketchy. Then in 1946 I said, "Grandfather, I'm going to join your [Communist] party."

In Frau Klemm's home town there was no other political party to join as those parties which would become the GDR's bloc parties were not represented there. Frau Klemm went to the local KPD treasurer and informed him that she wished to become a member.

He said, "Ok, little one, at the next meeting I'll bring an application form." Then he forget three times. In the meantime the KPD [merged with the SPD and] became the SED. Finally, in August 1946 I joined. So from the first months until the end I was a member of the Party.

Frau Klemm remained with the police until her retirement just a few years ago. Today she lives alone, remains active in socialist politics by attending local meetings of the PDS and she visits friends such as Frau Vogel. Her pension supports her adequately and she is in reasonably good health.

Conclusion

While the ethnographic excursions interspersed throughout this study depict many non-narrative forms of memory, in this and the following chapters I include many narrative examples as well. Of the many Dresdners I interviewed, the five men and women just introduced are given the fullest attention because their stories clearly express the lasting influence of family and personal memories of work, political and class struggle, hope and tragedy. The recollections they shared with me are embedded in particular historical periods and processes including the rise of fascism, the defeat of Germany in 1945, and the subsequent institution of socialism in the East. They are also strongly influenced by pressure after the Wende to "work through" the past. Finally, the narratives of these five men and women vary widely as their different ages, genders, personal and professional experiences, and political orientations strongly influence their accounts of the past.

The stories told by Helga, Jürgen, Herr Kleiber, Frau Klemm and Frau Vogel can be interpreted at two levels. First, they can be taken at face value. Viewed from this perspective, they describe difficulties in the present, flaws and failures of GDR society, and the course of the Wende. Viewed from a different perspective, their tales answer questions posed in the Introduction to this study: what issues emerge as being most important in debates over

the past, and what ambiguities, contradictions and tensions are expressed by differences in remembering and forgetting. The relevance of respondents' narratives to these questions is discussed in Chapter Six.

The narratives also express conditions identified by Gillis, Nora and Hobsbawm as strongly influencing forms and processes of memory. These conditions include the collapse of a nation-state accompanied by the consolidation of a new nation; the breakdown of old social structures followed by the emergence of new social groupings; and the loss of customs, guarantees and material culture of one world and the arrival of those of another. In this place and time of rupture, Dresdners had to reconceive their futures--and pasts. Yet they did so not only through narrative; they sifted through other repositories of memory as well, including their own bodies: survival in the "elbow-society" (a phrase used to describe life in the unified Germany) meant accommodating to West German forms of non-verbal communication and customary practices.

The next excursion is the story of a particular kind of social activity, new since the Wende and common in the ethnographic present of this study. The experience of the senior citizens who participated in this day trip portrays an absolutely crucial element of memory often overlooked in social science literature. Research that focuses on exceptional practices such as commemorative ritual, or highly specialized materials such as oral history texts,

often overlooks the fact that memory is also the sum total of any individual's accumulated experience and knowledge. After the Wende, East Germans suddenly had to function in an almost brand new world. They only slowly acquired the practical experience, and memories, they would need to be successful in this place. The fact that the Wende rendered a lifetime's worth of memory largely inapplicable to this new world is evidenced by the many poor choices and errors East Germans made after 1989. These include succumbing to the kind of high-pressure sales presentation described in the next excursion.

ETHNOGRAPHIC EXCURSION: THE KAFFEEFAHRT**December 1991**

We finally pulled up to the stop. I put on my coat and gathered my things and said "Tschüß!" and "Auf Wiedersehen!" and shook hands and stepped down the stairs and out of the door into the cold, dark night and all I could think was "free at last!"

I crossed the street, avoiding speeding vehicles, and waited at the stop for the streetcar. The ride home was uneventful except that there had been a car accident at Dr.-Külz-Ring and we had to wait a few minutes to pass by. I got off at Juri-Gagarin street, walked across the lawn to my apartment building, up the stairs and home. Blessed home! Blessed quiet!

I really didn't know where we were going today. Jolanta had said something about a Christmas market and I was looking forward to strolling around outside in the cold winter weather, inhaling the aroma of roasted nuts and mulled wine. Thinking of some people for whom I'd like to get gifts, I had even brought some extra cash.

The trip started when I met the group of about forty senior citizens at the bus stop at 7:00 am. I fell asleep promptly once we were underway in the luxurious, state-of-the-art tour bus, and was woken only when the group leader shouted something over the public address system about how wonderful it was that "Elizabeth, die Amerikanerin" had come along. We arrived at the village about two hours

later and disembarked. Following the directions of an enthusiastic middle-aged woman, we filed into a big hall where a number of tables were set with tablecloths, plates and cups. At the front of the hall was a stage with something on it that looked like a small, draped bed. Later in the day I finally figured out that this mysterious object was a sound system that had been cloaked with a sheet. In front of the stage, a table was stacked with large red and pink boxes. Next to the table was a poster-sized sign with a product logo designed to resemble a red cross. Another sign promoted vitamins. Not realizing that these items had anything to do with our group of senior citizens or the alleged Christmas market, I wondered what kind of health event had just been held, or would be held in the hall later that day.

A waitress came around and poured coffee, which I later learned cost 1.60 DM per cup, and offered us rolls with butter and sliced salami (2.40 DM), while a man, roughly thirty-five or forty years old, dressed in a green, embroidered Bavarian folk costume, picked up a microphone at the front of the room and announced the schedule: coffee and rolls, then a short walk, then the "program" would begin at 10:00 am. Lunch would be served at noon, then the Christmas market would be opened, then we would take a short tour of a local porcelain factory. Later there would be coffee, cake and dancing, and at about 5:00 pm we would board the bus and go home. Great, I thought--there will be

music and entertainment, and the Christmas market is certainly somewhere in town. I began to look forward to the day.

Then the man announced that, because the kitchen staff had to prepare our meal, we should order our lunch now. He would tell us about the choices; then we could raise our hands to place our orders. Although at that moment I didn't realize it, the pattern for the day had begun: hard-pitched, overpriced, poor-quality merchandise.

"There are three choices for lunch!" the man cried, "Wild Boar! Fresh! Not Frozen! Only twelve marks! Or turkey! Fresh! Not Frozen! Only eleven marks! Or Goulash! Only nine marks! Anyone who knows anything knows that if you ordered these delicious items in a restaurant they would cost at least sixteen or eighteen marks or possibly more! Then, to top it off! You can, but only if you want, have ice cream! A delicious, big bowl of ice cream for only 3.80 marks!" The man related a story about being at a restaurant recently where ice cream cost about 7.80 marks, or roughly twice as much.

"Man alive!" he shouted. "I told them, 'You should come here where we have exactly the same ice cream for only half the price!'" And when he took orders for ice cream almost everyone shot their hands up in the air to request a portion, which turned out to be a rather small plate of half-melted ice cream with a little fruit on the side and a dot of whipped cream.

That was only the beginning. He continued by pitching the next trip for the senior citizens' club by telling us that the senior citizens' organization is unique to East Germany ("And I know because I'm from West Germany and we don't have it there!" he added) and that they have over 300,000 members in East Germany. "Isn't that fantastic!" he shouted.

"Ja! Ja!" cried the audience.

"Wouldn't you like to double your membership?" he asked. "All you have to do is invite your friends and family along on the next trip, in February, for twenty-two marks per person! You ride in comfort on the bus, then get a warm sleigh ride with blankets and free warm drinks!"

Herr Bauml, the group leader, jumped up from his chair to ask "Truly, how many people could we bring? Could we bring two busses?" The man, somewhat astonished, glanced at his two female assistants who were standing nearby, then replied, "Of course! Wouldn't that be fantastic!"

The pitch went on. As we drank our coffee and ate our rolls he told a long story about how we brush our teeth twice a day but we don't take care of our feet. Our feet develop callouses; we get tired, and so forth. All we have to do is use the foot bath he was handing out at that moment as a free sample (his assistants carefully distributed one packet per person). We were to mix it in warm water, or hot if we could stand it, and not be put off by its black color because it's very concentrated. It

comes from some place deep in the earth; it's made out of minerals and all kinds of other amazing things. We should soak for about twenty minutes, then rinse off our feet, then we will float out of the bathroom! And we will float through the apartment! And we will float into bed! And float into sleep like a baby! And if we were to float onto the scale we wouldn't believe our eyes because we won't have lost a pound!

"You should use the foot bath again the next day," he told us. "Then you'll feel so fantastic you'll want to do the same thing every day, but! And here is where the trouble starts," he warned. "There are only two portions in each sample. After you use up your sample you'll go to the drugstore and ask for the foot bath and they won't have it. You'll go to the department store and ask for the foot bath and they won't have it. In fact, you won't find it anywhere. That's because it's available only through your very own senior citizens club!" he shouted. The manufacturing firm made a special agreement with the club, he explained, whereby the foot bath can be ordered directly through the club and the club receives twenty percent of all orders placed.

"That money goes directly into your club's account!" he exclaimed. "One club has already earned so much money that they've bought a color television set!" Everyone in the room oohed and aahed.

After the foot bath pitch the assistants distributed a

fake pearl in a fake gold setting to each person present. The next pitch was for a gold chain for the pearl that cost "only" 10 DM. A dozen seniors raised their hands to buy the chain. The man then talked for a long time about how disruptive modern life is of family and friendships and promoted Christmas as a time during which we can hold onto our most important relationships in life by giving gifts--such as the watch he had to sell us also for "only" 10 DM. (One of the women at my table bought one. The clasp broke before she could even put it on for the first time.) He also had a massage solution to sell, made out of alcohol and oils such as menthol. The female assistants came around with bottles and squirted a little of the liniment into the hand of anyone who wanted to try it. One woman rubbed it into her neck and exclaimed that the stiffness which had been bothering her vanished instantly. A bottle of the solution cost 15 DM; the female assistants sold about twenty. Bath salts were 8 DM each; a different foot bath was 15 DM a bottle. Garlic pills were 15 DM a box. In each and every case the man swore to high heaven that we were getting wholesale prices.

Finally we were freed for our walk. The village was grey, the streets barren; there was no sign of a Christmas market anywhere. Naively, I still believed that there was one in the village somewhere and that we simply hadn't come across it yet.

The big pitch came before lunch at the 10:00

"program." We didn't know, until the end, that the man was leading up to a vitamin package but he started on a long, long speech about health and vitamins, covering topics such as what vitamins do; why we need vitamins; how vitamins help our red blood cells absorb oxygen; why ship crews have to eat raw sauerkraut for vitamin C on long voyages, and if they were going to eat enough sauerkraut to fulfill their vitamin needs they would have to consume two kilos a day. He talked about getting leg cramps at night due to vitamin deficiencies and how much it hurts; how we get up and go to the bathroom and run warm water over the cramp and eventually it goes away, then we go back to bed only to get another because it's the wee hours of the morning and scientists have shown that the vitamin supply in our bodies, and therefore the oxygen supply in our legs, drops dramatically in the wee hours, and did you know that most heart attacks and most strokes also happen in the wee hours of the morning and this is something he personally knows because he is a doctor and has patients, and he can think of one woman in particular who can't sleep at night because she wants to stay awake to ensure that her husband keeps breathing, and that the average person breathes eighteen times per minute during the day and only ten or twelve times per minute at night and some people breath only two or three times per minute at night, and if you suffer from forgetfulness that can also be caused by a vitamin deficiency, not to mention high blood pressure. We can get

pills from the doctor for our hypertension, he said, but we should also help the doctor by taking vitamins so that when we go for our high blood pressure checkup the doctor will be amazed.

"Incredible!" the doctor will cry out as he loosens the cuff. "Your blood pressure is normal!"

Then he talked about the vitamins--vitamins A and C and B and B1 and B12 and iron and magnesium and other minerals and then, at some point, maybe a half an hour later, he presented the package: a whole slew of red bottles--red because of vitamin B, he said, with vitamin C in there too, because that's ascorbic acid and one can, with only two teaspoons of ascorbic acid, get the same vitamin C content of two kilos of sauerkraut. He continued by explaining how we should take the vitamins: one pill mornings, one pill evenings and we should drink the B and C one half hour before meals. Then he explained that even if we go on vacation we can take the vitamins with us. We just have to take them in their special styrofoam containers and protect them from light. Then, and he was approaching the end of the pitch, he pointed out that there were two piles of boxes on the table.

"We mustn't forget those among us who are diabetics," he warned, swinging into a fifteen-to-twenty-minute discussion of diabetes, including going blind and having sugar or insulin attacks in public places such as restaurants, having your feet amputated and so forth. He

finally ended, ages later, re-emphasizing that there were two piles of boxes on the table--one for regular people and one for diabetics. At this point one of the assistants stepped forward, on cue, to turn one of the packages from the second pile so we could see that it had a label on the end which he read aloud for us: "For use by diabetics." The man went on some more, thanked us for our attention, and concluded by saying that he was available to take questions either before the group or privately.

Naturally, the first question was "What do those vitamins cost anyway?"

He would not give a straight answer but started by telling us about the spa in town. Did we know that it cost two and a half thousand marks, 2,500 DM?

"That's a lot," he agreed, when the audience groaned, "But what do you think about when you think about your health? If you had a heart attack tomorrow, would you think about your money or would you pray, 'God let me get well again'? Well, the vitamins don't cost nearly as much as the spa," he promised. "They don't even cost five hundred marks." He talked about five hundred marks for a while, then admitted that the vitamins didn't cost five hundred marks because they cost 499 DM.

"But! Only for today!" he shouted, not missing a beat, "Only for today! And only for the Senior Citizens' Club! I will make these vitamins available to you for ONLY 245 DM!" Before anyone could say a word he explained a

payment plan--he would take a lump sum, or two lump sums, or three or five or ten. Whatever works for us, he assured us, is fine with him because he wants to make it easy for us to take care of our good health.

To make an already long story a little less long, at least ten people carried vitamins home on the bus that night.

When the presentation was over the man thanked us for our attention and everyone applauded. The first thing the group leader did was to jump up and say it was the finest health presentation he had ever heard, and would the man be so kind as to consider coming to their home club in Dresden as well as other clubs in the area because it just wouldn't be fair to keep this a secret from other senior citizens.

We ate the overpriced, poor quality food. My goulash consisted of a lot of sauce and very little, fatty meat mixed in with some overcooked canned vegetables (no vitamins there!). The man had mentioned that in his presentation.

"Cooking vegetables kills the vitamins," he'd informed us, "but who wants to eat raw vegetables? We can't change our eating habits in a hundred years, but we can take extra vitamins."

While we ate lunch the showman and his female assistants disappeared behind a curtain. Shortly thereafter they reappeared and announced that the Christmas market would be opened soon. He proceeded to pitch each

item for sale: the chain again for the fake pearl, the watch, a magnetic armband that was supposed to relieve its wearer of arthritic pain (15 DM), two sizes of fake Christmas trees (30 and 45 DM respectively), tin pans decorated with Christmas scenes (he expertly dropped one on the floor and, after it clanged resoundingly, asked, "Did you hear that? Real tin!"). The pans were 10 DM each. Christmas decorations ran between 1 and 5 DM. He then gestured to the curtain, which was drawn aside, and announced that the market was open. The seniors lined up and bought and bought and bought.

Finally everyone took their seats again. One of the assistants distributed a plastic bag to each of us while the man announced that Santa Claus would come shortly. We heard bells ringing and--lo and behold--Santa Claus (the other assistant) appeared. Everyone lined up to receive their party gift for the day--one Christmas duck, frozen so hard that each dropped like a medium-sized rock when they were released into the plastic bags we had been given.

In contrast to the "program" in the hall the trip to the porcelain factory was delightful and ended all too soon. Back at the hall, after the promised coffee, cake and dancing, everyone boarded the bus. Realizing that I had left my frozen duck behind I went back to get it but the door was locked. Although I knocked loudly, no one answered. I pressed my ear to the door and heard low voices inside, as well as the sound of money--coins--being

counted.

The seniors enjoyed themselves immensely on the ride home. They talked, told jokes, laughed and sang songs. Sometime later we pulled up to the bus stop where the trip had started at 7:00 that morning and I was freed.

At home that night I attempted to add up what the seniors had purchased. There were approximately ten tables in the room with four people per table. At the three or four tables near mine, which I could watch fairly closely, at least three people per table bought at least three products--say one for eight marks, one for ten marks, and one for fifteen marks. That would be 99 DM per table, or about 990 DM minimum for the room. I stress "minimum" because at some tables each of four people purchased at least three products for 15 DM each or 180 DM for the table, 1,800 DM for the room. If we split the difference we could estimate that the man sold about 1,395 DM in products, plus what the seniors bought at the Christmas "market," plus the ten packages of vitamins he sold. I estimate that the "doctor" sold close to 4,000 DM worth of products in about four hours. Not bad for a day's work. Additionally, the seniors paid twenty-five marks each for the trip; they bought lunch for anywhere between nine and twenty marks (depending on which dish they ordered, how much coffee they drank and whether or not they had ice cream); many of them purchased items in the souvenir shop at the porcelain factory and everyone chipped in one or two

marks as a tip for the bus driver. It all went into different pockets, but this little excursion cleaned the seniors out of close to 6,000 DM.

CHAPTER FOUR: REMEMBERING DAILY LIFE

Introduction

The senior citizens who participated in the day trip were vulnerable to the "doctor's" subterfuge, a sales event masked as a health presentation, in part because the Wende had rendered irrelevant a wealth of knowledge accumulated over decades of daily life experience. It would be months and, in some cases, years before East Germans accumulated the memories they needed to successfully participate in the radically transformed world they now inhabited; in particular, the ability to uncover capitalism's deceptions and lies was a skill East Germans only slowly mastered.

In this chapter I draw on respondents' memories and published sources to describe the daily life Dresdners knew in the GDR. As both the Prologue and previous chapter make clear, this was a world which, in 1991-2, had just recently been relegated to the domain of history. On numerous occasions, as respondents talked about this past they contradicted each other (e.g. "we worked hard," versus "we never worked hard"). Yet after closer examination it became apparent to me that these contradictions were patterned. First of all, they often reflect the generation of the respondent, his or her position in the work force or other social criteria. Secondly, as I summarize in the concluding chapter, numerous contradictions represent stances often implicitly taken in response to pressure to "work through the past."

Despite the heterogeneity of interviews, three broad themes emerged as organizational categories for narratives: family (including housing, child care and youth), education and employment, and politics (electoral politics, political ritual, the Lutheran Church and the Stasi). Naturally, as with any organizational scheme, these are artificial divisions and many experiences of daily life cross these categories.

For readers already familiar with GDR studies this chapter covers familiar terrain. For others, the first half provides background information for selections from interviews with Helga, Jürgen, Herr Kleiber, Frau Vogel and Frau Klemm that follow, as well as for remarks I make in the concluding chapter.

Family

Viewed as the "smallest cell" of socialist society, the heterosexual, nuclear family was actively furthered by the state in part through material incentives.¹ Low-interest loans to newly married couples, a portion of which was forgiven at the birth of each successive child, and preferential consideration for housing, encouraged many men and women to marry at a young age and have children early.

Yet, at the same time that government programs

1. "Die kleinste Zelle der Gesellschaft" Beyer 1972. See also Borneman 1992 for an extensive discussion of policies that shaped family forms.

furthered the formation of nuclear families, other policies made families as economic and social units superfluous. For example, the state made significant investments in education and job training for women; day care for children was widely available, as were inexpensive housing, and care for the elderly. The low cost of living (rent, utilities, transportation and basic foods were heavily subsidized), guarantees of education, full-time employment, and liberation from a significant amount of the care for dependent children, parents and grandparents, to a great extent freed men and women from interdependence. Some of the consequences of these contradictory influences were a significant decline, over the years, of the age of women and men at their first marriage and, at the same time, a noticeable increase in the number of divorces and single mothers in the GDR.²

Despite these tendencies, "family" retained its primacy as one of the most significant social, economic and emotional centers for GDR citizens. Aside from a spouse and children, many East Germans also desired an apartment or house, a car and a garden with a garden fence which

2. The average age at first marriage dropped steadily from 1950 to 1980, from 24.2 to 21.3 years for women, and from 26.6 to 23.4 years for men. Until the 1970s approximately 25,000 divorces were finalized each year; by 1989 this number had climbed to approximately 50,000 per year. Almost 35 percent of babies born in 1989 were born to single mothers (Winkler (ed.) 1990: 32, and Bundesministerium für Innerdeutsche Beziehungen (ed.) 1988: 9-12).

literally and symbolically defined the extent and limits of private space. People sought their Ruhe (peace and quiet) in their family, which functioned in part as a retreat from the compulsory society and politics of work collectives and other organizations.

Although the education, and economic and social liberation of women in the GDR played a significant role in the transformation of family structures, namely in the emergence of a very large population of economically secure single mothers, the GDR never went so far as to attempt directly to abolish or destroy the nuclear family. Historically "the family," in one way, shape or form, has been and is a central institution in German culture and society (see for example Evans and Lee (eds.) 1981). Yet some respondents did not accept that the GDR promoted the development of families due to cultural conservatism. One woman, a lesbian, single-mother of an adopted child, proposed a cynical explanation:

The state had a vested interest in keeping its population married--a single person can slip through the cracks, disappear. A married person, or a person with children, can be better controlled. Your family can be threatened either implicitly or explicitly.

Regardless of the reasons why young people in the GDR chose to marry and have children at increasingly early ages, they did. One of the consequences of this demographic trend was a great demand for housing. In Dresden, housing can be categorized into roughly three groups: Altbauen (old apartment buildings), old houses, and

Neubaugebieten (new housing developments).

Many of Dresden's old neighborhoods escaped the destruction of World War II. Here soot-blackened buildings that in some cases predate World War I line the streets in tight rows. Often five or six stories tall and in varying states of disrepair, they house numerous families in a dozen or more different apartments which may or may not have amenities such as indoor toilets, central heating, or showers or baths. Sometimes the toilet is downstairs in the back courtyard; often the apartments are heated with enormous, tile, coal-burning ovens³; and just as often, because the apartments lack showers, their residents must resort to sponge baths in the kitchen. But rent was cheap--sometimes only sixty marks a month (approximately one tenth of a worker's monthly wage or one-twentieth of the combined wages of a married couple), and the location of these Altbauen in or near Dresden's center made them very appealing.

In other neighborhoods stately old houses stand on separate lots shaded by ivy-covered trees. Located outside Dresden's "downtown," these peaceful neighborhoods seem suburban in character but are not marked by symbols of higher social and economic class such as expensive cars.

3. "We have to haul the coal three times over" I was told--once when it is carried in a metal pail from the basement to the apartment, a second time when it is actually loaded into the oven to be burned, and a third time when it is carried back downstairs in the form of ash.

Many of the houses have been divided into separate apartments and are shared by two or more families whose members are no more likely to be professional or white-collar workers than families who live in Altbauen.

Finally, in parts of downtown Dresden that burned in February 1945, and on the outskirts of the city, new (post-WWII) pre-fabricated, monotonous concrete highrises dominate the landscape. These new housing developments, or Neubaugebieten, usually consist of several apartment buildings each of which houses hundreds of people. While the developments are notorious for a merciless monotony that deadens both the eye and soul, the apartments in them do have indoor toilets, showers and central heating. What they do not have are charm or (often) proximity to shopping, recreational facilities or cultural centers. Originally such housing developments were planned to include shops, movie theaters, youth and senior citizens' clubs, sport halls, and more. But building the apartments turned out to be more expensive than anticipated; budgets were cut and with them plans; in one case, eventually only an adjacent grocery store was completed.

One woman described the housing projects thus:

No one cares about anything there. There is no life, no cinemas, not even any streets--just alleys. The people just sit there. They don't expend any energy to care for the apartments or the buildings. They don't clean or paint. Why should they? They don't have to worry about mowing the lawn. There isn't any lawn to mow, and what is done is done by the state. The apartments are so warm they don't even bother to get dressed. They do nothing--the men sit around in

their undershirts and lean on the balcony and watch the street and wait for their wives to cook lunch.

A person has to make their own space and have a place to be creative. There is no need or reward for creativity in a Neubau. There is an expression--work, work, build your house. Maybe it's a cliché but there is a concept of being free through work and in your own space.

Building housing was one of the GDR's priorities, but it was a priority the state had difficulty fulfilling. Even if young families had difficulty finding adequate accommodations, day care was readily available. It was also heavily subsidized, phenomenally cheap (one to two marks a day) and heavily used.⁴ Many parents had very positive experiences:

It depended on a lot of things such as the ratio of staff to children and the commitment of the staff. My son used to cry on Saturdays because he couldn't go to kindergarten. The staff at his kindergarten worked with the parents, giving us games and songs, suggestions for activities to do together with our kids. Sure, there can be disadvantages to sending your child to day care. Sometimes the children, especially infants, get sick because they are exposed to other children who may have colds or the flu. But the advantage is that children grow up in the company of others.

However, as with most things in life, the ready availability of day care was a double-edged sword. Some women felt pressured to enroll their infants and return to work as soon as possible after the Babyjahr, or year of maternity leave. Women who chose not to work, or not to return to work after the birth of a child, were sometimes

4. In 1989, 75 percent of children under three and 92 percent of children between the ages of three and six were enrolled in day care (Rueschemeyer and Schissler 1990: 76).

subject to criticism and malicious gossip for not "doing their share" for socialism. Those women who did work outside the home were still largely responsible for the majority of housework. Often they would pick up their children at the end of the day only to go home and supervise them while preparing dinner, cleaning house, doing laundry, tending to their husbands' needs and fulfilling other tasks that constitute the second half of women's "double burden" (see Dennis 1981, Lane 1983, Nickel 1989, Rueschemeyer 1982/3, Schmidt 1981). Some parents complained that their children were subject to ideological indoctrination at day care centers, in some cases provided with toy Russian tanks and instructed on the importance of "protecting" world peace through the maintenance of a strong military. Finally, some parents learned that their children were questioned about family discussions in which adults expressed their political views, or were tricked into revealing family habits:

When you watched the news on TV you saw a clock that had either dots or lines to mark the numbers--depending on whether you watched East or West German TV. Teachers asked the children to draw a clock and depending on how they drew it they could see what TV the parents watched.

When I related this story, told to me by one respondent, to another, the second respondent laughed uproariously. She was from Berlin, she said, where everything was a bit looser. In that situation the children would have asked, "What do you want? A West German clock or an East German

one?" I am struck not by her differentiation between the customs of Dresden and Berlin, but by the fact that she found the story entirely plausible.

Many parents characterized day care cynically, viewing it as serving the function of forcing women into the labor force by taking away from them the excuse that they have to care for their children. Here, the "double burden" of wage labor and housework women are forced to shoulder is emphasized and children are seen as suffering from being separated from their mothers and crammed into overcrowded, understaffed centers which put too much pressure on the children to achieve even at an early age. Often when this critical view is expressed it is elaborated to the point where early separation from the mother and premature socialization are seen as having damaged children for life. It serves as a broad explanation for all of the problems youth have today, including the tendency toward rightist or neo-nazi political attitudes, drug use and violence.

Another objection to day care was that it was yet another social institution (such as work collectives or the FDJ) which violated the privacy and autonomy of the family:

All these [institutions] were invasions into private life. The effort was to drive people into society, to drive them into a pattern through work in the community, or through organizations, or through youth clubs. And you always had to watch out.

Besides deciding whether or not to avail themselves of day care, parents had to make other significant decisions. In the GDR there were youth organizations for children of

three different age groups: Young Pioneers were school children in grades one to three; from grades four to seven children were enrolled in the (Ernst) Thälmann Pioneers, while the Free German Youth (FDJ) included young people from the eighth grade in school to the age of twenty-five years.

When parents first enrolled their children in school they filled out a form on which, among other things, they were required to indicate whether or not they wanted their children to join the Pioneers:

Of course you checked "Yes." You didn't want to experience the consequences, the questions, if you checked "No." And you didn't want to have to explain to your child the political reasons as to why she shouldn't be in the Pioneers. The child can't understand.

Not all parents checked "Yes" on the application form simply because, like the woman quoted above, they did not want to have to explain themselves if they chose to check "No." Some enrolled their children because they had positive memories from their own childhood experiences, including fun or socially constructive activities such as taking a day trip on a steam ship or collecting old newspapers for recycling. Children also went on weekend excursions, sometimes even traveling to other (socialist) countries where they camped and hiked, met other children and started friendships that were maintained subsequently through pen-pal correspondence.

Other parents knew no one whose children were not

members of the Pioneers and they saw no reason to withhold their children. A different motivation for enrolling children was to enable them to be like their friends. Wanting to protect them from being teased, laughed at, isolated or excluded from their peer groups, and fearing the emotional difficulty that might result if their children were the sole non-participants in their classes, parents signed their kids up.

One of the activities organized for teenagers through the Free German Youth was preparation for the Jugendweihe, a secular coming-of-age ceremony for fourteen-year-olds (briefly described in the Prologue). Preparation for the Jugendweihe consisted of a year of special instruction; those who would not make their Jugendweihe had no reason to participate in these special classes. Hence whether or not a teenager participated was obvious not only to a student's teacher but also to his or her peers.

Teachers had special responsibilities toward their students beyond the Jugendweihe. They were also expected to encourage young men to enlist in the army for more than the mandatory 1 1/2 years, to inspire their students to pursue military careers or to accept particularly difficult assignments, such as those on the East-West German border--perhaps even at the Berlin wall. There were reasons for young men to commit themselves to longer service, a military career, or duty on the border, especially for those who felt dedicated to the goals and program of

socialism or sought future influence for themselves in GDR politics. However, not all teachers were willing recruiters:

I had to have private conversations with each of the male students to "convince" them that they should enlist for three years of service in the army. Every year I was supposed to "convince" three students to enlist for three years each. Naturally, it was even better if I convinced them to enlist for five to ten years, or to pursue officer training. It never happened. I never "convinced" even one of them. I couldn't do that--convince them, I mean--but I had to try. I had to keep records of the conversations in a book, with the date of each conversation and the result. As a teacher, I was also expected to make home visits especially with the parents of male students in order to continue "convincing" them at home. What could I do? I couldn't sit there and say, "The army is fantastic; the opportunities are great; I recommend it highly." I didn't want their parents to think I was an idiot. So I would just bring up the subject and say, "Are you interested the possibility. Would you like to know about it," or whatever, and when they said "No," I heard the "No" and went no further. Eventually, I had fewer and fewer discussions with them and the ones I had became shorter and shorter, and then finally I would just say, "Ok, we've had this conversation and you know it, right?" And the student would say "Yes," and I would write the date in the book. Sometimes I wrote "Very involved with the Church" in the book--just so the student wouldn't be harassed anymore.⁵

Sometimes young men opportunistically enlisted for three years in order to guarantee themselves advantages such as preferential consideration for highly competitive academic programs. For one hundred places in computer science at a university, I was told by a student, there would be approximately one thousand applicants. "Everyone knew" that eighty of the available places would go to men

5. The influential role played by the Lutheran Church is discussed below in the section "Politics of Daily Life."

who had volunteered for three years of military service; the other twenty places would go to the top twenty candidates. If you were not one of the top twenty, you might get admitted as one of the eighty who had signed up for three years. In some cases, as soon as men started their military service, the state determined that it needed to accelerate development in a particular field. Men who had volunteered for three years of service would be released after nine months in order to begin their studies, while men who had signed up only for the mandated one and a half years would be required to serve the entire duration of their commitment.

Not all men who committed themselves to officer training or other forms of extended military service remained content with their decision, but leaving the military was much more difficult than joining it. The husband of one woman was a case in point:

Can you believe my husband was an army officer when we first met! I couldn't believe it--that with my political opinions [pacifism], I would have a boyfriend who was an officer! I was ashamed to tell anyone about him. Eventually we had a child together; then we married. But long before that he left the army--after months of struggle and "discussions" and a Party Verfahren [procedure]. It was brutal. Finally he was "allowed" to go--essentially with a dishonorable discharge. And then he had to find work. It lasted several months but finally he found something with a cultural organization. "Normal" factories and businesses wouldn't even consider him because he was a former officer. And as soon as they had his application they also had that information. It was impossible to hide it.

Education and Employment

Despite the fact that military service may have been boring, unpleasant or objectionable, it was, nonetheless, understood as a "normal" part of growing up in the GDR, at least for men. The state did not make many such demands of its citizens. And for those demands it did make, it offered in exchange guaranteed employment, housing, dependant care and more. These were some of the practical matters of daily life. Another guarantee, this one intangible, was that of existential security. This feeling, cherished by some, loathed by others, generally was a result of the way state intervention in matters of daily life was reflected in the life course almost to the extent that one could speak of the "planned life":

Sure you had little choices here and there, but basically you went to elementary school, then to technical school or to EOS [Erweiterte Oberschule, high school on the college track] for your Abitur. If you were a man you served in the army. Then you trained or apprenticed or studied somewhere, and you didn't have to put yourself out for anything if you didn't want to, but if you wanted to you could. Either way it didn't matter, because if you got good grades or bad, there was still a job for you at the end, often in the very same factory where you had apprenticed and there was always someone there to look out for you. It was peaceful. You always had your Ruhe. Then in your free time you could do whatever you wanted to do.

Then at eighteen you applied for your car. And you worked and you started saving money. Then you applied for an apartment. You submitted your application and that was it. It didn't help to ask after it or anything. Three years later you got a letter in the mail that said that your apartment was available. You applied for your car and fifteen years later you got a letter in the mail that said that your car was available. So you had your job and your apartment and your car and you were set for life. You

never had to trouble yourself to think about anything.

Knowing well in advance what would happen in one's life and when made some things easier. For example, it's true one had to wait a decade or more for a car, but it's also true that a car was very expensive--twelve to fifteen thousand marks--and car loans, widely available in Western countries, were unheard of. During the period that their application was pending, a family could save about one thousand marks a year; by the time the car was available they would have the money necessary to buy it.

But for some, the prospect of a planned, predictable life course was not appealing:

You graduate from college or professional school and you have nothing to look forward to except thirty-five years of work in the same job. Then you retire; then you can travel to the West; then you die.

Part of the security East Germans felt stemmed from the state's educational and apprenticeship system which ensured that no GDR citizen, except the most severely handicapped or resolutely rebellious, would come of age without having some economically useful skill. Furthermore, college or graduate school education and training for a professional career did not guarantee a higher level of material comfort or social status. In fact, it was commonly said that manual laborers earned more and lived better than doctors and lawyers because they were often paid in convertible currency or valuable gifts (packages of West German coffee, fresh fruit or vegetables

from someone's garden). Nonetheless, for many, a college education and a professional career remained the first choice in life. The exact field of education and area of career were often defined by others, namely administrators and bureaucrats who attempted to anticipate the GDR's future needs and accordingly produce the requisite number of appropriately trained professionals.

Despite the assurance of the young men quoted above that one's life course in the GDR was always predictable, the fact is that many people planned carefully and lived strategically in an attempt to guarantee choices they sought for themselves or their children. While it may not have been possible to ensure that a student would study what he or she wanted to study in college, it was possible to enhance the chances for getting into college in the first place. Some parents enrolled their children in the state youth organizations and some teenagers made their Jugendweihe because "everyone knew" that "if you didn't, you would never be able to get your Abitur and go to college."

In school there were other struggles:

[w]hat they say is, if you go to EOS, you go to the Red school. That means you get all the more inundated with Marxism-Leninism and everything else that is a part of it. The one-sidedness, this absolute certainty that the teachers represented to us, we [the respondent and his classmates at EOS] said that doesn't make any sense. How can it function like that? So it was a wonderful time because we were able to refute things, not just because we wanted to be contrary but as part of finding an inner logic. When someone comes and says this is how it is and I don't

need to prove it, it just is because it is, well, then I want to see if it makes sense. I want to know why things are, not just that they are. Understand? And for the first time [while studying for the Abitur] I was with other people who were the same way and it was a wonderful, wonderful time. Those were the good old days, you might say. There was the contradiction between the teachers, who were conservative, and the students, who were progressive. And it was a good battle.

Some respondents claim that, once past the ideological and educational hurdles of their youth, they went on to work very hard in their occupations. Others claim they did very little. Puzzled by this discrepancy, I asked a couple about it one night while we had coffee. The husband was a former factory manager, his wife, a language instructor.

It depended on who you were and what sector of the economy you worked in. If you stood on an assembly line, for example, if you were directly involved in manufacturing or assembly you worked a lot, and you worked hard. Naturally, if the materials you needed weren't there, there was nothing you could do and you had to take a break. But then if the materials came in on a Saturday or Sunday, which happened sometimes, then you worked on Saturday or Sunday too. Then the machines were old and spare parts failed, and it was hard to repair them, and you had to scrounge around and make do with things. In some cases in the GDR the same amount of work had to be done in a day as in the West, but the tools, the machines, the conditions were that much worse so that it was that much harder to accomplish something.

Supervisors had different frustrations that stemmed from the political and economic constraints that limited their professional effectiveness. A chemist and foreman at a plant reflected on the difficulties he had at work, focusing on the "upside-down relationship" between workers and managers.

In some cases the workers made more than the managers.

They were the politically empowered class. You couldn't fire the workers so you had to think of other ways to get them to produce, and sometimes that was impossible. The political pressure and the pressure to produce that came from the top down couldn't go as far as the privileged worker. It stayed at the level of the managers and because of the pressure nothing could get done and the economy stagnated.

Sometimes men and women were proud of the contribution they had made through their work and regretted not having been able to do more. Often related to this sentiment was resentment at having had to waste their time and energy by attending mandatory political meetings:

For example, we would all have to go to a meeting on environmental pollution. Someone would speak--an expert. He would say that Marx had said this and Lenin had said that, and therefore Marx and Lenin had founded the scientific analysis of environmental pollution. And everyone had to sit there and nod. But to say, "What is the level of carbon monoxide in our air?" And "Why don't we regularly know what the level of carbon monoxide is?" Or "What can we do about a level that is too high?"--that would be disruptive. The director would come and you would be called to a "discussion" and you would no longer be able to teach. You would become unwürdig [unworthy].

Most everyone agreed, however, that the work they had done had been very important to them--not only because of the income it generated but also because it had provided social contact and a source of positive self-esteem. Nonetheless, if they had been willing to work hard in part because of their commitment to the ideals of socialism, they were frustrated and disappointed by experiences which led them to see that not everyone shared their dedication. People also lost faith in the organization of labor and the utilization of resources in the GDR after witnessing

readily apparent waste.

One respondent, an elderly woman I call Frau Tietz, had a different reason for viewing the socialist economy with deep antipathy. After World War II she and her husband had purchased a small business that produced confections. After a few years of work they became very successful. Then, in 1972, their factory was collectivized. With great emphasis Frau Tietz cried, "We were compelled to voluntarily give the factory up to the state!" Indeed, they were forced to sign a document attesting to the fact that the property was transferred of their own free will. The factory did not survive collectivization, however: only a few years later it was closed.

The deterioration of the GDR economy was the primary (though not sole) reason named whenever I asked respondents why they thought the Wende had occurred. When asked to provide specific examples they often spoke of seeing roads and houses going unrepaired, but more often they referred to the difficulty they had getting items they needed on a day-to-day basis, ranging from fruits and vegetables, to clothing, to cars. Sometimes families kept "hamster cabinets" where items, purchased in quantity simply because they were available, were stored until they were needed. In addition, there were often neighborhood networks for rapidly communicating information when hard-to-find items, such as bananas, became available. Beziehungen, or

connections, had to be cultivated and manipulated as well. The unavailability of goods was even more difficult to tolerate when it was well known that those items were produced in the GDR but not sold for consumption there. One man recalled that the field behind his apartment building (since 1991 the site of a Mercedes-Benz dealership) was once planted with acres of strawberries--yet there were never any strawberries in the nearby store.⁶

Some goods, either unavailable through normal channels or of better-than-average quality, could be purchased in "Exquisit" stores where prices were exorbitantly high. Additionally, a small number of Intershops carried products imported from the West--available only for convertible currency. The existence of such stores, where products such as Marlboro cigarettes, Wrigley's chewing gum or L'eggs pantyhose were displayed in colorful, shiny wrappers, made the fact that it was virtually impossible to acquire those things all the more difficult to live with--for some, at least.

It many cases it was possible for East Germans to collect hard currency, particularly when a family had relatives in West Germany who sent a few Deutsche marks for Christmas or birthdays every year. Another frequently

6. In the GDR this man never enjoyed strawberries from the field; now he is unable to enjoy a Mercedes from the dealership there because of the prohibitive cost of such a luxury vehicle. Dresdners I interviewed were all too aware of such ironies.

mentioned method for getting hard currency was prostitution, particularly at trade fairs in Leipzig where both foreigners and hard currency convened. Additionally, East Germans could easily meet and sell services (such as skiing lessons) to West Germans while on vacation in other eastern European countries.

Hard currency, or "D-Mark", would be carefully collected, and then even more carefully spent. Some never spent their currency, treasuring it so much they could not bring themselves to exchange it for goods or services--for then they would no longer have the bills. Of course by the summer of 1990 the bills were worth no more than their face value, as opposed to the inflated and also symbolic value they had in the GDR.

West German relatives provided their poor eastern cousins with more than hard currency. Care packages containing coffee, candy, chocolate, cigarettes, toys and other coveted items arrived regularly, usually at least at Christmas. Christmas packages inspired sentiments not only of joy and thanks, but also anger and shame. Often the clothes and toys sent by relatives were not new but rather used.

"We were always the poor beggars," one woman observed, "always second class."

As with just about every other aspect of daily life in the GDR, heterogeneity of experience, rather than homogeneity, was the rule. Not everyone had relatives in

West Germany; not everyone received packages, or correspondence, or got D-Mark on a regular basis. Some who did not have contact with West German relatives claim not to have missed it at all. Or they were relieved not to have suffered the painful ambivalence of simultaneous thanks and humiliation. They were perfectly satisfied with the jackets, coffee and chewing gum available in the GDR, made do with their own salaries--paid in East German marks--and thought more about the world they lived in, that is the eastern bloc, than the world which was prohibited to them, the western bloc.

Lack of contact with West Germans had a variety of causes. Sometimes there were no relatives there, or if relatives existed they were unknown, or they were known but no contact emerged. In some cases, when individuals were employed in areas such as security or had access to sensitive information, communication with all West Germans was prohibited.

Information was also highly desired and difficult to obtain. West German relatives were a source not only of material goods, but also forbidden or hard-to-find publications ranging from maps and atlases, to handbooks with data on environmental pollution, and magazines. But the hunger and struggle for literature was not limited to publications from the West. Even books published in the GDR, especially those issued in very small quantities, were sometimes hard to find, necessitating long waits of a year

or more, manipulation of connections and the exchange of gifts. Sensations when they were first issued, novels such as Christa Wolf's Kassandra (1984) or Christoph Hein's Der fremde Freund (later published as Drachenblut 1984) circulated from friend to friend, stimulating extensive discussions within families and among acquaintances.

"Sometimes for months, a quarter of a year or more," I was told, "everyone would discuss one book."

By the 1980s an underground literature prospered in the GDR. It was difficult to gain access to the materials and machines which would have facilitated the circulation of such poems, stories and critical discussions of society and politics. Paper was scarce, copiers carefully controlled, and desktop publishing unheard-of. Nonetheless materials were prepared, carefully typed, and circulated among trusted friends who sometimes would take the trouble to completely retype them, thereby creating additional copies.

Finally, information about the world, intensely craved, as well as clues about alternative perspectives on society and politics were available in GDR newspapers and magazines--when the adept, interactive subscriber carefully read between the lines. In some cases, that also meant "reading" the layout of articles, the arrangement of photographs and other aspects of a paper's format:

Look here, on the front page of Neues Deutschland. Do you see how these articles are arranged? There's something bad about the United States [the dollar

declining] and right next to it, something good about the Soviet Union [new records set in auto manufacturing]. It was always that way.

For others, the only interesting pages in the local paper were want ads and obituaries.

"Those are the only pages anybody read," I was told.

"At least you could find out who died."

Newspapers were occasionally useful for other purposes as well: "Can you diaper an elephant with a copy of Neues Deutschland?" was one wisecrack. The answer: "Yes, when there's a speech by Erich Honecker in it."

The Politics of Daily Life

"We may not have had bananas," one woman complained to me as we spoke about differences in daily life before and after the Wende, "but at least we had our Ruhe." The peace and quiet to which she referred reflects a complex of underlying values cherished by many in the GDR: "Ich will meine Ruhe haben!" (I want my peace and quiet!) is a common cry. These qualities were (and are) imposed by authorities on domestic organization: for example, in a sign posted prominently by the administrator of an apartment building which exhorted all tenants to protect the Ruhe, Ordnung und Sicherheit (quiet, order and security) of the building. For the fortieth anniversary of the GDR, the state created and circulated a certificate on which was printed "Forty years of order, security and quiet." The opposites of Ruhe and Ordnung, or Unruhe and Unordnung (unrest and disorder)

were two of the evils against which Young Pioneers were supposed to battle.⁷

The maintenance of quiet, order and security requires that regulations, codes of conduct, or expectations for behavior be established, promulgated and enforced. Often these regulations verged on the ridiculous, yet just as often they were rigidly enforced as if they were so crucial to the maintenance of society that disregarding them, or making exceptions, would be intolerable:

I started [as a secondary school teacher] in the fall of 1986. I walked into my class and said "Good morning." The students said nothing in response. They were used to greeting the teacher, but with the greeting from the Young Pioneers. Every school class started with the following: the teacher said, "For peace and socialism be prepared!" and the students replied, "Always prepared!" That was up to the eighth grade. Then the greeting was simply "Friendship!" and the students responded, "Friendship!" But I said to myself, I'm not going to do that, so I walked in and said, "Good morning!" The students were totally shocked. They didn't know that at all.

A couple weeks later I was called to the

7. Unruhe is the absence of rest--or restlessness. It is the absence of calm--or nervousness. It also means unease, worry and trouble. In general, Unruhe is an undesirable state in which one experiences fear or anxiety. Unruhe also conveys the sense of political or social trouble--as in unrest in the streets. In this sense, Unruhe was one of those problems against which the Young Pioneers were supposed to be a first line of defense. In a segment of a popular film produced after the Wende, "Kinder, Kader, Kommandeure," which included clips from real GDR propaganda films, several Young Pioneers happened upon a small group of adults meeting in secret in the woods. The children ran to inform one of their fathers who, coincidentally, was drilling with his Kampfgruppe (civil defense group) at exactly that moment. The men of the Kampfgruppe seized their arms, followed the children into the woods and blew away the suspected conspirators--no questions asked. The segment concluded with a shot of the children beaming as they were extravagantly praised for their bravery.

principal for a two hour discussion on what was right and I was left with the binding directive to begin my classes with the correct greeting. What he said, to exaggerate somewhat, is that "Good morning" does not further a socialist lesson. So that was our Red principal. There could have been other principals who would say, "Ok, let him start with 'Good morning,' it's not a bad greeting after all." But not our principal.

So that's a little example. And when you've just started as a teacher it's not a very welcoming example. After a while all these examples pile up. Each experience is another little stone. Soon you have a little heap, and then it becomes very, very heavy, and after a while you just feel very small and very weak.

The desire for an ordered, quiet and secure life was viewed by some respondents as an "Eigenartigkeit" or idiosyncrasy of the (collective) German people and was described to me as the attitude: "You have your garden fence, and I have mine. That's my space and let me have my Ruhe." The underlying notion is that as long as all people know what they may and may not do, or say, or where they may or may not go, no one need be disturbed, troubled or frightened by the unexpected.

One of the ways quiet and order are maintained in democratic societies is by delegating political power and authority through elections. In the GDR, in an ostensibly democratic process, candidates were selected for offices, public meetings were held in which issues were raised and discussed, platforms were developed, party lists were established and elections were held. But the political significance of participating in the electoral process, specifically by voting, was perhaps of greater consequence

in the politics of daily life that in the "official" politics of the state. More often than not, voting was something people did primarily in order to protect one's Ruhe; "everyone knew" that abstaining from elections would result in "consequences."

These consequences might have included disadvantages for one's children (not getting into college) or being denied privileges such as a trip to the West. A common refrain was, "Everyone said to me, 'Vote! If you don't vote you won't ever be able to go [to the West].'" This comment was just as commonly concluded, "But I didn't vote and I was able to go anyway."

For some, voting was fraught with significant anxiety, particularly if they chose to use their ballot to make a statement of their convictions. One elderly woman, describing to me what she called her "nervous breakdown," said:

I simply lay awake all night and screamed. I screamed and cried, thinking someone would come and take me away but they never did. It all started the time I went to vote and instead of just checking off the list, I wrote three points down on the ballot. One, I didn't like the "black/white" politics in the GDR.⁸ Two, I wanted an alternative course of development for the country. Three, I wanted real candidates to vote for, not just the Party puppets. I had gone to vote early in the morning because I was going to write that on the ballot and there wouldn't be a lot of people

8. A reference to the simplistic portrayal of everything in the GDR and socialism being good and everything else being evil.

there then.⁹ But there were a lot of people there and I was standing there writing it and suddenly there was someone standing next to me, looking over my shoulder, saying "Now, what is that there." And he read what I wrote, then folded the paper and stuck it in the box even though it was invalid. A ballot that had something written on it was invalid.

Despite the fact that this women suffered no "consequences" for her action, she never voted again for fear that it would send her "over the edge."

Participation in other political rituals was mandatory in the same sense--that "everyone knew" there would be consequences for people who didn't attend. Some of these rituals, such as the Jugendweihe or First of May, had their origins in German socialist culture that predated the GDR. Then, over the GDR's forty-year history, such activities were transformed by those individuals who planned and organized them, and by participants. A folklorist at the Dresden branch of the Academy of Sciences offered this example:

The First of May was a big deal at first, with parades and bands and speeches and the like. It was a picnic day more than anything else [because] there was nothing to struggle for in the East--after all, the workers were now the ruling class. The problem was that in the village where I grew up roughly twenty-five percent of the population was farmers--and they had no interest in the First of May. You couldn't have had turnout for the First of May of course, so eventually everyone who participated got ten marks. Later, there was a young generation for whom the First of May meant even less. They had their motorbikes and

9. It was possible to mark one's ballot in a private voting booth, but it was suspected that people who chose to go into the booth had their names written down on a special list. Paradoxically, voting by marking one's ballot publicly at a table was an attempt at assuring anonymity.

their girlfriends and they would drive into the city because there was more going on there anyway. Then they would come cruising back through the village to collect their ten marks for participating. On top of that the band would drink too much. So you had the apathetic farmers, the indifferent youth riding around on their motorcycles, the drunken band. It wasn't exactly the day of glory imagined by the Party or the Politbüro.

Despite the fact that certain political rituals in the GDR weren't what they used to be, attendance was, if not mandatory, at least highly desirable. As with so many other aspects of daily life in the GDR, people readily succumbed to pressure to attend in order to avoid standing out or making trouble, or because they feared what might happen to them if they did not go.

"What might happen to them" does not necessarily refer to a fear of the Stasi (state security service). Some respondents claim to have been unaware of the existence of the Stasi at least until adulthood (age 18). Yet real or imagined anxiety caused by knowledge of the Stasi was a fact of life to which others did have to reconcile themselves.

This fear was sometimes expressed to me in terms of having to "live between the borders" where "the borders" demarcated the limits of what one could or could not do or say. One had to learn where the borders were, be aware of them and make compromises to avoid treading across them, for accidentally or intentionally crossing the borders could be dangerous--even if the "danger" that awaited remained unspecified.

Information about the possible consequences for crossing an unspecified border were communicated in apocryphal tales such as the story of a young man who applied to emigrate to the West--in part an act of rebellion against his father, a high-ranking Party official. The young man first lost his job. Then he was not permitted to travel to Berlin, then Leipzig. Eventually he was made a virtual prisoner of Dresden, and then he was made a real prisoner at Bautzen, a notorious jail run by the Stasi. Finally, he was "bought out" by the West. While such stories were not common, almost every respondent with whom I spoke knew someone who knew someone, and related their "Stasi story" to me with an air that such incidents were well within the realm of possibility.

Other issues more subtle than emigration also fell under the rubric of "living between the borders." For some, the first lessons of childhood concerned the art of speaking "with a double tongue." Messages concerning what one could and couldn't say where and when were often delivered in a way which, albeit nonverbal, nonetheless was not subtle.

"If you talked too much or with the wrong people," I was told, "your friends would slowly leave you until you were isolated and alone."

At other times the lesson was communicated directly: "If you said something, something a little too much, it might pass by. But later someone would pull you aside and

say, 'You'd better be more careful next time.'

Sometimes specific threats were made. One woman recalled that when she was a high school student (in the 1970s) a teacher said to her, "If you don't share this [political] opinion, there is no future for you here [in the college preparatory EOS]."

While some people may have characterized their lives as being clouded by pervasive fear, "it wasn't normal to be watched everywhere, every day," I was assured, though people were surveilled at times. One respondent complained about being watched--after he had submitted an application to emigrate.

I would go into a store to shop. As soon as I left someone would leave right behind me and follow me wherever I was going. It was so primitive, so clear. They wanted me to know they were there. They wanted to make me uncomfortable.

After the Wende, and certainly before it, many rumors circulated about the strength, influence, and extent of the Stasi. Speculations range from one person out of three being Stasi informants, to one in sixteen. Small incidents reinforced the perception that there was an informer in every collective. One example offered me involved a soldier who casually made a negative comment about Russians. The next day he was called to his commanding officer for a "discussion" during which his comment was repeated to him.

The problem of what is contained in Stasi files, how one gains access to one's file, and how to cope with its

contents plagued Dresdners during 1991-2, though some respondents pointedly avowed no interest in their files. "What's in there anyway except lies, assumptions and accusations?" one woman insisted.

Sometimes people disappeared. A teacher recalled that, in the early 1980s, a colleague mysteriously vanished. At first she assumed the colleague was sick or on vacation. Finally, after weeks went by with no word, someone contacted the missing teacher. She had applied to emigrate and from the day she filed her application she was forbidden to set foot in the school again. She was not even allowed to clean out her locker. Finally, almost two years later, the teacher was allowed to go to the West. "As soon as you filed your application you became a Staatsfeind [enemy of the state]," I was told.

Others planned strategically, first giving notice at work, then quitting their jobs, then applying to emigrate. A thirty-year old woman recalled:

Back in "deep" GDR times one of my teachers said to the class one day, "I'm sorry we won't see each other anymore." He filed an application to emigrate and was immediately removed from the school. He wasn't allowed to have any more contact with us at all. It was dangerous to even ask about him--if you asked, "Where is he?" or "What happened?" or "What is he doing now?" you made yourself suspect. Maybe you were an ideological enemy too.

Sometimes people who vanished presumably had been taken to prison for one offense or another. After the Wende a report emerged in which plans were described to turn a youth center into an internment camp for certain

people deemed dangerous or threatening to the state. One fifty-five year-old man, who told me he saw his name on a list of people to be interned, had worked with a church-based group on social problems such as alcoholism. Even though he and his associates assumed an informer was present at all of their discussions they talked anyway, believing they had to trust each other.

Now I know I was on the list to be taken away. All they would have told my wife was that I was safe, in a good place. The state had absolute power. We were afraid. Maybe we were always too afraid, but we wanted our kids to be able to get into a good high school, or get their Abitur and go to college. Or maybe you wanted a career. Maybe we should have had more courage. But then, the whole population of the whole country would have had to have been more courageous.

The fear of going to prison was common enough that a saying referred to "having one foot in prison" (as in the English expression "to have one foot in the grave"). I first heard this in the course of a conversation about traveling to the West. When groups were allowed to go the participants had to be "socially active" and trustworthy. Each group included a number of informants and, "of course" a leader who went with "one foot in prison." If anything happened, if anyone attempted to defect, it would be the group leader who would suffer the consequences.

Fear of the Stasi was engendered through harassment as well. One particularly poignant story was this:

In the fifties there were Greek children at the

institute down the road here.¹⁰ I was working with them and three of them in particular befriended me. They became increasingly homesick and wanted to go home. This was 1953 and the border wasn't closed yet but still it wasn't easy to cross. I pleaded with them not to go, "You're not permitted to go," I said. But in December, around Christmas, they became even more homesick and I didn't see them for several days. Then, early one morning, my doorbell rang. I answered the door and there were three big men standing there. They pushed my husband into the living room and me into the bedroom and told me to get dressed. "Why should I get dressed," I asked. "Just get dressed," they said. "You're coming with us." And I had to go with them.

They took me to an interrogation house and grilled me from early in the morning until seven that night. They asked over and over about the girls--about my relationship with them. They accused me of being a Fluchthilfer [accomplice to their escape]. I swore that I wasn't, that I had pleaded with the girls not to go but they were girls and they were homesick and they wanted to be home for Christmas! I didn't even know that the girls had fled--but I assumed they had, otherwise why would I have been brought in for interrogation?

They offered me food. I refused to eat. They offered me something to drink. I refused. I only wanted to use the bathroom--they let me do that, but I had to leave the door open. Suddenly it was over. The door opened and my husband came in. They had held him and interrogated him the entire day too. Then we learned the girls were there too--they hadn't fled! And they had told the truth--that they were homesick and that I had told them not to go!

After that the girls and I were forbidden to see each other. But sometimes we would meet in the dark on an empty street corner and whisper a greeting. Twenty years later, in the 1970s, the girls were finally permitted to go. They walked by the house and waved goodbye from the sidewalk. To this day I don't know where they are or what happened to them, though I think two of them are in West Berlin and one of them went back to Greece. They never wrote--or if they did, I never received the letters.

I asked this woman if she had told anyone about the

10. The respondent explained that the children had been orphaned during World War II, then transported to the GDR to be raised there. I have been unable to confirm her explanation.

incident. "I wasn't allowed to," she replied. She had missed an entire day of work and, when her colleagues asked why, said only, "'I'm not allowed to answer but I wasn't loafing around at home!' No, we couldn't say anything," she concluded. "That is how powerful the Stasi was." She showed me, however, how, with a look and the tone of her voice, she could communicate exactly where she had been.

By the 1980s, I was told, one out of ten people had applied to emigrate. Regardless of the accuracy of this statistic, even the rumor of such widespread dissatisfaction was distressing to ordinary people. The motivations of one person who applied and successfully emigrated revolved around a profound sense of entrapment. This man, about 35 years of age, told me that he "couldn't freely be a person [in the GDR]." He leaned toward me and blinked rapidly as he elaborated:

I couldn't think freely, or talk freely. It was like always being trapped in a condom and you were always afraid of what would happen if the condom burst. It was too much to bear. It was for freedom that I took the risk of never seeing my home or my parents again. It wasn't because of economic reasons. I thought about leaving for eight or ten years before I applied. It was a great, great, serious decision. I had an ex-wife and a child and, as far as I knew, I was deciding to never see them or my home again. My girlfriend and I applied to emigrate at the same time. She only waited one year--then she fled to the West hidden in the trunk of a car. I waited two years--then I got permission and left legally.

The decision to leave had repercussions not only for the individual who made it but also for his or her family. This was the case particularly when people fled illegally.

In the summer of 1989, a social scientist told me, his son fled to Warsaw, where he was one of the hundreds of people who occupied the West German embassy there. At that time, no one in the GDR anticipated that the borders would be opened and that the GDR would come to an end.

"If the Wende hadn't come," the social scientist speculated, "maybe I would have ended up sorting mail in the post office."

Even though fear of the Stasi may have permeated daily life in the GDR for many people, not everyone hesitated to speak his or her mind or act in ways that were forthright rather than evasive or manipulative. In particular, many older respondents (in their sixties and seventies) insisted that they had always spoken honestly and acted freely. Other respondents reported having heard rumors about possible consequences of certain actions (or, more specifically, inactions) then told me that they never suffered penalties for failing to vote or attend First of May festivities. Not all Dresdners believed that they had been spied upon, or had a file, or found life so unbearable that they wanted to flee. In fact, one of the attitudes pervading many interviews was that daily life in the GDR was utterly normal.

There were difficulties and tensions but these were viewed as customary and were dealt with in a variety of ways. There were practical methods for overcoming practical problems--such as slipping a sales clerk ten

marks in order to get a vacuum cleaner when she insisted that none was available. There were methods for overcoming psychological problems such as the frustration of having to bribe the clerk for a vacuum cleaner when you worked in the very factory where vacuum cleaners were assembled. The solution to problems such as these was often found in humor.

The state was notably bereft of a sense of humor. The inability to appreciate irony or wit was a sign of insecurity, one respondent confided in me, as well as dogmatism. Because the state could not see or appreciate humor it unwittingly created it. A number of slogans generated by committees for various motivational purposes were hilarious because the location of the banners or placards resulted in unintended double meanings. Some of these have been preserved in Ernst Röhl's satirical dictionary¹¹:

(Hanging on a cemetery wall) "Alles heraus zum ersten Mai!" (Everyone out for the First of May!).

(Outside a mental institution) "Alles, was wir sind, sind wir durch die Partei!" (Everything we are we owe to the Party!).

(In front of a jail) "Heraus zu neuen Taten!" (On to new [mis]deeds!)

Unintentional humor on the part of the state was one thing; intentional humor at the expense of the state was another. Jokes were relished, told and retold, and the

11. Röhl 1991.

pleasure they provided was intensified by the risk associated with their telling. A young friend compared humor in the GDR and after the Wende:

We couldn't laugh out loud about the Stasi or say Honecker was an ass. We had to "talk through the flowers." It was a lot more powerful then. Now everyone can walk down the street and say Kohl is an ass. It doesn't mean the same any more.

Telling a joke was risky but did not necessarily result in any "consequences." The degree of danger associated with a joke was relative to its content, the person who told it and the context in which it was told. Jokes were communicated rapidly through personal networks, bringing great pleasure to the participants. One moderately risqué example was this:

Every time Erich Honecker went out he noticed that there were fewer and fewer people in the streets. "Where are all the people going?" he wondered and ordered a subordinate to investigate the problem.

The subordinate concluded that the people were fleeing to the West and he inspected every inch of the Berlin wall until he found the hole. He returned to report his findings to Honecker.

"It's even worse than we thought," he said. "There's a guillotine above the hole. Whenever anyone crawls through, it drops down. The West gets the brains and we're stuck with the assholes."

Other ways of shrugging off politics were just as much a part of daily life and included developing the ability to move easily between two worlds--the official world of propaganda and ideology, and the private world where ideology was kept at bay. By way of example, consider the problem faced by people living in cities or on streets with at least two names--a historical name and a political name.

One afternoon I ran into a friend and invited him to the American-style Thanksgiving dinner I was planning. He declined, saying he would be going out of town to visit his parents. Curious, I asked him where that was:

"Chemnitz," he replied.

"Ahh," I said, "you mean Karl Marx City."

He looked at me oddly and said, "I always called it Chemnitz."

"But when you were born it had already been renamed Karl Marx City," I persisted.

"In history," he replied, now irritated, "we always read about Chemnitz. We talked about Chemnitz. And privately, whenever anyone asked you where you lived, you said Chemnitz. It was Karl Marx City only for official business--for addresses on envelopes and things like that."

Tension between socialist political ideology and alternative points of view was most directly expressed in the (overwhelmingly Evangelical Lutheran¹²) churches of the GDR; by the 1980s these offered a haven from the politics of daily life to a significant portion of the East German population.

In the GDR's early years the state had attempted to systematically repress the church and its adherents by propagating atheist ideology, limiting religious instruction and denying opportunities at all levels of society to church members. A pastor recalled:

As a young man [in the '50s] I wondered sometimes if I would retire a pastor. You had to take into consideration the fact that the state was so

12. In 1989 only 6.1 percent of East Germans identified themselves as Catholic while 30 percent were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Winkler 1990: 308). See also Enquete-Kommission (ed.) 1995 vol. 6, Helwig and Urban (eds.) 1987, Joppke 1995, Krisch 1985;)

aggressive against the church it might not be possible to be a pastor for long, that the church would be driven into the ground and I would end up a truck driver or something.

By the 1970s the state had modified its strategy: instead of seeking to eliminate what it viewed as an opponent, it attempted to transform the church into an agent for socialism. The desire of the GDR to reach an accord with the church enabled Lutheran bishops to win important concessions from the state. By 1978 these included the right to broadcast services on television at guaranteed times, and financial support for the construction of new churches and charitable work. In addition, principles already avowed by the GDR constitution were affirmed by Erich Honecker, including "freedom to practice religion, the internal autonomy of the churches, and the equal status of all citizens regardless of belief" (Krisch 1985: 124).

By the 1980s the Lutheran Church maintained over seven thousand parishes, staffed by approximately four thousand pastors. By 1989 over five million East Germans were members of the church (in contrast, in 1988, fewer than 2.5 million East Germans were members of the SED or candidates for membership) (Fischbach (ed.) 1990: 174). The church had also become a major provider of social services. In 1988 the church managed 32 hospitals, 161 (total) kindergartens, day care centers and children's homes, 2 homes for youth, 30 convalescence homes and spas, 102

senior citizen's centers and 17 homes for the mentally disabled (Winkler 1990: 312). The Lutheran Church employed tens of thousands of East Germans and provided services to hundreds of thousands more.

In the 1980s the church's significant presence grew even greater as it came to shelter what is referred to as the "Peace Movement," or an eclectic group of organizations concerned with a variety of social and political issues ranging from ecology to nuclear disarmament (see Ash 1983, Fulbrook 1987, Mushaben 1984, Ramet 1984, Sanford 1986/7). Lutheran Churches offered such groups not only physical space for their meetings but also institutional and political support. For example, church leaders could win permission from authorities for public gatherings such as antiwar demonstrations. In addition, certain church leaders fostered critical discussions of state policies. The pastor quoted previously explained:

In the GDR we lived in a divided land where there was an unbelievable armament. And in this historical situation the education of a man without requiring that he take up arms would have been, for me, the one thing that the state could have done in order to bring about peace. But that was actually a crime in the GDR, to raise someone like that. The education of young people about arms, about the power of the military against the class enemy, this was the greatest expression of a love for peace. That was the contradiction, yes that was the ideology. In the GDR if you didn't accept that, if you weren't for armament and defense, you were practically for the West, for the capitalists, and so you were a class enemy. In the GDR rearing children for peace was rearing them for war, in the final analysis. And I led such discussions here [in the church].

This pastor, as well as many others, actively

supported young men who sought to refuse mandatory military service. At first the state offered conscientious objectors the option of working in construction, but often the projects to which men were assigned directly supported the military and building air strips on army bases was not what such individuals had in mind. By the late 1980s the church gained a new option for men who did not wish to take up arms; assignments were found for them in (often church-run) hospitals and other health and social-service institutions.

In the GDR's final years Lutheran churches became an increasingly important social center for men and women who sought to explore politically sensitive issues. The church also contributed to the emergence of creative and critical public discourse. Newsletters, public festivals during which services, meetings, workshops and cultural events were held, and the opening of church services to new forms of worship that included non-traditional music and participation by controversial intellectuals, artists or writers contributed to this process. In addition, students and academics who sought to explore touchy intellectual questions found support in departments of theology in GDR universities. In these ways the Lutheran church began to foster a kind of nascent civil society.

While this flowering of discourse may be considered a kind of opposition it was, however, not equivalent to support for capitalism. More often than not, individuals

supported the basis premises of socialism, primarily economic and political egalitarianism, and focused instead on social and environmental issues. In addition, a small percentage of Christians actively supported socialism.¹³

In the following narratives, respondents refer to many of the conditions described above. Their accounts support the conclusions of scholars who find the origins of the Wende in shortages of goods and services, restrictions on travel, the excessive politicization of work and public life, censorship and lack of other freedoms (see Terrill 1994: 355-7).¹⁴ I present these excerpts from interviews with relatively little discussion, although I do identify some of the ways topics and points of view are framed by issues raised in the *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (working through of the past).

13. Torpey (1995) addresses questions concerning the support by intellectual and political elites in the GDR for socialism.

14. Terrill is actually more specific than this in that he associates particular sources of disaffection with each of four social groups to which he refers as "technical intelligentsia," "cultural intelligentsia," "members of the state and party apparatus," and "workers-consumers." For historical and political reasons that are too complex to discuss here, I believe that discontent was experienced and expressed in the GDR in ways that differed greatly from that characteristic of other Soviet-bloc states. For example, what Ash refers to (in the context of a discussion concerning Czechoslovakia) as the "fire under the ice" was notably lacking in the GDR (Ash 1990: 70).

Respondents' Narratives

Helga

Helga, the woman bitter about her recent unemployment and angry and frustrated in her present occupation as full-time mother, lived most of her life within the confines of the GDR as the Wall was built just a few years after she was born. The closed border caused her considerable stress at one point in her life:

Yes, in principle I grew up with the Wall. My dream as a child was to run away. It was crazy. With the border--I always thought that just can't be, that no one can get through! I didn't discuss it with anyone. No one at all, no. Somehow I had to find a way. It didn't make any difference how, I just had to get out. But that was just for a short time, after a visit with my cousin [who came from the West]. I had the feeling that she really came out of the great, wide world. There was an aroma of glamour in the apartment, what they radiated was so different from what we were used to! I thought it can't be that we have to live in this land always and forever, trapped. That's what I said to myself. So it was a time when I was a little flipped out. I think it was just that the West was simply so tempting and so unreachable.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Helga's parents died when she was young. Her mother suffered a severe bronchitis attack while attending a wedding in West Germany and passed away there. As Helga's father was already deceased at the time, it was Helga's older sister who contacted GDR authorities for permission to travel to the West for the funeral:

My older sister went to the ministry in Berlin and that is where she got the answer--your mother didn't have to make the trip. She could have stayed here! Yes! She could have died here! That's what they said! That was so horrible! I never got over that, this answer that we got. Our relatives must not have

understood at all, we could only send a telegram saying that we couldn't come [to the funeral].

Helga attributed the development of her political views to this experience. In particular, she felt she could never assent to a state that could be so "inhuman" as to deny bereaved children the right to attend their mother's funeral. As a result she never voted. Despite the fact that friends cautioned her, saying she could suffer "consequences" for failing to vote, she feels she was never punished for not participating in elections.

Though the experience of the state's reaction to her mother's death cemented Helga's antipathy toward the GDR, her negative sentiments had an earlier origin. In particular, her mother's hatred toward Russians regularly presented Helga with a contradiction between what she learned in school and what she experienced at home. When Helga tried to discuss school topics such as the "friendship" between Russians and Germans, her mother shut down or had only cynical replies:

At the least I received the impression from my mother that she had absolutely no regard for socialism, or the communists either. It was as if she always had that incident, with the Russians and her parents, before her eyes. You can't hold that against her, that she could never shake off the hate or lay it to rest. And she was afraid of these people too. I remember one incident, one evening, someone rang the bell. There was a Russian, I mean in uniform and everything, and he wanted to sell some watches. I came in and told her and she slapped me hard! I think it was because of the way I just came in and said that so casually, there's a Russian at the door. I remember today how she reacted, so full of horror as if it was that time again. It must have brought that experience right back to her, how it was then. But as

I said, as a child I had little understanding of why my mother reacted to things like that, about the Soviet Union and everything else we learned in school. Sometimes I think I annoyed her with it on purpose, to challenge her or provoke her. At least in retrospect it appears to be that way.

Despite her mother's anti-Soviet views, Helga was a member of the Young Pioneers and the FDJ.

"There wasn't any question that I would join," she explained. "There wasn't one person in my class who wasn't [a member]."

Helga also explained that she would not have been able to "handle" going it alone. "I always went along with the masses," she said, and she enjoyed many of the activities as well. In fact, she ran for the position of FDJ class secretary one year and was elected. Her responsibilities included writing reports on class activities, a task she described as "fun." Eventually Helga completed the Jugendweihe, even though she had recently started attending Sunday school:

I couldn't decide to do just one even though it was completely irreverent--first the Jugendweihe, then the confirmation! And it is so intense with the Jugendweihe, with this oath that you have to repeat after someone "Yes, we swear! [allegiance to socialism]!" And the next year I went to confirmation!

Though Helga assumes her mother was Christian, religion was not discussed in her family and neither of her parents attended services. Helga became interested in the church through a friend and attended as her guest. Later she became acquainted with two girls, siblings, whose

family was deeply Christian. By spending a great deal of time with this family, and openly discussing religious matters with them, Helga became "serious" about the church, though it was only after the death of her mother that she found what she called "living beliefs."

Helga apprenticed in the porcelain factory in Meißen:

In principle, I organized it myself. It was just that I happened to think, well maybe I could paint porcelain. In the cupboard we had china with flowers on it. One day I took a vase out of the cupboard and copied the pictures. That was ninth grade, the beginning of my career! That's when we had to apply, at 14, 15 years of age. It worked out well because to apply you had to send in a whole lot of drawings and I had gone to drawing school at the factory one day a week. Then I was invited to spend two days in the factory on a trial basis--all the applicants had to. Then you really had to show whether or not you could draw particular things--flowers, birds. Then after the two days you got word whether or not you were accepted. I was really excited about it. There were about 200 applicants and 38 were accepted so it was quite a careful selection. Then there was a four year apprenticeship which was very long--four years is like a college degree, right? Normally a skilled worker would be done training in two and a half years. But our apprenticeship was very comprehensive. . . . In the end it was a bit exploitative in that we were really painting for production but we weren't paid fully yet! Eventually, though, time went by and we started.

Helga was assigned to a production room already occupied by a number of gregarious co-workers.

"It was fun!" she recalled. "You had something to do with your hands [painting the porcelain] but you could talk too."

There was a union in the factory, to which she paid the required dues. She was obliged to attend meetings occasionally, three times a year or so, but paid little

attention to the "statistics or whatever" that were recited. Then Helga began to have difficulty fulfilling her norm. Though for many individuals the work became easier with time, for Helga it became more and more difficult. She also experienced eye strain and, eventually, became an "underproducer." When her first son was born she was relieved to go home on maternity leave, and then never returned to her position in the factory.

In contrast to the time of my interview with Helga, when she was frustrated and bored by being home full time with her children, after her first son was born she had no desire to return to work. Though she twice received applications for day care in the mail she never felt pressured to place her child in a center and rejoin the labor force.

As a parent, Helga came to have views about the state youth organizations quite different from those she had had as a child. Eventually she and her husband decided to withhold their second son from the Young Pioneers. She explained their decision in part by drawing a contrast between the childhood she desired for her son and memories of her own: "I didn't want it to be for my son the way it was for me." She continued:

We decided consciously that he wouldn't go because eventually or finally we took the position that you can't sit on both sides of the fence. We really thought about it and talked with other parents who had older children because we didn't want him to suffer. One family we spoke to said it's best when the child, or the teacher for that matter, is clear right from

the start where the line is. Then you know and she knows and you've declared the front.

So we went to the teacher and said that we belong to the church and it is for this reason that we don't want our child to be in the Pioneers. The teacher was really friendly--she said even if he wasn't a member he could come along on trips or join in activities.

But that was later. At the beginning the teacher intimidated us with the observation that he could have disadvantages as a result [of not joining] and we asked her to explain that, how he could have disadvantages. And she couldn't answer that because theoretically it was not possible because there was the principle that everyone could live according to his views, practice his own religion and so on. In practice it was different and she showed that through her remark. But nothing happened, nothing at all.

Helga associated the teacher's caution about disadvantages with what she was told about not voting: "People told me you'll never be able to travel to the West. Never!" But when she had a legitimate reason to travel (a relative's 80th birthday), Helga was granted a visa. She drew on her knowledge of the everyday as she reflected on the experience: "I had heard of applications rejected out of hand with no explanation, really arbitrarily, but I think they couldn't just reject mine."

As an adult, the church came to play "the most important role" in Helga's life. She explained that she finds companionship there, as well as the opportunity to worship God. Though she never experienced disadvantages as a result of her beliefs, it was not always easy for Helga to be Christian in a socialist state. In the nursing home (where she was employed in 1989) she made it clear to her supervisors that she would not participate in certain socialist activities. Though her views, and lack of

participation, were tolerated, "they certainly couldn't understand." She continued:

We also spoke very little about it because those people had such certain and convinced [socialist] opinions it was very difficult to get them to reflect on anything. There I had a feeling of being alone with my views. It wasn't always easy.

One of the issues raised in the *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* is the degree to which East Germans acquiesced to the state. As Helga reflected on daily life in the GDR she sought to explain her early conformity. Her story makes clear, however, that external compliance or even enthusiastic participation in socialist activities often masked unarticulated doubts. In this case there was a clear conflict between the domains of home (where her mother hated everything Russian) and school (where everything Russian was glorified).

Later, after the state denied Helga's family permission to travel to the West to attend their mother's funeral, and as she matured, Helga's Christian faith deepened and the church became increasingly important to her as a social and religious center. Ultimately she came to reject the state in very particular and also personal ways. By spending several years at home after the birth of her first son, and then withholding her second son from the Young Pioneers, Helga joined a very small minority of East Germans who attempted to carve out a life course for themselves and their families that did not coincide with the expectations of socialism. In the next chapter Helga's

narrative describes the way her antipathy toward the state had been transformed, by the spring of 1989, into willingness to participate in a challenge to its lies that was both assertive and public.

Jürgen

Jürgen's mother had wanted to be a teacher but was prohibited from doing so due to the politics of Nazi Germany; it was in the GDR that she was finally able to pursue her dream. Then she and her husband, Jürgen's father, strongly encouraged their children to pursue higher education:

My family believed that if you had the chance to study then you should strive for that. It had never been possible for my family to go on to higher education [before] because of money or for political reasons. And now you have the chance [they said] so work hard for it.

Jürgen joined the SED during his freshman year in college. He explained that he was strongly motivated by his family history (discussed in the previous chapter):

It was actually not a question for me at all, whether or not I would engage myself. Studying in college actually underscored that for me by clarifying the theory.

While he never had any "difficulties" in the Party, Jürgen did recall academic conflicts of an "ideological nature" pertaining to the topic for his graduate thesis. He had written his undergraduate thesis on the relationship of the German communist party to the national women's movement in the Weimar era. His project was well received

and he wanted to develop it in graduate school. He felt confident that the topic would be approved in part because his undergraduate advisor had agreed to advise him at the graduate level as well:

Then the project was simply rejected. "That does not coincide with the reputation of our department," I was told. "You have to do something else."

So I looked around a little and selected another subject, questions pertaining to the development of communism and "GDRology." Then there was a big conflict in the research group with the director. He wouldn't budge an inch because we couldn't come to an agreement over fundamental questions. I identified myself politically with the matter and I wanted to achieve something, but I always felt that there were obstacles preventing me from fully engaging myself. And then somehow you were politically untrustworthy and not suitable for advancement in the section.

Eventually Jürgen was able to settle on a topic acceptable to him, his advisor and his department, but the conflicts left a lasting impression:

I never thought that you could get into trouble just for expressing opinions about things when, otherwise, you were completely loyal and prepared to engage yourself [for socialism]. But that you would be punished for your views! And then that opportunities to advance yourself would be taken away! I never thought that. That was a real shock.

This experience, along with later experiences as a college instructor, led Jürgen to conclude:

It really was the case that, substantively, an academic career was a question of political socialization. You always had to take the prevailing view into consideration into your work. There were so many conflicts and people always said to me, "Now, don't take that so literally," and so forth.

Jürgen's first child was born after he finished his graduate degree. He and his wife were married shortly thereafter. Then, together with his father, Jürgen built a

two-room house with coal (oven) heat on the outskirts of the city. He said that the house "felt good." Due to the housing shortage in the GDR, many married couples moved in with their parents and numerous conflicts often resulted. Jürgen and his small family were independent from the start, though after a second child was born their quarters began to feel a bit cramped:

The first child was six, the second was three years old when we finally moved. You had to apply three years in advance for an apartment in one of the new developments. Then for three years you had to pay a little bit of money every week and volunteer an hour of time for the construction. It was hard just to get into the apartment cooperative. . . . But it went in order--you were put on a list at the cooperative and then they worked their way down the list until they got to you.

At the Technical University Jürgen taught what he referred to as the "basic study" in social science required of all students regardless of their major fields: one year of philosophy, two years of political economy, three years of scientific socialism or communism. Originally he was responsible for covering the history of the socialist workers' movement; later he taught political philosophy to foreign students and had the opportunity to include comparative material on the history of European and Islamic thought.

"That was a specialization that interested me a lot," he commented.

Jürgen sought to encourage his students to think independently:

I always tried to lead critical discussions, not to say I've got the truth and at the end of class I'll put it out of my pocket and show it to you. Rather, I said I have a position which I will defend, but when you have a different view bring it up and try to defeat me with reasoned argument. That's how I was from the beginning. And I had big problems when I was reviewed. I was asked, "What have you achieved in the seminar? How have you brought the students around to the position of the Party?" I said in my seminar there must be an atmosphere in which people can speak out. As a lecturer it became more and more difficult to do that. And I found it harder and harder to defend the line that I was required to defend. That's why I went to the foreign students, there I really had more freedom for myself. That was an important factor.

In retrospect Jürgen feels that he had good reasons to challenge socialism with certain questions that "always preoccupied" him, namely why the GDR had developed "so far" but no further.

"And now, in retrospect, I see that I had very good grounds to be skeptical and to dig deeper," Jürgen stated.

After the Wende, when the university was "washed clean of the Reds," as Jürgen put it, he wondered if he had made the best choices in his life:

I probably should have made more compromises in order to achieve a position where I would have had greater influence over certain things at the university. The way it worked people achieved positions of leadership then, during the Wende, they showed that they had absolutely no idea what was going on. They simply capitulated to what came [the reorganization of the university system according to West German principles].

As in Helga's case, Jürgen's narrative emphasizes the strong influences of family and personal history on life choices made in the GDR. However, his narrative contrasts Helga's as his history led him to work hard for socialism,

rather than to oppose it. Nonetheless, even though Jürgen was a member of the SED and a lifelong supporter of the regime, his memories illustrate the fact that many committed socialists had doubts about the state. Jürgen recalls political-ideological struggles over his dissertation and pedagogical methods that contradicted his understanding of what a socialist educational programs should entail.

After the Wende many members of the SED mourned the end of the dream and wondered where the state, Party, and themselves (as individuals) had gone wrong. Jürgen sees now that he sought to ask the right intellectual and historical questions about socialism. Paradoxically, though, instead of feeling that he failed by not being assertive enough, he wonders if he should have been more compliant in order to have achieved greater authority. Such critical self-reflection contradicts at least two of the notions implicit in the *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*: first that members of the SED uniformly and unequivocally supported the state and, second, that compliance always evidences passive acceptance. In Jürgen's case making compromises would have been a form of strategic action.

Herr Kleiber

Herr Kleiber, who had arrived in Dresden in 1945 as a refugee from East Prussia, neither actively supported nor opposed socialism. He fulfilled what he referred to as his

"responsibilities" as a citizen by successfully completing an apprenticeship, working for decades directly in production, and raising a family, but he did so with considerable ambivalence toward the GDR. Despite the fact that he suffered disadvantages for certain choices, such as not joining the Party, he did not yield to pressure to actively support socialism in that way:

I had to do without a lot of things because I never joined the Party. I was going to get a better position. It was all arranged, the starting date was set, salary, vacation. And on the next day the director said that the Party met and they determined that in the division I was supposed to take over there were a lot of comrades and a non-comrade may not supervise comrades. I couldn't lead the collective and they took the job away!

Even when he was not directly disadvantaged by socialist politics, Herr Kleiber was often frustrated by the informal politics attendant to his position:

Here, first and foremost, "master" meant political educator. That's what we learned in school, that is in practice ideological training counted as much as practical abilities. Unfortunately, though, work never counted as much as the social part and I find that that had a negative effect on the economy. When you proposed someone as a master, and that was the same as an "activist of socialist work," the application would come back with the comment that this man is not a member of the German-Soviet Friendship Society, he's not in the Party. What that led to was that in the factories people rose to the top not because of special abilities but because they said something in the right moment that was music to the ears of someone else.

As a master, Herr Kleiber was expected to convince members of workers' collectives to come "voluntarily" to the First of May demonstration. Attendance was "encouraged" by withholding 10 marks from an annual bonus

to collectives for each individual who didn't attend; these men and women became the "black sheep" when a collective wanted to "shine." Social participation was also taken into consideration when employees were considered for salary increases:

They would say, "Hey, he doesn't take part." And in the factories that led to a situation where people who were socially active were viewed better than people who worked hard from dawn to dusk. There was a saying, "clapping is manual labor too." That means it was better to cheer than to work all day long.

Even though he was a master, Herr Kleiber often had no recourse when it became necessary for him to discipline a subordinate:

You have to remember that a master or divisional director, even a foreman didn't have the authority that he should have had. There he was, wrapped up in GDR flags, but on the assembly line he had no power. No one feared for his job! When I think about it! There was one man who didn't show up for three days, then a week, then he came in drunk. And we couldn't fire him! We had to drive by his house and check up on him, ask if we can give him a ride to work. We were supposed to reform him, talk about why it is important for him to come regularly to work. If he were just fired then the next factory would have the same problem with him--the man had to be socialized!

Herr Kleiber directly associated the decline of the GDR with such misplaced priorities:

Sometimes out of an eight-hour day two hours were spent on work. The rest of the time was for social activities--FDJ, civil defense groups, the Red Cross, meetings, continuing education--that was all during business hours. So even if there was a worker who had to be productive he couldn't. And it wasn't only required that you participate in these things, it was honored! People who did a lot, they were the best!

As he recalls daily life in the GDR, Herr Kleiber contradicts certain accusations hurled at East Germans

after the Wende, namely that they were lazy and passive. In contrast, Herr Kleiber's narrative illustrates the real and ongoing difficulties experienced by a competent, well-trained worker who desired to contribute to the economy of a state he considered home, yet whose efforts were regularly frustrated.

Frau Vogel

Although Frau Vogel, the self-described "functionary," did not wish to speak in detail about her political work, she did outline projects organized by the DFD (Democratic Women's Association of Germany):

We got together to celebrate birthdays. We talked about divorce or insurance, or someone from the city would come and talk about changes in law, or we had educational or cultural programs. They couldn't ever last long because people wanted to talk to each other. In the field of health care there were a lot of people who were unmarried so they wanted to share information about problems.

We did crafts together, or someone who had gone on a trip talked about it. We went on hikes or we went to museums. We got tickets for the opera and on Saturdays, Sundays there were tours of the opera house for two marks. Then we went to see some of Dresden's oldest cemeteries--[August] Bebel is buried here and so forth.

There were other things we did. We were affiliated with senior citizens' organizations and other women's associations, and we had a role in bringing the voice of the people to bear on immediate locations such as Konsum or day care centers. We could find out the women's opinions and communicate this information. Once we saw that children in the day care center didn't have any fruit so we provided fruit for them.

In contrast, there were a number of tasks the DFD was supposed to undertake, as Frau Vogel put it:

We were supposed to unite the women ideologically. That was hard because they didn't want that. There were always meetings where these topics were discussed, the basis of Marxism-Leninism, and competition, why there is competition and conflict. Then there was the ideology that socialism is the one and only and so forth. There were such programs in factories too, then in the evening they were broadcast over the radio and on TV. They [the women] didn't want to hear about it anymore!

Frau Vogel summarized her work in the SED and DFD as being part of an overall project:

I did everything I could within my power to see that things went well for the people, that there was no more war. I hated war. That there was no more war was, for me, the most important thing. And also to ensure that everyone lives well, not just a portion of the population.

Frau Vogel's narrative, and the narrative of Frau Klemm which follows, illustrate influences of the *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* in that neither of these women would discuss their work in any detail. As mentioned in Chapter One, one of the strongest elements of the post-Wende working through of the past was the censure of socialism. In the previous chapter Frau Vogel's narrative included recollection of vivid and extremely painful memories of the persecution of communists during the Nazi era. She did not draw an explicit association between such recollections and her present refusal to "confess" to actions made in support of socialism, but other respondents of the same generation often directly referred to the persecution of communists in prior eras when they sought to justify to me their refusal to speak about political work in the GDR. Such men and women often complained of a

"witch hunt" against communists ongoing after 1989. The silence in Frau Vogel's narrative, and that of Frau Klemm (which follows), is a defensive strategy.

Frau Klemm

Of all the men and women with whom I spoke, Frau Klemm (the police officer) was most averse to speaking about her life in the GDR. Despite my efforts to inquire about her training and work, during our discussion she repeatedly returned to the subjects of history and political theory:

The hope here, in the GDR, was that there would be no more war. That there would be no more oppression, no exploitation, that there would be peace. That was the hope, the goal or, I say today, the dream of utopia. The theory, in itself, was false even philosophically, up until the dialectic. The dialectic and some of Marx's thought, that was right. But much that was made of it in practice was in error. But for me the market economy, especially when you call it a "social" market economy, that is deceptive. The market economy is for profit--profit and more profit.

When she talked about the GDR, Frau Klemm often responded to criticisms of socialism that had recently appeared in the press or on TV:

For example--recently I saw a TV program on the Stasi. They said it was worse than fascism. It is possible that people were struck out of rage or anger, but that people were systematically tortured? I simply don't believe that. There were dogs there, in the Stasi, but the majority of the people, and I know some, they were upstanding family men. The conception "Stasi," that is being made into a syndrome here. And we want the horror to grow bigger and bigger in order to distract ourselves from other things. That's how I see it. The more they talk about the Stasi the less they talk about the prices, the rent, the unemployment. Yes, it's a diversion!

There was something else. Everything that was good about the GDR is being portrayed as bad. Wait,

this was it--militarism in the kindergartens! Can you believe that! Never! And the idea that people couldn't talk, that they would be imprisoned, this sort of thing. That was never true! If someone was imprisoned he'd done something! And denunciation? Never! Maybe when people wanted to flee illegally over the border, but that was prohibited by law and they had to count on the fact that they would be caught. Everyone knew that if you tried to go illegally you placed your life in danger.

Frau Klemm summarized her opinion of press coverage on the GDR by contrasting it with a nostalgic portrayal of daily life in socialism. She emphasized themes often repeated by other respondents--East Germans worked hard, enjoyed an orderly and predictable life, and lived in a society where personal and social needs were regularly fulfilled:

In the beginning [after the Wende] everything about the GDR was painted black. But today I was speaking with some friends who said we had enough to eat, we had our Ruhe. We could go to work, we worked hard, we were happy when we fulfilled the Plan. We could go to the theater, we could afford it, we could go on vacation. We could go out at night--you can't go to the cemetery anymore now [out of fear of crime].

On the closed border, Frau Klemm shifted responsibility from the GDR to the Soviet Union and the cold war, though she suggested that measures taken by the GDR had been extreme:

The way I see it today the state could have let some people go. Even though there was a reason for the Wall, I say that the need was exaggerated. Besides, it wasn't our idea. It was an idea from the Warsaw Pact which was led by the Soviets. They wanted to secure the socialist camp from the West. But that had a cause too! Do you know how many agents are still here today, who were here in the GDR time? Agents from western secret services? We called them agents but we made jokes about them too--we called them "sabotagents" because they committed sabotage. There

was a stud farm and agents cut all the horses' pasterns. They couldn't stand up anymore and they all had to be shot! That was when agricultural production cooperatives were being organized. Or agents put nails in the animals' feed. That was cold war! That was the cold war here! These events must have had the effect of horrifying and frightening our leaders because the laws became stronger and stronger. They were oriented more and more against the West; then there was the Wall.

Frau Klemm also reflected on errors the state made in education, admitting that there were subjects that parents didn't like such as political theory. She acknowledged that parents had to rear their children to be hypocritical in order to avoid disadvantages. She blamed this on the policies of authorities who sought to further the careers of only the most reactionary students.

"That didn't have to be," Frau Klemm summarized, adding:

You have to look at both sides--it's wrong to generalize. There's a saying--you can't fit all shoes over one last. That means shoes have to come in different sizes. It is the same in politics, you can't generalize. And now there is a tendency to generalize GDR history. It was all wrong, all the communists were bad and people let themselves be controlled. But not everything you hear is true.

Frau Klemm expressed regret for the GDR, saying there were times when she "felt sorry" for the land. She noticed that houses and streets were in states of disrepair and that workers didn't have the materials they needed to do their jobs. At the same time she was steadfast in her assignment of blame to the West.

"There was an embargo against us so that we would collapse. And that is why our economy stumbled. Because

of the cold war, because of hostilities toward us." Yet Frau Klemm also felt that the GDR had overextended itself by doing "so much" for the Third World. She concluded:

Now, when I think about my conscience, my political views came about in this way--out of desire for a society that was simply against hate, against envy, against oppression, where the people are friendly to each other, where there is no poverty, where there are no homeless. That is the society I wish for and there will never be one. When the world goes on as it is now, I won't see it. I'm too old and I'll die before it comes.

I spoke with many "convinced" (überzeugte) socialists of Frau Klemm's generation. Their discussions of the GDR were pervaded by memories of the struggles of the '50s, as Frau Klemm illustrates by focusing on sabotage committed by agents who sought to undermine the establishment of a socialist Germany. Such stories often defend actions taken by the state (for instance closing the borders) by stressing the GDR's good intentions (establishing an alternative to capitalism and fascism).

Frau Klemm's narrative is typical of socialists of her generation in another important way as well. Although she was able to recognize some sources of discontent in the GDR, she was very much out of touch with the world of shortages, limitations and pressures in which most East Germans lived. Because of her age she was removed from the difficulties experienced by young families who struggled to find housing and obtain desired consumer goods. Because she was a police officer she was not permitted to have contact with West Germany (she had no communication with a

sister who lived there) and, therefore, never regularly experienced the stress of being tantalized by a prohibited world. In addition, as a civil servant and a member of the Party she was completely removed from the frustrations of workers so clearly articulated by Herr Kleiber. Finally, Frau Klemm's apparently wholly unreflective consumption of GDR ideology left her blind to alternative points of view from which criticisms of GDR society emerged.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to sketch a portrait of daily life that emphasizes the normalcy of day-to-day experience while, at the same time, retains ample evidence of its tensions and contradictions. These include state policies that fostered the emergence of social forms in contrast to official ideology, for example making single-parent families increasingly viable while at the same time viewing the heterosexual, nuclear family as a cornerstone of socialism. In addition, the more the GDR sought to compel participation in collective activities, the more it inadvertently promoted the growth of the "niche" society in which public participation was "for show" and "real life" took place at home, in the garden, and among small circles of friends.

When respondents referred to things "everyone knew" in the GDR they implied the existence of other contradictions, one of which was a discrepancy between ideology and

reality. In principle, socialism was premised by many forms of equality--economic equality, equality of opportunity, and so forth. Many respondents sought to stress the underlying fairness of socialism.¹⁵ In reality, certain behaviors and classes of individuals were singled out for reward or reproof, for example "everyone knew" that if you didn't make the Jugendweihe you wouldn't be able to study for the Abitur. Other respondents brought attention to the absurdities of daily life, for instance when trivial departures from normative expectations resulted in excessive disciplinary action. Think of the tongue-lashing received by the teacher who began his classes with "Good Morning" instead of the appropriate greeting from the Young Pioneers.

Narratives of daily life in the GDR depict a world where successful participation in its complex structures required mastery of numerous spoken and unspoken rules, awareness of locations, forms and boundaries of many different kinds of power, and constant self-reflection. Although certain Dresdners sought to convince me of the predictability of life in the GDR, the fact is that most East Germans planned carefully and lived strategically in order to attain personal dreams and aspirations. They had

15. As, for example, Jürgen, when he commented that it took three years to get an apartment but that his name was placed on a list and, when it was his turn, he was assigned a residence. In this way he strongly implied that no one received preferential consideration.

to build, and regularly draw upon, a wealth of knowledge and experience in order to anticipate possible consequences for certain actions and inactions.

The next excursion, "Herr Beck's Report," is about the lasting influence of past experience as individuals assess and respond to present circumstances.

ETHNOGRAPHIC EXCURSION: HERR BECK'S REPORT

Herr Beck and I met on February 13, 1992 (the forty-seventh anniversary of the bombing of Dresden) on a city sightseeing tour concerned with the history of Jews in Dresden. At Dresden's oldest Jewish cemetery, the end of a fascinating tour which had been conducted by a member of the local society for Jewish history, we began talking. When I explained that I was conducting dissertation research on how people recall and record the past he paused for a moment, then shared with me, "You know, I wrote a report about the rioting at the Hauptbahnhof [main train station] during October 1989. Just a small thing." He consented to allow me to read the report and we made a date for two weeks hence.

Herr Beck lives in a small brick house on a quiet, residential street in Dresden. Walking down the sidewalk to his front gate, I was struck by the fact that the surroundings resemble a suburban cul-de-sac more than an urban neighborhood. However, as I soon learned, the idyllic setting belies the pain of Herr Beck's memories.

Herr Beck greeted me at his front door and gestured that I should present the bouquet of flowers I had brought, a customary hostess gift, to his wife, who invited me to join them for coffee. When I mentioned that I was struck by the charm of their neighborhood we began speaking about Dresden, its sites, monuments and history.

"What exactly are you doing in Dresden?" Herr Beck

then asked. "What period of history are you interested in?" I replied that I was not so much interested in a specific period of GDR history as I was in the ways history was explained to me, that is, how life experiences shape historical understanding and interpretation. When Herr Beck suddenly pushed his chair back from the table and left the room I felt that I must have said something terribly wrong. Nervously, I made small talk with his wife while I waited for him to reappear. When he finally returned and showed me what he had retrieved, several books and a file folder containing an application for the rehabilitation of political prisoners, I realized I had said something very right.

Born in 1928, Herr Beck had just turned 17 when World War II ended. In the postwar period he was imprisoned by the Soviets in three different locations, including the so-called gelbem Elend (golden misery) in Bautzen, the yellow brick detention center and prison later used by the Stasi. In 1947, just before his nineteenth birthday, he and hundreds of other political prisoners were shipped by train and bus to a Siberian detention center where he was held for an additional two years. He showed me a book by George Kennan, Und der Zar ist weit: Sibirien 1885 (And the Tsar is Far: Siberia 1885. Published in English as Siberia and the Exile System, Kennan 1981). An account of a tour made in 1885 specifically to study the Siberian exile system, it included a map which Herr Beck used to point out the route

he was forced to take as a prisoner in February and March 1947 from St. Petersburg to an area near Lake Baikal. He observed that, in 1947, sixty-two years after the book was researched, conditions were exactly the same--primitive.

"Have you ever heard of the Werewolves?" he wanted to know. "They were a youth group organized during the Nazi period to defend the Fatherland, primarily in the East against the Russians," he explained.

Some Werewolves were very young; he was imprisoned with a boy who, at thirteen, had been sentenced to 25 years. However Herr Beck had never been a Werewolf; he had gone to one meeting but never joined. For that reason the Russians could not convict him. He was imprisoned nonetheless and now wonders whether or not he can be compensated when no conviction was rendered against him.¹ At the time I met him he was in the process of corresponding with relevant authorities on the question and he had joined two newly organized groups--one for former inmates in Bautzen, the second for victims of Stalinism.

Herr Beck showed me another book, Jürgen Kuczynski's Dialog mit meinem Urenkel [Dialogue with my Great-grandson] (1984). In the book the author, an influential and controversial Marxist historian who lived and worked in the

1. The applicable law provides for the rehabilitation of people convicted of certain crimes by or under the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the ruling political party in the GDR) and for compensation for loss of freedom resulting from detention or imprisonment.

GDR, critically interrogated socialism by imagining questions he thought his great-grandson might ask him some day and answering them. Herr Beck explained, "It was partly because of this book that I decided to write the report. When my grandchildren ask me some day, 'Grandpa, where were you and what did you do?' I will have an answer."

We turned finally to the report. Dated October 7, 1989, it was approximately six pages long, handwritten and accompanied by a hand-drawn map and a newspaper clipping giving the "official" version of the same events. We reviewed it line by line, pausing frequently so that he could explain.

On October 4th, 1989, Herr Beck, who worked as an engineer in a local factory, heard from colleagues that something was amiss at the train station. Immediately after work he went there to see for himself what was going on because, he explained, he felt he had a responsibility to be a witness. Thousands of Dresdners had gathered at the station to stop empty trains that were traveling to Prague to collect East Germans from the West German embassy there and transport them back through East Germany to the West.² The platforms were blocked by masses of people who wanted to board the trains in order to flee the GDR; even young families were there, accompanied by children carrying

2. For accounts of the week in Dresden from October 3-9, 1989 see Bahr 1990 and Liebsch 1991.

stuffed animals. One man lay on the tracks; a train roared through, apparently running over one or both of his legs. The police moved in to block stairs to other tracks. Only people with valid tickets were permitted through. The plea "Verehrte Bürger [Honored Citizens]! Please go home and apply to emigrate. Your petition will be granted in three days!" was issued over the public address system. It was greeted with whistles and catcalls. Herr Beck commented on the ridiculousness of the plea, observing that "the majority of people didn't want to flee East Germany but rather wanted reform!"

It was ordered that the train station would be cleared. A chain of uniformed officers pressed forward, pushing people backward and toward the exits. Those who resisted were beaten, pulled off the ground by their hair and arrested. Eventually the station was cleared; then it filled up again. Another attempt was made to clear it. This time the police beat their clubs against their shields, making a deafening noise that frightened and intimidated the crowd. Outside teenagers threw stones at the station, shattering some windows. A water tank arrived to blast the crowd with a fire hose. A truck followed the water tank. A police officer stood up through a port in the truck and waved his gun in the air. He did not discharge his weapon but Herr Beck said he realized at that moment for the first time that "the German communists would fire on their own workers."

Later in the night an additional three hundred uniformed officers formed two lines and pushed people down and through the Prager Straße, the wide pedestrian mall that leads from the train station in the direction of Dresden's old city center. The officers beat people when they did not move fast enough while guests of a nearby hotel stared aghast out of windows overlooking the street. Herr Beck stood in front of the hotel and saw at that moment something he said he will never forget, a scene he has seen described in no account of the demonstrations. A chain of police of The Workers' and Farmers' State³, protected with shields and riot helmets and armed with rubber clubs, stood aggressively ready. Dresden's massive, red granite statue of Lenin and two workers towered behind them, the clenched, raised fist of one of the workers a salute to the power embodied by the Communist Party, exercised in that moment by the police. "It was grotesque," was Herr Beck's only comment. Ironically, at a different point that night some people began to sing the anthem of the international working class; Herr Beck said that he sang along with passion and commitment for the first time in his life: "Arise ye persons of starvation, arise ye wretched of the earth . . ."

As the afternoon light faded Herr Beck and I leaned closer and closer over his report, discussing it in detail.

3. The GDR's national motto: Der Arbeiter and Bauern Staat.

Frau Beck announced that dinner was ready and invited me to join them. As we talked more about the Wende they frequently disagreed over matters of fact. When was Gruppe der 20 formed? When were the meetings with Mayor Berghofer? When were the discussions in the churches?⁴ I listened as Herr and Frau Beck (unsuccessfully) attempted to confirm the accuracy of their memories; then I asked how they felt about the future. They were grateful, they said, that Frau Beck was still employed (Herr Beck had accepted early retirement) but their needs were modest and they were not concerned for their own financial security. They were worried for their daughter whose training in (socialist) economics had become obsolete overnight, and they were very concerned about the social costs of German unification. Unemployment, homelessness and poverty were new since the Wende, and they had no frame of reference for understanding these conditions except the American movies they had seen since 1989, all of which were grossly violent and offered no resolution.

4. Die Gruppe der 20 (The Group of 20) consisted of twenty men and women who stepped forward voluntarily during a stand-off between police and citizens on the night of October 8, 1989 and met the following morning with the Mayor of Dresden at that time, Wolfgang Berghofer, to discuss issues of concern to Dresdners in general. The substance of their meeting was communicated to thousands of Dresdners in numerous churches throughout the city that night. The Group and Mayor Berghofer met again on October 16; a second round of open discussions in churches was held on October 17.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE WENDE

Introduction

Herr Beck's Report describes one night of violence and fear during the Wende. It also illustrates the deeply personal predispositions that influenced individuals as they interpreted the rapidly changing circumstances at that time and decided to participate or not participate in the Wende to varying degrees. And it portrays the power of past experience, and future considerations, on present decisions concerning the representation of the past.

Despite the brutality Herr Beck described, however, as revolutions go, the Wende was extraordinarily free of violence. Gorbachev never deployed the Soviet army and at no time did East German soldiers or police fire upon citizens. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the events of 1989-90 are referred to in Germany as a "Wende," a decisive turn or change, as opposed to a revolution or uprising. How or why "Wende" became the term of choice to describe the course of events from 1989-90 is unclear. The term had been used in the FRG to describe the conservative shift that took place with the success of Helmut Kohl and the CDU in 1982. In the GDR, the usage may have been initiated by Christa Wolf at a pivotal demonstration in East Berlin on November 4, 1989.

As the origin of the appellation "Wende" is ambiguous, so are the beginning and the end of the Wende itself. The opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 will always

be remembered as an occurrence central to it, yet this milestone took place after months of turmoil already had irrevocably transformed GDR politics and society. Similarly, although the unification of Germany on October 3, 1990 appears to provide a neat end to the Wende, subsequent changes were of such great significance one might argue that a Wende was still ongoing for months. Yet when asked about the Wende, Dresdners interviewed for this study inevitably replied with a variation of, "Oh, but that was so long ago," clearly implying that the Wende was part of the distant past, that which had led to the end of the GDR as they knew it.

Given its obscure beginning and uncertain end, the Wende cannot be defined exactly according to when it took place. It makes more sense to talk about the course of events during the GDR's last year and a half and what was left in their wake. In an effort to convey what it was like during that time, men and women often resort to making an analogy to a train with failed brakes zooming ahead out of control. Would the train derail and crash, resulting in a bloody and horrifying end for its occupants? Or would it eventually come to a halt in an unfamiliar and completely unanticipated place? Who could bring this train under control? No one knew.

With the train racing ahead at breakneck speed, few people had the time or analytical distance to speculate about why the Wende had come to be in the first place.

Rather they studied the East and West German media for clues as to what was transpiring; they demonstrated for freedom and peace, often chanting "Keine Gewalt!" (No Violence!). They participated in intensive meetings at their places of work or study and formulated positions on what could and should happen to the GDR. Some secured themselves in their homes, unsure about how critical the situation would become and, in some cases remembering the sight of Russian tanks in the streets during June 1953, fearful of the measures to which the state could resort in order to protect its power. Often they set burning candles in their apartment windows to signify their desire for peace. Some debated with themselves, their friends and families over whether or not they too would abandon their homes, property and families to flee to the West. Then they tied colored ribbons to the antennae of their Trabants and Wartburgs to communicate their decision to the world. They were consumed by emotions ranging from anxiety to dread to joy to agony to elation.

"All normal activities came to a halt," one respondent explained. "You couldn't even celebrate a birthday or sit down and read a book. There was just too much going on."

Causes of the Wende

Once, while meeting with a group of young Christians who were very critical of the GDR, I tried to emphasize positive aspects of socialism by repeating a tired cliché:

"In the GDR there wasn't any homelessness and everyone had a job." Members of the group replied:

In the newspapers there wasn't any homelessness or unemployment. But you had to wait years for an apartment and then sometimes you had to live in a dilapidated house with a toilet in the courtyard downstairs and no shower or bath. And everyone had a job, sure, if you can call it that. The machinery was antiquated. It came out of the turn of the century or, if you were lucky, out of the 1930s, and the first lesson everyone learned at work was not how to finish three pieces as quickly as possible but how to make three pieces last all day.

These young adults knew of such practices from personal experience as apprentices in production. Their cynicism reflects awareness of contradictions between official ideology and the reality of daily life.

Other contradictions were evident through simple observation of decaying infrastructure or the perpetual struggle necessary to obtain goods and services. The declining economy was also obvious to people who had the opportunity to compare the GDR with the West. Although Dresden's geographical location made it very difficult for households to receive West German TV signals, on occasion some families were able to pick up programs such as reruns of the American show "Dallas" which depicted an unimaginably extravagant lifestyle. Care packages from friends and relatives in West Germany were also a constant reminder of the better quality of food, clothing and other products in the West, as was the irritating presence of western products in Intershops. Finally, men and women who traveled to the West came back to the GDR not only bearing

a few gifts and other purchases but also, and perhaps more importantly, tales of the high standard of living there.

Once, when I asked a respondent about economic and social decline in the GDR he shared a (perhaps apocryphal) story about an unidentified village near the border with West Germany:

The village was really an extension of a mental hospital for patients who were well enough for occupational therapy. They made baskets or other kinds of crafts and did manual labor. But because they were mental patients doing therapy and not workers doing "real" work there were no politics, no unions, and therefore everything functioned and things got done. You didn't have problems like you did in the planned economy.

This tale, where it is only in a village populated by the mentally ill that things functioned well, expresses an extraordinary irony.

In addition to specific complaints about the GDR's economic inadequacies, an oft-cited grievance about daily life in the GDR concerned the experience of being insulted by rules and regulations established by the state and apparently arbitrarily enforced by obdurate bureaucrats. Herr Kleiber mentioned this when he angrily denounced local authorities for denying him a visa to travel to West Germany. As he put it, "You do everything that you're supposed to do, you work, you raise your children properly, and someone says to you, 'You can't go!'"

A comparable irritation was the so-called Sputnik-Verbot (prohibition of Sputnik), described in the Prologue. When the magazine was banned in November 1988 and the

decision was announced in block letters in newspapers,

the message was that we were unmündig [underage], that we weren't adult enough to read the magazine and decide for ourselves how to interpret the news, how to think and talk about things.

An additional source of tension and dissatisfaction in the GDR concerned the state's brazen disregard for the environment. This was evident in the ban on public disclosure of data concerning air and water quality, not to mention the clouds of fumes which shrouded factories and descended into the streets of major cities like fog into canyons. Unlike fog, which is benign, these clouds burned the eyes and throat. The sight of dying forests and rivers, including the Elbe in Dresden, was also a daily reminder that production and development in the GDR would be pursued at all cost. Tension between the populace and the state on environmental issues was particularly salient in Dresden as the state planned to construct a plant there to process silicon for the GDR's intensively fostered research and development program in micro-electronics.

A number of hazards associated with the plant had been identified by local, church-based ecology groups. These included the production of toxic smoke that would hang over the valley, inadequate plans for the disposal of the plant's liquid waste, and the transportation of toxic materials and solid waste directly through residential areas as well as through the historic city center. Discussions during which residents could express their

concerns to officials took place at the local level but were perceived to be unsatisfactory by members of the community who attended. Expert opinions in favor of the plant were presented by authorities but men and women who wished to stand and talk about immediate and compelling fears--such as those stemming from concern for the safety of their children--were silenced.

It is possible that the Wende was expedited by influential individuals who sought to initiate a change of leadership in the GDR, enhancing their own future opportunities. One man summarized:

I think the Stasi played many different roles in the whole thing. Why didn't the Stasi intervene to prevent the disclosure of the electoral fraud? If they didn't want the fraud disclosed they would have done something. They could have arrested the leaders of the group back in March or April. Besides, there was certainly someone from the Stasi in the group. But they didn't interfere, they let them do it. That's why I, and other people, assume that the Stasi wanted the electoral fraud to be discovered.

They must have realized that things weren't going to work out with Honecker anymore, that he was like an old blind man with a cane. They tried to initiate a transformation in the political leadership with this pressure from outside. There were even rumors that the Stasi was involved with the opposition. Then you see how, all of a sudden, people who were involved with the Stasi were leading opposition parties. Look at the attorney Wolfgang Schnur from Demokratischer Aufbruch [an opposition party] who admitted [in May 1990] that he had been a Stasi informer. Finally there are the unresolved questions about Lothar de Maiziere.¹ That's a very serious matter and one where I really don't understand everything. I don't know

1. Elected Chairman of the East German CDU on November 10, 1989, de Maiziere later became East Germany's first and last democratically elected Prime Minister. De Maiziere resigned his post after disclosure of the fact that he had been a Stasi informer.

from the rumors what kind of involvement he had with the Stasi, what he did, what he didn't do.

The "anti-fascist protection wall" would stand another fifty and one hundred years, Erich Honecker assured the world on January 19, 1989, and there was no reason to doubt him. But at the same time there was hope, perhaps even a need to hope. One woman explained:

only in the furthest reaches of your mind or in a distant corner of your heart did you actually cultivate the biggest dream and the tiniest hope--that maybe, someday in the future, Germany could be, would be united. That was almost unthinkable but you thought it anyway. You hoped and dreamed it and then it came true--the Wende came, the Wall was opened and Germany was united.

Yet one of the unanticipated consequences of the Wende for this respondent was the loss of hope.

"When your dream comes true," she concluded, "what do you hope for next?"

The Wende in Dresden

Each locale in the former GDR, be it major city, small town, or rural village, was convulsed by incidents unique to it during 1989-90. In Dresden, citizens' supervision of local elections on May 6, 1989 disclosed falsification of the ballot count in favor of the SED. At the 1992 trial of Wolfgang Berghofer (former mayor and head of the election commission), it was disclosed that, before the elections, Berghofer anticipated a return of approximately 88 percent in favor of the National Front (the SED Party slate) with 91 percent voter participation. Werner Moke, SED Secretary

in Dresden, advised Berghofer to come up with a more favorable result. Eventually, after a series of complex negotiations with an unidentified party, 98.5 percent in favor of the Party slate with 98 percent voter participation were agreed upon. These "results"--hardly radical in their departure from the customary 99 percent participation and approval--were then delivered to election districts throughout the city (Krümmel 1992). The actual vote as counted by citizens' committees was 88 percent in favor of the slate (that is 12 percent opposed) with 90 percent voter participation.² As Moke's defense attorney noted in the 1992 trial, the fraud did not result in a different outcome (Sächsische Zeitung 1992a). Nonetheless, the confirmation of fraud seriously undermined what little credibility the state and Party still had at this time.

Other incidents unsettled Dresdners over the summer. After the massacre on China's Tiananman square in June 1989, a group of young people protested the violence by meeting outside Dresden's Kreuzkirche and beating drums for peace. It was forbidden to have an unapproved gathering and it was forbidden to beat drums as a political statement. Because he feared that the protesters might be arrested, Pastor Christoph Ziemer (Superintendent of the

2. The actual result differed from the anticipated result by only one percentage point in the rate of voter participation. This suggests that local politicians were entirely capable of accurately assessing the political sentiments of Dresdners.

Kreuzkirche) invited them to seek protection inside the church. Nevertheless, several were taken into custody. Some sat in jail for several weeks; others were charged fines and released.

The immigration of East Germans to the West continued to distress Dresdners. In an informal meeting with me, former instructors from one of Dresden's colleges recalled that during the summer and fall they had initiated discussions about the flight of tens of thousands of East Germans both among their colleagues and with their students. They were expected to disseminate the view that East Germans were being enticed away or even kidnapped by western agents. One representative story circulated at this time, related to me with great hilarity by a group of students, was that a man had lost his capacity to think rationally after smoking menthol cigarettes proffered him by a western agent. Eventually losing consciousness, he came to several hours later in West Germany and bolted home to the East.

This theme resonated throughout newspaper accounts of the exodus. The enticement of East Germans to Hungary represented a "[p]rovocation against the GDR (Sächsische Zeitung 1989a). The "ice-cold trade in GDR citizens" was being carried out in a "Nacht und Nebel action"; the scenario had been anticipated long ago by the FRG and prepared for with contingency plans for "Day X." The motive? According to the same article GDR citizens were

being lured away to work in the FRG to support an increasingly aging population. A few days later the solicitation of GDR citizens was called "slave trade" (Sächsische Zeitung 1989b). It was being accomplished through the "application of all methods of assurances, temptation, psychological pressure and unconcealed enticement" and the plans were being "carried out unscrupulously as fits the character of capitalist society" (Sächsische Zeitung 1989c).

In discussions with respondents, causes for dissatisfaction endemic in the GDR emerged, namely economic and political problems. An additional theme was broached as well. This was the possibility that East Germans who claimed to be fleeing a politically unbearable situation were simply making a thinly veiled attempt at hiding their real motive--an "egoistic" desire for money and a western standard of living. In all, as was frequently summarized, "it was a schizophrenic situation":

The wave had a sucking effect. As more people went, more and more decided to go. There was an air of desperation and madness and fear. There was a sense that something terrible would happen here--a complete collapse of the society? Or of the economy? Maybe the government would call in the Russian troops. No one knew what would happen and that contributed to the wave also. People who had relatives in the West were drawn out. Or when all your good friends decided to go, you left too. Or when you came down to breakfast and your children announced that they were leaving you said "OK" and went too.

Because celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the GDR would begin on October 4, 1989, there was additional

pressure placed on a situation that was already extremely tense. A great deal of energy and effort had gone into organizing festivities in Berlin. One young Dresdner I interviewed attended as a member of the FDJ (Free German Youth). He recalled:

Each school had to send three people for the march. I volunteered, along with some friends, just to get out of school for the day. What a blast, we thought. All we have to do is take the train to Berlin and march in the parade. So we did. We arrived in Berlin before noon and walked around the city. The first thing I noticed was how much nicer the city was than Dresden. The busses were clean, the streets were in good shape, the shops were completely different--there were bananas there, and other products you couldn't get in Dresden.

After walking around for a while we went to a big hall where we were supposed to gather. We got our torches and so forth and moved to Friedrichstraße, the crossing to West Germany. The weather was drizzly and cold and we had jackets, but naturally we had to have our FDJ shirts showing. There we were, standing at Friedrichstraße, right next to an expensive hotel that only westerners could afford. We were not even allowed in, and we couldn't even think of staying overnight there. We stood there in the cold drizzle with our torches and we were supposed to celebrate the 40th birthday of the GDR. And here these rich West Germans and other westerners looked down on us from windows in a hotel where we could never go. We felt like fools.

Then the parade started and we shouted "Down with the Prussians" and "Saxony Number One!" When the march was shown on TV there were pro-GDR chants. I don't know where they came from because that's not what we chanted.

Honecker was standing there, and Gorbachev, and everyone chanted chants for Gorbachev and Honecker looked sick and weak. Then when the parade was over everyone went streaming through the streets of Berlin to get back home.

We got back to Dresden around 11:30 that night. That was late and we were worried because we were still wearing our FDJ shirts. That was dangerous then--we could have been attacked or beaten up by people, normal people who had had enough and they would say, what are you wearing that shirt for. Are you for the state or what?

It would be highly embarrassing for the GDR if, at the same time that thousands of East Germans were marching through Berlin carrying torches, red flags and banners with slogans celebrating the GDR before a platform of national leaders and distinguished international guests, thousands of East Germans were ensconced in the West German embassy in Prague demanding release to the West and to "freedom." This was a pressing problem that required an immediate solution.

It was concluded that the approximately 7,600 East Germans (Fischbach (ed.) 1990: 249) occupying the West German embassy in Prague at this time would be permitted to emigrate to the West, but that they would first return to the GDR where they would be provided with the appropriate papers. The means of bringing the would-be emigrants back to the GDR was rail transportation and, because of Dresden's proximity to the Czech border, the trains would run through the city.

As word got out that empty trains would pass through Dresden on their way to Prague, and that these trains would return through Dresden filled with men and women who would be granted permission to leave the GDR, thousands of Dresdners began to gather at the station. Some arrived with all the worldly possessions they could pack into a few small pieces of luggage, hoping to board the trains and ride them to the West. Their urgency was intensified by the fact that visa-free travel to Czechoslovakia had just

been suspended, effectively imprisoning East Germans in their own land.³ The trains remained the only apparent avenue of escape. Others, perhaps curiosity seekers, arrived to observe the tumult, and men and women who had to pass by or through the train station for one reason or another unknowingly stumbled upon the events there. These groups were met by members of a number of different security forces--the Volkspolizei (people's police), the Bereitschaftspolizei (standby police), Kampfgruppen (civil defense groups) and Offiziersschüler (officer students)--whose members were outfitted with gear including rubber clubs, helmets and shields, tear gas and masks, trained dogs and loaded weapons. Additionally, they were backed up by a powerful water gun.

The previous ethnographic excursion, "Herr Beck's Report," details one night of events at the train station. The chaos lasted approximately one week during which peaceful demonstrators, a small number of violent demonstrators (youth who hurled stones shattering windows in the train station), and curious onlookers were surrounded, driven forward and backward, threatened with dogs, assaulted with the water gun, beaten, arrested and incarcerated.

Often, those arrested were not permitted to notify their next-of-kin, who knew simply that their loved ones

3. Visas were required to cross the GDR's eastern border and enter Poland.

had vanished. When appeals to the police for information were rebuffed, men and women turned to Dresden's churches for help. The Dreikönigskirche, located in the Neustadt, came to play a particularly important role in the crisis. Members of the church's staff, particularly from the Jugendpfarramt (Office for Youth), talked with family members, took identifying information about their disappeared spouses and children, provided counseling, collected information from people who had been released on others they had seen and met while detained, and engaged lawyers to work for the release of prisoners. The church served as a contact point, a mediator between civilians and the state, a provider of information and assistance, and a record-keeper of the crisis.

Men and women who were aggressively assaulted by the police, arrested and denied due process according to East German law were reminded by the church that it might be very important to have a record of what had transpired. There was the possibility of an investigation into police conduct at the train station during the week and it was even possible that charges might be brought against authorities responsible for the violence. Hence, victims were requested to write reports of what had happened to them. This request was transmitted through Dresden by word of mouth; hundreds complied. It was particularly important to collect truthful accounts of the violence as the city's media had not yet wrested its independence from the state.

On October 9, Dresden's Sächsische Zeitung had this to say about the riots:

Criminals Will be Punished!

. . . Testimony such as the following has occurred in trials which already took place: "We came to the train station for the purpose of taking part in the riots," said the 27 year-old Kurt B. from Dresden. Horst G., 30 year old metalworker likewise from Dresden, testified, "I was there because I heard through West German media that the train station was occupied." G. has already been sentenced three times for, among other offenses, resisting federal measures and attempted illegal crossing of the border. He did not respond to the commands of the police, was taken into custody and, in an accelerated trial, sentenced to 10 months imprisonment. According to the justice department, a number of previously sentenced citizens were among the offenders but also thrill-seekers who came got caught up in the fracas with the instigating rowdies (Sächsische Zeitung 1989e).

One can sit in Dresden's Dreikönigskirche and read dozens of reports that contradict this simplistic portrayal of demonstrators as fomenters and criminals.⁴ Victims' statements also highlight the physical and psychological cruelty of some of the arresting officers who, on at least one occasion, joked about "turning on the gas" and preparing containers in which the bodies of detainees would be dumped like garbage (Dreikönigskirche account number 186).

The tension at the train station began to ease on October 8 as a circle of men and women of varying ages and

4. Due to the pervasive uncertainty and anxiety that characterized October 1989, not all Dresdners who submitted reports to the Dreikönigskirche agreed to provide written consent for their statements to be made available to the public. Church administrators provided me with access to only those reports for which consent had been granted.

backgrounds stepped forward from the crowd that night and approached the police, expressing their willingness to act as spokespeople for the citizens of Dresden. The Group of 20, as these men and women became called, met several times with Wolfgang Berghofer, then Mayor of Dresden, and other officials in order to raise issues of concern to Dresdners in general. The results of their conversations were disseminated to Dresdners in packed meetings in numerous churches throughout the city. Among other proposals, the Group of 20 advocated the establishment of informal committees on topics such as justice and security, education and culture, media politics and relations, the goals of socialism, travel regulations, ecology, and urban development.

Events in Dresden escalated with an immense demonstration on the Theaterplatz on October 23. Hans Modrow, District Secretary of the SED, overcame the problem of an inadequate sound system to speak to the estimated 50,000 gathered demonstrators. He made promises as general as continued dialogue, and as specific as bureaucratic assistance for two women who sought apartments suitable for themselves and their small children. Additionally, he responded to the frustration expressed by workers concerning meager productivity in the GDR and the need to find ways of improving motivation and performance on the job (Sächsische Zeitung 1989i). In the following days tens of thousands of Dresdners met at dozens of different

locations in the city to discuss and debate similar issues. A journalist described the atmosphere at one of these demonstrations as that of a huge experiment "full of expectation, excitement and the greatest attentiveness" (Sächsische Zeitung 1989j). No issue was too large or small to be raised.

One man's request that such enormous public gatherings no longer be called "riots" or "mobs" by the press had his wish granted. As tens of thousands of Dresdners continued to meet in the city's plazas over the next weeks, editors of local papers, who had recently wrested themselves free of political domination, found a variety of new appellations for the participants. Instead of "ringleaders backed by the West," "fomenters," "criminal elements" and "agitators," the participants became "unauthorized demonstrators," "participants," "citizens," "dialogue partners," "politically cultivated individuals" and, finally, "peaceful demonstrators" (Anonymous 1989: 125).

Two editors from one of Dresden's local papers described the move from printing what the state mandated to printing what was really happening as "incredible," "tremendous" and "exciting."

The offices were filled with flowers sent by the people of Dresden. Letters flooded in. Letters of thanks, experiences, stories of encounters with the Stasi, things people finally wanted public.

By the middle of October 1989, sensational events unfolding in the GDR had inspired factory-based union

groups and work collectives to emerge from their customary mode of stifled discourse and engage in discussion and debate that once would have been considered traitorous. Many collectives recorded their conclusions in the form of position papers which they then submitted to newspapers and churches as well as local and national offices of the SED and the FDGB (Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund--the GDR workers' union). Their statements expressed enduring commitment to the GDR and socialism, grave concern about the future of their land, anger at the rigid individuals, groups and absurd policies which caused the GDR to arrive at such a critical crisis, and a willingness to initiate far-reaching changes in GDR culture and society that might enable the nation to survive.

Members of a workers' brigade at a chemical plant wrote to three Dresden newspapers, the SED and the FDGB:

[f]ull of grave concern for the future we observe that despite the beginning of public debate thousands are still leaving our country. . . . We all know that they are not being driven away by hunger, material need or violence. Similarly we don't believe that they are being lured away. [Rather] it is in the face of many questions which have remained unanswered for years in our society and in the face of epidemic resignation that many of these people have made the conscious decision to leave this nation (an unpublished letter received by Die Union).

Not content to limit their new-found voice to the expressions of worry and distress, these authors and others detailed exhaustive lists of areas in which reform was urgently needed. A union group at a manufacturing plant near Dresden wrote to the SED, the FDGB and Die Union:

In these days of domestic political turbulence our collective stands behind the demands of the progressive members of our republic. We call for:

- objective, multidimensional, comprehensive and rapid dissemination of information in all media concerning social and political events;
- the right to freedom of expression and assembly;
- improvement in availability of consumer goods for the population;
- the possibility for all citizens to travel to all lands;
- the accommodation of economic decisions to environmental limits and possibilities;
- the establishment of secret elections under UN supervision;
- the development of democratic supervision of the police and Stasi;
- the creation of a civil alternative to military service;
- the recognition of the citizens' initiative "Neues Forum";
- the continuation of constructive dialogue with all progressive members of our republic (excerpt from an unpublished letter received by Die Union).

Other groups listed similar points, adding more specific demands in the economic and political sphere. Students in Organizational Psychology at Dresden's Technical University formed work groups to make recommendations in areas of worker training, motivation, and the rules, regulations and expectations of the FDJ.

At approximately the same time, the Dresden branch of Neues Forum petitioned citizens to participate in independent work groups on fourteen areas where changes in law, custom and culture in the GDR were critically wanting. The extent and comprehensiveness of the list of topics--which included constitutional protection of freedom of speech and assembly, education, economic development, and problems specific to the elderly or youth--suggest that

there was almost no area in the GDR which was not seen as needing improvement (Anonymous 1989: 77). In fact, members of a committee to promote a citizens' initiative in Dresden under the auspices of Neues Forum recognized that

[a]ll areas of our social life, economy, politics, environment, health care and social security system are characterized by the appearance of crisis (Anonymous 1989: 27).

In retrospect it is tempting to see the Wende as a course of events which, once initiated, had an inevitable conclusion--the opening of the borders and the unification of Germany. But at this point, in October 1989, no one could anticipate what would happen next. The state might yet prevail; the populace would succumb. It was entirely conceivable that the government would resort to the so-called "Chinese solution" (slaughter the protesters) and that no reforms would take place. In part because of this uncertainty the next weeks were experienced by Dresdners as a time of uncertainty and dread--as well as incredible excitement.

While many East Germans might have hoped that the borders would be opened, it is doubtful many believed this was a realistic possibility. One woman observed:

The Wall was built when I was one month old. We are almost exactly the same age. I grew up with it. It was like a law of nature and, after all, Honecker had said it would stand for another 100 years. And then one day someone said to me, "Hey! The Wall is going to be opened tonight!" I couldn't believe it! Imagine if someone said to you, "Hey! Tomorrow the sun will rise in the west!" And then the Wall was opened and it was as if the sun had reversed its direction.

Others anticipated problems that would follow from the opening of the borders:

Stays the wall, go the Volk
 Falls the wall, they go broke
 Yes, it's pretty hard
 On our poor old GDR⁵

Finally, on November 9, when Günter Schabowski announced that visas for travel to the West would be issued to any and all East Germans who applied, reaction varied from disbelief to shock to amazement. The announcement did not specify that the Berlin Wall would be opened but, as the location of the greatest real and symbolic tension between East and West Germany, this crossing became the dramatic focal point of the next few days. Tens of thousands of Dresdners traveled to Berlin that night where some of them scaled the wall, danced on it and pounded it with sledgehammers. Others walked, rode and drove through its gates to be greeted on the other side with tears and champagne, maps, coffee, tea, hugs and, of course, the 100 DM "Welcome Money" to which each and every East German who arrived in the FRG was entitled.⁶

5. Translation of a placard from a demonstration.

6. One respondent explained the relationship between the FRG and the GDR as follows: "The FRG never recognized the GDR. Although the two countries did have diplomatic relations, economic trade, and so forth, as far as the FRG was concerned the GDR was actually part of the FRG and the GDR citizen was a FRG citizen. That's why, as soon as they arrived in West Germany, East Germans had all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of West German citizens. Nonetheless GDR citizens couldn't just walk into the FRG office in Berlin and use that as a corridor to the West.

Though 84,000 visas were distributed to Dresdners by the next day, not everyone went to Berlin. In Dresden, thousands of Party members rallied in front of the SED's local offices, calling for a renewed commitment to democracy and socialism and counseling against hesitation in these "critical days" (Sächsische Zeitung 1989k). Other Dresdners gathered by the tens of thousands at Fučikplatz on Sunday, November 12 to proclaim "Reform yes, Chaos No!" (Sächsische Zeitung 1989l). Additional demonstrations in the coming weeks attended by ordinary workers as well as groups of artists and intellectuals were focused predominantly on opposing German unification. Participants advocated a renewed commitment to socialism including a reorientation toward its ideal goals: equitable distribution of wealth, the pre-eminence of workers over politicians, and social justice.

"It was clear that the Party was being run by old, ideologically rigid Comrades," one respondent observed. "Someday they would have to go and new, younger leaders might be more flexible." With the advantage of hindsight we can now ask where were the tens of thousands of individuals who would vote for the CDU and German unification in the spring--they certainly did not take to the streets during this time.

So even if the FRG didn't recognize the GDR as a state, they recognized that East Germans couldn't just cross the border to the West, even though they did not acknowledge that the border had the right to exist."

On December 5 approximately 15,000 women, men and children strode down Bautzner street to the Stasi's Dresden headquarters. Despite impressive numbers and resolve it was observed by participants that the march was really "just for show." The Stasi had already determined that they would open the gates to the building and, more importantly, critical files, particularly those implicating Stasi officers, had already been destroyed. Additionally, certain political prisoners had already been released or were scheduled for release. Nonetheless the "occupation" of the Stasi building was an important symbol for the assertion of popular control over a major instrument of power (some would say of terror) in the GDR. Subsequently "watch" over the building was organized by a citizen's group into six four-hour shifts per day.

The Wende-train continued to speed ahead that winter. When Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of West Germany, delivered a speech before a fractious crowd at the ruin of the Frauenkirche on December 19, he was greeted with cheers--and boos. Raw eggs were hurled at him and he was "welcomed" with banners such as one which announced "Against Kohlönie!"⁷ Yet another pictured two pigs. A fat pig, labeled "FRG," and a runt, labeled "GDR" were eating out of a trough labeled "Third World." The caption asked, "May I eat out of your trough too?" (Anonymous 1989: 157).

7. A pun on "Kohl" and "Kolonie" (colony).

Though he suffered taunts, many of Kohl's supporters also turned out that day. In fact, Jürgen recalls that a majority of the participants were rudely critical of the GDR and its adherents.

The months before national elections were held in the spring of 1990 were no less tumultuous than the fall of 1989. Factories began to lay off workers and close; immigration to the West by predominately young, male, skilled East Germans continued at a rate which was frightening both for the East (which seemed to be bleeding to death) and the West (which had increasing difficulty housing the immigrants and providing them with jobs). East Germans struggling to organize and campaign actively for the upcoming elections found themselves adrift in a sea of new political rules, strategies and methods such as making use of newly available copiers. Tension surrounding the elections emerged in a variety of ways including this wisecrack:

Everyone who votes opposition is a chauvinist pig,
Everyone who votes SED-PDS is a stalinist pig,
Everyone who doesn't vote is a compromising pig.
Therefore: all voters are pigs (Anonymous 1990: 36).

In the end, the CDU won in Dresden with almost 45 percent of the vote, slightly more than the national average of approximately 40 percent (Fischbach (ed.) 1990: 393-397). In this way, Dresdners, along with East Germany as a whole, delivered to the CDU a mandate for unification which was effected on October 3 of that year.

In the next section Helga, Jürgen, Herr Kleiber, Frau Vogel and Frau Klemm explain why the Wende occurred and how they experienced it. Although each of these respondents focuses on the discontent of East Germans, they do so in quite different ways. Helga hones in on the contradiction between ideology and reality as she experienced it. Herr Kleiber recalls shortages of goods and services and political repression. Jürgen suggests that the Party's priorities were misplaced and that leaders were kept ignorant of crucial information. Frau Vogel comments only that she is glad the Wende was peaceful, while Frau Klemm admits that the state's lies were transparent but fails to acknowledge that East Germans wanted anything but better socialism.

Respondents' Narratives

Helga

Helga, whose Christian faith eventually led her to withhold her youngest son from the Young Pioneers, finally came to reject the state's blatant lies.

I think the Wende came about because the difficulties of everyday life became more and more noticeable and from on high there was always this picture of culmination painted for us. Always, every day, in the media you heard how wonderfully perfect everything here is and that wasn't the case anymore at all. I think it was that simple, that people just couldn't stand it anymore! There were always these lies in the newspapers and in the radio--"Friede, Freude,

Eierkuchen!"⁸ Then there were the festivities for the 40th anniversary of the GDR or rather they put on a big show as if everything here was fine!

Helga joined the group in her church that decided to test the state's democratic claims during elections in May 1989. She attended public meetings where candidates spoke in order to hear their platforms, inquire about their plans and assess the candidates as individuals. She observed that many of the candidates were evasive when challenged with questions.

Then there was the election itself. There was a stir when people [citizens] came to participate in the ballot-counting in order to ensure that the votes were counted accurately. In my district I went with three other people and we were punished with scowls! Just for exercising our rights! Then finally they just told us to get out and they basically threw us out. That showed me that it [the way things were] couldn't go on any longer.

That's when the Wende started, according to Helga. Ordinary people marched down to city hall to demand an accurate tally of votes against the Party slate. Protesters were told that if they pursued the matter they would have to reckon with "measures." Because the group leaders were married and had young children they feared for their families and backed off.

"But this incident stayed in our minds," Helga said.

Then things accelerated to the point where there was this mass flight in the fall, or was that in the summer? We never even considered going. When I watched TV with friends and saw these people I thought they've really gone crazy. That's what I thought--

8. Literally "Harmony, Joy, Omelettes!" or "Everything's grand!"

really. The pictures were so dreadful--the way the people stormed the fence of the embassy in Prague. I thought they were being driven on by wild dogs! I never would have thought of this country like that--that it was so awful here that you can't live, or can't live any more. I didn't understand that. It was just beyond me.

I also couldn't understand why Honecker, right before the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the GDR, why he closed the border to Czechoslovakia. Then in principle we really were cordoned in and I thought I just can't bear it any more. I was so worked up about it that I sent a telegram to Honecker! My neighbor, Frau Fischer, said she was worried about me then. I told her--I said, "Frau Fischer, I'm going to the post office to send a telegram to Honecker!" And she said, "Are you really sure you want to do that?"

The clerk at the post office, it was really delightful, she gave me a look but somehow it was sympathetic. So I demanded that Honecker rescind the closing of the Czech border. I really demanded it--with my name and signature. It wasn't anonymous at all. And I sent it to Berlin. That struck me as courageous, really. It was really a big deal! I never got an answer from Honecker. So the telegram is in a file someplace or it landed in someone's wastepaper basket--I'll never know.

As with many respondents, for Helga the "last straw" was an affront to her sense of personal rights. When the riots described by Herr Beck disrupted regional rail service, Helga's sister, who was mentally handicapped and lived in a group home about thirty-five miles away, was denied permission to travel to Dresden for a visit.

Then we were sitting and eating dinner one night [November 9]. The radio was on, very quietly, and they made that announcement that we would no longer need visas to travel anywhere. We heard the announcement--exactly at that moment when this Herr Schabowski said, it is announced or something like that, that right away the border to West Germany and West Berlin will be opened. I don't remember his exact words anymore. But we heard it! Exactly at that moment when he said it! It was very peculiar. We looked at each other and said, it just can't be true or something like that. Then we sat and listened

to the radio for a long, long time that night. Then on DT 64 [the youth radio station] there were these incredible reports from the early hours of the morning--people went right away [to Berlin] to see that it was true, what they said. And then on the next day friends came over and we congratulated each other as free citizens! But when it first happened, I don't know, I don't think anyone believed it! It's not that we didn't want to believe, you just couldn't. He just read right off the note. And his voice was so odd! It came right over the radio!

Helga summarized her hopes for the Wende as a desire for freedom. While she stressed that she and her family never experienced pressure or oppression as a result of their Christian beliefs, physical limits such as the closed border were more than she could bear.

In this way Helga exemplifies an important element of the Wende often missed when scholars attribute the East German uprising to struggles for abstract ideals such as democracy. In fact, the vast majority of respondents in this study were motivated to participate in the Wende by particular and deeply personal concerns such as the desire to be free of a feeling of entrapment. Absolutely none rejected socialism outright.⁹

Jürgen

Jürgen, the former college instructor, first told me that he had "divided feelings" about the Wende, then said that he experienced the Wende as a "defeat through and

9. Of course this may be explained by the fact that all the men and women I interviewed had stayed in the East after 1989!

through." He explained his divided feelings by talking about the period after the Wall was opened and before the CDU won the elections held in the East in the spring of 1990:

At that time I thought we should strive for [German] unity but slowly, over a period of time, and through a confederation of the two states. But the opinion of the masses was already somewhat different. At the demonstration [when Chancellor Kohl spoke in Dresden in December 1989] there were aggressive and rude catcalls. We were strongly assailed by people who didn't agree: "Hang the Reds" and so forth. And it was organized--people were brought to this demonstration from throughout Saxony in order to pack the audience. So that was something of a turning point in the Wende.

When describing the Wende as a defeat, Jürgen referred to his lifelong commitment to socialism:

I had engaged myself and worked hard. I thought we would break out of the rigid doctrines of the GDR and offer something new, that we would take Modrow's position [unification through confederacy] and develop it. There would have been problems, naturally, that we could anticipate. For example, as with the unification treaty now, one of the parties to the treaty no longer exists. Naturally, then, that party can not ensure that the specifications put forth in the treaty are abided by, that the GDR government and its clientele, the GDR population, are respected. As a result portions of the unification treaty have been broken.

Jürgen then shifted to a third position in which he expressed an "ambivalent" view of the Wende. He recognized that the GDR had been at an end and he referred to the results of research conducted by his brother, a social scientist, who found that "the entire official line was

being rejected by the masses."¹⁰ Fewer and fewer East Germans believed that socialism would vanquish capitalism. Young people were increasingly dissatisfied with the state, sympathetic toward rightist movements, and anti-Semitic. But this was only one level of the problem. A second level was that

the results of [my brother's] studies were never published or even made public. He worked for a safe--he delivered his report to his supervisor who put one copy in his safe and another copy in another safe and that was it. In this way reality was masked.

Jürgen also reflected on the injustices of politically motivated layoffs that took place after 1989. He and his colleagues had continued to teach throughout that fall. Although German students stopped coming to classes, the foreign students continued to attend. Along with other members of his department, Jürgen conducted a survey on the willingness of the students and faculty to continue after 1989.

The assent of the students and the faculty was there; we presented the results of the survey to the university administration. We even proposed a project to conduct research on the integration of foreigners in East German society; the project would have justified our further employment at the university but the proposal was rejected for political reasons. In the end, the curriculum was interrupted only when we were fired and the department was closed.

So the entire department was dissolved and only a few people were retained. First of all our purpose vanished. In the GDR a basic study in social science was obligatory. That isn't the case anymore. Someone might have inquired about the academic and intellectual capabilities of the faculty and sought

10. Compare Bowers 1979, Grote and Kienbaum 1991, Mleczkowski 1983, Ortmann 1989.

ways to retain us at the university, offering us new tasks and so forth. But that was not undertaken for political reasons--they wanted to wash the university clean of the Reds. That was the justification, really.

The new personnel were extreme anti-socialists, anti-communists. They weren't necessarily from West Germany--there were East Germans too, out of the "reserves" of all things. People who were never engaged politically before, or who were associated with the church. They took over the new positions. And now there is going to be a new wave of selection and those who will survive, they'll be 90 percent "black" [CDU]. Naturally they will choose their own assistants, or bring their assistants with them. So there will be very, very few faculty remaining at the university from those who played a role there formerly.

As was the case with many socialists I interviewed, the Wende offered Jürgen a period of hope in which he imagined that socialism might be revitalized and the GDR would continue with younger, more honest and responsive leadership. But he was not prepared for the massive dissatisfaction with socialism expressed by East Germans when they voted overwhelmingly for the CDU in 1990, nor was he prepared for the total rejection of the ideals of socialism, and socialists themselves (members of the SED), that followed. He was stunned by the loss of his job and the rapidity with which the university was "washed clean of the Reds." He also expressed a sentiment shared by many East Germans, not only members of the SED, namely distress at the widespread injustices that resulted from the sweeping victory of "democracy" in the East after 1989.

Herr Kleiber

Herr Kleiber explained the Wende by narrating an abridged history of the GDR, focusing on its early successes and later failures. In the postwar period, he recalled, conditions improved steadily, in particular in the provision of housing and goods. He remembered the experience of arriving in Dresden as a refugee, "with nothing to wear, nothing to eat." He explained, "For us who came from the worst, from nothing, things got better and better." But economic success was accompanied not by political liberalization but by increasing political pressure. "Then, in 1961, they closed the border tight."

He witnessed the severe punishment of an individual who refused to conform to official views and, in his narrative, related this incident to the stifling of dissent in general:

A colleague of mine--he didn't do anything in particular but he didn't welcome the Wall [in 1961]! There was a petition--everyone was supposed to sign the petition welcoming the Wall and he didn't sign. He was our research director, a gifted man. He was dismissed with no notice. There was a hearing and he was imprisoned. Imprisoned! For years! Because he didn't welcome the Wall! From that point on I would say, I mean, I never noticed any direct resistance. That was only in certain groups. But in conversation you noticed that people were dissatisfied.

Herr Kleiber recalled the 1970s as "the best years." His children were young then, and he and his family frequently went camping: "seven times in Czechoslovakia, in Poland twice, twice in Hungary." The pleasure of vacation was not limited to the few weeks the Kleibers were away.

Because frequent shortages of goods made it difficult for them to acquire the items they needed for camping, they began preparations months in advance.

You could only get preserves in winter so we bought them then to have them when we went camping in summer. And things like that made the days special. That was the best! As soon as Christmas was over we started getting ready for vacation!

Herr Kleiber related these experiences to the "flight into the private sphere" that occurred throughout the East during this time.

"Out of the factory and into the garden!" he summarized. "Social participation was just for show!"

Everyone was for himself. In the factory too. I mean, you have to be honest. Everyone pilfered from the factories. After all, there were hardly any service workers. When you needed a pot fixed or a bowl, you did it in the factory. When your car needed repairs you got it down to the factory and worked on it there.

By the 1980s the economy had become noticeably worse. Herr Kleiber pointed to the fact that, although the cost of certain staples and living expenses remained very low, the prices of other products began to climb. Electronic products were outrageously expensive, but even "a pound of ham cost 3.80 marks and that was an hour's wage for someone. People became unhappy." He and his family made do, however.

We hardly ever drove the car, we rode our bicycles everywhere and to work. We applied for everything you could apply for. Cars for our son, for our daughter for my wife. We had applications for three cars! We applied for a bathtub--a ten year wait they said! We waited three, four years for a sewing machine. We applied for a phone seven years ago and we still don't

have one.

Despite these difficulties, Herr Kleiber stressed the fact that East Germans didn't suffer. "You got used to it. You couldn't say life was hard." Nonetheless, he said, "a lot of people didn't want to live like that." In particular, those Dresdners who could receive western TV programming saw how it was possible to live.

In the late 1980s Herr Kleiber was able mount a small satellite dish on his roof and pick up programs broadcast by West German stations. He and his family watched the Wende on TV [!].

And how ridiculous, or how stupid, some people were! On October 4th [1989] our Party secretary called all the masters and divisional directors together and said "We must recognize that it is the West's fault that we have to resort to these drastic measures!" They'd closed the border to Czechoslovakia! After almost twenty years of almost completely unregulated travel! In the past all you needed was your identification card to go there, and now they closed the border because so many people had fled the GDR. The secretary pounded on the table and shouted "And it is the fault of the West!" Can you believe that! That an intelligent, educated person could have said such a thing!

For Herr Kleiber, as for Helga, what was most important was that the border would be opened but neither he nor his wife felt any desire to move to the West. As one-time refugees they had already had the experience of building new lives out of nothing and they had no desire ever to experience that again.

We were very happy when they opened the border but we really didn't think about unification. We didn't think it would happen, or that it would happen so fast. A lot of people say they should have taken

things slower, especially the economic aspects of it. That would have been better. But think, if they had delayed the currency union even more young people would have gone West. They had to unify the currencies--two countries, an open border, and two currencies? That never would have worked, especially with the price differences. Yes, in retrospect they made mistakes, you can't deny that. But people wanted to have it all at once--and that just doesn't work, it never works.

As Herr Kleiber and his family observed the Wende and speculated about what might occur, they sought to understand the circumstances around them by drawing on examples from the past. In particular, having witnessed currency changes and devaluations before, he and his wife decided to spend their savings, 7,500 marks, on a VCR.

"Then the currency union was set for two to one--we could have gotten 3,750 DM for the 7,500 marks! But how were we to know! That time was so crazy, so confusing, you didn't know what to think!"

Then the layoffs started. Actually, at first the workers weren't fired. They were put on reduced hours, then no hours. They didn't work and they got 85 percent of their net salary, then they got 63 percent. I got notice for December 31, 1991. Now I'm in ABS [the work program in which he has no work].

Herr Kleiber's periodization of GDR history is typical of that of many respondents, as is the great pleasure he has recalling time spent with his family when his children were young. His distance from the Wende is striking--he and his family did not participate in any demonstrations; instead they watched them as they were broadcast by West German networks. Some of the demonstrations that took place during the Wende were attended by hundreds of

thousands of people. Yet when one considers the fact that the GDR had a population of approximately 16 million in 1989, it becomes clear that the majority of East Germans did not take to the street during this time. Perhaps in this respect Herr Kleiber and his family are typical as well.

Frau Vogel

Frau Vogel, the older woman who had worked for the DFD, spoke very generally and briefly about the Wende, summarizing the circumstances that led to the end of the GDR as "pressure from the outside." She also expressed deep gratitude for the fact that the Wende occurred when it did, and that it was not violent:

Something had to happen, that's certain. I would say, and it's hard to say, but I would say that the Politbüro was united. It had the power to change and the pressure was there from outside. That the people rose up in the Wende, that they took to the streets and that it happened peacefully, all that resulted from the pressure and perhaps it happened just in time. If things had gone on longer here perhaps it would have been bloody. But the people had had enough and they took to the streets. We have to thank the people for bringing the Wende about at the right time. What I am not sure about is to what extent foreign, capitalist countries played a role.

It's a good thing it was peaceful, though. It was perhaps just the right time, and the last time, when it could be peaceful. Otherwise it would have been much worse. But I haven't gotten over it yet. And in my opinion it reflects back on what happened in the Soviet Union. That gave me a lot to think about too, the lessons we should draw from that. But Gorbachev has made so many mistakes since then--he changes his position, going first this way, then that way. For his own country he hasn't yet come to the right solution as with our Wende. That's the way I see it.

Frau Vogel hasn't "gotten over" the end of a system that should have fulfilled the population but that, in reality, created endemic dissatisfaction.

Frau Klemm

When Frau Klemm (the police officer) explained the origins of the Wende she was more specific than Frau Vogel:

It was clear that the state lied and that its lies were almost immediately transparent. There is one important exception--no one knew, really, that the state was bankrupt. Honecker continued to claim that productivity was increasing. This contradicted the experience of ordinary people who knew there was less and less bread, that the economy was declining.

Despite her recognition of the state's weaknesses, Frau Klemm was unable to acknowledge the depth of dissatisfaction among East Germans. She remained convinced that

the people who demonstrated wanted a better GDR. They wanted better socialism, more than anything they wanted socialism! Just like they had been taught! They all know what a class is, what communism is, what socialism is, in the theory, naturally.

Frau Klemm admitted that there were errors in socialist theory, but she defended some of its core elements.

Lenin's work "Imperialism, the Highest Form of Capitalism," this work is worth its weight in gold. In its details it is possibly passé today, but in the tendencies he analyzes! The cartels, the monopolies who seek to dominate the world. Lenin researched that--the banks, the role of money, of capital. It's all so logical! It's just that his conclusions were in error--that a weakly developed capitalist land will develop socialism first, before a developed capitalist land. That was Lenin's theory and it was false.

Frau Klemm also focused on hypocrisy in all politics--capitalist, socialist and oppositional (to socialism). She was angered by the fact that many of the people who spoke at demonstrations during the Wende had directly benefitted from socialism but did not acknowledge any debt in their speeches.

I can still hear in my ears today, the good ones. Bärbel Bohley--she said "I was able to study here [in the GDR]." But the others--not one of them said such a thing and all of them studied at our expense.

Finally, Frau Klemm concluded by reiterating the social and political goals which had motivated her commitment to socialism, and directly opposed them to the nature of West German society:

I always hated the FRG. I never wanted that system and now I have it nonetheless. I do desire a society without hate, without envy, where there is no oppression, where the people are friendly to each other, where there is no poverty, where there is no homelessness. Such is the society I wish for, and that will never come to pass.

Conclusion

In contrast to one of the positions on the Wende delineated in Chapter One, in which the end of the GDR is attributed to external pressure from the West and an internal opposition led by a small group of courageous intellectuals, narratives of the Wende describe a society that cracked apart around its own contradictions. The state was bankrupt both materially and morally; its lies transparent, the shortages and pressures experienced by

ordinary East Germans increasingly intolerable. Yet, while respondents overwhelmingly identified the country's ideological and economic problems as the underlying cause of the Wende, it was their personal experience of such problems, as well as other grievances (such as not being able to travel freely), that led them to desire at least a transformation in socialism, if not its end.

CHAPTER SIX: REFLECTING ON MEMORY AND HISTORY

Introduction

The preceding chapters are filled with evidence of the fact that the past does not simply pass away. One woman spoke about it like this:

You can't cut yourself off from the past--you lived it, it is a part of you. Somehow you have to carry it with you into the future.

While I agree with this woman that the past is always part of the present and future, I disagree that it is passively transported. As memory, it is vital in the present in two senses--both crucial and animate. Nor is the past simply carried into the future; instead, hopes, dreams and fears of the future motivate and shape choices as people and groups remember, commemorate, or forget what has gone before.

The Wende launched East Germans into a future quite different from that which they had previously imagined. As a result, one of the tasks thrust upon them in that time was the reconception of the past. While some desired to reflect consciously on their histories, many memories were too recently formed, and too painful, for intellectual contemplation. In other cases, the experience of the loss of the everyday, its sudden and unexpected relocation into the domain of history, was just shocking. One respondent illustrated this when she said:

I remember when you "graduated" from the Ernst Thälmann Pioneers into the FDJ. You didn't have to make that snappy salute anymore when you replied

"Always ready!" [the greeting]. You could just sort of stand there, slouching, and mutter "Friendship." I can't believe that's historic now [she shook her head with astonishment].

To categorize memory into types including inscribed or incorporated, dominant or oppositional, to locate memory in places such as urban landscapes, to bring attention to memory as a past-present relation, even to describe social uses of the past, is to provide a starting point for an exploration of the ongoing presence of the past in human society. But these approaches to memory are not adequate to describe the complex, multidimensional struggles over the past that took place after the Wende. These struggles suggest that memory is not a thing or even many things. It is an expression of often paradoxical or contradictory processes--of remembering, recollection, representation, repression--which are inherently social, cultural and political.

In the Introduction to this study I posed four primary research questions: in what ways is the past remembered and represented in Dresden; how are recollection and forgetting implicated in social relationships and cultural processes; what aspects of the past, or issues in history, emerge as being most significant and why; and what ambiguities, contradictions and tensions can be discerned in remembering and forgetting?

The first question is answered by the previous chapters and excursions. I have discussed histories

written by scholars as well as those represented in newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, films and a slide presentation. I have given attention to the ways the past is present in Dresden's urban landscape: in plaques, the superimposition of modern facades on old buildings, archaeological exploration under the Brühlsche Terrace and graffiti, to name just a few. I have written about gravestones erected over empty graves, ritual commemoration of suffering and tragedy, and England's Queen Mother unveiling a statue to "Bomber" Harris. I have described the production of history and memory through photography, the collection and display of objects from a past daily life, and in oral narrative. Knowledge, explanation, understanding, anticipation, rationalization and fear also have a place in this study, and all are founded on historical memory. Finally, this study is a historical project in and of itself in that I have documented the practices and experiences of people in a particular time and place through observation, talking, listening, tape-recording and writing.

I have suggested answers to the remaining three questions in the previous chapters; now I will address them directly.

Social Relationships and Cultural Processes

One of the social relationships influencing the representation of the past throughout this study is that

between me and the city, activities that take place in it, and respondents. As discussed in the Introduction, I brought a host of expectations and assumptions with me to Dresden and those people with whom I spoke addressed me in certain ways, emphasizing or de-emphasizing particular subjects, because of who I was--a young, white, female, American graduate student who was sympathetic to socialism.¹ Respondents thought about the past, explained it, and drew conclusions about it in part because I asked them to do so. If I had not been there with my questions and tape recorder, the reflections contained in this study would not have been generated and communicated in the fashion that they were.

My presence in the field shaped the production of memory in other ways as well. The students who created the museum sought to help me understand why they felt it so important to preserve the GDR's Alltag by remembering their grandparents' silence when asked about National Socialism. The old man at ruin of the Frauenkirche asked me to take a picture of him so he could have a memento from that night. When the woman I call Frau Esperanto heard my American accent, she checked to see if I knew what the year 1933 meant in German history before explaining why Esperanto had

1. On several occasions I had to make my openness toward socialism clear before respondents would speak with me. In one case, after I had done so, the woman I was interviewing angrily recalled another American visitor "who had already made up his mind" that the GDR was nothing more than a "totalitarian dictatorship."

been so appealing to her.

However, respondents did not interact only with me as they remembered the past. In many cases their interpretations were shaped by the participation of other people during conversations, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Frau Klemm: The GDR didn't have the death penalty --OK, after 1945 they executed the fascists who killed thousands of Jews in concentration camps and so forth. Do you think they could have reformed people like that? Besides their grandchildren, the skinheads today, demonstrate the power of family influence. They didn't learn those ideas in school in the GDR.

Frau Vogel: It's not that simple. A lot of fathers are unemployed, the mothers are unemployed and the kids run loose.

Frau Klemm: If I may express my opinion, look at history. If there hadn't been any Nazis the capitalists would have created them. And today--I saw on TV, they showed a man giving a skinhead a 100 mark bill. I'm telling you there are people who have an interest in it.

In this passage Frau Klemm and Frau Vogel disagree about the origins of modern-day rightist movements. Frau Klemm blames family history and ongoing political-economic support for fascism, while Frau Vogel points to social-structural conditions that leave young people to grow up without adequate parental supervision.

Interlocutors need not always be physically present to influence reminiscence; in some cases they are present in memory or in the imagination. As Jürgen sought to explain his life choices to me he remembered conversations he had had with his Grandmother and commented, "And what Grandma tells you is the real story, right? More so than what you

learn in school." The students who created the museum and Herr Beck, who wrote the report on violence at the train station, were motivated by the anticipation of conversations they might have in the future with their as-yet-unborn children and grandchildren. The men and women whose speeches are described in the excursion "Two Murders, Two Demonstrations" did not communicate directly with city officials during the demonstrations, but expressed their views on the past, and made demands concerning the future, knowing that their messages would be relayed by the press and become a part of public debate over the murders and trials.

In these ways memories are shaped by numerous personal or individual social relationships, be they immediately present, imagined, remembered, anticipated or mediated. Memories are also shaped by collective experiences. Jürgen described the Wende as a "defeat"; Frau Vogel said her disappointment was "unmeasurable." Both of these individuals had narrated deep family histories of struggle for socialism; Frau Vogel witnessed the price her father, imprisoned and tortured by the Nazis, paid for his political views, while in Jürgen's family commitment to socialism stretched back into the 19th century.

Frau Klemm also described longstanding family dedication to socialist politics--her Grandfather had grounded the Konsum in his community and was an active member of the local communist party. But she evoked

recollection of broader processes as well when she mentioned the land her family lost to the expansion of brown-coal strip mines, and the subsequent intensification of industrial production in the region. She recalled her lifelong work for socialism as part of the struggle of workers in and against such processes. When she said that her father "had to die" because her family could not afford to extend his stay in a sanatorium, she referred to some of the costs of capitalist development borne by the working class--exposure to hazardous materials and working conditions which, combined with inadequate provision of affordable health care, can result in debilitating injuries, illnesses and death.

Memory is a vital part of the construction of collectivities other than families and classes as well. As Hobsbawm observes, appeals to a particular form of memory, namely genealogy, represent the need for a group to locate itself in a lengthy tradition (Hobsbawm 1972: 14). The GDR's political elite sought to authenticate its preeminent status by claiming ideological descent from Germany's communist and anti-fascist activists. Such appeals to the past express ongoing tensions, in this case surrounding the legitimacy of the SED.² This study also contains reference

2. The slogan, "Die Partei hat immer recht" (The Party is always right) similarly suggests the need of the SED to avert possible criticism. If the party were, in fact, always right, it would not need to promulgate that fact in a slogan.

to historical identification expressed in social action. When the young student quoted in Chapter Five described his participation in the 40th anniversary celebrations for the GDR, he mentioned that he saw Berlin was better maintained and provisioned than Dresden. After making this reference to material inequalities between the two cities, he recalled how he and his friend marched through the streets of Berlin chanting "Down with the Prussians" and "Saxony Number One"--evoking memories of protracted conflicts between northern and southern Germany.

A more recent social rupture that has its origins in recollection, and powerfully influences representations of the past, is the post-unification division of the German people into "Ossis" and "Wessis" (derogatory terms for East and West Germans). Recently, Marc Howard suggested that East and German identities could be understood as ethnic sentiments incorporating many subjective elements including the perception of shared experience and history or, in other words, memory (Howard 1995). One respondent carefully articulated the nature of his East German identity in this way:

I still have my GDR identification card, my GDR passport. I'm not proud of them, but that's my identity. But that doesn't mean I identify with the state. I just identify with the life that I had before and it just happened to be in the GDR.

This man continued by pointing to one of the characteristics of daily life in the GDR that was important to him--the feeling of solidarity, of "belonging together,

of being a part of a big group."

"OK," he then added, qualifying his recollection, "'Solidarity' was in written in capital letters all the time [ideologically], but there were collectives and we were all there for each other."

Subjectively felt and objectively symbolized, identities are closely tied to contextually determined social status. After the Wende, identities that had been ideologically prestigious in the GDR (workers and farmers) became disdained. A language teacher commented on this inversion as she remarked on the new significance of good grammar after 1989:

It's important to write well now. The bureaucratic style is different in West Germany than it was in East Germany and we have to master this new style. And if you don't master it--you're out, unemployed. Before, it was different, the GDR was a small, cozy world, we were all in this together, and even if you couldn't write well people would smile and nod and disregard your mistakes and it didn't matter. Sometimes the newspaper would even publish letter from a simple farmer, mistakes and all. And then we would read the letter and say, did you see how many mistakes there were in the letter from Farmer Müller? But it didn't matter because Farmer Müller was a farmer and this was the Workers' and Farmers' State. He was a member of the Progressive Class. He was the Future! Now the Workers' and Farmers' State doesn't exist anymore and workers and farmers are just another class, a lower class, and if you can't write according to the rules of the dominant class you're out. You're a "dumb Ossi."

"Dumb Ossis" are not only "out" ideologically. They are also "out" (disadvantaged) materially in the united Germany. One woman complained:

This "unification" is just an act of violence and everything is being wiped out or shut down and the

people are devastated and feel politically powerless. What could they do anyway, vote SPD? The SPD is just a compromise party, they don't offer any alternative. Meanwhile the new managers from West Germany come in and work from ten or eleven in the morning until two or three in the afternoon. They wear a suit and tie [in contrast to the casual dress of East Germans], are domineering and then they fly home every weekend. And for that not only do they make a third more than East Germans but they get a bonus for working in the wild and chaotic East. And then while they're here they stay in the Bellevue [hotel] or they get a nice apartment, and Dresdners who are waiting for apartments don't get apartments. And of course they don't even have to pay for the plane ticket.

The political and economic domination of the East by the West is accompanied by moral and ideological domination expressed in the pressure to work through the past. One respondent summarized the coercion to recall thus: "The Wessis come now and point their fingers and say 'Hey you, Ossi, what did you do to resist [the state]?'" While some East Germans, not only intellectuals but also ordinary people, feel it is crucial to reflect on the past, others resent pressure to do so.

"You aren't allowed to think or act like an East German anymore but you are supposed to dig up and analyze everything it meant to be to be East German," a woman complained. She continued:

If the situation had been reversed, if the West was socialist and the East capitalist, or if the Wessi had been born in the East instead of the West, the Wessi would have lived just like the Ossi. And this presumptuousness, this arrogance, it hurts.

Another respondent commented on how "Ossis" lived saying,

When the Wessis come and say, "Ossi, what did you do to fight the state" we have to say we didn't do anything. We lived, we worked, in some respects we

lived well. We played along, we compromised, we had our Ruhe.

Compliance, or that to which East Germans refer when they say "we lived" is, now, considered evidence of a psychological deficit (the authoritarian personality), moral weakness (tolerance for a corrupt regime) or failure to have worked through that other past which weighs so heavily on the psyches of Germans, National Socialism. But the fact is that the tendency to conform, so essential for survival in the GDR, so much a focus now of vehement censure, is just as important after the Wende. Perhaps the greatest paradox is expressed in rumors about job interviews: in some cases it is actually desirable to confess former membership in the Party or association with the Stasi--these resume items indicate readiness on the part of an individual to be a "team player"!

The Significance of the Past

Such ironies provide a clue to one of the significances of memory and history: the *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* is part of the construction of new forms of hegemony and ideology after the Wende. In the Introduction I summarized the position taken by Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) who associate hegemony with "nonagentive" power and ideology with "agentive" power over the production, circulation and consumption of signs and objects. Memory is constructed and expressed through a variety of signs

(including language), practices and objects which are subject to different forms of agentive and non-agentive power. A crucial component of many levels of identity, memory is what makes it possible for individuals, families, classes, political and regional communities to conceive of themselves as such, and perceive differences between themselves and others. Identities confer advantages and disadvantages, both material and symbolic, including access to and control over various forms of power, or vulnerability to forms of power. In other words, remembering and forgetting are shaped by hegemony and ideology, and hegemony and ideology are influenced by processes of remembering and forgetting.

In Dresden ideologies of history, or stances toward the past favorable to particular social groups, have been asserted through specific activities undertaken by various agents at different historical junctures. After 1989 the city government ended one form of the public commemoration of communists and socialists by renaming streets and plazas. It also permitted hundreds of neo-Nazis to march through Dresden saluting "Heil Hitler."³ Grocery chains emptied local stores of East German products and filled them with West German and American brands. Media conglomerates hired TV and newspaper editors who favored stories critical of socialism.

3. The march described in "Two Murders, Two Demonstrations" had been authorized by the city.

These actions, examples of the ways ideologies can be asserted through agentive control over signs, objects and consumption, were themselves ideologically determined. As discussed in Chapter One, the cold-war mentality prevailing in the FRG at the time of the Wende led the West to conceive of itself as a "liberal democratic order" opposed to the "totalitarian" East. When West German "democracy" prevailed over the GDR "dictatorship," the victors' strategies included eradicating references to positive aspects of socialism and equating the GDR past with that of Germany's "other" abhorrent past, National Socialism. The equation of the GDR with Nazi Germany is, in part, what gave rise to actions undertaken in the East after the Wende including what Jürgen referred to as "wash[ing]" the university "clean of the Reds," removing socialist statuary and, in numerous other ways, attempting to eradicate tangible vestiges of socialism.

Socialism's intangible remains were to be eradicated after the Wende too, through the process of working through the past. Because an ideologically determined, totalitarian view of socialism prevailed in the East after the Wende, and because, as Hobsbawm (1972) observed, the past often serves as a pattern for the present, the process of working through the past would be modeled on the postwar working-through of Nazi Germany. Questions concerning the crimes of the state, and the complicity and guilt of the population, became central to public debates, private

reminiscence, and conversations with the occasional anthropologist.

Complicity and guilt were usually discussed with me in terms of making compromises. There was Ruhe to be had in the GDR, but achieving that peace and quiet required that people make concessions at numerous junctures in their lives. For example, many young men decided to undertake the mandatory military service not because they felt committed to "defending peace" but because it was perceived to be a prerequisite for admission to college and access to other life opportunities.

Yet referring to such acts (joining the army, signing one's kids up for the Young Pioneers, attending First of May festivities) as "decisions" implies that individuals not only had choices in these areas but weighed and considered them, then acted in one way or another as a result of conscious reflection. When I asked respondents why they did not refuse to participate in political activities, they sometimes responded by defending the activities themselves--every state had an army so why couldn't the GDR, the Pioneers were fun, and so forth.⁴ Yet I also often received responses such as "Wir durften

4. A former army officer said, "The purpose, ideology, goals, methods of the GDR army were identical to those of any other nation. It is only now, because of its unfortunate position on the losing side of this little ideological war, that it is being negatively judged as criminal. In reality it was no different than, say, the army in the USA."

nicht!" (We weren't allowed!). Another response, "The choice was army or jail and who was brave enough to choose jail?" indicates that the perception of choice is highly subjective and often structured by external circumstances. Memory of life experiences, and knowledge of what "everyone knew" in the GDR, provided the framework within which such "choices" were evaluated.

One man phrased the problem somewhat differently, focusing on the tendency of people to align themselves with the masses.

The problem with the Germans, with the East Germans, is that we are all ruled by fear and silence. If twenty people had gotten together and said "Wir sind dagegen!" [We're opposed!] they could have taken the initiative and made changes. But what happened was that one person said, "Ich bin dafür!" [I'm for it!] and everyone else, out of fear, was silent.

A different respondent countered with the claim that East Germans not only had the right to criticize but they had an obligation to do so.

But in actuality one couldn't bring critical points into a discussion when they had not already been foreseen and the outcome planned. One could criticize or make suggestions only from a position of leadership and critical people didn't get into positions of leadership. In the end everyone played along. Just keeping your head low and not doing anything against the system was playing along. No one wants to see that now. They want a victim, a scapegoat, someone to blame. They don't want to think critically about the role they played.

But not all East Germans seek out scapegoats; some blame themselves. Playing along was learned at an early age, a group of students explained to me, and despite their youth (late teens and early twenties) they were "guilty" of

having supported the GDR "too." In particular, they said that they had parroted ideological lessons on school tests in order to receive good grades in their classes.

"Does that mean that everyone who got poor grades in school is less guilty now?" I asked. They laughed and replied by referring to the pressure to work through the past in this way: "So much is being written now in the press about how terrible the GDR was we have to think about what role we played."

That role was summarized by one man, a former member of the Party, who stated, "Die, die nicht dagegen waren, waren dafür [Those who did not oppose (the state) were for (it)]." Some astute respondents, resentful of the condemnation of the GDR by western politicians and press, observed that West Germans support their state through actions and inactions in exactly the same way that East Germans sustained the GDR. This criticism of the West suggests one of the ways hegemonic processes are at work in memory and history in the unified Germany.

As Comaroff and Comaroff explain, hegemony "consists of things that go without saying" and this is why its power seems to be "independent of human agency, to lie in what it silences, what it puts beyond the limits of the thinkable" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 28-9)." After the Wende there was little in the GDR that was totally silenced. Convinced socialists over approximately fifty years of age angrily denounced political oppression in the so-called democratic

FRG, citing the Radikalenerlaß, or prohibition of employment in public service to members of "extreme" political groups (including the Left), as a prime example. These individuals often also mocked West Germans' self-congratulatory claims of having "finished" with their Nazi history.

"How many Nazis were left in power in the West," some argued, "as judges, lawyers, professors, politicians."

In contrast, younger respondents frequently criticized West Germans' wasteful, environmentally destructive consumption habits, the exploitation of the third world by capitalism, and the emphasis in capitalist society on gaining social status through the acquisition of material possessions instead of focusing on intrinsically satisfying personal relationships. Respondents of all ages and political persuasions objected to the naturalization of inequality in capitalist society. In particular, they rejected the view that individuals should be held responsible for their own unemployment or homelessness. They focussed instead on the culture and structure of West German society in which certain classes of individuals, for example women, are disadvantaged competitors in the marketplace.

Despite these criticisms of West German culture and society, only rarely did anyone suggest to me that West Germans should work through their postwar history in the same way that East Germans are now expected to work through

socialism. The acquiescence to West German historical ideology suggests that the one of the hegemonic processes accompanying West German domination of the East was the successful silencing of alternative points of view within the *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*.

Occasionally respondents did reject the demand that East Germans work through their pasts. But instead of directly challenging West Germans to work through their history too, respondents evaded the comparison of socialism with National Socialism by evaluating the GDR with respect to different German pasts. By seizing upon alternative historical analogies, respondents conveyed views of their recent history that varied from the simple, black-white, totalitarian-democratic model:

The hope of 1989 well, that's just been like every other unfinished German revolution. Like 1848 or 1918, the revolution was started but there was no follow-through and the conditions afterward were even worse than they were before. It is as if I have a wound on my arm and a bandage and before the wound is healed I peel off the bandage and everything, the skin and everything, comes with it.

By making a quite different analogy, another respondent suggested that instead of comparing totalitarian elements in socialism to those of National Socialism, National Socialism should be understood as having adopted the most undesirable elements of Leninism which were, then, perpetuated in the stalinist GDR:

It's too bad Hitler's fascism turned out to be so criminal with the persecution of the Jews etc.. It's too bad because there was so much positive in it. But his method, fascism, Hitler borrowed that from Lenin.

Lenin was the first fascist, Hitler his successor and only then, later, came Stalin who murdered more communists than the Nazis did.

This respondent, a former officer in the Wehrmacht who became a committed member of the Party in the GDR, went on to criticize German unification in this way:

Socialism was doomed from the start, from 1917. It had no ability to adapt, to develop. It was only a matter of time before it would break down and when it finally did it was a miserable, terrible system. And now there is nothing to replace it but this so-called "democracy" which is no more democratic than socialism was. If my boss doesn't like my nose he can fire me. He never could have done that in the GDR.⁵

Finally, there is an ironic parallel between the postwar Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit in the West and the post-Wende Aufarbeitung in the East that often escapes notice. Many former Nazis and Nazi sympathizers were left untouched in the West after 1945, and many former members of the SED survived post-Wende purges in the East. Helga referred to this when she mentioned that all the "old personnel" are still in place in the nursing home where she was working during 1989, "just like in the factories." Another respondent commented that the Wende wasn't a radical change but, simply, a transfer of power.

The people in the shop windows [Erich Honecker, etc.] have been replaced but the hundreds or tens of thousands of people who stood behind the shop windows still stand there.

Many Dresdners made similar statements about the Wende, but

5. In the next section I develop the theme broached by this respondent, namely the ways the present is explained in part through appeals to the past.

the hegemonic suppression of critical historical interpretation prevented them from extending this observation to reproach either of the West or of pressure to work through the past in the East.

Hegemony and ideology are ongoing processes, not static conditions. They are evidence of the continuously shifting social alignments and forms of power characteristic of complex societies; in addition, they shape, and are shaped by, often contradictory memories and histories. In the next section I identify different levels of conflicts in memory and history in the former GDR.

Ambiguities, Contradictions and Tensions

At the first level, contradictions pertain to what the GDR was and was not. Often, as I have indicated in previous chapters, respondents' recollections varied according to their ages, genders, educational and employment experiences, political ideologies and religious beliefs. At another level, memory is internally contradictory. I explain what I mean by this below. Thirdly, contradictions and tensions in memory and history shape interpretations of the present and the conception, or anticipation, of the future. Finally, memory's counterpart is amnesia. The tension between remembering and forgetting is the last contradiction addressed in this section.

Both Borneman (1992) and Weidenfeld and Lutz (1994) have published results of research on East German

generations and both refer to Mannheim (1928) as a point of origin for their analysis. Mannheim proposed that individuals of approximately the same age, or members of generations, share formative historical experiences that shape values, attitudes, behaviors and, thus, historical consciousness. In this study the five respondents whose narratives are most fully presented represent three generations: while Helga was born before the Wall was built in 1961, she was so young at that time it is fair to say that she lived all of her formative and adult years in a state whose borders were closed to the West. Herr Kleiber experienced the end of the war as a child and grew up in the early years of the GDR, as did Jürgen. Frau Klemm and Frau Vogel have personal memories of the Weimar and Nazi era and were young adults during World War II. These generational differences are expressed in the different emphases respondents bring to their narratives, although generation alone does not explain the presence or absence of certain historical perspectives.

Helga experienced neither the era of National Socialism nor the economic successes of the GDR in the '50s. She knew primarily the '60s and '70s, which were characterized by increasing dissatisfaction of the population with socialism and the emergence of the "niche" society, and the '80s, a decade of crisis so great it led to the dissolution of the state. Her narrative focuses on issues such as conflicts between public and private discourse and her efforts to

maneuver herself into an acceptable life course--an occupation from which she eventually sought refuge in motherhood.

Herr Kleiber learned a trade and, through his work, helped build socialism in the GDR--although he developed no strong political commitments. Jürgen attended college and became an intellectual, a university lecturer who believed in socialism and desired to contribute to its success. While Herr Kleiber narrates a history of early success in the GDR, eventually leading to a period of economic fruition, he does not relate this brief era of prosperity with any value inherent to socialism; rather he focuses on the irony, stupidity and cruelty of GDR politics. Jürgen concedes problems within socialism but nonetheless concentrates on its fundamental worth and emphasizes his efforts to critically engage his students with socialist theory.

Both Frau Vogel and Frau Klemm personally experienced the economic and political chaos of the Weimar era and the subsequent hardship and brutality of Nazi Germany. As adults they vowed to work in the GDR against the recurrence of such atrocities. In their narratives they stress egalitarian aspects of socialism as well as its character as an alternative to capitalism, the political-economic system they hold responsible for cycles of crisis and war. Of the two Frau Vogel, the "political functionary," is more open to reflection on socialism's failures. Frau Klemm, the police

officer, concedes only that there were errors in the theory then angrily denies and denounces criticisms of the GDR.

The recollections of Helga, Frau Vogel and Frau Klemm express the unique experiences and vulnerabilities of women in fascism, socialism and post-Wende capitalism. Frau Vogel's body was directly violated in Nazi Germany. Later, both she and Frau Klemm were employed in wage labor during the war as part of the massive deployment of women in the labor force who replaced men sent to the front. Then, after the war, these women pursued professional careers in socialist Germany. Had they lived in the FRG, where women were employed at a rate much lower than that in the East, it is unlikely they would have had the same opportunities. I suspect that Frau Vogel, in particular, would have had much greater difficulty coming to terms with the fact that she could not have children if she had not lived in the East where women were valued for their productive labor as much as their reproductive work--at least in ideology.

Helga grew up in the GDR at a much later time but even as a young girl she had no doubt that she would learn and practice a trade. However, Helga's life course exemplifies one of the contradictions of gender within socialism. Despite the almost total integration of women into paid labor, for many women motherhood remained a central and greatly desired occupation and role. It was only after the Wende, when Helga was fired from her job as a health-care aide in a nursing home, that she first deeply resented the

monotony and boredom of being a full-time mother and housewife.

The stories of Herr Kleiber and Jürgen reflect experiences unique to males in two ways. First, these respondents worked in occupations dominated by men. In Herr Kleiber's field, machine production, both workers and masters were overwhelmingly male. While more women made inroads into higher education in the East than in the West, Jürgen's successful completion of graduate school and employment as a lecturer does coincide with a pattern in Germany of the dominance of males in higher education.

Interestingly, Herr Kleiber and Jürgen have had quite different experiences since the Wende. Herr Kleiber has become a house-husband while Jürgen describes himself as head of the household, "as in bourgeois society." By doing so, Jürgen makes an explicit reference to the relationship between gender roles and particular social structures.

The influence of education and employment experience, political convictions and religious beliefs on the recollections of these five respondents have already been briefly discussed in the preceding two chapters. In part, Helga, Herr Kleiber, Jürgen, Frau Vogel and Frau Klemm differently recall the nature and degree of repression and freedom they experienced in the GDR. Of the five, Helga and Herr Kleiber were most resentful of restrictions on their personal freedom and the state's lies. It is Herr Kleiber who emphasizes shortages of goods and services in the GDR,

while Jürgen most directly experienced political-ideological conflicts first as a graduate student then as a college lecturer. While Frau Vogel and Frau Klemm referred to shortages of goods and services, they stressed the freedom they experienced in the GDR from injustices of capitalism, fascism and war.

In the preceding paragraphs I have identified differences, or contradictions, in respondents' narratives. A second domain of conflict and tension in memory is internal to recollection. I will illustrate what I mean by this by providing three examples. In the story of the museum, Karl relates a chronology of the Wende in which the Sputnik-Verbot followed the massacre on Tiananman Square. In fact, Sputnik was prohibited in November 1988, seven months before the massacre. Karl's memory is erroneous--at least in his representation of facts. When remembering the Wende respondents often could not accurately recall the sequence of events, or they reordered events to support an interpretation of the larger processes that shaped the dissolution of East Germany. In Karl's case, he gets the facts wrong but accurately represents the state's increasingly direct rejection of Glasnost and Perestroika.

A second example of contradictions internal to memory is Jürgen's threefold evaluation of the Wende. In Chapter Five he described himself variously as "ambivalent" about the end of the GDR, as having "divided" feelings about it, and as viewing it as a "defeat." In each case, he discussed

a different aspect of the Wende to support a different subjective stance toward it. When "ambivalent," he referred to problems within socialism that needed to be addressed. When "divided," he talked about a particular period during the course of the Wende when it appeared that there was a chance for a "third way" of renewed socialism. When referring to the Wende as a "defeat" he reiterated his lifelong engagement for socialism, and that of his family.

A third contradiction internal to memory stems from a respondent's narrative not fully reported here. Earlier in this chapter I quoted a young man who talked about missing the feeling of solidarity he had in the GDR. But previously in my interview with him, he had described himself as a loner "through and through." He declined to work in group projects in school, participated in collective activities only to the extent that was absolutely necessary, and was even criticized by his teachers for not participating more fully. His representation of the way he conducted himself socially in the GDR contradicts the very element of GDR society he later sentimentally recalled.

In each of these examples the apparent contradictions can be resolved by viewing memory as a capacity to flexibly reconstruct the past through recollection in order to fulfill various present needs. The first example shows that memory often expresses subjective truths, or truths of the perception of the past, through the reordering of factual truths. The second example illustrates the fact that

subjective stances toward the past vary according to the elements that are recalled from it. In the third example, it may be the young man's need to reconstruct his identity in the unified Germany that engendered sentimentalization of those social arrangements against which his identity was produced formerly.

The influence of the present on the recollection of the past was evident in many interviews. Respondents often fondly remembered the leisure they enjoyed at work, when they had time to drink coffee and socialize with colleagues. They often participated in cultural activities organized through work collectives as well. Now workers have to work hard and they fear for their jobs if they don't. This new atmosphere on the job is widely described as the intensely competitive "elbow society." The loss of solidarity at work was mentioned over and over to me as one of the greatest costs of the Wende.

Recollections of the past incline East Germans to be critical of the present in other ways as well. For example, the new CDU government lacks overall credibility. One woman disputed the official unemployment figures, claiming that they were too low. She estimated that if you include workers engaged through ABM (the government work program), as well as workers on short hours, zero hours, in early retirement and retraining, the real unemployment rate approaches fifty percent. Or, as she put it, "Only half the people who used to have work still have real jobs." She

justified her determination by explaining, "Look, it used to be that every morning when I got on the streetcar I never got a seat. Now I always get a seat." This is a very simple example of the ways memories of past observations serve as a basis for evaluating the present. In this case, a set of recollections led the woman to suspect the government of concealing the truth about the devastating consequences of the transition to capitalism.

Dissatisfaction with the state and politics is widespread. Chancellor Kohl and his party, the CDU, are blamed for having misrepresented the effects of unification.

"They should have been honest," Frau Vogel complained. "They should have told us it was going to take ten years [to build a new economy in the East]."

Another respondent explained the reasons why "democracy" in the unified Germany is, actually, just an artifice:

In a democracy the people have to exercise the power. But people are lazy. That would be too much work. They don't want to get involved. What it would take is this: first you have to see that something has to be done, then you have to make the commitment to do something for it, then you have to spend the energy, and take risks and suffer the consequences because getting active, being active means suffering consequences. If "the people" would do this, then it would be a democracy. But, in the end, democracy is against the interests of the politicians, not in their interests, so that is why they don't allow society to really be a democracy.

This young man, a student, remembered the challenges and risks he and others had undertaken during the Wende, and was bitter about the ways the democratic initiative of East

Germans was stifled after 1989.

The past also serves as a basis for the anticipation of the future. There was enormous anxiety in the East after the Wende, as this comment suggests:

After the Wende East Germans were afraid of everything in the future, wondering every day what's going to happen next. Now we've calmed down a little bit, we can think about today and tomorrow and next week and we've learned that it's not so frightening after all. It is possible to move ahead, move forward.

A teacher whose place of employment, a language institute, was threatened with closure after the Wende, said she felt ready to join her colleagues in a fight to save the school. She believed that the radical social changes accompanying the Wende mean that "anything is possible" in the new world she and other East Germans now occupy. But, although her belief seems optimistic, it has a darker side too. This emerges as she explains her hope with reference to the past:

Before, the world had certain rules, a certain order. That world has been fully broken down and what would have been the grossest injustices before now happen every day--namely people getting fired and left with no medical insurance, no money to pay the rent or even survive in the future.

The dark side of her statement "anything is possible" is the observation that this condition obtains only because of the total chaos and uncertainty prevailing since the Wende.

It is far easier to discuss the significance of remembering than forgetting; however, Benedict Anderson's description of one of the functions of amnesia provides a useful starting point. He writes that "official" memories

are very much a tool of state or national interests and "[a]ll profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions . . . spring narratives" (Anderson 1983: 204).

For any (healthy) individual or social group, selective perception and forgetting are as essential as remembering. Intentional or unintentional, they enable humans to glean significant information from the excess of stimulation to which we are regularly exposed, and thus facilitate the creation of meaningful representations and narratives. Not being able to forget is a burden of mythical proportions.

Forgetting, amnesia and silences have a quite different dimension as well--they can be imposed by one party on another. The prohibition of memory, an interdiction against the transmission of history, is a powerful tool of repression employed all too often as part of processes of domination. Individuals and groups can impose silence and forgetting on themselves as well. By doing so they may forgive, protect, manipulate, indulge in nostalgia or engage in any of a number of other related social and cultural practices.

Multiple silences are evident in the previous chapters. Sentimental nostalgia for the "good old days" of socialism is premised by the forgetting of the tensions, envy, mistrust and frustration of daily life in the GDR. Historical discourses that represent the GDR as having been

a bleak and repressive totalitarian regime silence many of the entirely normal, positive and even playful aspects of daily life in socialism. For example, the young student who participated in the parade in Berlin on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the GDR did so in order to get out of school for the day!

Other silences I referred to in this study include Frau Klemm's refusal to talk at all about her work as a police officer. When I suggested to Frau Esperanto that some East Germans had had political problems in the GDR she said absolutely nothing in reply. Frau Vogel told me why she couldn't have children--but also that the subject had been "taboo" for her for many years. The reconstruction of the Frauenkirche will silence the powerful memories individuals have that are associated with the ruin. The removal of the Lenin monument, and socialist street and place names, silence both memories of the individuals commemorated by such physical objects, and memories of the imposition of socialist ideology by the GDR state.

There is even an amnesia of habit recorded in this study, or the cessation of practices irrelevant since the Wende. After 1989 it was no longer necessary to plan carefully, strategize and manipulate personal relationships in order to obtain goods and services in the way that was routine in the GDR. There was no need to "talk through the flowers" any more when telling jokes. Neighborhood networks for the rapid communication of information vanished.

Certain recycling practices ceased. It was no longer necessary to make proper socialist greetings and certain forms of self-imposed silence became superfluous.

There is an additional, crucial relationship between memory and amnesia. It is often the fear of losing the past that prompts conscious or active remembering. Michael, Karl and Sabine created their museum as a defense against the loss of the GDR Alltag. The design for the new Frauenkirche incorporates a museum to mitigate against forgetting. Herr Beck, who wrote the report on violence at the train station, and the leftists and rightists who marched through Dresden acted in the ways that they did in order to stave off the disappearance of the past.

The many ways the past is remembered and forgotten in Dresden, the expression of memory in social relationships and cultural processes, the emergence of particular issues in recollection, and the ambiguities, contradictions and tensions with which remembering and forgetting are laden, all indicate that memory is deeply paradoxical and powerfully dynamic. Memory must be conceived not only as pertaining to history but in history. It is constructed and conveyed through highly mutable symbols which are, themselves, vulnerable to changes brought about by shifting material, political and ideological relationships. Attention to the often difficult conditions people experience as a result of such shifts, and the power of hegemony and ideology to shape both reflection and action,

must be included in any study of memory. These contexts influence the construction and expression of memory, and memory influences the actions and inactions of people as they strive, on a day-to-day basis, to make sense of and survive in a rapidly changing world such as eastern Germany after the Wende.

In conclusion, I let Helga, Jürgen, Herr Kleiber, Frau Vogel and Frau Klemm summarize their views on the future.

Respondents' Narratives

Helga

In principle my life hasn't been affected so positively by the Wende. On the one hand I can travel but on the other hand people say "No, we don't need you anymore [at work]." That administrators can simply exercise power in that way and make a judgement about whether or not they will employ you based on whether or not they like your face--in GDR times that was impossible.

But I'm going to try to do something. I've considered going to school to become a nurse. There is also the possibility of getting a qualification through on-the-job training where I am applying now. Right now I just hope that I get a job, one that's enjoyable, that I just find something to do where I feel useful.

Jürgen

For the future? First of all I hope to come to terms

with the new relations [Verhältnisse]. As far as my professional prospects are concerned, that's still an open question in my case. It will be decided at the end of the year, then I'll know something concretely. Naturally I hope that I get something in this direction [in which he is now training] where I can keep myself busy, or perhaps I can do something in the area of journalism. There are more possibilities there and I have always been interested in life histories and photo essays.

Herr Kleiber

[Herr Kleiber] What we need more than anything now in the new German states is work.

[Frau Kleiber] They have to open new factories. Something.

[Herr Kleiber] That is what is most urgent. But I don't want to be pessimistic. I would say that in two or three years things will be different. There is growth in some branches of industry so things will get better. I hope there will be work for me too. I'm not pessimistic. We finally achieved what we wanted to achieve. The little one is going to college, we have a small apartment but it's nice what we made for ourselves here. I can't say that we're unhappy. There are people here who say things are bad but there are plenty of other places where people have to make do with less than we have.

Frau Vogel

What I need in this time? Well, I have to say, and I have to be honest, that's really up to me. The senior citizens' club is there and I should get more involved. That would be nice. I want to join the society for people who are visually handicapped and get together with people who have the same kind of handicap that I do. But that is something I have to accomplish myself. But my future? Personally? What can I say . . . I don't know how the next year will go because I still have an application for a widow's pension pending and I'll get something. I don't have to worry about making do with the lowest pension. I have more than the lowest pension so it has to be enough.

Frau Klemm

The GDR is dead, honestly. There is no future for socialism in Germany now. Not in the next one hundred years. Then whether or not there will be something called socialism I don't know but if there isn't a more humane society then that will be the end for the people of the world. When you see the slums in the major cities of capitalist countries, the houses are dilapidated and the children run around in the debris. I just wish that all the people of the world could live humanely. That would be a piece of socialism for me.

APPENDIX I**Primary Respondents*****Helga**

Age 34. A former artisan and nurse's aide in an old-age home, Helga is now unemployed. She is married and has two young sons. She identifies herself as a Christian.

Jürgen

Age mid-40s. Jürgen is a former university lecturer in Marxism-Leninism who was forced to retire after 1989. He is married and has two young children. He is a former member of the SED.

Herr Kleiber

Age approximately 50. Herr Kleiber is former master metalworker who was forced into retirement after 1989. He is married and has two adult children. He identifies himself as neither Christian nor communist.

Frau Klemm

Age approximately 70. Frau Klemm worked for the local police until retirement. Her husband died in World War II; she is a former member of the SED.

Frau Vogel

Age approximately 70. Frau Vogel was responsible for political and union activities at a health care center. She was married twice and has no children. She is a former member of the SED.

* Ages given are for 1991-2.

APPENDIX II

Explanation of abbreviations and foreign terms

ABM, ABS

Public employment programs.

Die Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit

Literally "working up the past" and commonly understood as "the critical reassessment of the past." Also translated as "working through the past" or "coming to terms with the past." As Hartman (1986) points out, "Aufarbeitung" utilizes a material metaphor as one of its meanings is to take raw materials and work them up into a finished product (p. 114). Sometimes contrasted with Vergangenheitsbewältigung.

Aufschwung

(Economic) recovery.

Auschwitzlüge

Literally, "Auschwitz lie." The position that there was no Holocaust and that claims to the contrary are propaganda of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy.

Bezirke

Districts. Established in 1952, districts replaced states as the constituent territories of the GDR.

Bürger

Citizens.

Bürgerbewegung

Citizens' movement.

CDU

Christlich-Demokratische Union. Christian Democratic Union.

DFD

Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands. Democratic Women's Association of Germany.

Entnazifizierung

De-nazification. Refers to investigation and removal of former Nazi party members and collaborators during the postwar period.

EOS

Erweiterte Oberschule. Advanced high school on the college track. In the unified Germany: "Gymnasium."

FDGB

Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund. Free German Association of Unions.

Feind

Enemy. Term used in the GDR to refer to the West as well as subversive elements within GDR society.

First of May

The socialist labor day.

Gefühlsstau

Blocked emotions. Literally "feelings-jam"; term coined by psychologist Maaz (Maaz 1990).

GDR

German Democratic Republic, 1949-1989.

Historikerstreit

Historians' debate. See Knowlton and Cates (1993).

H.O.

Handelsorganisation. A nationwide chain of cooperative stores in the GDR.

Informelle Mitarbeiter (I.M.)

Informal co-worker (unpaid informer) for the Staatssicherheitsdienst (Stasi).

Jugendweihe

Socialist coming-of-age ceremony that predated the GDR becoming, after World War II, a central component of the GDR's social and ideological curriculum for youth.

Junker(s)

Elite rural agricultural landowner(s) in East Prussia (before World War II).

Knappschaft

Miners' society.

Konsum or Konsumverein

Consumers' cooperative society.

KPD

Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands. Communist Party of Germany.

Lieux de mémoire

Sites of memory. Phrase used by Nora (1989) to refer to artificial locations for memory such as archives or museums. Contrasted to natural memory which need not be so embodied.

Nazi-Zeit

Nazi period. Expression used colloquially to refer to 1933-1945.

Neues Forum

New Forum. An alternative political party, based in Leipzig with branches in many GDR cities and towns, which sought official recognition in the GDR. At first banned, Neues Forum was finally recognized by the Ministry of the Interior on November 8, 1989.

NSDAP

Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei.
National-Socialist German Workers' Party.

Null Stunde

Zero hour. The view that the end of World War II granted Germany an entirely new historical beginning.

PDS

Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus. Party of Democratic Socialism, successor party to the SED.

Ruhe

Peace and quiet.

SED

Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands. Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the ruling political party in the GDR.

Sonderweg

Atypical route. The view that Germany's relatively late (nineteenth century) development as a nation-state contributed to the emergence of National Socialism.

SPD

Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. Social-Democratic Party of Germany, opposition party in the FRG.

Spitzel (plural "Spitzeln")

Informer (for the Stasi).

Staatssicherheitsdienst (Stasi)

State security service. Frequently and erroneously translated into English as "secret police."

Unruhe

Disquiet or unrest. A word commonly used to describe the pervasive anxiety and uncertainty of the post-Wende period.

Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung

See "Die Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit."

Vergangenheitsbewältigung

"Mastering" or "overcoming" the past. This expression refers to a relationship to the past in which one does not engage critically with it but seeks to conquer it as one would an antagonist or foe.

Weg-werf Gesellschaft

"Throw-away society." Slang expression for the West that refers to environmentally detrimental consumption habits.

Wende

"Turn" or "change." Term used to describe the events of 1989 in the GDR.

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