This is to certify that the

thesis entitled
Daily Life, Politics and Victimization in Eastern Germany, 1933-1993: Remembering the Third Reich and the GDR after the Wende

presented by

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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in History

Dagmar Herzog
Major professor

Date 16 Nov. 1994

DAILY LIFE, POLITICS AND VICTIMIZATION IN EASTERN GERMANY, 1933-1993: REMEMBERING THE THIRD REICH AND THE GDR AFTER THE *WENDE*

By

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History

1994

ABSTRACT

DAILY LIFE, POLITICS AND VICTIMIZATION
IN EASTERN GERMANY, 1933-1993:
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This is an oral history of a group of elderly Germans I interviewed in the former GDR (East Germany) in mid-1993: men and women who had lived through the Nazi era, the Communist era, and the years since reunification into the capitalist West. My study considers how attention to daily life forces a rethinking of historians' traditional periodizations of the Third Reich and the postwar period. I also analyzed what "politics" means to these individuals who have lived through three regimes, as well as their attitudes about economics and ethnicity. Most importantly, I analyzed the paradoxical legacy of Nazism -- the ways in which its reputation for terror provides individuals with an explanation for their own learned helplessness and retreatism *and*, contradictorily, how they remember it as the only happy and stable time in their lives. I thereby offer insights into the workings of memory and modern forms of depoliticization more generally.

for all the students and teachers who helped find informants and interpret their testimonies in Halle, for all the friends who made me feel so welcome there, and for Dagmar, my mentor.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDM	*Bund Deutscher Mådel* -- League of German Girls (Third Reich)
CDU	*Christlich-Demokratische Union* -- Christian Democratic Union
CSU	*Christlich-Soziale Union* -- Christian Social Union, conservative Bavarian "sister party" of the CDU
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany, now reunified Germany)
Gestapo	*Geheime Staatspolizei* -- Secret State Police (Third Reich)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
KPD	*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* -- German Communist Party
NSDAP	*National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* -- National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party)
SA	*Sturmabteilung* -- Storm troopers, brownshirts -- paramilitary arm of the NSDAP
SD	*Sicherheitsdienst* -- SS Security Service
SED	*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* -- Socialist Unity Party (ruling party in East Germany formed from the merger of the KPD and SPD in 1946)
SPD	*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* -- German Social Democratic Party
SS	*Schutzstaffel* -- Blackshirts -- elite Hitler body guard and security service, later also elite military force
Stasi, SSD	*Staatssicherheitspolizei* -- State Security Police (GDR)

INTRODUCTION

Oral histories of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) are few and were produced mostly in the final years of the regime, as West Germans and others were allowed to enter the GDR under some supervision to conduct research. The data produced from them needs to be viewed cautiously. As one historian from the West noted, even in the spirit of *Glasnost* of the late 1980s, most subjects of such interviews did not feel free to express all of their opinions.[1]

Among the primary interests of these researchers was, as we shall see, the search for the "human capital" that had allowed the GDR to function and remain relatively stable for nearly forty years. The regime had existed long enough for two generations to have emerged with no direct knowledge of unified Germany and arguably no sense that division was not a "normal" state of affairs. This, coupled with the well-known quiescence of the population, would seem to indicate that the GDR had created enough support or at least resignation among its citizens that the nationalistic excesses of the recent German past (as well as any widespread desire for reunification) had been overcome. However, even in the late 1980s, a substantial number of ordinary GDR workers could recall a working life under the regime the Socialist Unity

Party (SED) claimed to have negated in coming to power: Hitler's Third Reich.

What was the meaning of the pre-1945 era for later life in the GDR? While it certainly is beyond question that fear of coercion, particularly after Soviet tanks crushed the workers' uprising on 17 June 1953, and the difficulty of escape, especially after the building of the Berlin Wall in August, 1961, i.e. the actions of the SED and its Soviet allies, were key factors in stability, it has been suggested that a legacy of secret police tactics and state controlled media *from 1933 to 1945* played a role, for a time at least, in the acquiescence of the population to SED rule.[2] Indeed, for many everyday life in the GDR had to have seemed in part to be a "re-run" of the years before 1945. Unfortunately, neither of the major oral history projects in the GDR in the late 1980s offered a definitive conclusion on the legacy of the Third Reich for GDR stability. One author merely suggested that for many the GDR was viewed as simply the alleviator of Hitler's destruction, the other writer simply beginning his work on East and West German identities with the immediate postwar period.[3]

While the meaning of the 'lived experience' of 'socialism after Hitler' could not be fully explained to most outsiders while the GDR still existed, paradoxically, and for different reasons, it also cannot be today. The restrictive atmosphere alone seems to have precluded this before 1989, and, for reasons I will explain below, the researchers at that time were not looking for this connection. Meanwhile, a rather different obstacle confronts researchers today. The change in Soviet foreign policy that granted its allies complete control of their internal affairs in early 1989, and the unexpectedly rapid end of the GDR, what the Germans refer to as the *Wende*, has thrust the East Germans into circumstances so radically different and unexpected that the older generation, who had expected to live out their twilight years quietly, could hardly help but

feel stimuli for rethinking their life experiences, and a need to appeal to new narrative strategies to understand 'where they have been' and are today.

Alltagsgeschichte, or the history of everyday life, is usually based both on public and private documentation and oral testimony. The latter may be recorded very near in time to the event, or much later. To draw conclusions from oral testimonies that recall both a distant past and a recent one that each seem radically different from the present is obviously more problematic than evaluating documents and testimonies nearer in time to the event, due to the coloring that the passage of time lends to the memory of experiences. It is nevertheless my hope that this writing, based on interviews with the older East German generation in 1993, will suggest methods for exploring the changes and perhaps less obvious continuities in daily life before and after 1945. Likewise, I hope to demonstrate and analyze how individual "Eastern" Germans shaped and were shaped by the transition from Nazism to socialism, whatever water has passed under the bridge of memory since. Further exploration beyond this writing will have to be undertaken soon, however, as the last East German generation that can remember the Nazi time is rapidly disappearing.

While analyzing my own tape recorded interviews with twelve older Eastern Germans who today live in the area of Halle, Saxony-Anhalt, I decided at least four broad and often overlapping themes needed attention. These are: 1) daily life and periodization, 2) victimization and identification, 3) differences/similarities of life under the Nazis and the Socialists, and 4) the Holocaust, racism, and Nazism. Themes one and two received considerable attention in previous oral histories in both East and West Germany, the latter two themes perhaps not enough. The two major oral histories of the GDR alluded to above, one by a trio of West German historians including Lutz Niethammer, and

another by American anthropologist John Borneman, who compared lifestories of East and West Berliners, were both conducted between 1986 and 1990. Ironically, just as progress could be made on the history of everyday life and how the beginnings of the GDR were remembered, the same spirit of openness that made the projects possible culminated in the regime's demise.[4]

Daily Life: Pre- and Post- "Wende" Perspectives

In both of the studies before unification, daily life, at least until the late 1940s or early 1950s, was remembered similarly -- the period from 1933 till the mid 1940s was recalled, on the whole, as stable, the period from mid 1940s was remembered as highly unstable. What was different in 1993 was how the longer period *after* the early 50s was remembered, and how it was related to the years before. Without getting ahead of myself, I will suggest here, as previous research has noted, that 1945 is seldom remembered in individual life stories as the dramatic turning point that it is in international politics. As for the later period, circa 1953 to the 1980's, recalled before the Wende as a period of relative stability if not improvement, in 1993 it is connected to the experience of World War II and the occupation as continuation of misfortunes, times that were tolerated, but seldom remembered fondly.

Feelings of victimization, which were articulated in Borneman's interviews with East Berliners and to a lesser extent in those of Niethammer, did not necessarily involve lengthy stories about personal suffering and deprivation. More often, it was simply feelings of helplessness in the face of political repression and surveillance at work, for men feelings of estrangement from their families upon return from war or POW camps, and the general difficulties of feeding, clothing, and sheltering their families in the occupation period. Rather

than taking a measure of pride in overcoming these difficulties, those Borneman interviewed could only relate these experiences with a sense of loss and powerlessness. What limited progress and security they felt in later years always paled by comparison with their western neighbors, and by the 1980s they knew the gap was widening. In Niethammer's interviews, more satisfaction was recounted concerning the work-a-day existence in the three industrial towns his team visited, but even the more positive responses were accompanied by feelings of remoteness and resignation from politics.

These feelings of victimization (and I would argue that simple resignation means leaving oneself no other role than that of a victim) resulted in a general distancing from and skepticism about politics, often precluding any attachment to the GDR or sense of GDR citizenship. The reader of Borneman's book almost comes away with the feeling that "Germany" for his subjects was a utopia that existed on western television. At the very least it was not the result of a socialist revolution after 1945. In 1993, there was the same sense that politics had always been beyond individual control but there was even greater emphasis on the fear of persecution that one would have suffered had one attempted to influence politics than in the research before the *Wende*. What was most interesting, however, regarding these fears was not that they were more pronounced than in previous interviews, but that examples were almost always derived from the years after 1945 than before.

What then of the prewar era? Strangely enough, though Nazi persecution of political opponents was there for all to see from 1933 on, as was the accelerating campaign of persecution of Germany's Jews, homosexuals, and other religious and ethnic minorities, opinions were voiced in my research that the single "good time" in memory was the 1930s. This should not be

misconstrued as a lingering identification with Nazism. I will argue that however puzzling -- or offensive -- it may seem, the 1930s do not seem to be connected with the evil of Nazism at all! The economic improvements brought by Hitler are recalled today as unconnected with policies of racial exclusion and political conformity. There is no denying that such "disconnecting" is often a tactic for rationalizing one's inactivity, or even denying one's approval for the less palatable dictatorial measures of the prewar period. What these people told me often suggested myopic disinterest, based on a feeling *their* lives were improving at this time. But this thinking was often a bit more complex. There was a sense among these people, as other researchers have noted in previous interviews, that these matters were part of a political sphere that was not part of their lives. Whatever feelings these individuals may have been denying about the politics of the prewar years, what is crucial for this argument is how they evaluated their lives in the 1930s, and how this period and the war affected their understanding of life later in the GDR. When the good times came to an end, what was learned *in the war* about repression became the model for rejecting politics in the future. A younger East German told me that the old people feel they are without a country because every system they have known has fallen. I would also argue that they look back on all such systems and feel betrayed.

In the late 1980s, an interviewer could not have expected members of the older generation to speak of the Nazi government as identical to the GDR in terms of its police apparatus and informant network. Yet in 1993, I often heard such statements as 'a dictatorship is like any other, whether from the right or the left.' This thinking is undoubtedly linked in part to a German-wide movement movement to the right: de-emphasizing the uniqueness of Nazi crimes by suggesting that Germans were captives of the Nazis just as East Germans more

recently have been captives of the SED, can direct attention away from the arguably unique evil of Nazism, and the collective responsibility of the Germans for its coming into being. On the other hand, when such a statement comes from an East German, it certainly has as much or more to do with "coming to terms" with an individual's perceived complicity in the maintenance of socialism.

Whether the phenomenon of Nazism is better explained as fascist or totalitarian at the level of political theory must at least briefly be considered here, as indeed must the notion that the GDR is best understood as totalitarian. Moreover the contextual meaning of statements concerning regime-similarity that were offered amidst quite a bit of contrary evidence must be addressed. As we shall see, for all their protestations of similarity of the regimes, the examples related to me of spying and interrogation almost always concerned the SSD or Stasi, rather than its predecessor, the Gestapo. For now, I want to be clear that it is not my intention to argue that these two historically and geographically connected systems are identical in their goals or even organizations. However, under certain conditions, daily experience could seem remarkably similar under both regimes.

Truth be told, I had not undertaken this project with any thought that talk of both systems being the same would surface so consistently. Scarcely mentioned in previous studies, such thinking suggests many new questions. Do such opinions derive merely from projecting the image of the Nazis onto the Stasi and SED, or did the latter consciously mimicked some of their predecessor's tactics? Do they have to do more simply with whether an individual approved with one or the other regime? How much do discussions of the meaning of the Nazi period in the German public media affect East Germans who spent 44 years in a separate, contradictory, and almost completely

ideologically closed environment? This problem will be dealt with further below, but for now I want to suggest that this mentality is connected with the aforementioned "good" 1930s. In that time and after, these people tend to separate the role of the state as "policeman" from its role as an economic provider. I want to suggest that my informants and those in previous studies view the "state" as capable only of impacting individual lives negatively -- when work and pay were stable it was not thanks to the state, but to an ill-defined *social system* that in their minds was not connected with "politics."

The work of Borneman, a study of identity formation comparing the lifestories of East and West Berliners with the goals of both German states for what he calls the "model lifecourse," is important for delineating a feeling of victimization as perhaps the dominant theme of the older generations' life stories. However, his work seems lacking in historical perspective. Such a perspective, I would argue, is necessary to locate the ultimate source of the retreatist behavior and feelings of helplessness in the face of the SED and the Stasi. Beyond this, I would argue that when Germans emphasize their own victimization during the Third Reich, and claim the GDR was nearly its equivalent, we must delve deeper into their individual memories for where Nazi criminality fits into their self-conceptions as Germans and individuals. If they interpret their own experiences as victimizations, do these fit on a continuum with those of Jews, Poles and Soviet prisoners? Moreover, what are the moral and methodological problems for any historian in analyzing first-hand accounts that describe any part of the Third Reich as "good" or "normal?"

Before addressing these individual issues in more depth as well as the similarities and differences between previous research and my own concerning how life in Eastern Germany is remembered and interpreted, it is important

briefly to outline interviewing methods, both my own and those used previously. In addition, a brief comparison of the occupational and familial statuses of the persons interviewed, as well their positions relative to the SED, is necessary before continuing.

Part I: People

What sorts of people did previous research tend to focus on? Industrial workers and others living in their midst were Niethammer's focus. Borneman's group seems to have varied considerably by occupation, but he is not specific about their work, other than the fact that he avoided academic types. In addition, he used data from previous interviews with this generation, as he found it particularly difficult to get anything out of the men save pre-rehearsed "life-speeches." Though he recorded some 43 full-length life histories in both East and West Berlin and hundreds of parts of interviews, his data indicates that he interviewed no more than twenty of the older generation of East Berliners in depth.[5] Niethammer and company (assisted in some cases by GDR historians) interviewed primarily industrial workers in Karl Marx Stadt (today once again known by its pre-GDR name Chemnitz), Eisenhuttenstadt, and Bitterfeld; approximately 40-50 men and women in each city. While both studies clearly made an effort to strike a gender balance, this is more explicitly stated in the case of Borneman, who highlights the disparate circumstances and actions of men and women in the immediate post-war period.

In both of these studies, there is a considerable variation in age among those interviewed. Niethammer and company were clearly open to varying ages; one has to assume that the search for GDR "roots" did not preclude those whose early adult experiences occurred after 1945. The youngest subjects were 55 -- obviously another reason for the lack of emphasis on the Third Reich's legacy. As Niethammer's work was conducted between 1987 and 1990, some of these people were less than ten when the war began, and had little experience of the 1930s. The average age of the 32 people whose lifestories make up the body of his book was 67, meaning on average born between 1920

and 1923. Though these are just over a fifth of the people he spoke to, we can assume, if they are representative of his entire subject pool, that at least half had worked in the thirties, but we can also be sure that at least one fourth did not.[6] Borneman, who lays out three generations in his study, defines the oldest one as those born between 1910 and 1935.[7] Unfortunately, then, a good many of these people likely had no adult experiences under Hitler either.

These broad age groups obviously make it problematic to ascertain the meaning of the Nazi period for later experience in the East, but the Third Reich was spoken about considerably by some of those Niethammer interviewed. A final matter to be considered is subject position relative to the SED. Roughly 40% of Niethammer's subjects were SED. As for Borneman, we know very little about his informants' relationship to the SED; he only distinguishes them by gender and familial status.[8]

As for the 12 persons I interviewed in and around Halle, Saxony-Anhalt, in May, June and July 1993, these 6 women and 6 men were between the ages of 88 and 62 at the time, but only two were younger than 70. Perhaps the next most important factor in identifying the group is that 5 of the 12 were new arrivals to Saxony-Anhalt after the war; 3 from territories lost to Poland and Russia, and two from territories outside the German Reich of 1937. Some requested anonymity, others did not. To treat all of them equally I will identify them by the last initial only, excepting two who have the same initial and two who are brothers. Before moving on to interviewing methods, some general comments are in order on the group(s) as a whole.

One of the most important aspects of Borneman's work is his description of the experience of women in war and its aftermath. The World Wars were not merely suffered by German men at the front, but also by the women who stayed

behind to head households in economies with many shortages. Indeed, the inability of the state to provide subsistence for the "private sphere" has been shown to have undermined the German war effort, even the functioning of the government itself, in the First World War.[9] Meanwhile, women briefly experienced freedom from patriarchal control in both wars (giving many unexpected if only temporary leadership of their families) and greatly increased opportunities for work outside the home, only to be removed for the most part from traditionally male-dominated industries afterwards, However, after the second war, this tendency was clearly more pronounced in the West than in the East.[10]

Both of these "normalizations" were likewise about restoring the traditional, patriarchal family model that had been disrupted by the spousal separations of war as well as the deaths of so many men. As for the GDR, despite a policy of gender equality in the workplace, by the time it had achieved its laudable percentages of women working or in job training (over 80%) in 1977, the generation that concerns us here was approaching retirement age, and obviously their parents had long since passed it.[11] Many women who grew up before 1945 never worked full time outside the home before the war or after. Therefore it should not be surprising that half of the women I interviewed did not either. It also is not surprising that of those who did work, only the youngest was involved in work requiring advanced training -- opportunities for such training and work were rarer before 1945, and often not considered as a real option for daughters of workers or the lower middle class.

Meanwhile, the men I interviewed pose some problems occupationally. To have even a mere two school teachers and one agricultural worker (who was also a land owner) is disproportionate compared to only 3 skilled workers. I

would suggest that future efforts to recruit informants, if done in a largely random fashion (ie. chance meetings, newspaper advertisements) would even this group out, and this will be a goal of my own further research. At any rate, despite the different occupations and education levels, I found the attitudes of these 6 men not to differ radically from each other regarding life under the SED or the Nazis.

In terms of family life, while Borneman noted radical changes in this generation after the war, such as high levels of divorce and living together out of wedlock, he also stressed that for large numbers of people traditional patterns continued. I found my group of informants extremely traditional. Those who had lost spouses early in their lives had had no interest in remarrying, and those who had not were still married. Attitudes toward their children also seemed traditional. All were happy to report that their offspring were married and usually with children of their own. Given the largely small-town or village background of the group, this is not at all surprising, but those who grew up and lived mostly in cities showed no aversion for typical family life either.

Method

While Borneman's and Niethammer's studies varied somewhat in numbers and occupations of subjects, their methods were basically the same. I attempted to follow Niethammer's method as closely as possible, but certain necessities I will note in this section prevented an exact replication. Both Borneman and Niethammer initially allowed the subjects to tell their life stories in their own words, interrupting only for clarification, and only in later meetings asked specific questions suggested by the lifestories. Niethammer and company spent only two to three weeks in each area, usually allowing them two

sessions with each subject. Borneman seems to have had greater time available, sometimes taking many months to get to know people and allowing his subjects to close the interviews when they pleased, often meeting more than twice. Generally, Borneman found interviewees by simply making acquaintances with people who lived in the neighborhood where he was staying (in East Berlin, not far from Alexanderplatz in the city center). Niethammer et al. generally found subjects through factory management's soliciting of interested employees.

My own method was a bit different, my subjects varied more occupationally than those of Niethammer, and my means of finding interested persons was closer to that of Borneman. In terms of method, though I was able to carry on a choppy conversation in German on general topics, it soon became apparent that to probe issues more deeply I would need a native speaker to ask the questions. In Halle, where opportunities to speak English with a native speaker are limited, but learning the language is now very much in fashion, I was able to meet numerous students, both at the university and outside it, who were interested in serving as interpreters. Due to these circumstances, it was impossible simply to let the subject tell his or her life-story straight through. Generally, the interviews began with general questions about early life, and they might go from there in various directions. If the subject was not inclined to go off on long tangents, we tried to organize the discussions so that we would cover childhood, school, and early working life usually up to the war (and sometimes its end) in the first interview, then the occupation, work, family life and retirement in the GDR in the second. Finally we concluded with their thoughts on 1989, or perhaps a question of what the Nazi period or Hitler himself meant to them in retrospect. While this leaves the taped interviews open

to numerous "re-listens" in the future to uncover bits of answers that may not be fully translated, I am confident the meaning was accurately conveyed by the students.

Time limits also forced me generally to conduct just two interviews, although one tightlipped man had clearly given all the information he planned to in one, and several others went on so many tangents that I required three sessions or even four to get detailed information from all periods of their lives. Obviously, the use of interpreters disrupted the kind of flow and rhythm (ie. changes in speed, delivery and tone) described in Ulrich Herbert's summary of interviews with Ruhr workers.[12] However, questions about the end of the war and the occupation did yield an excited "play-by-play" narration, similar to what Herbert described for the West, while questions about life in the 30's, 50's, or 60's tended to be answered with broad generalities such as "things slowly got better" or "life was OK for the most part." In the latter decades an occasional story of a friend or relative's escape or arrest or visit to the West punctuated a lengthy, uneventful, "ordinary" time.

As mentioned, the occupations of my subjects varied considerably more than Niethammer's (recall that Borneman did not break down his group by occupation). I had one university teacher, a group previous interviewers avoided, two school teachers, a group Niethammer also avoided, and two housewives, a group the latter had some contact with but not much, and a small farmer, a group that neither spoke to. We must assume that their daily lives were not as structured as most workers, but it seems that the periodization of their lifestories need not be dramatically different; with the exception of those in essential war industries, nearly every man in their generation went through a fairly stable working period in the 30s followed by military service, internment in

POW camps of varying length, and a gradual return to a stable working (and in most cases family) life. However, my own presence in the interviews with both the men and the women (but particularly with the men) tended to create diversions in the discussions. Often we wandered into international politics, or they made efforts to instruct a younger foreigner in the details of recent German history; in such cases, I tried to return the focus to what they experienced themselves, rather than what they had read or heard about afterwards.

Finally there is the issue of Eastern refugees. While it is not known what percentage of these 15 or so million people ended up in the GDR, particularly because so many people living in the GDR after the expulsions from the eastern lands moved even further West until 1961, they probably do not make up over a third of the elderly Eastern population, as they do in my group.[13] I can only answer that time limits prevented seeking out further informants, and further discussion of the past with many more members of this generation will be necessary to balance origins (and occupational/educational backgrounds). This will inevitably bring out a greater variety of opinions about the GDR (and Third Reich) today. However, the central themes noted above of victimization, depoliticization, and viewing life after the 30s in the main as a time of misfortune or merely getting by, were repeated so consistently in my research, that I am confident that greater numbers will not produce drastically different results.

I will discuss these attitudes in greater detail below, but for now, regarding my sample of this generation, I believe that despite the small numbers, (and the preponderance of refugees and expellees) I have avoided the dangers both of concentrating on a fairly small occupational group (Niethammer) and of concentrating on a border area (Borneman) that is subject to outside influence that other regions do not feel. Perhaps, in this manner, my

subjects are more representative of the variety of persons in most GDR cities.

Clearly this is only a beginning of interviewing the older generation in the East so that the "era" of Nazism and socialism in Germany may be viewed as a broader, connected period. It can only be hoped that future oral history projects in the former GDR will not be too limited occupationally, will concentrate on an area outside the unique atmosphere of Berlin (which though changed is still two cities) and most importantly not begin their research with the year 1945 (or 1949) and instead look for the GDR's roots in the Third Reich.

Part II: Daily Life and Periodization

The periodization suggested above came out of interviews of approximately 200 Ruhr area industrial workers conducted by historians from the Universities of Essen and Hagen in the early 1980s. The leader of this project was the aforementioned Lutz Niethammer. He suggested that by focusing on workers' experiences and social milieus across the period from 1930 to 1960, one could find in the 1930s roots of political orientations that emerged in the Adenauer era. Niethammer hoped to uncover both the roots of emerging democratic attitudes among working classes that had offered little opposition to National Socialism, and -- in the process -- to illuminate a broader spectrum of political opinions that surely existed among Ruhr workers. It was his thesis that however more politically interested this group became, the majority favored neither laissez-faire capitalism nor socialist centralism, but rather some mixed system.[14] Later, as we have seen, Niethammer's group undertook a similar study of workers in three major industrial centers in the GDR. Here the motive was also to uncover the opinions of working classes that had received even less attention than their western counterparts.

For our purposes, the crucial discovery of the study of Ruhr workers was how daily life was periodized. For the Ruhr workers remembered the period 1933-42 as stable, filled with work, better pay, and raising a family; the period 1942-53 was remembered as filled with disruptions, want and instability, and the period from 1953 until the 1980s as one in which order and prosperity were restored. Meanwhile in the East, the first two periods were basically remembered in the same manner, but as the post-1953 era never resembled the plenty of the 1930s, there was no discussion of a return to prosperity -- the GDR was remembered more for rescuing the workers from the dire

circumstances of the post-war period, and providing career advancement beyond many ordinary workers expectations, if not material rewards comparable to those in the West.

Niethammer's initial study was not unlike a great deal of the new oral history projects of the 1970s and 1980s, the aim of which was to uncover the meaning of historic events from a different perspective than the one available in the existing historical research -- a perspective "from below." Oftentimes such research among groups with little or no literary voice brought new and more complex meanings to events previously interpreted from the view of political or literary elites.[15] Niethammer hoped to emphasize that at the level of the worker, politics was not viewed as a bipolar affair of laissez-faire capitalism vs. socialist centralism. Rather, the support of workers formerly involved in the SPD, KPD, and Catholic Center was, in the 1950s, not given to the ruling CDU coalition or to any internationalist movement, but to the SPD, in the hopes of some sort of mixed sociopolitical system. The 1930s and 1940s were to be understood as a pre-history to the later social-democratization of the *Ruhrgebiet*.[16]

According to Herbert, this was due, ironically, to the repressive nature and booming economy of the Third Reich. The attempts by the Nazis to penetrate the workplace and win over workers were countered by workers' concentration on a steady workload, family, church activities, and maintaining ties with friends and colleagues. After the war, when the economy improved again in the 1950s, though much of the old milieu had been broken down by the war's dislocation, the work ethic remained as a means of avoiding politics generally. From that time on most workers sympathized with the SPD but apparently did not participate actively.[17]

From the depression of 1930 until the 1960s, times of unstable

employment and unsettled family life were recounted in great detail in these interviews while more stable times seemed to "fly by." The success of the Nazi regime in creating employment ended for this generation a prolonged youth (i.e. single life in the parents' house) and brought a flat, in many cases consummation of a previously postponed marriage, and as time passed, children. From 1933 till about 1942, time flew by -- and "play-by-play" of daily life wasn't necessary; all was routine. This period was characterized by long hours at work, children coming, and no time for politics. Meanwhile the community of friends and cohorts of youth, so important for support during the prior instability, are scarcely mentioned.

With the beginning of air raids or conscription a chronological narrative resumes: either of the constant relocation of the factory or war-time experiences. What might be described as the crisis period, 1942-53, sometimes ended earlier, with the currency reform of 1948 in the three western zones. Stability presumably returned with improvement in housing which allowed family life to resume. By improvement, I mean either finding a new flat, or having one's previous flat intact and all to oneself again, and the permanent return of a reliable food supply. As Herbert has commented, "re-entry into 'normal life'.....occurs whenever the separate spheres of private life can be rebuilt: a secure job, an intact flat and the sense that long term plans can be made again."[18] Even more important, this experience was a *reconstruction* -- of the secure life of the 1930s, which was still remembered by many in the early years of the Federal Republic as the best time for Germany.[19]

The crucial points here are two. First, as mentioned, the period of war, defeat and occupation is a time of prolonged insecurity in both work and home; 1945 is not a turning point. Second, the secure life of the 30s is *restored*. The

50s are not just parallel to, but pick up where the 30s left off.[20] This can also be seen in terms of industrial capacity, which despite heavy bombing, was actually higher in 1944 than before the war. Even at the war's end industrial plant was sufficiently intact that with the repair of infrastructure and sufficient labor supply another production boom was possible.[21] Meanwhile, the Nazi terror, individualization of labor negotiations, and the destruction of former working-class neighborhoods by bombing precluded a revival of the social milieus of politically active working classes, and their respective socialist, communist and Catholic organizations, that had existed in the *Kaiserreich* and Weimar Republic, and left instead a "materialist perspective."[22] Because of this, the currency reform was remembered as more meaningful than the founding of the FRG, remembered only as so much speech-making.[23] What all of this suggests is that the Ruhr workers, as myopic or self-serving as it seems, were able to separate the state's role as an economic provider from its politics, both in the Third Reich and after. Seeing politics as largely remote and irrelevant until it directly affected them in bombing and conscription, West German workers told their lifestories as if the war and the occupation were nothing more than a brief interruption of prosperous "good times."[24]

Likewise, the workers in the GDR also interpreted the state's repression separately from its role in the workaday existence. Before the *Wende*, some testimonies indicated that while direct participation in politics or criticizing the state outside the immediate family or a trusted group of friends[25] was always out of the question (and at any rate many of those questioned indicated that politics had little bearing on their lives), there was some sense that a stable and reasonably comfortable life had been provided by the state, or more exactly, the part of it they referred to as the "social system," which, whatever its

shortcomings, had at least in theory the workers' best interests in mind.[26]

Meanwhile, as mentioned, testimonies from East Berlin suggested that many individuals saw themselves as victims not simply in terms of being helpless to influence politics, but also because their lot fared badly when compared with the increasing plenty in the FRG.[27] Doubtless their proximity to West Berlin made this disparity the more obvious. This was particularly irritating after the SED proclaimed "actually existing socialism" to have arrived in the 1970s: utopian expectations were unfulfilled, except, perhaps, in the "paradise" to the West.[28] The different locations, then, variations to some degree in class and occupation, and the subjects' relationship with the SED, make it possible to account for this variation in economic outlook. But what I would argue is important here is that in each case the ability of the state to provide was evaluated separately from its police actions and ideology which brought severe penalties for open dissidence.[29] Even if the Third Reich was more draconian in its punishments,[30] for those groups not targeted as "racial" or political enemies of the Reich, the relationship with Nazi state as political leaders is basically the same as with the GDR (ie. keep opinions to yourself, avoid any unnecessary participation) even as there were varying responses concerning each state's ability to provide a stable working life. The data I have collected after the *Wende* suggests a different conclusion concerning how the GDR's role as provider is evaluated. It is not approved of today because it ameliorated the problems of the post-war period, nor is it strongly disapproved of because it could not keep pace with the West. What I have heard in many of my own interviews is neither strong approval or disapproval, but a fairly consistent opinion that things were better in the 1930s. Easterners that I have talked to do not compare the 50s and 60s with the 30s unless asked, but only the latter are

remembered as good times, as if the 30s set a standard that never was equaled in the GDR.

What about comparison to the West today? The notion that life was better *drüben* was seldom discussed anymore.[31] In 1993 the rising unemployment and crime were due to the influence of things western -- the cost of "utopia." The West Germans were criticized for their arrogance, and it is still a given that things are better there, but the growing awareness of the other side of what they had "missed out on" since the war -- the uncertainties, familial dislocations, and competitive individualism of capitalism -- makes the notion of a "western" living standard seem less idyllic than in times past. What remained a good time and place was in memory alone.

Why were the 30s not spoken of as good times before the change? I believe there are several reasons. First of all if we look again for just a moment at the point of view of Western workers, the idea of the 50s and 60s as a continuation of the prosperous 30s, and the former decades as a restoration of normality, was derived from looking back over forty years of prosperity with just the single interruption of the war and occupation. When workers in the GDR were interviewed a bit later in the same decade, their experiences since the Third Reich were, to say the least, different. With forty years of exposure to the state's propaganda about the Nazi period as fascist exploitation of labor, the lack of a lengthy prosperity to compare with the thirties, a favorable working life as compared to the dismal economies of their eastern neighbors, and the knowledge that however better it was in the West, they could never share in it, it seems more likely that they would associate the Third Reich with war and chaos, and the idea of a "first economic miracle" in the 30s would not even implicitly suggest itself.[32] What is remembered instead is how the GDR removed

the dire circumstances the Nazis left behind. This theme was also prevalent in Niethammer's work because, as mentioned, a number of his subjects did move up in position at work (and a bit in living standard) from their prewar circumstances.[33] Finally, what recovery there was in the East took longer due to Soviet reparations payments, which involved, along with cash payments, the taking of an unknown but certainly devastating amount of East German industrial plant to Russia -- and the Russian authorities simply took over of many large enterprises on the spot.[34] This and the lack of Marshall Plan aid likely made the "booming 30s" seem shorter and more distant by comparison.

Meanwhile, besides the time of Niethammer's study, there is also the focus: searching out the experience of socialism "from below." Niethammer's objectives in the GDR seem to have been slightly different than those in the *Ruhrgebiet*, though originally the idea for the work in the GDR came from the study of Ruhr workers. The GDR, alive and reasonably well when most of his group's research was conducted, seems to have suggested a similar strategy: to search for at least some continuity with the Nazi past as a source of stability.[35] Looking for explanations for the GDR's stability at the grass-roots level, he sought to locate the people that had some stake in the state besides merely the fear of coercion, and in however grumbling fashion allowed it to endure for forty years.[36] His subjects talked extensively about the fascist period, some displaying no shame for their participation in fascist organizations, but more than likely for he and his coresearchers these experiences seemed less connected to GDR stability than the aforementioned success of the GDR in overcoming the deprivation of the postwar period.

Though interested in continuity, and certainly finding some, their apparent interest in reconceptualizing GDR society, and proving it was not

merely a victim of a "total" state, was a very different task than the one in the West. Though Niethammer et al. were determined to avoid putting their subjects into preconceived typologies, the need to prove that the citizens of the GDR did have *some* agency and some stake in its preservation might have led him to overlook the potential of the Third Reich's memory to *prevent* affinity for its successor.[37] Simply put, given the lengthy stability the GDR had known by the 1980s, and the perceived need to refute the notion that it contained a captive population, searching for the roots of *instability* must have seemed like missing the forest for the trees.

But perhaps more important in explaining the lack of discussion about the Third Reich as a good time in both Borneman's and Niethammer's books are two factors touched on in the previous section: age variance and the political atmosphere.[38] First, as we have seen, there is the age variation in both studies. Perhaps the older generation would be better described as two. Dorothee Wierling, a colleague of Niethammer, subdivides the older generation into those born in the 1920s and those born earlier; the former are the more likely to remember the destruction of the Third Reich as the defining experience of their youth, and were determined afterwards to rebuild and reorder society so as to prevent a similar calamity.[39] Yet as we shall see, the people I interviewed who were born in the 1920s do not seem to remember the Nazi period in that way today.

Second, and perhaps most important, is the political climate in which these interviews took place. It will be recalled that roughly 40% of Niethammer's subjects were SED, and he emphasized that even those who were not spoke cautiously. For this reason alone it is unlikely that they would have spoken too positively of the 1930s. There is an occasional reference to the caution

exercised by Borneman's subjects as well, though the general lack of commentary on this problem is partly explained by the fact that Borneman leaves out the pre-1945 years of his informants' lifestories, and, as mentioned, does not tell us if any of these people were SED.

If we look again now at Niethammer's focus, the search for the GDR's success among ordinary Germans, it was based mainly on what the GDR was able to accomplish in the wake of the war's destruction, understandable given the perspective his group had at the time. Meanwhile, again, the decidedly more negative opinions that Borneman recorded in East Berlin, were the result of a comparison to nearby West Berlin. Neither group displayed any nostalgia for the 1930s. When I spoke to members of the same generation after the GDR's demise, the focus seemed to have shifted. It was never my intention to look for explanations "from below" for the GDR's foundering. Rather, given what I understood about the lingering differences that still divide Germans East and West, I expected some nostalgia for the GDR. What I found instead was indeed nostalgia for the 1930s. Guarded, true, but nevertheless apparent.

No one wanted to refer to Nazism as a correct philosophy. Rather, this nostalgia was based on the "first economic miracle" of the 1930s. When one considers the inability of the Kohl government to bring about a painless unification in comparison with the way the Nazi state had seemingly alleviated economic woes, and at the same time, as we shall see, the "alien" qualities attributed to the GDR, this nostalgia for the only prosperous era in their memory (an era, as we have seen, that today is not recalled for its inhumanity) becomes the more understandable.[40] Generally, things were described as having gotten better in the late 50s, but there was not a sense of that time as "good." Why? The obvious answer was that there was no (second) economic miracle in the

East, and that eventually the GDR was sealed off from the West. But there is more to it than that. If before 1989 many in the GDR felt some general satisfaction, particularly in comparison with their eastern neighbors, they also felt that whatever had happened in the past, there was no changing the present -- and that present certainly could have been worse.

The GDR was viewed favorably when only worse alternatives were possible. When the international situation changed, the focus shifted away from defending 'what might have been worse' to lamenting 'what might have been'; after the change, the implication was that had unification come sooner, an "unnatural" interruption could have been shortened. While the West German workers found the war and occupation a disruption *between* normal periods of working and family life, a post-GDR perspective makes the Easterners view the entire period as a kind of great disruption. What had been accepted as natural suddenly became alien once the possibility, then the reality of its end came.

Yet ironically the disruption has not ended! The older Easterners seem now to have worse feelings of being looked down on by Westerners, given that today their plight cannot be blamed on the SED. Meanwhile, all affinity for anything beyond their immediate family, friends, and neighborhood seems to have vanished. The "social system" that had protected them is missed, even if the deceased state, whose politics they did not connect with it anyway, is not. No longer needing (or feeling compelled) to look for positive aspects of a political system they could have done little to change in any significant way, they now can emphasize its artificiality. In so doing, some praised the 1930s, and even those who did not either had thought of leaving the GDR at one time or another or today wished it had been dismantled sooner. But no attachment to the new German state was expressed either.

It bears repeating that this should not be understood as a complete lack of satisfaction with life in the GDR. Three of the people I spoke with were relatively content with how their lives had gone before 1989, qualified by a number of small complaints. Though Borneman noted that the *Aufbau*, or post-war reconstruction in the East, was recalled in the late 1980s with nostalgia, even this period is recalled today as merely a time of great want, not as a hopeful beginning.[41] Not that there was much nostalgia for Hitler either, but the sense that the GDR had been a continuation of the disruption that began with the war or in some cases just the last phase of it, and the present feeling of inferiority, left the Third Reich -- that is, the *prewar* Third Reich -- as the only happy time in memory.

Good Times: Memories of the prewar Third Reich

The prewar Third Reich seemed for some to last into the wartime itself, until the effects of the war were directly felt. For others it ended when the person closest to them enlisted or was conscripted. Frau S. was born in East Prussia in 1910 and in 1945 was married and became a housewife in Halle after fleeing before the Red Army early in that year and meeting her future husband in Berlin. She waxed nostalgic about her lost life in the East, describing her life in a small town near Tilsit as if the Nazis had not existed. Her small town was a place where all were small shopkeepers, helpful and friendly, where no one worried about who had the most money, and where in winter the children could borrow horses and ride them through snowy fields. While she expressed pride in her volunteer work helping in a hospital after the war, no memory of the years after the war seemed as happy as the time before. For her, life did not seem to change abruptly until the flight in January, 1945. Until then, the war had not

affected her directly.

I will discuss further her and other informants' memories of later times below, but now I would like to introduce my other informants and discuss their respective memories of the prewar period.

Frau D., born in 1914 in a small town some 50 km east of Leipzig in Saxony, had a bit more sophisticated view of the "good times" of the 1930s. She explained how many were won over by Hitler's "fixing" the unemployment. Before Hitler, "students studied and found no work.....so when Hitler brought work, he was liked." But for her father, speaking about the Nazis was taboo. He had been SPD, and spent weeks in a camp for it. She was only 19 when Hitler came to power, and married three years later. Her first three years of marriage (1936-39) were spent in Halle, and like the prewar experiences of the Ruhr workers, were recalled as uneventful. From 1939, Frau D. and her husband lived briefly in Delitzsch, an industrial town that later attracted air attacks. She was a housewife and followed her husband to various positions in the *Reichsbahn*. Her best time for feeling at home and developing friendships was in the place of their lengthiest stay, a village south of Magdeburg, between 1942-54. Her life before the war and after 1954 was so full of moving about with her husband that the time in the village raising her son, despite her husband's intermittent distant assignments to supervise railway repair, friends going to the war and later returning, and the experience after 1945 of the most difficult material circumstances of her life, was actually recalled as rather stable. For Frau D., the sense of improvement in the 1930s was used to explain Hitler's popularity, but she would not go so far as to specify that it made her life better. The continuity of her husband's employment before, during and after the war was quite different than most working men's experiences, as was his

continuous movement (6 different assignments between 1936 and 1956, but all with the railway). Yet for all the movement, the pattern of their life together (and in the case of two of his briefer assignments, apart) was not as fractured by political events as were the lives of others I interviewed.

Herr W. V. and his brother G. V., born in 1917 and 1914, grew up in a small village a few kilometers east of Halle. Their father was the owner of a large garden that Herr W. V. eventually inherited. Herr G. V. was apprenticed in machine repair in the early thirties, but ended up as career soldier and a gymnast and gymnastics coach before the war, afterwards becoming a school teacher and administrator. The elder married in 1938, not expecting war. The younger took a chance and married in 1944; he and his wife still live on part of the land he inherited. Both remembered being pleased in the 1930s by the "impressive" and rapid reduction in unemployment, the new motorways, and the "discipline introduced into the younger generation." They liked what they called the early period. No similar approval was mentioned about any time in the GDR. Herr G. V. was unashamed of his service in the *Wehrmacht*, and made sure I knew it. No such defensive comments were offered for anything that he did in the GDR, or by anyone else regarding that time. Most seemed to reason that all of those activities were things they had no choice in. His brother would not speak in terms of a duty to fight in the war, but I did have the impression that he felt compelled to enlist (he would not say he was coerced) because all his friends and acquaintances were joining. Like practically everyone else I interviewed, both brothers, when directly asked if the 1930s were better than the period of relative stability after 1953, were not sure. What stands out is the almost total lack of positive reminiscences about any time after the 1930s.

Herr M. also spoke of the good times in the prewar Third Reich. Perhaps

the most colorful of the informants, he was born in 1916 in Moscow, but his family settled in Riga, his father later dying mysteriously in the Russian Civil War. His adoptive family moved about quite a bit, mostly between Bavaria and Halle. Hitler's rearmament allowed him to become a *Berufsoldat*, or career soldier also, and he took took great pride in his accomplishments. He trained in weapons manufacturing in Berlin, at a very select school, to which he apparently was admitted because of his knowledge of plumbing and water pumps (he had spent a year as a plumber in 1934). He felt fortunate to be in the school, and today still does not connect the war aims of Hitler with his opportunity. Though he had at least one sweetheart during his time in Berlin, he did not marry till after the war. After the war he worked as engineer till retiring in 1985.

Berlin in the 30s was fondly remembered by Herr M. for "everyone having money" and for nights of wild knife fights in a Mexican bar near the Alexanderplatz. He said they were just fighting for fun (?), as typical young men do -- "a wonderful time" said he. Herr M.'s story after two years in the capital was even more favorably remembered. He was assigned to an arms depot in Augsburg, Bavaria, and for the first time he was independent and financially successful. In connection to his departure from Berlin, he recalled with pleasure the sweetheart from Potsdam he had to leave behind, referring to her as the best beautician in the area and beautiful herself. It seemed important to him to stress the lack of any chance to keep the relationship going. Soon after he left, apparently, there were many other nice young men after her. Like practically everything in his life, fortune intervened. However, in Bavaria, he seemed to be having the time of his life -- he bought a motorcycle and spent weekends in the southern mountains drinking *Kristallweizen*, which he called the best beer in the

world.

After the war broke out he began training for a job as an arms quartermaster, a job he apparently got through the recommendation of someone at his former school. Life in the war was more of an adventure than anything else for Herr M., as he traveled throughout the Balkans and never had to go to the front, but it was not without its dangers. On two occasions, his superior, a general who apparently found him indispensable, got him out the brig, once for returning late from leave, which could have meant execution late in the war, and once for refusing to shoot a partisan. What most pervaded his narrative then and later were such "big wheels" who either saved or victimized him. He stated emphatically that his life-story was an example of the effects of political policy on an individual.

Frau H. also commented on the life in Berlin before the war, where she had moved from her birthplace for the first time in 1935. She was born in a village approximately 25 km north of Halle in 1913, where she met her future husband at a wedding in 1932. She moved with him in 1935. After the war broke out he served as a medic and she returned to the village in 1942 with her two-year-old daughter to escape the intensifying air raids. As for the prewar period in Berlin, everyone she knew said "hooray" in describing Hitler. Obviously for her, Berlin at this time meant excitement beyond anything she had previously known -- the only time she remembered as "very nice." Her husband's firm was closed in 1945, and they returned from the village to clean out his flat and left Berlin for good.

Herr W., the youngest of the men, born in a village 40 km to the southwest of Magdeburg in 1927, had few memories of the prewar Third Reich. However, he remembered his school days during the war as bringing the first opportunity

for freedom from parental control, as he was selected to attend a teacher school in Cottbus, a large Saxon city some 15 kilometers west of the Oder. In January 1945, at the age of 17, he was conscripted, and captured by the British near the river Ems in April. He was taken to England, where he worked in agriculture and mining. Fortunately he already spoke English well, and often served as an interpreter rather than a laborer. He was allowed to return to his hometown in the summer of 1948. Eventually, with some extra coursework in 1952-3, he was allowed to complete teacher training and then taught at several high schools until 1990. He married the childhood friend of a cousin in 1949, and he and his wife have three children and many grandchildren.

The time at the school in Cottbus seems to have been the "glory days" for Herr W., particularly before the time of conscription drew near. He still meets his surviving school comrades each year, and still remembers the routine of life there in extraordinary detail. At the same time, he remembers little Nazi indoctrination, and little interest in politics among his comrades. They seem to have been more interested in sports, music, and lessons. What he does remember of the official line came out of speeches by influential military visitors arguing for the justness of the war. His own teachers are remembered either telling the students in secret that the war was wrong or merely concentrating on teaching and not politics.

Similarly, Frau St., the youngest woman, remembered Nazi teachers as "old maids" in love with Hitler. She remembered how these old "spinsters," who had replaced conscripted younger male teachers, were hated and mocked by the school children. Frau St., the youngest and best educated of the group, was born in 1931 and speaks fluent English and Russian. She was born in Lodz, Poland, daughter of a white-collar employee in a textile factory. Her mother died

in 1941, and she attended school in Lodz until January, 1945, when she and her younger brother joined a trek towards the *Altreich*, to escape the approaching Red Army (her father had already been conscripted by the *Volkssturm*). After four or five harrowing days, they reached relatives in Helmstedt, later the GDR-FRG border. Her father, too old to do physical work, was released from an American POW camp, while she and her brother made their way to the house of an aunt in Schleswig-Holstein. Her father eventually found them there and got them away from his apparently cruel sister-in-law. He then set them up in a flat. Her father had learned Russian in the Czar's army, and heard from relatives that interpreters were needed in the Soviet Zone. He worked there and sent the children money until the currency reform in 1948, when his pay became so devalued that he could no longer support them. The children joined him in Halle and eventually Frau St. studied language at the university in Halle, beginning teaching there in 1954. She married the same year, and she had two daughters in the early 1960s. Her husband died unexpectedly in 1968, and she retired recently from the university.

The memory of the "Nazi spinsters" was, however, seemingly token. Otherwise she remembered the *Lodz Deutsche Gymnasium* as virtually un-Nazified. Like Herr W., there was no memory of a preponderance of ideology during her school days. She told me that the "spirit" of the humanistic education continued, as pensioned teachers often returned to replace the younger ones, and the "spinsters" were the exception. She spoke very proudly of her school, not just the institution but the building itself, showing me pictures. She remembered how it was the envy of the Poles and was vandalized by Jews in the tension before September 1, 1939.[42] For her the school seemed to be a symbol of a past that came to an end when the Russians encircled Lodz in

February 1945. Ironically, the girls had already been separated from the boys after the Poles were defeated by the Germans in 1939, and moved from the beloved building. She insisted that a plot was afoot by the Poles to wipe out the Germans in 1939, and described the relief the people close to her felt when the *Wehrmacht* arrived. After this brief moment of fear, life was largely normal for the German population till much later in the war.

The one person who had no positive experience to relate from the 1930s or early 40s was Herr S., who seemed to understand my purpose as collecting personal experiences of the war and after, and went right into the war, with little comment on anything before 1939. He was born in 1920 in Halle, and there found what would become his career for 28 years, a position in a food distribution firm (it was state-owned by 1947). Save two years in the post-war period, he lived his entire life in Halle. His life before the war was very much like his life after. Indeed, after the war many of the same co-workers were either still there or had returned from military service. Later, he took evening courses in commerce at the University of Leipzig, finishing a degree in 1960, and was the only person I interviewed that joined the SED, in 1967. This apparently allowed him to change positions that same year and to get a new apartment in 1976.

Frau W. was also reluctant to talk about the Thirties as a good time. She was born in 1913 in Neisse, upper Silesia. Though she was alert and talkative at the age of 80, her life-story up until the war was full of hard experiences -- her biological parents died young, the crisis of 1923 was still remembered clearly, with a 'killing' earned one day in selling produce amounting to nothing the next, and her husband's long term unemployment (she married at 18) while she raised two children and battled a severe illness. Like Frau D.'s husband, her's was also a railway worker, becoming a trainee and escaping unemployment in

1935. Throughout the 1930s, they were able to manage, she said, and just as they were feeling stable in location and income, the war came and he had to leave to work the railways in Poland. Though they were not separated for the entire war, I had a sense that it was all remembered as a frightening disruption of her life. The family eventually did reunite after the war, but as we shall see, there were more hard times in 1945 and after.

For Herr H., born in a small town in the Sudetenland just 7 km from the Saxon border in 1921, the prewar period had its dramatic moments, with war in the air in the spring of 1938, and the later satisfaction of the German army arriving in the area, but like Frau St., he did not experience life in the prewar Reich. For him, the fun of participating in nationalist groups was lost when the area was incorporated into the Reich; then all were required to participate in such organizations. Life was quiet and work in an engineering firm uneventful, he lived alone for a year before conscription at 19. His fondest memory from the period was before incorporation: in a youth organization of the Czech NSDAP (which was outlawed in favor of the official German party in 1938), he joined a band that played before the house of the local Czech police chief and stood at attention, trying to provoke him. When the Czechs left later, there was no longer any fun in showing one's Germaness. He later was quite candid in admitting that he had approved of the Nazis until he became aware of "the further consequences of the system." They seemed to have fulfilled his youthful wish to live in an all-German state, but Herr H. would become much more skeptical of Nazism and nationalism later in life, presumably, though I did not press the point, due to what he learned about Nazi genocide. He apprenticed as a locksmith before taking the engineering job, and was single when he was conscripted, which from his narrative presumably occurred early in 1940. What

followed after bootcamp was four-plus years in the war in a communications unit and four more in a Russian labor camp. He eventually rejoined his family, who had been forced out of the Sudetenland and ended up in Halle, where he eventually found work in a tool factory and married.

The War, the Occupation and the GDR: An Interruption of Normality

Obviously, the sense of the war (or more exactly, when the war directly effected an individual's life negatively) and what followed as a dramatic interruption of that which had been normal was felt most strongly (and earliest) by the five people who lost their homes, the regions in the East where they grew up. While it is not possible to know how much an "economic miracle" might have soothed this sense of loss, the existence in the 1980s of refugee groups in the FRG demanding the return of the lost German East seems to indicate that the older generation could never have gotten completely over the loss of the *Heimat* in any case. But even among those I interviewed who were natives of the Halle area, all but one remembered a sense that because of the war or its consequences things were never going to be the same, this sense deriving from different experiences at different times in each case.

The war had caused many separations, and Frau W. in particular still felt pained to recall her husband leaving for Poland. For others, such as Herr M., the war actually recalled some memorable adventures. Herr G. V. referred to the invasion of Poland as "a walk." Herr S. fondly recalled his time in France; little work and little trouble with the local population. Herr W. V. remembered his unit being stranded in April, 1945, after an air attack by the British destroyed their equipment, and how he and his comrades shared a bottle of wine and waited to be captured by the advancing English army. But the war brought much more

danger and pain than these anecdotes would indicate. I am not suggesting here that the war was not an interruption of the normal routine of these people's lives; quite the contrary. But the particular war-related experiences that brought with them feelings that normality might never return centered around the coming of the Russians and the laying of foundations for the GDR.

For several people this feeling came as late as after the war. Frau H., who had already abandoned Berlin several years earlier to escape the air-raids, remembered that no one in her village understood why the Americans were leaving in June, 1945, and could not believe they would now have to live "under Socialism." The war had altered her life much earlier, but the sense that things would never be the same only came with the Red Army. Herr W.V. said losing the war was not so bad when compared to the fear of what was to come next -- he was apprehensive -- unsure of what life "under the leadership of Russia" would be like. Similarly, when Herr W. returned to the area from England in 1948, the Russians took his papers and he knew his future plans to return to England (he had fallen in love there) had been destroyed -- he had to stay. Herr M. seemed to be aware that if he returned to his family in Halle in late 1945, there he would stay -- with the Russians. But he had promised his adoptive father he would.

For Frau St., like others from the East, the sense of an unprecedented, Russian interruption came before the war's end, with the approach of the Red Army. Frau St. showed a similar tendency to Herr M. to discuss her family difficulties as if powerful people had time and again set them up for misfortune. Ultimately, she blamed the end of the German community in Lodz, Poland on the Czarina and the Prussian king who let Germans migrate eastward to begin with. This also points up another issue for her that will be returned to later: her

insistence that ethnic mixing inevitably leads to conflict.

She talked at length about the criminality of Stalin, and remembered how her father, though working for the new German Ministry of Agriculture in Halle as an interpreter after the war, did all he could to keep her and her brother in Schleswig-Holstein. He disliked the Russians for their spying, lack of education, and their tendency to steal anything they could. Herr W.V. concurred: in his words "they came not as victors, but as beggars." Frau St. lost a boyfriend in those days due to his fear of visiting the Russian Zone. Even some time later, a relative of Herr W. was afraid to visit the GDR because he had been in a Soviet prison camp and had been tortured. The war had already disrupted their lives, but the coming of the Russians was more of a break with familiarity.

Herr H., after having spent 4 1/2 years laboring in the Ural mountains, remembered that before arriving in Halle in October, 1949, he had determined to stay with his parents and pass up a chance to live in Westphalia. However, he had ideas of what Socialism would be like, as he had learned that the civilian population around his labor camp did not eat as well as he did. When he came to Frankfurt an der Oder in 1949, he and his comrades were given a welcome gift of 50 marks. When some of his comrades laughed, a man there retorted, "you fascists, you should be glad about the fact that the new democratic system will keep you!" He added that a brother-in-law who had lost a leg at Stalingrad had been given no compensation from the government. The GDR seemed a mere continuation of life under the victors. In commenting on the problems of unified Germany today, Herr G.V. referred to "the development of the FRG, while the GDR *survived* the Soviets." While all the women I interviewed talked about the fear of Russian violence against women, five of the six did not encounter any Russians until June, 1945 when the Americans and British left the western

parts of Mecklenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia. While all had heard stories of rape, and often knew victims, none remembered seeing such an act, or ever feeling as if they themselves were in immediate danger.

As this last observation suggests, the recurring emphasis on the East as the place where the Russians were seldom corresponded with visible reality; on closer questioning, as early as the summer of 1945, the Russians seemed to have moved entirely to army barracks and out of the cities and towns. Excepting the 17 June 1953, their hand-picked German "collaborators" were in charge of whatever decisions affected the population. In every town, the local Communists or Socialists were remembered as being given power very quickly. Still, what is important here is how the GDR is *remembered* today; as Russian domination, and not as a "German" experience.

The most interesting answer to the question about what had changed with the founding of the GDR came from Frau W., who not only lost the *Heimat*, but her very identity -- literally! All records of her identity were lost; birth certificate, record of baptism, etc. She and her family were unable to prove who they were. She said that they had problems for a number of years, because they did not officially exist. At the same time, within a year and a half of the improvement her family experienced concerning food rationing, clothes, and furniture, around 1952 or 3, both of her sons left for the West. Though she recalled the pain and fear of being separated from her husband in the war (even though they actually spent less time apart than others I interviewed and those Borneman discussed), her family was irreparably separated during the GDR.

Though Frau S. found a husband and had a second (and this time legitimate) son after the war, her life after 1945 seemed to move from one

tragedy to the next. A sister had a drinking and abusive husband, and a young niece died of kidney failure despite coming to Halle for an operation. Her husband won a trip to Leningrad as reward for good work in the handicraft shop he managed, and she warned him not to go, saying the air pressure there was bad for his health. But he was determined to make the trip, and had a stroke while there. (Her dramatic recollection of prophesying disaster if he went on the trip reminded me of JFK's secretary, Mrs. Lincoln, who after the event recalled pleading with him against the trip to Dallas.) Worse still, the GDR government refused to pay for her son's trip to bring back his sick father.

She gave the impression of having been on an 'emotional roller coaster' before the Russians came to East Prussia, but that event, in which her first son contracted an illness that eventually killed him in 1948, was clearly the central rupture in her life. A good part of the next three years was spent in East Berlin, helping wounded and sick people under Russian guidance. However, though it was the Russians who forced her from her home, she was one person who did not equate the GDR's beginnings with a Russian takeover. Her years in Halle after the war were characterized by a feeling of not belonging to the new, city environment, which she found to have a greater disparity between rich and poor than in East Prussia. She remembered little of life in Halle except volunteer work in a day care center and her husband's job in the handicraft shop.

That Frau S. had no lingering enmity towards the Russians, as Herr M. and Frau St. did, is partly because she befriended a Russian officer in Berlin, who later helped her find a flat in Halle, and because of her generally fatalistic attitude. Her life seemed filled with her efforts to be nurturing and helpful with little reward. When asked if her life improved in the GDR (when she was living with her husband and when they had a child), she said she could not say

because she had to do so much for the family that it was always the same. Whatever she said or did, it mattered little because people and events seemed out of her control. Her husband seemed fated to marry her, as she found him wounded in the street, and later fated to die. Both as a volunteer and with her family, all her efforts to help others seemed to have gone unnoticed. It seemed that the Russian officer was the only person she remembered appreciating her, and in any case she accepted the loss of East Prussia, saying "it is part of Russia now" with no bitter intonation. Later, though stating that she felt isolated in Halle and that it could never be home, she claimed to be satisfied. What seemed to matter to her most, which reminded me of Frau W., was how well the people around her were and how they treated her, not the larger events of politics that might victimize one from time to time, but could not be avoided.

The 17 June and After: "Things Were Not So Bad"

The feelings of Russian control seemed confirmed by the suppression of the workers' uprising on 17 June, 1953. Protesting a rise in production quotas without comparable raises in pay, workers in Berlin, Leipzig, Halle and other large cities took to the streets, their demonstrations eventually crushed by Soviet tanks. Herr W. said the 17 June convinced him that a Soviet-style state was coming. He said it showed that the "GDR" was only a name, and that the economy was really for the Soviet Union. The brutal suppression made him question for the first time whether there was any real freedom -- if East Germans were only free so long as they did not complain. On closer questioning, he actually had no knowledge of the protests until the next day, and even then was not completely clear if the use of tanks he had heard about on Western radio was not mere propaganda. When asked what experience of his *own* convinced

him that a dictatorship was assured, he related an incident around the same time in which a Stasi man disguised as a school administrator questioned him about relatives in the West. A coworker who admitted that he did and wondered aloud why it should matter was removed.

Herr M. recounted personal experience of 17 June, emphasizing that in the West they said of the suppression of disgruntled workers in many GDR cities that "it is your problem" and because of the Russians nothing could be done. He told how a colleague lost a job due to striking, and that he would have too had he not been hospitalized.[43] Even when discussing the Honecker era he continued to insist that the key to the people's helplessness was the Red Army. While it is true that the East German revolution would have been impossible without Gorbachev's "doctrine" of nonintervention, Herr M. seemed to have no understanding that the direct cause of the SED state's collapse was not Russian nonintervention in the GDR, but the changed policies elsewhere in the bloc that triggered the mass exodus from the GDR. The "little Stalins" in East Berlin that refused to follow Gorbachev's lead on reform seemed inseparable in his mind from the Soviets.[44]

Leaving aside these two angry reactions to 1953, a pattern seems to be fairly typical, especially for Eastern refugees: a sense of interruption, but no major complaints with the GDR, little or no sadness with its passing, and happy memories from before the war. Regarding experience generally in the GDR, Herr H., who insisted that he "never really got used to the system," did describe life in Halle as a bit of an advancement from life in the Czech village he had come from. Though he lamented the loss of his home, he found the tram system and his flat in Halle made life easier. At the same time, however, he evaded attempts by the trade unions to get him to join, never gave a thought to

involvement in the SED, and even considered staying the West when he visited there in 1981. Herr W.V. said getting some things was more difficult, but with a bit of resourcefulness, you could manage.

Frau H. said life in the village and in her parent's mill was generally the same as before. As for Frau D., when her husband was again assigned to Halle in 1956, where they remain to this day, after so much moving about and some separations, another uneventful "normal" period began, though it lacked the close friendships that they had made in the village between 1942 and 1954. She did seem quietly pleased, however, to have a full-time job at the local university, saying that at her level one's political beliefs were not important if kept inside. I will have a good deal more to say on public conformity and repression in both periods below. The point to be made here is that whatever the danger of expressing opinions, life in the GDR was hardly a totalitarian nightmare; more often it was quite unproblematic. Herr S. said simply that "it was not bad, but they [his family] could have used a bit more." Clearly, he meant material comforts and pay, rather than civil liberties. Others remarked that though they knew the informants in their workplaces and neighborhoods, most co-workers and bosses were easy to get along with, even if the system was "rotten and bad," to use Frau St.'s words.

Unification

While some, such as Frau H., were pleased at the end of the GDR -- "we all took a deep breath," the emphasis on new problems dominated talk of unification. If the GDR was part of a lengthy interruption of previous normality, things had changed so much in the West that there was no returning to that normality in 1990.[45] Paradoxically, the interruption of the GDR was so lengthy

that it had become something of a normal time itself, one that had to be accepted as having a dangerous police apparatus, but as Frau T. said, had some good intentions. Neither the "normality" of the slow, stable life of the GDR could be resurrected without the state control that had produced it, nor could any pre-1945 "all-German normality" recur. Whatever promises Konrad Adenauer had made to restore untainted German traditions, the FRG had modernized beyond the normality they had remembered, and indeed the change had made the GDR seem better in some ways.

But we should not take this to mean that unification was not generally approved of. Herr W.V. said it was necessary, and on the whole better, though he gave few specifics, other than stating that success was in the German personality, as had been proven in the Federal Republic, so perhaps the loss of jobs would encourage easterners to start their own businesses. Earlier, he had remarked that the gap between rich and poor was widening, and crime was on the increase: "every week you can read and listen about something going on." While apparently not opposed, his brother remarked rather wittily that "this unification is official, but not socially acted out," and he could not understand why the West looked down on the East, as it was so much more difficult for those in the GDR. Herr H., not unlike many much younger people, was critical of how unification was handled, but not of the idea itself. He said the six months after November 1989 should have been used to form another government, presumably some all German "third way." Frau W. cared little about unification, as she had been in the hospital with a broken leg at the time. However much she disliked the repressiveness of the GDR, she did see the changes as being for the worse, emphasizing crime, unemployment and high rents -- yet she shed no tears at the GDR's passing. Even Herr S., the person most uncritical of the

GDR, wished unity had come sooner.

Frau T. had little to say on unification, other than expressing mild worries for a grandson who had taken the opportunity to travel all over the world, and the hope that East and West would slowly become accustomed to each other. As the only member of the group to have memories of the First World War and everything since, I was curious indeed to hear her thoughts on what unity meant after all that had come before. She had a feeling that the world is out of order today, no doubt a reference to all the instability in Russia and the Balkans. More importantly, her suggesting that "Germans like Führers" when asked of the possibility of a resurgence of Nazism in the future, seemed to cast a chill over unity. But she did not oppose it. Frau St. did not address it directly, but given her association of the entire GDR with Stalin, and her insistence that had the American troops in Berlin knocked down the wall in August of 1961, the GDR would have collapsed, it is safe to assume she was glad that it ended. She lamented the growing crime, but said it still was safer than the U.S. Herr M., an accomplished conspiracy theorist, suspected the new right-wing violence in Germany to be influenced by some undetermined foreign group. He could not see any other reason why any German would invite another ruin such as National Socialism on the country. He also believed that a screw-making machine he invented was rejected at an international convention because Western countries did not want the disgrace of appearing to have fallen behind the GDR in technology. He complained about the thousands of Marks he needed to fix his building that were unavailable because all the Federal Republic cared about was repairing churches.[46] He only hated the GDR slightly more than he seems to hate the state of Germany today, which is understandable, because he blamed "politics" for every misfortune that had

visited him and his family.

Finally, the most positive response to unification came from Herr W. Though he contended he could not put up with teaching in the new system, as the students were too "undisciplined," he described 1990 as "like awakening." He could not believe that suddenly he could buy anything, "Hell is over," he said. However, taken together, all these statements seem to indicate some sense of unity as the lesser of evils and perhaps the only real option, the three years since revealing that no utopia should be anticipated. On the upside, an end to repression of the individual thoughts and feelings was welcomed, despite some seemingly contradictory opinions that daily life under the Stasi was not in fact dangerous. As we shall see below, it often came down to "who you knew." Several people commented on their boss or the party functionary closest to them. How this person treated his/her colleagues or employees was critical to their well-being. A kind superior could make the difference between a difficult life and an easier one. There seemed to be a contradiction running through the interviews. On the one hand, individuals close to one could make a huge difference, and yet so many times events were spoken about as if fortune alone determined the outcome. Finally, what also seemed to be appreciated today was the "honesty" of capitalism. As Frau St. said, at least capitalism admits that it judges you on what you earn, even if that is not one's true value.

Conclusions on Periodization

What previous studies and my own both suggest is that the periodization of life in the Ruhr area was not entirely repeated in the GDR before the change or after. Before the change, in the work of Niethammer, the Third Reich receives some attention, positive and negative, but generally is remembered for the hard

times it left behind; partly due to the ages of those interviewed and partly because of the difference in their experience since -- mere stability in the GDR as opposed to boom in the FRG. After the change in the East, as my interviews show, some early part of the Nazi period has emerged as the lone "good" time in people's lives. Regarding the postwar period, before the *Wende* there was some affinity for the GDR's alleviation of want, and a sense of a return to stability. But after it everything since the war seems to run together as a lengthy period just tolerated.

The phenomenon of positive identification with the 30s and corresponding memory of the GDR as simply getting by could be the result of variations in occupations and experiences before or after the war. While the I have suggested that an affinity for the Third Reich before the change was unlikely, we cannot be sure that my own subjects would not have spoken positively about the 1930s if I had interviewed them earlier. Meanwhile, there are other possible explanations for the recurring themes of the GDR as an interruption and fondness for the 1930's.

First, it appears to be human nature to distance one's self from a failed system. I find this explanation of little help here. For one thing there is no sense of danger today for anyone who criticizes the united German state or sings praises of the former one. For another, there were advantages to life in the GDR that all seem to miss. Moreover, even if they were to distance themselves from the GDR out of some self-image problem (i.e. if the system was a failure, I don't want to be thought one also), the Third Reich does not have a reputation that would improve their image. Then there is the problem of their youth in the Third Reich. Obviously the times when we are young are likely to seem better in retrospect than those which follow. However, only one of the people I spoke to

was 40 as of 1945, and several were still relatively young -- quite a few fell in love and got married after the war. It's safe to assume that there is more to nostalgia for the 30s than just remembering the glory days of youth.

Along the same lines is the problem of old age. As most of this group are pensioners today, they could show no remorse for the end of the GDR because life for them in the new enlarged Federal Republic has all the benefits of consumer goods, free speech, and travel, while it lacks the risks of long-term unemployment and uncertainty. To counter this, however, it must be remembered that care for the elderly is more expensive, life today is faster and noisier and crime has risen, prices of necessities are liable to rise at any time, and many have remarked that formerly friendly neighbors have often become snobbish and distant in their pursuit of material gain. While the GDR is remembered as fairly tolerable, parts of its way of life that had been counted on can sadly be no longer.

All this suggests that despite a feeling that unity was seen as the best option, it would be wrong to suggest a profound dislike for the GDR. Some parts of GDR society are fondly remembered; a slower pace, a guarantee of steady work, a close family life with time for children and grandparents. A lot of the work-a-day life was actually rather unproblematic. Meanwhile, though the only events from around 1955 to the present that are narrated in detail are traumatic -- death or illnesses in the family, friends' or relatives' escape attempts or run-ins with the government or the Stasi -- they seemed rather isolated. On the other hand, few positive experiences were related either, and usually had to be "pried out" of a group convinced I would not be interested. The lack of both negative and positive information from this period most likely derives from a sense that the war and its immediate aftermath, 17 June 1953, the building of the wall, and

unification were *the* history of Eastern Germany and therefore I would be interested in these events only, rather than their own everyday experiences with the political system and its effect on their work and family. Often I was given history lectures rather than lifestories.

In the final analysis, only Herr M. was deeply hostile toward the GDR. For the rest, excepting travel restrictions and lack of some consumer goods, most had few serious or long term "gripes" looking back at the regime. While they had once resigned themselves to life in it for the foreseeable future, they now show no great emotion one way or the other over its demise; the latter is remembered as an event as beyond their control as the SED state had once been.

Part III: Victimization, Depoliticization and Identification

While West Germany, at least at the level of public media, seemed to have a severe "identity crisis" in the 1980s, the idea that the Eastern population ever had a separate identity was less discussed.[47] One reason was the official SED interpretation of fascism. Another, as noted above, was the restrictive policies regarding visits to the GDR by western researchers before Gorbachev and *Glasnost*. While West German problems of "coming to terms with the Nazi past" became a hot topic in the 1980s, and whatever else the controversy accomplished it ruled out a return to the "amnesia" (if deliberately repressing memories may be called amnesia) West Germans seemed to have had in the 1950s, amnesia in the East was assisted by the state's disavowal of responsibility. In the beginning for the SED the only identity problem lay in the future, not the past. Their interpretation of Nazism allowed them to take measures that, so they thought, would pave the way for a new socialist identity in the GDR.

From a Marxist perspective, Nazism was explained as a last-ditch solution to the final crisis of monopoly capital. In this paradigm Hitler was a mere puppet of capitalists who required a suppressed labor force to remain in power. With the dispossession of landed aristocrats and the nationalizing of industries beginning in 1945, the elements that gave Hitler his real power were eliminated, and that power turned over to the workers and peasants, his former victims. Thus, "Antifascism" became the founding principle (and principle legitimizer) of socialist rule.[48] The leaders of the SPD and KPD, who merged in the Soviet Zone in 1946 to form the SED, had genuine claims to be designated victims of and resisters to fascism. However, despite a more thorough denazification than in the West, the claim that the entire population in the Soviet

Zone were victims of a system many had approved of or at least had not opposed was dubious at best.[49] Later, the new state even had to grant an amnesty to lower-level Nazis in order fully to staff its bureacracy.[50] So the GDR set out to construct a new German state that had supposedly broken from a fallen nationalist past with a population that had no incentive to reevaluate that past or own up to its role in Hitler's coming to power.

As for a Western perspective on Eastern identity, as time passed and the Cold War intensified, the Eastern population was considered merely as captive, the SED state as a mere "Soviet Zone." Western Germans gave increasingly less thought to those in the East, excepting their own family, thinking of them as having little identity other than 'potential' West Germans. Even when the GDR was accepted as a legitimate state after 1969, it still was generally evaluated as so dominated by the state-party complex that, excepting dissenters, it had no other identity than a community of fear.[51]

Nations and Political Cultures

As we have seen, only one of the two oral histories I have been discussing, that of John Borneman, has pursued the problem of the GDR and German national identity. But Mary Fulbrook, a British historian of modern Germany, has written several articles on the matter, revising her argument somewhat after the *Wende*, the most recent version appearing in a book on German nationalism.[52] Though these two studies are methodologically different, both suggest (as does the research of John Ardagh) that if an East German identity did exist, a sense of belonging to a separate and distinct community, it had more to do with lived experience in the sociopolitical environment of the GDR than with any longer-term "national" history.

All this begs the question of just what a nation is. I will offer my own definition of the German nation below, but for now, the point to bear in mind is that both these studies argue that the older generation never felt any sense of a GDR "national" identity, or thought of themselves as GDR citizens. Today the people of this generation, born approximately between 1905 and 1930, still seem to feel little connection to the now defunct GDR, even if from a very different perspective. But Borneman's study missed an important continuity from the Nazi period that helped to explain their lack of affinity for the GDR -- and is still does today.

Fulbrook, in discussing East and West German "identities" and political cultures, suggests that a political culture be defined as the range of responses to life in a given state's social milieu, with its various pressures and constraints suggesting their own unique opportunities, aspirations, and possibilities. However much the state tries to and does influence the political culture in its territory, a range of responses are available within any political culture, from active opposition and dissent, to retreat and indifference, to demonstrative approval.[53] Her argument suggests that the continuity of both the Eastern and Western political cultures over several more generations might have made East and West Germans think of themselves as being as different from each other as they now think they are from the Austrians or the Swiss Germans.[54] The really important "national" history, then, is the kind that is "lived" in a given state -- national history here must be defined as a lengthy continuity of political institutions and individual responses to them, and therefore of political culture. Both may change and evolve, but some significant traditions, rules, and behavioral responses must be learned and passed down/relearned. As for East and West Germany, there simply was not enough time apart for two "nations" to

emerge.

That I must put quotation marks around "nation" should not come as any surprise, as the term has been open to piracy by myriad groups pointing to myriad combinations of shared traits as grounds for self-rule.[55] The feeling of belonging to a nation can rest on common experiences, languages, ethnicities, political or religious ideals, whatever one can share with a vast imagined community in one territory or in diaspora.[56] For our purposes, the German nation is often referred to as a linguistic, cultural community, and at other times as Bismarck's *Reich* and the successors to it. There can be no doubt that when Helmut Kohl refers to the German people or nation, he is not including the Swiss or the Austrians. If we can accept that the political culture of the *Kaiserreich*, with its mass class, religious and nationalist movements was the German nation of its day, I would argue that its successors, on the eve of their foundings in 1949, were still the German nation. By this time, a political culture (though wracked with class divisions) had existed under succeeding *single* governments for a sufficient time for most to view themselves as a broad community, despite the continuing regional and religious identities they also feel connected to.

Rethinking East German Identity

That said, we must look into the Eastern political culture. Fulbrook suggests a political profile that seems more or less accurate for the great majority of the population, what has been called the "niche society."[57] This retreatism by most of the population was a product of daily interaction with the GDR state, rather than some putative hereditary German trait. The niche society is characterized by the ordinary citizen living a "two-track life" consisting of public conformity and private authenticity. This phenomenon has been linked to

modern dictatorships and their attempts to make "total claims" on the lives of their subjects.

In the GDR (and the Third Reich before it), the state provided organizations that would structure all phases of life collectively. These included work, sports, and cultural organizations, state-controlled trade unions, and youth organizations. In all of them (in which some participation was usually required if one wished to advance beyond the most menial work) it was crucial to "mouth the appropriate sentiments and slogans at the appropriate times," whether one did or did not believe them.[58] The weekends in the GDR, however, were generally left for what were perceived to be more authentic feelings and the "flight to the land." The "land" was in reality a mere garden plot, usually granted to town and city dwellers outside city limits, where a private shed usually allowed one to create one's own uniquely designed and decorated space -- one small niche for authenticity.[59] What is important to note here, however, is that the practice of living a two-track life was a dominant political profile in the Third Reich as well (especially in wartime when the typical citizen had a good deal more to criticize), fading as time passed in the FRG, while in the GDR it was tacitly encouraged as a kind of safety valve.[60] For the older generation the two-track life in the East was simply business as usual, and for the younger, particularly after division took on an increasingly permanent character, it became the most practiced means of seeking accommodation with the new state.

While the older generation had learned the "two tracks" under Hitler and simply perpetuated the behavior out of justifiable skepticism for politics afterwards (as their western counterparts did for a time) the younger generations obviously "found their niches" under the SED. Meanwhile small

numbers of both generations in the West became more politically active as time passed.[61] When one considers this and also that unofficial protest movements emerged in the East only when the political system relaxed its demands for ideological orthodoxy, Fulbrook's argument -- that retreat and participation as political modes of behavior are rooted more in experiences under political regimes than in some unchanging "national character" -- seems on the mark.[62] If we return to the older Easterners, their behavior fit into the GDR political culture (and doubtless influenced it), but they still spoke in terms of "we Germans" and seemingly could not, for all their public conformity, relearn Germany as half of its former self. Their formative years, to use Borneman's phrase, recalled too much experience in the unified 'small-German' Reich, which makes it all the more curious that Borneman himself chose not to elaborate on their early years in his own study.[63]

When members of this generation told him their life stories, the dominant theme -- their own feelings of victimization -- was based, or so Borneman believed, on their inability to influence politics and the failure of the GDR to provide a living standard comparable to the FRG.[64] What we have seen and what Borneman overlooked was that these feelings were also derived from what they learned under Hitler: that politics seemed out of their hands, criticizing the state was dangerous, and in peacetime politics usually had little to do with their daily life anyway. From the failure of Weimar to the building of the wall, the people I interviewed remembered politics as something on the order of a force of nature that might do with them what it pleased, but most often was not connected to them in any way. It did not seem to occur to anyone that lack of interest or supporting a demagogue claiming to be "above" politics was exactly how politics had become such a monster in the first place!

Borneman and Nation-building

While Borneman's study of German identity in the two halves of Berlin from 1986-9 is generation-specific, which gives us a handle on evaluating the older East Germans and whether or not they came to think in terms of having a "GDR nationality," it ignores both the longer-term and immediate past. His suggestion that states attempt to construct nations out of their subjects is no doubt correct. Furthermore, by suggesting that their success or failure can be evaluated by comparing the state's "national" history with the autobiographies of its citizens, he creates an intriguing paradigm for evaluating a state's efforts, in interaction with its subjects, to create a sense of identification with its goals.[65] Borneman defines the state's national history not as an official version of the past, but an official version of the future -- a model lifecourse for the subject that can be ascertained by studying the state's legal commentary on marriage and other forms of cohabitation, the legal definition of what constitutes a family, the rights of children vis a vis parents, pension levels and eligibility, etc. Comparison of the model lifecourse with individual lifestories should divulge whether the states claim to represent its subjects *as a nation* is legitimated. Ideally, the individual will periodize his/her life comparably with the state's model, and more generally will view the goals of his/her work and family life as isomorphic with those of the state.

An example could be derived from the state's position on parental duties versus how they are actually carried out. If the state's laws and policies recommend an egalitarian sharing of child care duties, individuals can be said to legitimate a part of state strategies for nation-building (at the level of reproducing the national group) if child care chores are equally distributed. In this manner Borneman's paradigm of nationalism shows the political contest

that is present even in the most fundamental practices of daily life, and thereby demonstrates that the belief many older Germans have that politics was completely separate from private life was wrong. Space does not permit a full discussion of the GDR's family law and the model lifecourse contained therein, but it can be noted that its fundamental principle was a leveling of class and gender inequalities, to be accomplished through mandating equal rights in work and marriage for both sexes, eliminating private ownership of all but the smallest enterprises, offering equal state assistance to single mothers, and a centering of family law around the rights of the child, thus restricting parental control and integrating children from a very young age into numerous socialist activities.[66] Borneman also constructs the model life-course of the FRG in equal detail -- as might be expected, it centered on a traditional patriarchal family model and a maintenance of private ownership.[67]

It does indeed seem, then, that nation-building includes a battle over "family values," reminding of current debates in the U.S. about what the government should do to encourage certain lifestyles while discouraging or even penalizing others. Yet Borneman also narrows the concept of nation-building in other ways that I find highly problematic. First, if we think again about political cultures as Fulbrook has defined them, as the range of responses available to an individual living under a given state, it may be suggested that a national identity can emerge based on a continuity of state institutions and a legacy of patterns of individual responses over time. In Borneman's paradigm, each generation's "reading" of the state's model lifecourse either constitutes the nation that the state desires -- through a general appropriation of the state's model in everyday action, or some other nation based on a different lifestyle and belief system, or if the responses are too diverse, no nation at all. The

problem lies in his continuing emphasis on victimization, what he considers the dominant themes of the life histories he recorded. Whether these feelings of victimization, deriving in most cases from individual perceptions that they had no say in politics and that life was better in the West, constitute a GDR identity, is not clear, nor is it clear what role any experience prior to the GDR plays in this victim mentality.[68]

History, both immediate and long-term, seems completely to disappear in this paradigm. A nation becomes a generational plebiscite that can be rejected at any time, regardless of state or cultural continuities. Little or no influence in this process seems to be ascribed to cultural traditions or interpretations of longer-term history by scholars or the media. Even older citizens with lengthier memories than the majority seem to have little influence.

The Nation(s) and History

While Fulbrook does think that official interpretations of history are less critical for the development of political cultures, she and other historians seem to point to the idea that a nation, whether defined as an ethnic and/or linguistic group, or a group with shared cultural or political institutions and values, does not appear or vanish over a generation.[69] Nationalism may ebb or rise with historical events, but individuals feel a sense of belonging to a nation not merely because a contemporary milieu makes them feel at home, but because a nation appears to be something that *transcends* the here and now. It seems that nation-building could not even begin without a state identifying itself with longer trends that have stayed with the community it claims to represent, even though the rules it sets for appropriate behavior (consider how some behavior is referred to as un-American in the U.S., for example) must play a role in constituting a national identity.

The problem for the two Germanies was to strike some balance between accepting each other's right to exist while somehow connecting themselves to whatever German nation transcends time. Fulbrook attempted analytically to separate the efforts of both Germanies to position themselves as representing *the* German nation, while at the same time creating a sense that their half (or perhaps a smaller fraction) was also a nation to which its subjects belonged. This conceptualizing of "Germaness" was mainly pursued by the FRG after it began gradually to recognize the GDR's right to exist in the late 1960's, eventually putting forward the idea that two states do exist for one German nation, and thereafter giving only lip service to unification.[70] The East German government took a more problematic line; that two nations, divided by *class*, existed on either side of the Elbe.Therefore, in the East the tension between the two levels of national identity seemed unresolvable at the official level, while for the younger generations (much like their counterparts in the West), there was little discussion -- two nations seemed indeed to exist based on two different politico-economic systems, and they were citizens of the GDR.[71]

Then there is the problem of the more immediate and formative past. The importance for older East Germans of their experience of the Third Reich seems greatly underestimated by Borneman. While he describes the period 1933-45 as formative for them, he seems simultaneously to dismiss it in terms of national identity, writing that.....

> belonging with reference to the Nazis, as supporter or nominal member or even as someone in the resistance, is not a particularly ideal self around which most people could construct an identity.[72]

While this statement is accurate, the years of Nazi rule were still crucial -- not because people would necessarily identify with all the goals of the Nazis or

resist them actively, but because of what they learned in reaching *accommodation* with the Nazi state. A lack of identification with fascism did allow some of the subjects of Borneman's and Lutz Niethammer's interviews to identify with the GDR, but the fact that many more did not had more to do with National Socialism than Borneman realized.[73] His conclusion, that particularly among men, a feeling of victimization dominated the narratives of this generation in the East, seems basically correct. However, his insistence that their experiences under National Socialism need not be discussed again caused him to miss a fundamental reason why both men and women felt no affinity for the GDR.[74]

Victimization: the Third Reich and the GDR

Meanwhile, as suggested above, East German perspectives from the mid to late 1980s have since changed. At that time a sense of victimization was felt in comparing their lot with the richer West, and (what Borneman missed) from their *learned* sense of helplessness in relation to the system (and the previous system). Today, I would argue, while the sense of helplessness remains, victimization now derives not so much from comparison to the West, which is now associated with instability a la Weimar, as from a sense that the Bonn government has let them down, and from lamenting the "lost" 1930s, a memorable good time that was interrupted by the war and the GDR. Unification, with its economic problems and social restructuring and the remaining psychological distance between East and West brings no sense of closure. Rather, they feel victims of the recent past *and* the present. Meanwhile, whatever nostalgia there may have been for the construction of socialism in 1949 has been replaced today by perhaps newly intensified memories of a

Russian takeover and extreme want.

Before moving on, it is important to remember that feelings of victimization are not necessarily expressed with extreme bitterness. I would define a victim mentality as a consistent description of oneself as at the mercy of outside forces and events and surrendering whatever agency one has out of a sense that it is ultimately ineffectual. Yet, even if all is left to chance, fortune, as Machiavelli wrote, is unpredictable. Many of those I interviewed were grateful for its having smiled on them when it did, just as others were intensely bitter if it had not. But most were not bitter; the dominant mood was more of a quiet fatalism with a lack of pride in anything they had done since the war. An older Sudeten German I know who came to America as a teenager in the late 1940s talked about his life to me in terms that were positive, but also those of a victim. He praised the U.S. for having *given* him everything, and referred to his wife as having "taken pity" on him when she agreed to his proposal. When describing the war-time, it was evident that its horrors had caused him to lose all faith in humanity.

We have seen that it was more implicit than expressly stated in the Halle lifestories that the GDR never delivered the good times the Nazi state had, as no one wanted to associate themselves with fascism.[75] I have also suggested that the feelings of victimization are more about resignation than intense bitterness. Meanwhile, unification makes these perceptions possible and also enhances them. For those I interviewed, the post-*Wende* sense of the GDR as an interruption and their memories of inability to alter the situation for forty years seem ultimately to be the reasons the West Germans arrogantly look down on them. "They cannot understand what it was like to live here with the Russians," said Herr W. V.

The lesson learned in the Third Reich about politics, and the way the 1930s are remembered today are seemingly contradictory -- the Hitler period seemed to have brought the worst *and* best times -- and yet both today reinforce the feeling of being a victim, in the wartime and after, and make it difficult for the older generation to feel nostalgia for or mourn the GDR today. As we have seen, it was clear to researchers before 1989 that the negative consequences of authoritarian rule had "hung-over" in Germany after 1945. The economic boom of the prewar Third Reich probably did not hurt the image of the GDR while the latter still functioned. It seemed distant, brief, and certainly ideologically incorrect to speak about. But what we are concerned with here is not so much how the Third Reich was remembered in the GDR, but how both are remembered *today*. The prewar Third Reich, as we have seen, is not remembered for its criminality, but is thought of today as a success story. With the coming of the war and sometimes before it, these individuals associated involvement in politics or merely giving an opinion with danger, even though we shall see that such behavior was with closer questioning not always remembered as dangerous. But regardless of how early this realization came about, the 1930s were almost without exception remembered fondly.

If we move forward for a moment to 1989-90, the shock at the disclosure of how corrupt, economically unsound, and environmentally irresponsible the SED state had been made even committed socialists feel that the decades of sacrifices had all been for nothing. Even though opinion is divided on the success of the GDR economy,[76] what is known about the GDR today and the sense of it as alien and interruptive, make its beginnings hardly a success story worth citing. Indeed, however inept the Kohl government's handling of unification, the East Germans cannot help but feel that the fallen SED

government is as much to blame for their woes as the *Bundesrepublik*. Today, along with positive *and* negative memories of the Third Reich, the circumstances of the GDR's demise prevent a positive evaluation of the GDR. Beyond this, and not surprisingly, the GDR is remembered as only part of what its predecessor was, and in some ways a non-German entity entirely.

More than simply good economic times, the prewar Third Reich is remembered in other ways that makes it impossible for those I interviewed of the older generation to have any affinity for the GDR today. Before moving on to the testimonies of those I interviewed, we need to look at several of these means of conceptualizing experience that improve the image of one state and hurt the other. Together, they make the Third Reich seem better today, and also more natural, to the older Easterners I interviewed.The GDR brought with it the loss for many of their homeland in East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia, the Sudetenland and in eastern states, separation from relatives and friends, travel restrictions, and sometimes shame to the men who in their own minds had fought for their country, not for fascism. While it is by no means certain that all those who lost their home in the eastern formerly German lands lament it still, it is indicative that travel for retired West Germans to the areas of Poland and Russia that once were East Prussia became a booming industry after the *Wende*. Those Easterners I spoke with also clearly retained a strong attachment, often showing me books and photo albums of where they grew up, and travel for retired West Germans to the areas of Poland and Russia that once were East Prussia became a booming industry after the *Wende*. Frau T., born in 1905 in a town not far from the east bank of the Oder, a town from which she had to flee in 1945, told me how one of her sons went back to visit the family house, but she could not bear to see it again. That all of this was brought on,

directly or indirectly, by Hitler's war on the Soviet Union did not matter; today these losses are associated with the Red Army and the GDR.

There is also Hitler himself. Despite his status as the most evil ruler in modern times, there is a sense among the older generation that however mad he was, he was an ordinary man and an ordinary German, whereas Ulbricht and others in the SED were Russian-trained. Likewise the GDR itself is now viewed as an alien system, a "Russian" system. The Third Reich, despite its ultimate objectives that they all rejected, was not described as specifically German, but clearly was not viewed as foreign either. Though the two political systems are viewed as more or less equal in terms of police actions and ideology, only the Third Reich could provide good memories, and specifically German ones -- memories of a nation before defeat and division. All of this, once again, should not be understood as nostalgia for Nazism itself; even those who had at one time supported the Third Reich and were bitter after the loss of the war were not about to deny Germany's responsibility for the war or Nazi criminality, though there were occasional comparisons to Stalinist Russia that smacked of relativism.[77] That said, I will now relate some examples of the education in retreatist behavior the Third Reich offered, especially as the war began to turn against Germany, and how it continued as the dominant mode of behavior in the GDR.

"Silence is Golden, Speaking is Silver"

Frau T. remembered that being careful of what one said in public was "a tradition from the Nazi time." Several others put what they learned under the Nazis in the more proverbial form, "silence is golden, speaking is silver." When any of the people I interviewed mentioned times that they or someone close to

them had been openly critical, it was always to stress the danger, not the heroism showed in such an act. When I asked Frau D. if she had worried upon learning a new socialist state was being created, she replied that it was the same as in the Nazi time -- one just kept the mouth closed; when one spoke one's personal opinion it was dangerous. She had recounted earlier how her father had spent time in a camp for his work with the SPD. This meant just one thing: quit talking about the Nazis.[78] The clearest example of the combination of victimization and depoliticization came towards the end of my first interview with Frau D. The Nazi experience convinced her that withdrawing her voice from politics in the future was the only way to carry on untainted. It never occurred to her or anyone I talked to that perceiving one's self as helpless to affect politics and therefore avoiding all participation is something of a self-fulfilling prophecy: feeling helpless only makes one become helpless. However, without numbers such as those seen in Eastern Europe in 1989, active resistance was generally futile.

What of involvement *in* the system? Fulbrook has suggested that many joined the SED not merely for career opportunities, but to be able to communicate opinions, appropriately and cautiously worded, to those higher up.[79] Frau D. had no thought of such things: because the Nazi time was so bad, she and her family said no to any party, no to politics in general. Her husband denied himself a comparable position to the one he had had in the war by refusing to join the SED. Herr W. concurred: "if you had seen what the Nazis did, you would never want to join a political party." The extremity of this statement seems quite remarkable on the surface. However, it must be kept in mind that in the GDR participation for the most part meant obedience and indoctrination in a *single* party, not seeking out a group with similar interests. As for the four SED-

controlled bloc parties (organized in the Soviet Zone to give at least some voice to former Catholic Center party members and conservative and nationalist Protestants, right-wing nationalists, liberals, and peasants, respectively) they seldom came up without my asking, and seemed in their minds to be mere extensions of the SED. The question, then, is whether this statement and others like it apply to participation today. The 1990 election seems ample evidence of at least a widespread interest in voting, if not direct involvement in political parties.[80] However no one I spoke to had much to say on their voting habits. At times I got the impression that this late in their lives, voting was not considered to be worth the effort.

Herr W.'s experiences as a teenager in the war have already been discussed. But even before he went to the teacher's school in 1941, he remembered being taught to conceal his political opinions. He recalled a local Jewish chimney sweep who had disappeared suddenly in the late 1930s, and how his father seemed to know that something terrible had happened to him but did not tell him, because he "feared a young boy's mouth." Keeping quiet was taught at home, lest the parents would meet trouble for what the child had said. Herr H. characterized the war time in Germany as more dangerous than before regarding speaking in public because the people were more regimented by numerous state declarations. "He had learned....in the Hitler time to keep silent and in this way to help his family." Frau W. agreed, and suggested that it was only the war (!) that made most people critical enough of the state to have to fear repression: "both (Third Reich and GDR) made people afraid of speaking freely....(one had to be) careful who was next to you.....that was carried over." She remembered the start of the war as a time when "all the happiness was gone," basically meaning one's loved ones had to go to it. But even then not

everyone listened to reason, said she, but made accommodation with the situation, *and did so again with the new system.* What is clearly apparent here is war's legacy for the GDR: acceptance of the situation at hand because one seemed to have no other option. It also shows that these people by and large did not remember the Nazi state as a target for criticism before the war.

Frau H. surprised me with a comparison between the two periods I had not expected. When asked about the mood in Berlin when the air raids became steady, she said people complained about how difficult it was for them, and some quarreled about "Hitler's theory of war," but none denounced the Nazis. What was surprising was what came next, "but they could have spoken against the government without being sent to prison.....it was more dangerous to speak out in the time of socialism." I have my doubts about the veracity of this claim, but I find it important not so much for truth value, but for highlighting again that socialism was remembered as different, as something outside popular sentiments, imposed from above. I heard no other comment on the GDR being more politically repressive, but such a comment as Frau H.'s seems to derive, as did the previous remark by Frau W, from a sense that there was less memory of things to criticize in the Third Reich, whatever the penalty. This also points us again toward the problems suggested earlier of just how similar and how dangerous the respective police states were in daily experience. We will return to both these of problems below, but it is important to keep in mind here that whatever the similarities of the two systems, these people clearly had ideas about how to behave in public that were carried across 1945.

Hitler, Stalin, and the Transition to the GDR

Frau H., not surprisingly, was one of the people who remarked that Hitler was an ordinary man, remembering pictures of him with little children designed

to emphasize his kindness. She mentioned no individual personalities from the GDR; it was simply "socialism" -- associated with the Russians. Recall that when the Red Army replaced the Americans in her town at war's end, she remembered the disbelief that they would now have to live "under socialism." Whatever Hitler was, he seemed to be an ordinary German, although several people talked about him as mad, recalling hearing stories of his chewing on carpets in tense situations.[81] Frau St. noted a seemingly obvious point that showed the difference in perception. The Third Reich had its symbol in Hitler, but the GDR had no symbol other than Stalin in the early years. After declaring that she never believed the GDR was on any road to a socialist utopia, she suggested that the difference in the Third Reich was that people loved Hitler -- she thought the majority did. Herr G.V. remembered this feeling when he told me that if there was an event or meeting in Halle, nearly every house put out its Nazi flag. Meanwhile Stalin or Russia came up in some other interviews in relation to the GDR. Several people, as we have seen, referred to their fear of returning home and living "under Russia" after the surrender, as if everyone knew that meant the end of normality. When asked what he missed about the GDR, Herr W.V., G.V.'s younger brother, summarized the early GDR in this way: "as long as Stalin lived, (there was) no hope, but then things settled a bit." Also along this same line it is worth recalling once more Herr W.'s comment regarding 17 June 1953: that it showed that 'GDR' was just a name, and that the economy was for the Soviet Union.

Then there is the memory of the war's end, which often made it difficult for the older generation to feel enthusiasm for the GDR in several ways. Herr W. remembered how happy he was to be home from England after he met his future wife and accepted that he had to stay in Saxony-Anhalt. (He seemed to

have gotten over his English sweetheart rather quickly.) He told me he was thrilled to know that he would never have to hold a rifle again. Absorbed in house painting and his new love, he hardly noticed the founding of the new state. Like so many of the others, his experience in the war had convinced him to avoid politics altogether. Herr G.V. described the defeat as a "total inner collapse;" it was difficult for him to think of any possible future. It will be remembered that he defended his military service with pride on several occasions. Given Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy concerning "capitalist" wars, and the assault by the *Wehrmacht* on the Soviet Union, returning soldiers were often stigmatized. Recall Herr H.'s experience in Frankfurt an der Oder. Herr H. also spoke of having done his duty in the war. He remembered being forced back to his job after the 17 June uprising by Russians with machine guns as an example of how he never got used to the system.

Being cut off from relatives and friends in the West initially, relatives and friends leaving later, the loss of their geographical roots, and the loss of freedom of movement generally were problems for this generation in getting used to the new system. Herr M., who, it must remembered, told his life story as if politicians were to blame for every misfortune he had ever experienced, summed up the problems wittily (?!): "the only difference between Hitler and the SED was that Hitler didn't build a wall!" The GDR was a constant reminder of these losses. Herr M. lost the chance ever to see his mother again (she died in 1963) and to this day is searching for a lost half-sister in the U.S., so he claims, due to the wall. Herr W. was nostalgic about his lone trip to the West in 1950, when he and his wife visited her cousin. He did not have any relatives of his own in the West -- had he, this might have blocked his teaching career. He took great pride in his trips *since* unification.

One of the most profound senses of loss I heard concerning the founding of the GDR came from Frau W. It will be recalled that her family lost all their identification. She remembered the founding of the GDR in 1949 as confirmation of her family's official "nonexistence." Then in 1954, just after the family could finally afford new clothes and furniture for their tiny flat, both of her two sons left without warning for the West. Frau St.'s family lost all the family's money because all the banks in Lodz shut down in the panic as the Red Army began to encircle the city. Her father had left for the *Volkssturm* and she and her younger brother had no idea what valuables should be taken with them. Directly after criticizing the GDR she told me that Stalin was the greatest land robber of all. The GDR recalled Stalin, the symbol of everything her father did not trust, and the loss of her home. Her father had to go back to the Russian zone, but she said the reason he kept her and her younger brother in a small town in Schleswig-Holstein as long as he could, was that he did not trust the Russians. Herr H. lost "his mountains" in the Sudetenland. Though he said it was not as difficult for him as it had been for his parents, he said that he never took the typical GDR vacation at the Baltic Sea, because he preferred the mountains. He did not visit them again until 1967.

Frau T. lost everything after her flight from the East to Thuringia. She remembered that this loss, and her husband's death in the war, caused her to concentrate on practical things, scraping together whatever living she could to feed herself and her two sons, aged 12 and 10 in 1945. Apparently to think of politics would remind her too much of what had been lost, and certainly would not help them get by. When politics did affect her again, when the SED made it difficult for her sons to study what they chose, it was only then that she was aware that the GDR was a dictatorship. Once again it was the GDR's tendency

to take away -- property, possibilities -- that got the most attention. She referred to her sons as having *paid* for their father's having been a large landowner.

On the whole, then, this group began life in the GDR with emotionally jarring losses, a fear of political repression and a corresponding disinclination to be involved in any political activity, and a sense that something un-German had entered their lives. For its part, in most cases the state could do little to remedy this sense of loss or had policies and an ideology that encouraged a sense of victimization and continued distrust of politics. Of course such a statement begs the question of just how a state secures consent for its rule. Perhaps, as Fulbrook suggested, the relative amount of material satisfaction and at least some limited amount of unrestricted "private space" were keys in producing acquiescence and therefore at least tacit consent for the GDR.[82] Despite this "success," however, its beginnings are correctly remembered as a hard time, even if there was enough "private space" to convince these people not to oppose the government openly or attempt escape. Incidentally, it does not seem coincidental that the one person who did not remember how hard the post-war period was and had fewest complaints about life later in the GDR, Herr S., happened to be the one who was able to return almost immediately to the same job he had had before the war, in a food distribution center in Halle -- particularly fortuitous when one considers the hunger the population went through at that time.

But for most of those who lived through the birth of the GDR, material satisfaction was a long time coming, and their lack of participation based upon a skepticism acquired over the previous twelve years is perhaps not characterized accurately as even tacit approval. Not that consent cannot be given without participation. Fulbrook has noted that the decision to stay out of

politics in the FRG usually did not imply opposition to or even disapproval of the regime.[83] My own research suggests approval for any government is ultimately tied to little more than prosperity and security -- when these individuals felt they had these, they felt as if they could most completely control their own destiny, rather than being controlled. They have seldom felt this way since 1939.

Work and the Economy

This brings us to the economy. As mentioned, no person explicitly stated that the 30s made them used to prosperity and the GDR never brought it back. Most people wanted first to emphasize how desperate their conditions were after the war, not to make comparisons. Often, the contrast was present simply in the tone, enthusiastic in the 30s, more somber, perhaps even bitter for later periods.

Herr W. V. did not talk about his own garden as "booming" in the 30s, yet he and his family did have the impression that everything improved rapidly then in terms of living standards. He remembered that particularly in the lower middle classes, "the people loved a new person [i.e. Hitler] taking a new direction toward progress." The Nazi time never posed a threat to his livelihood, as the SED government later would. What stood out most for him in the prewar period was that shortly after Hitler came to power, beggars stopped coming around his garden quite abruptly.

In the late 50s he came under intense pressure to join a collective and give up ownership, and was, or so he says, under pressure to produce a certain amount for the state or go to prison. Eventually a compromise was worked out in which a portion of the garden was leased to a nearby collective farm. His memories of the GDR economy are of a battle with the system, beginning with

the Soviet occupation, in which he remembered the Russians fighting the locals to control food distribution centers. He indicated that he had won a small victory over the collective, hardly a victim's attitude, but he emphasized how greatly the economy was hurt by the Soviet reparations and how the compromise he made came only after outrageous demands for produce, including quantities of milk when he did not even have a cow. There seemed to be no guarantee he could maintain ownership indefinitely. This does seem to correspond with reality, as even the smaller farmers were mostly "absorbed" in collectives by 1960.[84]

But what is interesting is the emphasis of the story: on the ever-present danger of losing independence, and how hard the state was to please, not on the courage involved in resisting. It was clearly more important that I understood him to be a victim of an unfair the system rather than appreciating how he responded to it. When asked about the state of his business in the 60s and the 70s, when the GDR's population and economy was stabilizing, he did say that for him there was some progress *but only because of his own initiative*. What one could produce for one's self could be exchanged for something else one needed. He concluded "maybe you would have trouble getting this or that, but in general you could *manage*." In trying to show contempt for the system and the unspectacular improvement in his business at the time, he had seemingly contradicted himself by emphasizing his own agency. Perhaps, with the exception of the period leading up to the compromise, the state was not the ogre he imagined. It struck me as quite odd that a person who maintained considerable independence against great odds for so many years, arguably the most successful person in the group, took so little satisfaction in it and concentrated on the pressure he was under. He would later blame German economic woes in part on the Jews.[85]

Herr M. equated working in the GDR with victimization more than anyone else I interviewed. It began with his employment in dismantling machinery after the war for Soviet reparations. He was needed in this work because so many engineers were heading West. His first experience in the new system, then, was under the Russians and a reminder of the price to be paid for defeat. When he was asked later to work in an explosives firm, the job he had had in the 30s, he refused and was disadvantaged because of it. Later he was further disadvantaged due to refusals to join the SED. This experience contrasts sharply with the 30s when he stressed his pride in having been selected for the arms school. The experience of the war caused him to reject this work (he had not equated the work with war-making till he was in the war), even as he waxed nostalgic about the same work in the 30s. Here we see the "damage" that memories of the Third Reich can "inflict" on the GDR today: work that gave a sense of pride in the thirties has a bad name in the GDR because of the war Hitler started.

Herr M., disillusioned with politics or work useful to the state, refused to be involved politically or do such work, and was penalized for it with lower pay in the work he did do. Skepticism for politics after Hitler here not only hurt his view of GDR politics, but also his view of its ability as an economic provider. Later, when he went to a reunion of the arms school in West Berlin, his refusal to give a written report on his activities cost him four years of pay raises. As he knew by that time the consequences of not "playing along," he almost seems to have been defying the authorities purposefully, to set himself up for losses in pay so he could hate the system more. When asked what his best time in the GDR had been, he said it was when he was 65 -- he could work and earn a pension besides! Finally he got what he wanted; the pay that had eluded him

since the 30s. He talked about his resistance again and again not as a source of pride, but as a source of deprivation. He summarized his working career as having the responsibility of a general director, but the pay of a worker. Recall also how he ranted about the FRG government's putting all its money into restoring churches, while he got nothing to fix the building his family recently got back from the SED. For Herr M. the state giveth, and the state taketh away, and mostly it does the latter.

I mentioned Soviet reparations above and how the GDR was connected to them. Obviously this contrasted starkly with the beginnings of the Third Reich, characterized for its progress and rapid reduction of unemployment. Indeed for many, one of the GDR's few accomplishments in this atmosphere of devastation was simply ending hunger. Hunger stories pervaded the interviews. Herr H. said he still has dreams of returning to his parents' building in 1949, but unlike the actual event, in the dream he goes in the cellar and falls into a pile of potatoes. Herr M. did not want to speak to me in the presence of his wife, because he did not want her to be reminded of the hunger in the early post-war years. For Frau H., the GDR was never as good as before, but at least they had enough food after a few years. The hunger was almost always remembered as beginning at the end of the war, not during it. Thus it was not actually attributed to the Nazis, but to the Russians, who were remembered, as suggested above, for occupying food distribution centers, taking all the cattle, standing guard over the village mill, and coming "as beggars." Part of the reason no specific memory was expressed about the founding of the GDR is that many were too preoccupied with simply getting life's necessities. The GDR seems to be remembered as beginning (if the beginning is remembered at all) with great difficulty, not as the construction of a German revolution, as the SED portrayed it.

The war quickly put an end to the emphatic support for the Nazi state based on economic recovery and its successor state seemed too much like the Third Reich *at war* to garner any new support of its own (recall Herr. H.'s remarks on the acceleration of proclamations, suggesting that the dictatorship was becoming more restrictive as the war progressed on page 67). All Frau W. had to say on the GDR economy was that it was no longer bad in 1957, when they finally located relatives in the West and received parcels of food from them -- food they had a worse need for earlier. Frau T., who lost husband and home in the war, seemed to equate her work in the GDR with merely getting through, while her husband's work in the 30s, on a large farm inherited from his father, was a symbol of long-awaited stability. (He had made a go of farming a different parcel of land in the twenties but had given up on it). Before 1945, she had not planned on working outside the home.

While the SED made much of its guarantee of equality of work and pay for women, not only did it remain difficult for women to move into some traditionally male positions (including management), but even when they did, male involvement in child care and other housework generally remained the same. The so-called liberated socialist woman remained beset with a double burden of being housewife and mother on the one hand and worker outside the home on the other.[86]

Work was basically a duty for Frau S., a volunteer day care worker, who complained of how much her efforts to help her extended family and the children she cared for at work went unnoticed. Frau D. talked about the difficulty of work just after the war, when she and many women like her did whatever work they could for food, such as sewing or hard work in the fields.This type of work continued for many after 1949. At that time it was simply done out of

necessity. I got the general impression that the work she did later at the university in Halle as a secretary was more fulfilling, but she seemed to feel little sense of empowerment in it or sense that the GDR had given her an opportunity to better herself. Like couples in capitalist societies, she and her husband both worked simply because they needed money, as did both Herr W. and his wife. Hitler was always remembered positively for *bringing* work, while the Soviet occupation/GDR system seemed to be associated with *forcing* one to work, both out of need and in terms of societal pressure.[87]

Frau St. had the most positive view of work of anyone I interviewed, as it involved a tremendous amount of rigorous training on her part. The fact that she really enjoyed her career also helped her to deal with the untimely death of her husband. She remembered it all, however, as accomplished in spite of the system that was always trying to "trip-up" students on ideological grounds. She owed her opportunity to reach a white-collar position to the stern discipline and support of her father, not to a state committed to equal opportunity. Her success also should be viewed cautiously because she was the youngest person I interviewed. As Borneman suggested, the women of the older generation were less integrated into the workforce than those trained after 1945, due to the lack of opportunity for skilled training before the war. The mobilizing of women workers for the war effort in 1943 generally provided low-skilled jobs, and most of the women of the older generation carried on in low-skilled work, while, as we have seen, a substantial minority avoided employment altogether in the GDR.[88]

Conclusions on Victimization/Depoliticization and Identification

Before the ***Wende***, resignation to life in the "permanent" SED state seemed to have prevented any interest in or positive reexamination of the pre-

GDR lives of these people, a time that likely had been associated with war, shame, and hardship. But while their experiences *in the war* made them irrevocably convinced that fascism was wrong, a second look today allows them to see that in most cases fascism had been fine with them until the war, or more specifically till they or their spouse was forced to go to the war. Herr W. was correct in assessing the feelings of at least those I spoke with and possibly the majority of his generation when he said that no one thought of the war as wrong until their son or husband had to go or was killed in the debacle. This remark was remarkably similar to the implication of Frau W.'s comment on the disapearance of happiness when the war came (see page 67). This feeling and a post-GDR perspective allowed these individuals to separate the prewar Third Reich from the war itself; the latter a time before they learned what fascism "was really all about." Herr G.V. remembered a prewar Reich where for many people there was not such a worry about the lack of free speech, because there was nothing then to complain about! This correlates with the other half of Frau W.'s comment, that people only "listened to reason when the war began" (ibid.). Herr W.'s similar comment directly above, and Herr H.'s comment that he had supported the system, and knew nothing about the camps (and as noted on p. 67, little about the dictatorial nature of the system) till much later.

This is not to suggest some revisionist nationalism in which Hitler displayed his good intentions before 1939 and was somehow not to blame for the war. Rather, it shows how the war could be more closely linked in memory with later, related misfortunes than with the state that caused it, and how disconnected my informants felt from the genuine victims of the Nazi regime. The big loser in this perspective is the GDR. It was built on loss for these people: lost *Heimat*, loss of family members, loss of respect for their military service, loss

of freedom of movement, and loss of work status unless one joined the SED. These losses stirred feelings of resistance, but these individuals take no pride today in what limited resistance they put up, and instead feel victimized.

Why did none of these people heroize their resistance or even the fact that they were not taken in by the propaganda of the SED -- ie. their ability to retain at least a private (and as we shall see in a number of cases, a limited public) authenticity? I would suggest a theory derived more from intuition than research. With forty years of their lives invested in a system that revealed itself to be increasingly repressive and corrupt and never achieved what it promised, perhaps the need to emphasize the hopelessness of their previous predicament is derived from a sense of guilt for not ousting the regime long ago rather than leaving the task to the younger generations. The sense that Herr M. and others had of having to live "under the Russians" is also important here. They emphasized this so that I, and ultimately West Germans, will not look down on them for "putting up" with the GDR as long as they did. Knowing today the apparent ease with which the GDR was swept away encourages them to emphasize the danger, otherwise they might appear far too complicitous in perpetuating the SED's rule. Of course, such a notion is not logical, given the tightness of the Soviet grip in Eastern Europe till 1989, but what seemed to collapse with such ease at that time in retrospect could seem, as I have argued, quite artificial. An insistence on their own victimization could absolve them of some responsibility for all the years of their lives that from today's perspective seem wasted, and possibly help to answer the anger and what they perceive as arrogance on the part of West Germans who are frustrated with the cost of unification.

The end of socialism did not do what might have been expected; that is,

it did not show the older Easterners all the things they had missed since 1945. Rather, it made them miss what they had had before 1939, and which no longer existed in the now modernized (and economically weakened, noisy, and unfriendly) FRG. Though all agreed with unification in principle, it has made them feel all the more victimized -- even though it also has allowed them to admit that they approved at least in part with the Nazi state. Yet when the talk moved from their individual point of view to a more collective perspective, the victim mentality did not completely carry over.

No one I interviewed denied German responsibility for the war, but practically no one spoke in terms of opposition either. Their sense of loss, though not related to their personal actions, was for the most part blamed (at least implicitly) on Germany,[89] however much Russian aggression (and U.S. aggression as well) was also blamed.[90] When I asked Herr M. if he had agreed with the war or thought it was wrong, he became defensive and asked me if I had been against America's involvement in Vietnam, and reminded me that he was a career soldier. There are two underlying messages here: 1) that he was a member of a collective (Germany) he had to defend to a foreigner, and 2) it was not for him to say if the war was wrong or right; he had no choice but to serve. If he had ventured to say the war was wrong, then he would have had to admit that *he* (and Germany) was wrong as well. The rightness or wrongness of the war was an issue that no one seemed to be able to comment on, *even as* there was no denying of what country was responsible. From their individual perspectives it all seemed out of their hands; either it provoked similar defensiveness, or more often an emphasis on the lack of options besides participating. But what was implicit in such comments was that the lack of options were based not simply on compulsion, but on a sense of duty as well.

I am not suggesting that refusing military service was a real option for men of his generation. However, for some, their inability to separate themselves from the morality of the decision for war, forced them into a victim's argument, even though they stopped short of portraying their entire country as a victim. When Herr G.V. brought up who started the war, he could have named Hitler as the initiator, but chose Germany instead. I have argued that this generation never had a sense of a GDR identity, due to their victim mentality. Yet this has not prevented identification with a larger (and partly fantastic) German collective, one which includes East and West, but forgets how permanent division once seemed, and sidesteps individual complicity in the Nazi past.

Since at least 1939 these individuals have persisted in not resisting those in power, indeed withdrawing themselves from any possibility to influence the distribution and application of power, and encouraging their children to do the same. For the future, however, whatever their final words will be to their grandchildren, it is likely they will not be completely debilitating. Though they are angry today with what they see as West German snobbery, they do still have some sense that all German-speaking people within the now shrunken remnant of Bismarck's Reich are still a nation. A nation still somewhat divided, but a nation nevertheless. Perhaps they need to believe this more than Westerners do; perhaps it is easier for them to feel this attachment than their children or grandchildren. Still, in their eyes *states* make war, and *states* and "systems" restrict opportunities and misunderstand individual needs. Attachment here is another matter.

It cannot be assumed that their prosperous western neighbors are deeply attached to the state either. It seems that residents of the North Atlantic community in general consider their individual successes as earned in spite of

political systems rather than because of them. Yet, however unsympathetic West Germans are to their government, it has not prevented great numbers of them from activism on behalf of many issues since the 1960s. A determination to see oneself as a victim seems to insure alienation; a sense that one could always have had more or done more if ill-defined outsiders had not intervened.[91] This attitude insures that these people will not voice their opinions on where German society is headed. Yet at least they are passing along a sense of belonging to a single German nation, albeit with a problematic past, to their grandchildren. Whether this will encourage participation remains to be seen. The 1989 revolution seems to indicate that a good many of the younger people have not resigned themselves to the role of victim.

Part IV: Comparative Dictatorships

The people I interviewed in Halle, all of whom described themselves as politically disinterested if not entirely contemptuous of all political systems they had experienced, often suggested that life under either regime was basically the same. What are we to make of the belief that dictatorships of whatever ideological stripe are no different at the level of ordinary experience, and is any comparison of the Third Reich with the GDR appropriate?

First, let's look at the latter question. To begin with, since the behavior of the older generation under the SED, and their interpretation of it, were so shaped by their prior experiences under Nazism, applying any sort of totalitarian theory to explain why daily life under both seemed the same is quite problematic. Even though it was never claimed, the SED did inherit a legacy of Hitler and his war. It is a very different thing to talk of the two "totalitarian" systems of Hitler and Stalin, than to compare the former to a system that was its "off-spring." For the individual who lived through both, there is what might be called a refraction of memory. The experience of the Third Reich helped color the meaning of the GDR, and the experience of 40 years under socialism alters the hindsight of the Nazi state. I have argued that this generation was predisposed to retreat from political participation in the GDR, and looking back they are also likely to de-emphasize specific acts not directly related to them that made the Third Reich uniquely terrible, given that their lifetime then and since always contained at least the potential of denunciation and imprisonment.

Looking at the larger problem, whether life in dictatorships with very different goals can indeed seem very similar, it is has been suggested that both the Third Reich and Stalinist Russia can be described as members of the same family of "totalitarian" states, similar in their intent to organize all areas of life

around collective ideology and eliminate all opposition -- both placing a "total" claim on the lives of their citizens. But there are arguably better explanations for the success of both the Third Reich and the GDR. The arguments for interpreting the Third Reich as a breed among fascist states rather than as part of a broader, totalitarian group, seem to better explain its inner workings, while the GDR itself, hardly a static or monolithic Stalinist state, is also probably inadequately characterized as "totalitarian."

The Nazi state seems better explained, in Kershaw's words, as located "within the European-wide context of radical anti-socialist national-integrationist movements, which also rejected the forms though not the substance of bourgeois society, derived from the era of open imperialist conflict and emerg[ing] to prominence in the upheavals following the First World War."[92] The context and ideal around which to integrate, then, were different from, and perhaps even a reaction to, the Bolshevist success in Russia. In addition, fascists in general, while playing the "nationalist card" against class fissures, spoke of corporatism and protecting the lower middle class, but generally allowed private ownership of the means of production to continue and larger enterprises to continue to dominate their economies; obviously a very different approach than Stalinism.

In a similar vein, Fulbrook has questioned the application of a totalitarian model to the GDR. Obviously, the 40-year history of the GDR witnessed varying levels of coercion and tolerance for dissenting opinions. Meanwhile, the ability to incorporate and subordinate technical and cultural elites, provide a relatively good standard of living when compared with the rest of the eastern bloc, and maintain a unified party elite, were probably as important as coercion and ideological conformity for stabilizing the state.[93] As Fulbrook has said and recent

events have shown, the police cannot arrest an entire nation. Dissent must remain isolated, and this involves both "carrots and sticks." Her analysis seems to suggest, as does Kershaw's, that the term totalitarian applies to certain extremes of state action in crisis or a perceived crisis, but over the long term the total claim can and does relax.[94] When it does, careerism and/or a genuine desire by many to have a limited voice, can be more useful than terror in providing a regime with stability.

But the fact that the Third Reich and the GDR are historically related, that for many Germans the former colored their perceptions of the latter, and finally all the problems of defining either as totalitarian, do not prevent us from concluding that in some periods, and for some groups of individuals, they were indeed experienced as quite similar. Kershaw does not close the book entirely on comparisons of the Third Reich with Stalinism either, despite his preference for comparing the former with other fascist states. He suggests that the desire to control all aspects of public life and social interaction, the demands of ideological conformity and elimination of all alternative loyalties, and the use of all available media for the mobilization of the masses around revolutionary goals are clearly present, at least in some time periods, in both.[95]

As for my informants, perhaps they had enough experiences of such "totalitarian" phenomena in specific periods to allow them to conclude that from their perspective the two regimes produced the same effect. Such a statement is bound to strike the thoughtful reader as odd, given that the GDR did not produce a world war and genocide. We must remember that these people are speaking of the work-a-day peacetime existence experienced under each. But the perception of sameness did not prevent varying opinions on the degree of danger when giving an opinion, much discussion of restrictions unique to the

GDR, and memories of a greater degree of pressure to join the SED than the NSDAP.

The GDR seemed to be remembered more for spying than the Third Reich. Indeed, everyone I spoke to seemed to know via the local grapevine who were Stasi or Stasi informants at the work place, while similar experiences were seldom remembered from the Nazi time. Conversely, the GDR also was remembered for having bosses and other local party officials who generally did not denounce their underlings for an unorthodox remark, giving them a warning or slap on the wrist instead. Frau St., who, it will be recalled, strongly disliked the SED, remembered such an administrator at the university in Halle. Frau T. had a similar feeling about those in charge of the hospital she worked in. Herr W. and Herr M., it will be recalled, were both questioned by the Stasi directly, but the only other stories recalling incidences of coercion involved the Russians rather than the Stasi. The latter was recalled more in the interviews as potential punisher than for having actually carried punishments out.[96] Herr S. seemed proud to proclaim that he never worried about saying his opinion to his superior in his firm, but it must be remembered that he eventually joined the SED. Earlier he had had a boss in the Nazi party, but remembered him as a kind man. Very little about the Gestapo came out in the interviews. As we saw, Herr W.'s father was careful what he told his young son, for fear it might slip out at school, but nothing happened. We have seen that Frau D.'s father also had a run-in with the Nazis in the early 30s. This is the only direct reference to political repression I heard about from the Nazi time. Of course, part of this discrepancy may be due to the fact that a number of my informants lived in small towns before the war's end and later relocated to an industrial town. But seven of the twelve spent at least some time in large cities either before or during the war, and only Frau D.

mentioned the Gestapo directly.

Frau H. was particularly frustrating in this regard. One could not expect her to have been any sort of suspect, as her husband was NSDAP and at least in the 1930s believed in Hitler. However, though she lived in Berlin in the 1930s and her husband also joined the SA, she remembered no persecutions -- she even insisted that none of his associates were anti-Semitic! On top of associating with others (her husband's friends) who were pleased with the *Führer,* she gave the impression of not having made any new friends independently of her husband at this time. It could not be expected that she would be subject to investigation given this social network. The latter also seemed to make repression of strangers unnoticeable. This might help explain her aforementioned insistence that speaking up was more dangerous in the GDR.

Also complaints unique to the GDR were noted as well, as we have seen. Chief among them was discrimination against children in education due to their parents' backgrounds, and restriction on travel to visit friends and family. Then there was the issue of pressure to join a party. I recall no mention of any pressure put upon anyone I interviewed to join the NSDAP (though Herr W. and his wife, who were both school children in the 1930s, did indicate that participation in the *Jungvolk*, *Hitlerjugend*, and BDM could not be avoided) while many commented on such pressure in the GDR. Apparently statistics bear this out.

The SED constantly had to enlist functionaries, informers, and ideologically reliable managers of all of its enterprises and institutions, particularly after the waves of purges in the early 1950s, often pressuring the reluctant, while the Third Reich, in which membership and some participation

was crucial if one was to advance in most careers, had to suspend recruiting several times and turn applicants away permanently after 1939.[97] But aside from the restrictions on education and travel, the other differences here are of degree, not kind.

Travel and education restrictions were clearly different in the Third Reich and GDR. They have to do with specific variations in goals of the regimes, and historical locations of the two states, but though they increased the feeling that the GDR was about loss, as we have seen, they have not on the whole changed the overall perception of similarity.

Returning to differences of degree, how are we to account for the memories of greater numbers of run-ins with the political police in the GDR -- particularly given the relative similarities between Nazi and SED party organization at the community level, and similar tactics of information-gathering by and numbers of personnel and voluntary informants in the SS-SD-Gestapo complex and the Stasi.[98] I would suggest that this disparity is partly rooted in the perception of the 1930s and the contrasting one of the 1950s and 60s I have already discussed, and the simple fact that the Third Reich was shorter-lived and was either initially approved of or at least not despised by my informants. All this likely makes the GDR's intrusive policies today seem the more infamous. It does, after all, seem a logical corollary to the thesis of the good times and lack of memories of repression in the Third Reich.

The idea that the state could somehow swallow society whole and through ideological indoctrination and terror reshape all individuals into a level, uniform, mass of servants, as totalitarian theorists warned in the Cold War, seems quite doubtful today. As Irving Howe has argued, self-interest and individuality, along with apathy towards politics, have tended to emerge in

"totalitarian" systems when just a bit of freedom is allowed.[99] As we have seen, freedom had its small refuges in the GDR in the garden shed and later in the Protestant church, and these "safety valves" in the end still could not contain the built-up steam. Every state seems to have to grant its space for individuality, and if the rest of life is too restrictive, and perhaps more importantly too unsatisfying materially, the need for individuality tends to outgrow the sanctioned space.

If life under the two states is remembered as largely the same, it is also due in part to my informants' vague ideas of social systems seemingly unconnected with politics. As we have seen, one could be happy with one's own lot under a regime and be unconcerned with politics. Therefore, when the state was providing work or in partnerships with businesses that secured high levels of employment, and not making any other demands, it was almost invisible. Many seemed aware of it only when it was taking things away: one's home-roots, work opportunities, loved ones' lives, freedom of movement, etc. When one mentions the Nazis or the SED to these people, they only can remember the worst side of both: lies, repression, denying opportunity unless one played along. For the great majority of their lives politics was associated with danger and loss, even if lived experience was not so simply divided between safe private and dangerous public spheres. If one narrows the definition of political life this much, so only the negatives remain, it is not surprising, particularly in a case where both states guarded against non-conformity with both police and volunteers and the potential for imprisonment (though, of course, the GDR had no concentration camps) that some individuals find both regimes to be so much the same.

But if this is so, if one dictatorship appears to be like any other, what are the implications for whatever moral lessons the experience of National

Socialism ought to have for Germans and all people? As the *Historikerstreit* and Bitburg affair have shown, both apologists for the Nazi period and Western elites determined to show solidarity against Communism have, for however different reasons, played down both Nazi genocide and the lessons it provides of the potential of modern civilization to descend into barbarism.[100] It should be clear already that it is not my purpose to write the Holocaust out of the history of eastern Germany, even if it does seem virtually absent from the life stories I have heard. In the next section I will review the controversies surrounding the history of daily life and Nazism, and, believing that the former can indeed increase our understanding of the latter, I will also analyze the few individual encounters my own informants had with both Nazi criminality and perpetrators themselves, as well as their thoughts on racism in general.

Part V: Racism, Holocaust and Nazism

We have seen how life in the Third Reich has been described as both good and normal in retrospect. The study of everyday life in this period has not been without controversy, particularly because of a purported de-centering of the Holocaust as the central event of the Nazi era. Critics, particularly (though by no means exclusively) Israeli scholars of Nazism and the Holocaust, accused Niethammer and company of creating a "considerable trivialization of the Nazi era" with their study of "normal," un-Nazified life in the *Ruhrgebiet*. This is clearly not the place to launch into a blow-by-blow overview of the exchange between daily life and Holocaust historians.[101] However, I will suggest how the problem of "normality" and National Socialism has been dealt with without losing sight of the unique importance and moral lesson of the Holocaust, and how oral history can and has actually made Nazi criminality more explicable rather than trivialized.

First, what of 'normality' under Hitler? When genocide and slavery appear in a modern context, does 'normality' disappear? Detlev Peukert argues that for all our faith in enlightened progress, modernity as we understand it possesses its own pathology. What is considered "normal" in modern industrial society can in fact be seen as giving rise to and under certain conditions enhancing pathology. Peukert's insight was derived from studying previous theories of social development in the Third Reich.

In the 1960s both David Schoenbaum and Ralf Dahrendorf suggested that the Nazi state's plans for war and genocide provided a modernizing push (not wholly intentional) that laid the groundwork for the Economic Miracle in the 1950s by introducing an achievement society which wore down worker solidarity, as well as breaking down other traditional class structures. Later, a

book refuting the theory of a German *Sonderweg,* or separate path that took Germany away from liberal parliamentarianism in the nineteenth century and paved the way for a right-wing takeover in the 1930s, suggested instead that the culprit was the economic crisis and political failure of the Weimar Republic. However much one of the authors, Geoff Eley, was skeptical of modernization theory in general, the implication was that modern industrial society with its class fissures was more instrumental in the rise of Hitler than some tradition of misdevelopment.[102]

What this trend in German historiography suggests is that however vague and murky the idea of modernization may be, advanced industrial society contains seeds of both "normal" and pathological tendencies. But if this is so, why didn't economic crisis produce comparable levels of barbarism in other advanced industrial states? Aside from the unique circumstances of interwar Germany, part of the answer lies in an understanding of "the pathology of modernity" not as the source of genocide, but as a means through which it is allowed to take place.

The source of genocide was undoubtedly Hitler himself, along with committed Nazis, and the movement's ability to tap into the various levels of "popular" anti-Semitism.[103] These were unique causal factors that had to be present to incite pathological actions. From this perspective, pathology is not trivialized for being simply a part of "normality." Rather, it is made explicable (though still condemnable) by ascribing it to the working of certain historical forces on the framework of normality in a period of socioeconomic distress and political upheaval. If the crisis and responses to it that unleash barbarism are severe enough (for example the gradual replacement of Weimar gridlock with the Nazi dictatorship and police state), rather than sweeping up all the normal

elements of modern industrial society in violence and destruction, they actually reinforce them, as (to use Ian Kershaw's words) working populations' "'normal' daily and private concerns consume such energy and attention" that taking care of one's own family involves, as we have seen, an inner immigration, strengthening the "pathological hand." Normal life shrinks away and hides from the freed pathological elements until eventually all normal spheres are invaded and destroyed.[104]

It is arguable, then, that normality did not just exist under the Nazis, but was a crucial agent in the maintenance of the Third Reich.[105] From this perspective, it is not only possible to speak of normality, though in this case perhaps only a thin veneer of normality remained, but it is essential to do so if we are to better understand how the period was lived by most Germans. Niethammer and Borneman both began their oral histories in the GDR by leaving the initial period free for workers to tell their life stories in their own words, interrupting only for clarification. Given what we know about these life stories, experience of the Holocaust is unlikely to come out without additional questioning. Perhaps in summarizing Niethammer's project in the *Ruhrgebiet*, Herbert could have paid a bit more attention to the problem of "teasing out" experiences with the Nazis and Nazi criminality regarding Jews, Poles and Russians, experiences that are commented on in both of Niethammer's studies. Here are part of Herbert's opening remarks -- this is the only mention of Nazi criminality in the entire chapter:

> All "politics" aside, for a large part of the population the image of National Socialism was characterized principally not by terror, mass murder and war but by reduction of unemployment, economic boom, tranquility and order.[106]

Perhaps this thesis would not have sparked such controversy if issues regarding Nazi terror and Jewish neighbors had been worked into the discussion, as they often are in personal lifestories. My own work, like Niethammer's, indicates that ordinary Germans, while usually not offering unsolicited descriptions of Nazi racial policies, do on occasion wander on to this topic from other experiences that are "closer to home."[107] Moreover, when my subjects did so, they tended to concentrate on the ways in which they themselves, or people close to them sought to help Jews, Poles or Russians from nearby labor camps or ghettos. If we are truly to understand how internments, tortures and genocide could have been allowed to take place, understanding the relation of German "bystanders" to the events seems indispensable.

When anyone close to them was given workers from the camps, my informants remembered that no one ever risked refusing the help on moral grounds, and they always emphasized how well they treated them. My general impression of these discussions is that they were reasonably candid, even when women, such as Frau D. and Frau S., told me that their husbands never wanted to discuss whatever negative experiences they had in the war. Frau D.'s husband, too ill to be questioned, had worked for the *Reichsbahn* in Nuremburg near the war's end with workers from a camp, possibly Flossenburg, but said little to her about it. Meanwhile, in the village where Frau D. remained, she remembered Russian prisoners who worked on the railway nearby her flat. She recalled bringing them food, as they were only lightly supervised. There were men and women, apparently at least some were kidnapped civilians -- basically slave labor. She took great pride in helping them, particularly when one of the women became pregnant, and she shamed an apparently racist doctor into

helping her. Later, when U.S. soldiers came to the railway station beneath her flat with machine guns, a prisoner from the camp defended her, saying that she was a good woman, and not a fascist. A memory of Nazi criminality allowed her to define herself in opposition to fascism. She remembered the Russian woman's name, Maria, but had no idea what became of any of the prisoners after the war. Herr W.'s wife told me how her father had a Polish worker who helped him paint a factory he worked in and who also was allowed to come with him to their village on weekends to help paint there. Apparently this job painting the factory allowed her father to avoid military service for more than a year early in the war, but later he had to go, leaving his teenage daughter to care for her sick mother and little sister. She and her husband stressed how well they treated the Pole, particularly how they sneaked him to the dining table to eat with them, something forbidden for eastern prisoners.

Herr W.'s comments were interesting regarding this prisoner. He simply said his father-in-law needed a worker, and so the camp guards brought one. There seemed to be no moral dilemma; he needed help, and the camp brought it. I was not clear whether the worker was requested, or "strongly recommended" by someone in the party. As camp inmates generally were given just enough food to die slowly unless they had a special skill to offer, it might have been that he felt he was helping the Pole more than hurting him. I did not want to press the issue and cause a problem, but it is interesting that neither of them thought the complicity question through. This seems attributable to the feelings of helplessness I have discussed above. Frau T. had a similar experience with Russian workers brought in to work her farm. No mention was made of who requested them or the moral dilemma of using them; they were simply needed, and so they came.[108]

There were also the occasional stories of a single Jew or Jewish family who were there and suddenly gone with no warning, as we saw with Herr W.'s mentioning of the chimney sweep. *Kristallnacht* was remembered after the fact, and usually the recollection was one of surprise and confusion, as if the Nazi terror against Jews had not been heard of before. While this was the first (and last) country-wide coordinated pogrom of the Third Reich, it is interesting that with only one exception, the boycott of 1933 was seldom recalled, and the Nuremburg Laws of 1935 never came up.[109]

What was remembered of the boycott was that it was ignored, because Jewish merchants had better connections and gave better deals. Herr M. and his adoptive father seemed befuddled by the Nazi anti-Semitism and continued shopping in Jewish stores. He suggested to me that anti-Semitism derived from Jewish money-lending in the Bavarian countryside when the depression came. Both his attitude toward the boycott and the characterization of anti-Semitism seem accurate in explaining the feelings of a substantial number of people on either side of the issue.[110]

Meanwhile, though I encountered an occasional anti-Semitic statement that smacked of Nazi propaganda, it was generally accepted that the Nazi persecution and murder of the Jews was in a different category than any victimization my informants had experienced themselves. But again, there is no memory of anti-Jewish activities before the *Kristallnacht*, only anti-Jewish speech-making which Herr W.V. mentioned, and even after 1938 it is generally only the lengthening war that disillusioned these people to Nazism. Frau H. remembered that Hitler began by praising the Germans, and only later attacked the Jews in his speeches. Frau St. and Herr G.V. both hinted at dislike for the Jews. The former remembered them in Lodz as unclean and untrustworthy, and

suggested that the worst POW camps may have been run by Jews. Herr G.V. made comments to the effect that they still had too much influence, and that their investments in the FRG were part of the reason there was such disparity between the two Germanies. He had no idea how much he sounded like a Nazi himself when he said this and finished, "and now they extract the profits." Both he and Frau St. were quick to equate Stalinist crimes with Hitler's.[111]

The Nazis themselves were generally portrayed in two ways: either as an undefinable group located primarily in larger cities, or as the local mayor or other local official, people who usually were Nazi only in name, or a "progressive" individual who became disillusioned as the war and brutality accelerated. Unless directly questioned, prewar Nazism does not recall anything unpleasant. As for perpetrators, the ones spoken of are without exception people they never knew well and are never referred to as members of the same group as the subject, either they were "the Nazis" or "the SS."

The phenomenon of Nazism generally was not spoken of as a German phenomenon, but as *politics*. All of this points to attempts by my subjects to distance themselves from all these events, except when it was possible to lend a hand, instances they always made sure they related to me. Lending a hand, or talking about an individual Jew they knew who either escaped or disappeared with no warning, and once or twice mentioning Jewish friends they had (and in one case still have) seems to have been a way of assuring me that they were not guilty and could not have helped any more than they did -- perhaps that Germans in general could not have done more.

Frank Stern has argued in his work on the evolution of both anti- and philosemitism in Germany from the 1930s to the 1960s, that for most, memories of crimes against the Jews tend to abstraction of the latter and are generally

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Frank Stern has argued in his work on the evolution of both anti- and philosemitism in Germany from the 1930s to the 1960s, that for most, memories of crimes against the Jews tend to abstraction of the latter and are generally

fleeting, suggesting that individual Germans have invested much effort since that time in distancing themselves emotionally from Jews they knew or whatever knowledge they had of persecutions, deportations and murders. At the same time, Stern does also take into account that for many Germans Jews were at most peripheral in their life experiences, and suggests, as I do, that many still tend to defend themselves against any complicity or responsibility by reference to their own helplessness:

> The formulation about Jews "disappearing from sight, vanishing" is also revealing in respect of the perception of politics and political events at the time -- the perception of interference in 'normal' everyday life coming from political circles. Since it was apparently a question of "grand politics" on a national scale, when it came to racial policies, deportations, and annihilation, the question of one's own responsibility in all this is not raised. One felt helpless, subordinate. As someone states in one of the interviews [and I also heard this several times]: "politics weren't discussed -- they were a taboo subject." One had nothing to say -- the others (high up in government) had said it all.[112]

Here we see once again the depoliticization that others to the east carried over to the GDR. What is particularly striking is the phrase "interference in 'normal' everyday life," suggesting that politics was removed from daily experience and only entered it when taking things (or in this case) people away. It is important also to remember that Stern is not suggesting that this formulation is merely a rationalization for inactivity after the fact, but a psychologically accurate portrait of how politics were perceived at that time.

In the final analysis, it is difficult to accuse a group with a largely rural and small-town background of indifference to Jewish suffering, however similar their remarks regarding politics, the Nazis and the Jews are to those Stern criticizes. They knew few Jews and may very well have not witnessed deportations or violence against them first hand, though it must be kept in mind that, as mentioned, more than half did spend at least some time in larger cities in the

Nazi period. It is possible to highlight the meaning of silence by examining the surrounding context, but when there is nothing offered on deportations, as was the case in all my interviews but one, it is quite difficult for me to pronounce a judgment on indifference or complicity.[113] Herr M., during a third meeting, did give an account of deportation he witnessed in Greece. He told an SS man that "if Germany loses the war, you will be responsible for its bad image in the world." The SS man replied, "with an attitude like yours, we will lose." Even though we have seen in Herr M. an almost prototypical victim, he had a sense that the SS were uniquely terrible in their treatment of civilians.

Regarding racism and tolerance in general, the Holocaust seems not to have taught all the lessons one would hope. The idea of Germany becoming multi-cultural was not greeted with much enthusiasm by anyone. Refugees and foreign workers in the FRG, who have recently come under attack, were not objected to personally, but there was a sense that more should not come, especially those who were not willing to meet bourgeois standards of cleanliness and hard work. Herr W. was quite annoyed with what he perceived as the sloth and uncleanliness of Gypsies, a group of whom were given a home that once belonged to a German in his town and had apparently nearly gutted it since. Frau St. said there should be no dual citizenship for *Gastarbeiter*.[114] She always stressed that the individual's education was the measure of his value, what she called breeding. Even so, she, and Herr W. as well, tended to speak in national stereotypes. The Poles were good at black market activities, the Jews vengeful, the Russians backward, the Italians lazy, the English reserved and "uptight." Only the Americans seemed to be remembered fondly, always giving chewing gum and chocolate to children, and on occasion coming into homes for a drink or chatting on the street. This might have had something to do with my

presence, but I think the G.I.s represented the only positive memory of that difficult time. Their month and a half in Saxony-Anhalt was something of a temporary relief before the really hard times came. They made efforts to feed the population, while the Russians needed all the food for themselves. Because the Holocaust had little to do with them, and any memories related to it were only those in which they had done a good deed, it is unfortunately not surprising that stereotypes and a feeling that races cannot intermingle and coexist pervades. Frau St. told me that all our troubles in the U.S. are related to our bringing in slaves -- as if that past, and the "natural tendency" of races to live apart, prevented any stability in our future. I am perhaps too idealistic, but I had hoped I would not hear such a thing from a German who had lived in the Third Reich.

Conclusions

I have argued that unification has brought a nostalgia for the 1930s among the older generation, rather than for the early days of the GDR, as might have been expected. As I have mentioned several times, I do not consider this nostalgia as a re-evaluation of Nazism. The peculiar way in which the criminal aspects of the regime were not connected with the prewar era has more to do with self-interest, myopia, and the concentration today on their own misfortunes from the wartime onward -- which makes the prewar era in their minds the only happy time left to reminisce about. Be that as it may, the question will inevitably be asked whether this nostalgia is not in fact partly derived from the conservative shift that has been underway for more than a decade in West German politics. Before concluding, I will address this matter.

Nazism and Germany Today

I have suggested that these people lack sympathy for right-wing movements of today, particularly the violent ones, and yet they do think in terms of racial stereotypes and Germany's "foreigner problem." A lot has changed in Germany since the mid-1980s, and indeed for younger generations with what Helmut Kohl called "the grace of late birth," these changes do suggest new possibilities for interpreting the Nazi past and nationalist attitudes that would never have even been suggested before the conservative shift in Western politics since around 1982. While this is not the place for an in-depth discussion of these developments, perhaps some excerpts from a recent book on unification will give a sense of them. To quote John Ely:

> If the Greens at the beginning of the eighties signified the rise of a viable and influential radical Left after the delegitimation of German Communism, the new-Right parties, especially the "Republicans," signify the establishment of a structurally significant radical Right. This is a part

> of a changing complexion in Germany's political culture as a whole.....plans to commemorate the V-2 ballistic missile..... would have been unimaginable in the old "Federal Republic," as it is unsurprising in the new.....Kohl's openly nationalist federal campaigns in 1987 and 1989-90, the "adjustments" and adaptations that conservatives have continually made in response to radical Right propaganda, the "historians debate,".....and the open cultivation of a cultural or ethnic nationalism have been characteristic of a new kind of national conservative spectrum that has been developing in the past decade, a development which has been accelerated by the unification process.[115]

What is most important in this process is not that the unique horror of the Nazi period *per se* is being re-evaluated by great numbers of people, but that right-wing revisionist opinions and more subtle racial or ethnic stereotypes that once were taboo are increasingly being aired -- also among those who do not think of themselves as right-wing. Whatever the ordinary German thinks of ultra-Right nationalism, whether it be indifference or simple acceptance of its right to exist, these groups seem likely to stay, as they will all over post-Cold War Europe. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands have marched in the streets of German cities in protest against ultra-right violence, and anti-foreigner attitudes in general, if not against the non-violent new right.[116]

However, it is my contention that re-evaluations of the 1930s that I have heard have less to do with this shifting climate of nationalist feeling than the factors already mentioned. First of all, I think too much of my informants' lives have been lived in a completely different environment for them to be tightly connected to the FRG "grapevine." I am unconvinced that people in their 70s and 80s are likely to change long-held opinions due to the media, particularly a new and unfamiliar media. I maintain that their new thinking has more to do with their personal attempts to come to grips with the unexpected (and in their mind unlucky) circumstances in which they find themselves in today, circumstances

that make most of their lives seem a wasted effort -- except for the 1930s. When questioned about their recently acquired rights to read a free press, most seemed lacking in enthusiasm. Though nationalists have been equally, and frighteningly active in the former GDR, and many have been complicitous in these acts, including local police, nothing I heard from these older people even implicitly indicated sympathy for these acts. As for the organized Right, my informants' political skepticism seems to preclude any interest in this group, although the "Republicans" never actually came up.

Moreover, while the "gag" on the Third Reich has been removed, I think those who lived through the period, with a few extremist exceptions, are not reevaluating or trivializing Nazism. If nothing else, Soviet prison camps seem to have taught the men a lesson on the dangers of extreme nationalism, while the hardships of the occupation were similarly instructive for women and children. Herr W. remembered a gruesome experience at Cottbus that convinced him, at 16, that something was wrong with fascism -- he had to work far into a winter night unloading frozen dead bodies of presumably German civilians from a train from the Eastern Front and load them onto trucks to be taken away for a mass grave. "A very terrible time," he reflected. Though occasionally expressing intolerance, Herr W., who taught history for 37 years, saved some artifacts from the Nazi period, including a yellow star.

While younger Easterners may have what Peter Schneider called a clear conscience regarding the Nazi past,[117] the memories of the last years remain vivid and searing for those who were there. Whatever prejudices these people retain, they certainly show no signs of condoning violent solutions. Meanwhile, when there were hints of a "Germany for the Germans" mentality, there was little mention of problems with "foreigners," other than Gypsies. Herr W.V. noted how

most locals had no quarrel with African guest-workers living on the edge of their village. But neither he, nor his brother, nor most of the others conceived of Germany in the future as a multi-cultural state.

A Legacy of Victimization?

Within the living memory of the people whose experiences are the subjects of this writing, three political systems have been overthrown, each claiming to represent the German nation (or *a* German nation). Long ago they told themselves that "politics" was best left alone, and they are leaving it alone once more. As we have seen, this group was for unification, generally, and believes in a vague identity of one Germany, but as suggested, they have little to say about the goings on in Bonn today, even as the negatives of unity, mainly unemployment and crime, are noted with bewilderment. Schneider has referred to the eastern experience as a "double-zombification" that came from the experience of the Nazi police state and the reconstruction of its "essential characteristics" in the GDR. This came after a thorough beginning to denazification by the Soviets, who then reversed themselves and allowed the new SED, as noted, to absolve the remaining population of responsibility for Nazi criminality, even as they brought back the police state under a different name that restricted individual agency once again.[118]

This generation's rejection of political involvement out of the feeling that politics had victimized them in the past, enhanced their sense of victimization in the GDR and does still to a lesser extent today. While there is certainly no return of nationalistic feeling in the older German generation, a recent article on Rumania has some relevance to the ex-GDR. Katherine Verdery has suggested that an explanation for the growth of nationalist feelings in Eastern Europe has

much to do with the structure of the socialist states that disappeared in 1989-90. The feeling of victimization today derives from, not surprisingly, the sense that the socialist cadres were of an alien, Russian (and even Jewish) nature. Meanwhile the ethnic tension (or in this case tension between newly "estranged" countrymen) has been linked to the need to redefine the "self" in relation to a new "other," a new object for grumbling or outright hostility to replace the fallen party cadres and leaders. All of this seems to have gotten started because in the socialist states, nationality was reified while all other institutions and allegiances outside the party were done away with. Then when socialism exited the scene much more rapidly than would have been expected, national/ethnic cliques were left to squabble in the midst of the struggle to establish market economies and pluralism.[119]

This model does not work quite as well in today's FRG, but it certainly corresponds to the idea of the GDR as an alien interruption, while the West Germans and Western capitalists seem to be the new "other" that perpetuates the "victim identity." It is fortunate that the younger East Germans did form unofficial political movements in the last years of the GDR, even though they had little real bearing on the fall of the SED. They have potential for repoliticizing the younger generations, particularly because the activists that formed into Alliance '90 have now merged with the Western Greens. They form a substantial minority that still appears to believe in some Third Way that can strike a balance between free market capitalism and socialist centralism. They will certainly have a voice, however limited their real power will be. The older generation seems to have left them little legacy of participation, with a few notable exceptions, and they will live out their lives without really believing they could have changed things -- and apparently quite a few will be wondering why

their lives had to be so unlucky.

What is important to remember however is not that they missed any great opportunity to stop Hitler or the SED. As Frau. H. indicated, in 1933 the center and conservative parties were so fragmented that the German *Mittelstand* and upper classes were likely facing either a Nazi-led coalition or an SPD-led leftist coalition. They could not have been expected to support the latter in the polarized and economically unstable interwar environment. It is ultimately unprofitable to counterfactualize the events that led to the "double-zombification" of the East on the assumption that all of it could have been "nipped in the bud" in 1933. What is important here is not what these people could have done differently, but their attitude towards what they had to face. It is seldom wise to try to force change without the strength of numbers, and after the Second World War it was unlikely that a political movement of necessary strength could have emerged in any case. Moreover, the way out that existed after 17 June 1953 via West Berlin allowed those most likely to have led such a movement a safer option until the wall was built.

Meanwhile, I am not completely unsympathetic to those who stayed. Giving up one's home and in some cases one's family could never have been an easy decision. What they *could* have done differently is evaluate their own actions for the real courage they entailed. It did take some courage to maintain distance from the SED and attempt to live their lives as much on their own terms as they could. It also takes courage today to maintain a sense of dignity despite the scoffing Westerners. It is arguable that their Western counterparts would have fared no better if their hometowns had been "liberated" by the Red Army. It is unfortunately too late for this "stateless" generation to return (if they ever were there) to participatory politics. It is not merely that they lack affinity for the state;

they see the whole process as an elite affair, unresponsive to their wishes, as it has always been in their lifetimes. There may simply be too much history for them to get beyond victimization. As pensioners, most are not as uncertain and anxious about the future as are their sons, daughters, and grandchildren. In this sense they are lucky.

The younger generation may yet have a chance at influencing what must seem a distant and unsympathetic state bureacracy. Still, I have not walked a mile in their grandparents' shoes. Their sense of victimization is not entirely imaginary, but what they do not understand is their own role in increasing it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] One of the two studies I will be discussing here expressed this caution in introducing a collection of lifestories that came out of an oral history project in the GDR in 1987-90. The editor referred to Schweick strategies used by his interview partners when speaking. The term seems to have originated in the Habsburg empire, used by Austrian Germans to refer derogatorily to Czechs whom they considered conniving and deceitful. The book is Lutz Niethammer, Dorothee Wierling and Alexander von Plato, *Die Volkseigene Erfahrung: Eine Archaeologie des Lebens in der Industrieprovinz der DDR. 30 Biographische Eroeffnungen* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 9-73. The other study I will be discussing is John Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins* (Cambridge, MA, 1992). There is not as much made of the caution that GDR citizens exhibited in this book, but it is mentioned in a discussion of housing and the police/state means of monitoring individual behavior, pp. 127-131.

[2] Mary Fulbrook, "From Volksgemeinschaft to Divided Nation: German National Identity and Political Cultures Since the Third Reich," *Historical Research* 62(148), 1989, pp. 193-213. Though the article focuses on the particular responses East Germans made to the socialist state in its own milieu, for a time "a-political passivity" is referred to as a "hangover" from the Third Reich.

[3] The former study is that of Niethammer et al., the latter is that of Borneman. I will elaborate on the problems of both of these studies in the next two sections.

[4] No overview of daily-life history projects in the GDR based on oral interviews is available in English at present. A brief overview in German by Hans Joachim Schröder notes that because of the SED's restrictive policies regarding historical research (based on their conception of the socialist leadership as the vanguard of history -- and therefore their disdain for historical explanations based on the viewpoint of those "who follow") the only interviews conducted before the Niethammer project were with refugees from the GDR in the FRG. As for the post-*Wende* material that appeared between January 1990 and 1992, these were generally "rush-jobs" that were of value for little more than interpreting the 1989 revolution.Schröder, *Interviewliteratur zum Leben in der DDR* (Bremen, 1993), especially pp. 12-31.

[5] Borneman, p. 56.

[6] Nine of 32 lifestories in Niethammer's book were of persons 60 or under.

[7] Borneman, p. 47.

[8] For the numbers and make-up of Niethammer's group see Niethammer, pp. 15-17. For what information there is on Borneman's group see Borneman, pp. 15-17.

[9] See Geoff Eley, "Review Article: Labor, Women, and the Family in Germany, 1914-45," *German Politics and Society* 23 (Summer, 1991), pp. 1-20. The part of the review referred to here discusses Ute Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen in der Kriegsgesellschaft. Beruf, Familie und Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Goettingen, 1989)

[10] For descriptions of this process of "normalization" of gender roles in the Western zones and the FRG, respectively, see Maria Hoehn, "Frau im Haus und Girl im Spiegel: The Interregnum Period of 1945-9 and the Question of German Identity," *Central European History* 26(1), 1993, pp. 57-90, and Robert G. Moeller, "Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany: Women and Social Policy in the Federal Republic, 1949-1955," *Feminist Studies* 15(1), Spring 1989, pp. 137-169.

[11] For an introduction to women's problems and opportunities in the GDR, see David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally* (London,1983, 2nd ed. 1988), pp. 250-269.

[12] Ulrich Herbert, "Good Times, Bad Times, Memories of the Third Reich," Richard Bessel, ed., *Life in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 97-110. More on this important study will follow, but for now the rhythm mentioned involves very detailed narration of times of disruption of the working life, while more stable times are discussed more generally, and without a chronology.

[13] It has been suggested that the great majority, though the exact number is not known, ended up in Bavaria, apparently determined to avoid living in the Russian zone/GDR. Tony Judt suggests the best, though still partial, account of the expulsions from the east is Alfred M. deZayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam: The Expulsion of the Germans from the East* (Lincoln, NE, 1989). The numbers Judt gives for the different territories/countries from which the expellees/refugees came can be found in Tony Judt, "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," *Daedalus*, 121(4), Fall, 1992, pp. 83-118.

[14] Lutz Niethammer, ed. *Die Jahre Weiss Man nicht, Wo Man die Heute Hinsetzen Soll* (3 vols., Berlin, 1983, 1985), vol. 1, 7-29.

[15] For more detailed explanation of the rationale for and goals of oral history, see Allessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories* (Albany, NY, 1991), pp. 45-58.

[16] Ibid., especially pp. 12-16.

[17] See Note 14.

[18] Herbert, in Bessel, ed., p. 105.

[19] Ibid., p. 97. Of course, it must be remembered that this is how individual lives are remembered. The "zero hour" of 1945 was not entirely a myth, and however many Nazis returned to the West German bureacracy, it is fair to conclude that Nazi politics and power were crushed in 1945. In this sense, the 50s *did not* pick up where the 30s left off.

[20] Ibid., p. 109.

[21] Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany* (Ann Arbor: MI, 1987), pp. 193-195.

[22] This should not be taken to mean that most workers were won over to National Socialism, or that resistance was entirely extinguished. For a balanced description of the Nazi successes and failures in attempting to break down working-class milieus, see Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany* (Yale, 1987), pp. 101-144

[23] Herbert, in Bessel, ed., 1987, p. 109.

[24] Ibid., pp. 108-110.

[25] For more details on the little networks of friends that permitted a sphere of "authenticity," see John Ardagh, *Germany and the Germans* (New York, 1987), pp. 338-42. The revised edition (1991) unfortunately lacks the detail of the original on the GDR, in favor of emphasis on the problems of the East after unification.

[26] Niethammer, 1991 p. 627-30

[27] For a brief summary of the feelings of victimizations, see Borneman, "Belonging, pp. 287-291, or Borneman, "State, Territory, and Identity Formation in the Postwar Berlins, 1945-89," *Cultural Anthropology*, (7)1, February 1992, pp. 45-62, and especially pp. 54-56.

[28] "Actually existing socialism" was described as containing "its own inherent contradictions and difficulties, which have to be recognized, analyzed and dealt with, rather than dismissed as the debris of past history which will eventually whither away." See Fulbrook, 1989, p. 199.

[29] Niethammer, 1991, p. 630. It must be added, however, that ideology, particularly in a socialist system, was not so clearly separated from economic concerns. Niethammer did find some approval for the emphasis on the worker in GDR ideology, even if the indoctrination and policing of the population were disliked and political participation avoided.

[30] Ibid., pp. 627-630. While this is not the place for a laundry list of Nazi criminality, it is worth remembering that while the GDR was organized around a universal ideology that anyone could theoretically join, the Third Reich also required racial purity on top of ideological conformity. Not only was the organizing principle guaranteed to lead to wider persecutions, but nothing in the GDR could compare to the systematic extermination of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and the mentally and physically handicapped undertaken by its predecessor. Even political prisoners and common criminals were presumed in the Nazi state to be products of some form of racial degeneration. An excellent survey of the Nazi "racial" terror, which Rudolf Hess referred to as applied biology, can be found in Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Harvard, 1988). Meanwhile, a brief description of the workings of the GDR political police, the Stasi, and the dilemma it continues to pose in Germany, can be found in Peter Marcuse, "Moral Indignation and Politics: The Debate over the Stasi," *New Political Science* Spring-Summer, 1993, pp. 9-17.

[31] *Drüben* in this context translates as "over there," the term often used in Germany before the wall came down to refer to the other side.

[32] This is Herbert's term, used in Bessel, ed.,1987, p. 110.

[33] Niethammer, 1991, p. 629.

[34] Childs, pp. 13-14.

[35] See Niethammer's introduction (1991, pp. 9-73)

[36] See John Torpey's review of Niethammer, 1991, *German Politics and Society*, Winter 1991-2, pp. 186-9.

[37] For more on Niethammer's thoughts regarding the dangers of placing subjects in predetermined typologies see Niethammer, vol. 1, 1983, pp. 17-23. For more on his desire to refute totalitarian explanations for the GDR's success through the 1980s see note 36. It must be remembered however, that this is a reviewer's "take" on where Niethammer's work fits into the historiography and other literature on the workings of GDR society, not the author's own words.

[38] See above, pp. 7-8 for the age variations in previous studies. As far as the lack of discussion of the Third Reich, good or bad, in Borneman's study in Berlin, this derives from significant other problems he has in dealing with the Third Reich and German history in general. These problems will be addressed in the next section.

[39] An English translation of Wierling's evaluation of the 1920s "generation," in the main based on in-depth analysis of two interviews is Dorothee Wierling, "A German Generation of Reconstruction: The Children of the Weimar Republic in the GDR," in Luisa Passerini, ed., *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories: Volume I: Memory and Totalitarianism* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 71-88.

[40] Details on the post-unification economic woes of the East can be found in John Ardagh, *Germany and the Germans* (2nd edition, New York, 1991) pp. 434-479.

[41] It is the contention of Manfred J. Enssle that while at the level of high politics, the period of 1945-9 was a decisive period in the shaping of the future of the Federal Republic, at the level of daily life it was experienced primarily as a time of scarcity, and more importantly was linked in the individual mind with times of scarcity in the past, such as 1915-1918, or 1923, not as a time of hope for the building of a prosperous future. See Manfred J. Enssle, "Five Theses on German Everyday Life after World War II," *Central European History* 26(1), 1993, pp. 1-19. As for the GDR, what is interesting and should be investigated further is how the post-war period was associated in interviews *before* the *Wende* as a time of building or rebuilding, not scarcity (contrasting with Enssle's finding in the West) but is associated with scarcity *today*. Could this be related to the fears of another depression on the horizon?

[42] Alas, I am unable to find any other evidence for this event in the secondary literature or English language press. Though Frau St. spoke in racial stereotypes, this event was not spoken of with a feeling of intense hatred for the Jews.

[43] For a look at who would volunteer information to Niethammer on their own involvement in the 17 June uprising, see Lutz Niethammer, "Where Were *You* on 17 June? A Niche in Memory," in Luisa Passerini, ed., pp. 45-69.

[44] An excellent and brief conceptualization of the movement that broke the SED's stranglehold on power, the rising human tide out of the GDR to the Federal Republic via Hungary and the FRG embassies in Prague and Warsaw in 1989-90, and the arguably more courageous but ultimately less important reform movement of the fall of 1989, is John Torpey, "Two Movements, Not a Revolution: Exodus and Opposition in the East German Transformation," *German Politics and Society* Summer, 1992, pp. 21-42.

[45] For one thing, Fulbrook notes the increased urbanization and industrialization of the West, as opposed to the primarily rural, small town, and agricultural nature of the GDR. See Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation* (London, 1991), pp. 221-226.

[46] One of the surprises of my research was an almost complete lack of discussion about religious affiliation, or any sense that one's faith was a means of dissenting or at least "inwardly emigrating" from socialism. However I did not specifically ask about religious faith. A number of younger people I met were involved in theological studies at the university in Halle, no doubt because the Protestant church did and still does provide an alternative viewpoint on religious as well as social issues, in contrast to the prevailing atheist and agnostic beliefs among the young. One younger person told me, however, that her family had not even trusted the nominally free Protestant church as a place to criticize the system. She believed all groups meeting in churches in the GDR were infiltrated thoroughly by the Stasi.

[47] For balanced studies on West German identity and the Nazi past see Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), Richard Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow* (New York, 1989), Peter Baldwin, ed., *Reworking the Past*, (Boston, 1990), and for briefer analyses see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, 2nd edition (New York, 1989), chapter 9, and Jürgen Habermas "Yet Again: German Identity -- A Unified Nation of Angry DM-Burghers?," New German Critique Winter 1991, pp. 84-101. The only useful analyses of East German identity I am aware of are those of Fulbrook ,1989, 1991, pp. 291-317, and "Nation, State, and Political Culture in Divided Germany," John Breuilly, ed., *The State of Germany* (New York, 1992), pp. 177-200, Borneman, *Belonging*,1991 and "State, Territory, and Identity Formation," 1991, and Ardagh, 1987, 1991. The most recent book on the history of East German society generally, including chapters by Niethammer, Wierling and many others is Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994).

[48] For a brief discussion of Marxist approaches to explaining fascism, see Kershaw, 1989, pp. 24-26. A more recent and detailed article on the SED's interpretation of fascism and its use of antifascism to legitimate its rule is Jürgen Danyel "Die geteilte Vergangenheit. Gesellschaftliche Ausgangslagen und politische Dispositionen für den Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Widerstand in beiden deutschen Staaten nach 1949," Jürgen Kocka, ed., *Historiche DDR-Forschung: Aufsätze und Studien* (Potsdam, 1993), pp. 129-147. Danyel argues that the doctrine of antifascism was derived from the earliest communist writings on fascism in the 1920s, which depicted it as a function of monopoly capital, but that antifascism became in the GDR more or less a superimposition of fascism onto bourgeois society generally. Not only did this concept allow the SED to claim to have totally broken with the Nazi past, but to claim also to have broken from the failed parliamentary democracy of Weimar, as well as to demarcate itself from the "fascist" FRG. Apparently the only recent German tradition the SED did attach itself to was that of the communist resistance in the Third Reich and the failed revolution of 1918. Danyel also suggests that the GDR's claims in the 1950s to be *the* German nation would have been unthinkable without the doctrine of antifascism. For KPD communiques on Nazi victimization of the working class, see J. K. A. Thomaneck and James Mellis, eds., *Politics, Society, and Government in the German Democratic Republic*, pp. 13-14, 20, 154-7.

[49] Indeed, they seem to have been aware of this themselves. Eve Rosenhaft's research indicates that the exiled KPD members in Moscow had called on the Communist underground in Germany to organize "popular opposition," which they were in no position to do. While Communists in Germany built networks, produced illegal publications, and encouraged individual opposition, by 1945 the Moscow exiles had come to the conclusion that the working class had "succumbed to fascism." While this did not mean converting the population to socialist principles was ever considered impossible, it is in striking contrast to the later assertions that the Red Army had liberated the German people from "a kind of occupying power", and that "the activity of German resistance bore witness to the moral claim of the German people." Rosenhaft, "The Uses of Remembrance: The Legacy of the Communist Resistance in the German Democratic Republic," in Francis R. Nicosia and Lawrence D. Stokes, eds., *Germans against Nazism: Essays in Honour of Peter Hoffman* (New York: 1990), pp. 369-388.

[50] For problems of denazification see Fulbrook,1991, pp. 141-150.

[51] A good example of studies of the GDR that concentrate on SED domination and make little attempt to investigate interaction with the state is Henry Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic: The Search for Identity* (Boulder, CO., 1985). All that is discussed is how the state seeks to *create* an identity for the people and for itself in the world through ideology and economic planning, as if the response of the working population is of no consequence. Meanwhile, since 1989, some information from surveys of students in the GDR from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s suggests that an overwhelming majority were in support of the system in early surveys, followed by a gradual decline through the mid-eighties. Interestingly support from apprentices and young workers declined faster and further than among university students. University students, of course, had more to lose if they were deemed politically unreliable. See Manfred Kuechler, "Political Attitudes and Behavior in Germany: The Making of a Democratic Society," Michael G. Huelshoff, Andrei S. Markovits, and Simon Reich, eds., *From Bundesrepublik to Deutschland: German Politics after Unification* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1993), pp. 33-58, and especially pp. 43-49.

[52] See note 47.

[53] Fulbrook's most detailed examination of the developing political cultures in the two Germanies is Fulbrook, 1989, pp. 193-213.

[54] Fulbrook, 1992, p. 181.

[55] In Eric J. Hobsbawm's critically acclaimed book on nationalism, the author meets with the same frustration as practically every other author that has attempted to define "nation." "As an initial working assumption," writes Hobsbawm, "any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a 'nation', will be treated as such." E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 8.

[56] How one "imagines" that they belong to a community too large to be assembled in direct view has been explained as a phenomena related to the spread of modern mass communication techniques. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (2nd edition, London, 1991). Why the nation seems today to be the imagined community of choice is discussed in chapter 8, pp. 141-154. It must be remembered, however, that these communities of choice tend today to be nations in the ethno-linguistic sense, often the only remnants of community in the disintegrating bloc and the porous, economically unstable Third World. Hobsbawm, in a revised edition of his aforementioned book, is doubtful regarding the politico-economic viability of whatever states such ethnic-nationalists have formed or will attempt to form in the increasingly internationalized global economy. He characterizes ethnic strife amongst these rival groups and against foreigners generally as defensive reactions and retreats before "international population movements with the ultra-rapid, fundamental and unprecedented socioeconomic transformations so characteristic of the third quarter of our century." (p. 171) These 'needs to belong' are therefore symptoms of historical forces, not the forces themselves, and nationalism is not the world historic force it once was. Whatever anger and violence accompanies these forces of change, "multi-ethnic and multi-communal states are (now) the norm." (p. 179) Not surprisingly, 'national economies' are losing prominence as well, as multi-national enterprises and agencies "outside the control of state governments" multiply. The present ethnic strife and myriad movements for national separatism are better seen as "complicating factor(s)." Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (2nd edition, Cambridge, 1992), pp. 163-192.

[57] Fulbrook, 1989, p. 204. She borrows this term from Günter Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt* (Munich, 1986), pp. 115-69. Gaus is a former West German ambassador to the GDR.

[58] Ibid., pp. 204-5.

[59] Ibid., p. 205.

[60] For an overview of the working classes' responses to National Socialist attempts to penetrate their working and social milieu, see Peukert, pp. 101-124. See also note 12.

[61] Fulbrook, 1989, p. 207, and 1991, p. 182-3.

[62] What Fulbrook cites as crucial to the emergence of unofficial peace and environmental movements in the GDR of the 1980s is the compromise the Lutheran Church reached with the SED, that allowed the former to have semi-independent voice as a "discussion partner" with the state. By the early eighties, the church had attracted numerous groups and individuals seeking an outlet for their dissenting opinions and began to serve as a kind of umbrella under which dissent could be incorporated into the political process. It was not anticipated, however, that these unofficial movements would outgrow the umbrella and emerge as genuine opposition, which they did after the Soviet Union declared that it would no longer interfere in the internal affairs of its allies in 1989. For the pivotal role of the Lutheran church see Fulbrook, "Co-option and Commitment: Aspects of Relations Between Church and State in the German Democratic Republic," *Social History*, 12(1) Spring, 1987.

[63] Borneman, *Belonging*, p. 119. More will follow on this -- what I see as a major oversight in his book.

[64] A brief summary of these expressions of victimization can be found in Borneman, *Belonging*, 1992, pp. 287-291, and in Borneman, *Cultural Anthropology*, 1992, pp.45-62, esp. pp. 54-56.

[65] Borneman, *Belonging*, pp. 36-56, but I recommend a careful reading of everything before this chapter, as the concepts are extremely complex, and quite frankly not clearly explained.

[66] For more detail in the GDR's model lifecourse as Borneman has interpreted it, see I bid., pp. 74-118.

[67] Ibid. The two respective "model life courses" of the GDR and FRG are extrapolated and compared in the same chapter, "State Strategies and Kinship." For more details on West German German family policy, see also Moeller, Note 9.

[68] The confusion surrounds what Borneman calls master narratives, to which an individual may appeal in order to connect his life experiences into a coherent framework, rather like a genre in literature. The state's model lifecourse provides such a genre, which in this case was centered around building an egalitarian socialist utopia. When this master narrative did not manifest itself in the stories of the older generation, because they focused instead on their life experience as a series of victimizations, Borneman suggested that they appealed to no master narrative, from the state or otherwise. This generation could not locate a master narrative, while their Western counterparts told their lifestories in congruence with the FRG's master narrative of restoration of and assimilation to a class-based and gendered hierarchy. Both states promised that their "nation-building" strategy would rebuild Germany and return it to prosperity, although based on egalitarianism in the GDR case, on a socioeconomic hierarchy in the West. Western success translated to a fairly stable identification with the FRG, but also contributed to a perception of victimization in the East. Given that it is clear today that most GDR citizens, particularly the young, did not seem to identify with the FRG, despite being envious, and even those who did could not share in its sociopolitical milieu, what was their identity? Master narratives can exist, apparently, outside the states legal commentary for a group of people with shared experiences if most of them employ a similar genre to construct their lifestories, but victimization, according to Borneman, does not qualify as a master narrative. What the eastern identity was for the older generation is never explained. The reader is left wondering if it had been merely a wish to be more like the West Germans.

[69] We have seen above how the KPD/SED interpreted the immediate past. In terms of the longer term of German history, the SED at first cast itself as successfully realizing the socialist aspirations of the failed German revolutions of 1848 and 1918 and as remaking the Russian October revolution of 1917. As time passed and the GDR's position became more secure, additional elements were incorporated into the "progressive" view of history, in order to root the GDR more firmly in peculiarly German traditions. In the process Prussian expansion and militarism were recast in a better light, and such German personalities as Martin Luther, Frederick the Great, and Bismarck were identified for their roles in the economic transitions Marx outlined as historically progressive.

[70] Martin McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic Since 1945* (New York, 1983), p. 242.

[71] Fulbrook, 1989, p. 201.

[72] Borneman, *Belonging*, p. 119.

[73] The reference is to Lutz Niethammer, et al., 1991.

[74] "Since many narrative accounts of life under the Nazis have already been published, I am going to begin with stories about the end of the Third Reich and the beginning of post-war life." Borneman, *Belonging*, p. 121.

[75] No one expressed sympathy for today's right-wing extremists either, though, as we shall see, there was a consensus that Germany did have a foreigner problem today (rather than an extremist problem) that required a non-violent solution.

[76] Childs' discussion of the GDR economy can be found in 1988, pp. 140-164. Fulbrook is much more positive, even though both authors note how difficult the beginnings were, with Soviet reparations and no Marshall plan aid. Fulbrook suggests, as I have, that pride in the limited accomplishments of the GDR economy -- i.e. putting it in a realistic international perspective -- is not unreasonable when derived from comparison with its COMECON allies, rather than comparing it to a "Western" standard, as Childs did. See Fulbrook, 1991, pp. 221-229.

[77] The issue of Nazi crimes as relative to, and even inspired by Stalinist terror was raised by German historian Ernst Nolte in an article in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 6, 1986. This suggestion was attacked by the German philosopher Juergen Habermas. His accusation that Nolte and several other conservative historians writing at the time were seeking to deny the unique evil of National Socialism in the hopes of promoting an identity for the Federal Republic freed from the Nazi past touched off the *Historikerstreit*, or historians' debate. In the virulent exchange that followed, those who sought to relativise the Nazi crimes were basically defeated, but this has not prevented such ideas from circulating at the "street level" in Germany. The problem of the daily life/oral history perspective and the Holocaust itself will be addressed in a later section.

[78] Such silence as this does seem an attempts to develop an imperviousness to Nazism. Similar responses have been characterized as a form of resistance, and, so the argument goes, it is not fair to label all such behavior as passive consent or indifference. If research into individual behavior under dictatorships begins without blanket labeling, in the long run it will arguably provide more understanding of the variety of possible responses outside approval or active opposition in such circumstances. However, the fact still remains that such a posture indicates some feeling of helplessness. See Kershaw, pp. 151-154, for a brief introduction into this concept, known in German as *Resistenz*. The original idea was suggested in Martin Broszat et. al, ed. *Bayern in der NS Zeit*, 6 vols., (Munich, 1977-83).

[79] Fulbrook, 1991, pp. 244-53.

[80] Voter turnout in the first free election in Eastern Germany since 1933 on March 18, 1990, was 93.38%, but only 70% voted in the East German state elections of October 14, 1990, and 75.1% in the December 1990 Bundestag elections. For more on the voting in the transition to united Germany, see Konrad Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (Oxford, 1994) pp. 115-134, 177-196.

[81] Apparently this is not just an old wives' tale. William L. Shirer, an American journalist who reported from Germany on many of Hitler's public activities and later wrote the widely read *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York, 1960), noted that a source close to Hitler told him how the Fuehrer hurled himself to the floor and chewed on the carpet corner while waiting for news in the Czechoslovak crisis of September, 1938. See p. 391.

[82] Fulbrook, 1992, p. 184.

[83] Fulbrook describes "the majority of non-active citizens in the West" as "happy, but passive." See Fulbrook, 1991, pp. 308-315.

[84] See Childs, chapter 6. Between state-owned farms and collectives, 95% of farm land was in within the "socialist sector."

[85] See Part V.

[86] See Childs, chapter 10.

[87] Regarding societal pressure see Ibid.

[88] Borneman, *Belonging*, pp. 149-151.

[89] "Germany" at times appears to mean only the government, but also can be understood as "us," the human collective that all of these people speak of as if they are members. Of course, it is both a unified and divided collective, depending on the context.

[90] Some anger is expressed to this day for the firebombing of Dresden, the ancient Saxon capital, in February, 1945. The GDR could never afford such extensive restorations of its city centers as could the FRG. The ruins from the war remained more visible in the GDR, and the memory of arguably unnecessary destruction remains more intense there, by and large.

[91] This is not to suggest that there were no active dissenters in the East. Among the better known from this generation are Robert Havemann, whom Fulbrook has described as a "committed communist." He was imprisoned with Eric Honecker under the Nazis, and later as director of the Physical-Chemical Institute had large audiences for his lectures that were critical of both Stalinism and what he considered "a certain legacy of Nazism in the GDR." A firm believer in some kind of market responsive to the needs of "the whole community of socialism," rather than to capital or the ruling oligarchy, and greater freedom of speech and press, he had hoped the "Prague Spring" of 1968 might have the effect of liberalizing other socialist regimes -- that is till it was crushed by the Warsaw Pact troops. After losing his job for his views in 1964, he spent most of the rest of his life under house arrest. Fulbrook, 1991, pp. 268-9. Among the writers who stayed in the GDR after 1953 and continued to call for greater freedom and reform, the most notable of the older generation was Stefan Heym, who had left Germany in 1933 and fought against Hitler in the US army, but was later removed from the US zone due to his communist sympathies. He immigrated from the US to the GDR in 1952, and from that time was a voice for creative freedom. His works were, as Fulbrook has suggested, semi-critical of the regime throughout, and he joined with other noted GDR intellectuals in protesting during periods of intensifying restrictions on expression in 1956, 1965, and again in 1976, during the exiling of the singer-poet Wolf Biermann. His history of the 17 June uprising was banned in the GDR for years before eventually being published. He was also highly acclaimed in the West. Childs, pp. 73, 206, 215, 223 and 352. For more on the cultural elite of the GDR, see Ibid., pp. 195-228. More recently, and a bit younger, is Jens Reich, a committed socialist, who, along with Havemann's widow, was among those who founded New Forum in the fall of 1989, intended not to be representative of a new party platform, but an actual forum for "open and free discussion," It was intended to supplement the only alternative forum to that point, the Protestant church, but was directed towards non-Christians. New Forum was the first step outside the "umbrella" of the church for East German dissent, and demanded similar recognition to that received by the church in 1978. (See Note 62). However, it and other groups springing up at the time were interested in going much further than pressing the government on environmental issues, disarmament, or human rights. The call was increasingly for reform of the government itself. Fulbrook, 1991, p. 325-6. A Summary of dissent in the GDR can be found in ibid., pp. 265-290.

[92] Kershaw, p. 40.

[93] Fulbrook, 1991, pp. 244-53.

[94] Kershaw, p. 41. In Ibid. Fulbrook hesitates to refer to any period in the GDR as totalitarian.

[95] Kershaw, p. 34.

[96] Recall for example Herr H. being forced back to work by the Russians after 17 June, 1953, or Herr G. V. stating that he must produce a certain amount in his garden or go to prison, the latter not specifying who would have imprisoned him in such a case. The Russians were presumably to blame for the death of Herr W.'s father, which I have not mentioned. He apparently died at Buchenwald when it was used by the Soviets to detain political prisoners after the war. Although Herr W. was never able to find a record of it. Herr W. is still extremely angry about this, as he declared to me that his father was only a local dues collector for the party in his village, and apparently had to join the party to get a job in an airplane factory in Halberstadt.

[97] For information on the development of SED recruiting in the 1950s and 60s, see McCauley, pp. 68-73, 127-33. For the Nazi party, see Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1992), pp. 83-5.

[98] Studies of the relationships of both the Gestapo and the Stasi to German society have noted that both were able to function efficiently in their persecution of ideological non-conformity and -- in the former case -- racial mixing, due to the great number of civilian informants, both paid and unpaid. For the Stasi see Marcuse, Note 29. For the Gestapo see Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy: 1933-45* (Oxford, 1990). In the latter work the emphasis is on the voluntary nature of informing on violations of the state's policies of racial segregation, in the former it is noted that many hundreds of thousand were paid to inform.

[99] For a recent, readable, and balanced discussion of the evolution of totalitarian theory, see Irving Howe, "Totalitarianism Reconsidered: Yesterday's Theories, Today's Realities," *Dissent* Winter, 1991, pp. 63-71.

[100] For the *Historikerstreit*, which I referred to above, see notes 2, 47, and 77. For an excellent summary of the implications of Ronald Reagan's visit to Bitburg for the memory and uniqueness of the Holocaust, see Geoffrey Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Historical Perspective* (Bloomington, IN, 1986). One finds not only essays in this book, but also numerous editorial Comments, cartoons, and photographs on the problem of remembering and memorializing of the Holocaust.

[101] For a concise outline of this controversy, and the author's own insights on the matter, see Kershaw, Chapter 8, "Normality and Genocide," pp. 150-167.

[102] The references here, made in Peukert's introduction, are in the former case, to David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution* (London, 1966), and Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (London, 1968). The latter is to Geoff Eley and David Blackborn, *The Peculiarities of Germany History* (New York, 1984). Though the first two books are discussing the results of the Third Reich and the last its causes, both are pointing to the Third Reich as part of the process of capitalist/industrial modernization.

[103] Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (New York, 1987). What Marrus argues is that anti-Semitism actually did not attract most individuals to Nazism, it was actually the other way around. Individuals were drawn to the dynamic personality of Hitler, and anti-Semitism was central because he said it should be. See pp. 8-18.

[104] This argument is something of an assimilation of Kershaw 166-7, and Peukert, 14-17.

[105] This is the argument of Claudia Koonz. She writes that the Nazi policies encouraging traditional patriarchal families and a marked separation of the private female domestic sphere and the public male political sphere created an atmosphere of "normality" in the home and family that allowed Nazi men and fellow travelers to perpetrate crimes while retaining a "normal" and reassuring domestic "refuge." However, all the while, this "normal," unpolitical sphere was increasingly politicized, with children pressured into Nazi organizations and women's groups encouraging wives and mothers to assist in "neighborhood watches" against violations of Nazi racial codes, and to take no pity on neighboring Jews and others who were persecuted due to their lack of "fitness" for membership in the *Volk*. Eventually the private sphere that was promised to women was destroyed by this increasing politicization, culminating with the recruitment of women into the war effort. But while it lasted, the Nazi homefront did in fact aid and abet Nazi terror. German women, then, were far from passive victims, as some of their feminist daughters chose to characterize them later. See Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (New York, 1987).

[106] Herbert, in Bessel, ed., p. 97.

[107] For several examples of how individuals Niethammer interviewed "wandered onto" the Holocaust and Nazism, see Niethammer, 1985 (vol. 3), 152-171, and Niethammer, 1991, pp. 136-146. Discussions of neighbors, dealings with the bureaucracy over ownership of a house, and how a spouse was met, led three subjects to opinions on the NSDAP, *Kristallnacht*, and Jewish deportations in these interviews, subjects that would likely have not come up without additional "benign" questions, or requests for clarification. Incidentally, I have taken it as something of a given that during the war the German public was aware of at least incidences of mass-murder that were part of the Final Solution, despite what Michael Marrus called the iron curtain of secrecy the Nazis had drawn down around the mass shootings, death camps and ghetto clearings in Eastern Europe. Since the 1970s a number of studies of shown this to be the case (see for example note 110 below). The most recent, arguing as previous studies have that news of genocide leaked out to the German public via soldiers on leave and in transit to Russia, and more generally that a combination of indifference and general approval for goals of racial purity, if not the means used to achieve it, were essential for the radicalization of anti-Jewish policy, is David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

[108] This attitude seems at least partly in line with the research on foreign labor in the Third Reich by Herbert, 1987: "the foreigners were simply there, part of the workaday scenery." (p. 191). The author asserts that the vast majority of Germans became accustomed to the presence of millions of foreign workers in their midst as a part of daily experience, and years later still do not connect them with Nazi crimes, or even consider their conscription or the harsh treatment and deplorable living conditions they were forced into as criminal at all. The author argues that popular prejudices against Poles were part "of racist predispositions and potential in the German population." (p. 190) From there, the system of forced labor, which included a racial hierarchical order with Germans at the pinnacle, with "visible preferential treatment" for them, and terror and repression against the "lower races," served "to reduce and defuse the social tensions within the class structure of German society substantially." Racism evolved from prevailing prejudices and stereotypes into concrete practice of a "daily habit," and concern for individual survival "left little time or opportunity to view the misery of the foreign workers as anything special or out of the ordinary" in any case. (pp. 190-1) Even though the treatment of many of these workers seems to have improved after Stalingrad, as propaganda aimed at the work force tried to de-emphasize racial stratification in favor of solidarity against the Bolshevist threat, Herbert gives no sense of this prevailing "daily habit" of racism changing for better or worse amongst the population. Likewise whatever period of the war these memories of foreign workers came from in my research, the attitude was the same. However, the fact that those I interviewed stressed the kind treatment and even a sense of solidarity with these workers that they remembered seems to indicate that, contrary to Herbert's thesis, they have retained some sense of the criminal aspect of the forced labor policies. On the other hand, perhaps they were outraged merely by how most of these individuals were *treated*, rather than the concept of forced labor *per se*. It is plausible to characterize these people as not objecting to the workers' presence on utilitarian grounds, so long as they were not mistreated, without assuming they had fallen into the "work-a-day" racism Herbert described. Yet, however useful and necessary they were to the German war economy, it had to have been obvious that these workers, and Eastern workers in particular, were in the Reich against their will. What is implied in these statements, then, is that both the workers and the people close to my informants who used them were making the best of a system that they could not control. There seems to have been a bit more of an effort to locate these events within Nazi criminality than Herbert has suggested, even if they are still viewed from the perspective of a helpless bystander. In any event no one felt any need to attempt to rationalize the use of these workers to me.

[109] Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz* (Urbana, IL, 1970) is an excellent source for background on all Nazi anti-Jewish measures before the war.

[110] Resistance to the boycott has been noted by Kershaw in a brief study of popular opinion and anti-Jewish policy, based, as is his longer book on popular opinion in Third Reich Bavaria, on reports of the Gestapo/SD and exiled SPD leaders with informants still in Germany. The sources must be viewed cautiously, but give evidence that when personal interest was not at stake, the great majority of Germans were increasingly indifferent to Jewish persecution as the war came and grew worse. See Kershaw, "The Persecution of the Jews and German Popular Opinion in the Third Reich," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 26 (1981), pp. 261-289.

[111] An exceptional effort to compare the Holocaust with other genocides, without denying its uniqueness, has been produced by Israeli Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer, "The Place of the Holocaust in Contemporary History," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* I (1984), pp. 201-24.

[112] Frank Stern, "Antagonistic Memories: The Post-War Survival and Alienation of Jews and Germans," in Luisa Passerini, ed., p. 34. For more detail on these recollections, drawn from the Niethammer project in the *Ruhrgebiet*, see Frank Stern, *The Whitewashing of the Yellow Badge: Antisemitism and Philosemitism in Postwar Germany* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 213-263 .

[113] This conclusion is supported by Stern. See Ibid., pp. 33-34. He also writes regarding the memories of 'vanishing' Jews that "this may indeed have been in keeping with the actual facts of social reality -- perhaps the individual did not know any Jews personally. The relationship with Jews in such a case, quite independently to Nazi propaganda and anti-Jewish measures, may naturally have remained relatively abstract."

[114] For informative studies of Germany's current problems with "foreigners," see Eliot Neaman, "The Escalation of Terror in Germany: Is it Time to Leave?" *Tikkun* 8(1) pp. 32-25,75, and Jane Kramer, "Letter from Europe -- Neo-Nazis: A Chaos in the Head," *The New Yorker* June 14, 1993, pp. 52-70.

[115] John D. Ely, "The Black Brown Hazelnut in a Bigger Germany: The Rise of a Radical Right as a Structural Feature," in Michael G. Huelshoff et. al., eds., p. 238.

[116] See note 114.

[117] See Peter Schneider, *The German Comedy: Scenes of Life after the Wall* (New York, 1991), pp. 153-172.

[118] The reference to Schneider's work (ibid.) is from Tony Judt,1992, pp. 100-101.

[119] Katherine Verdery, " Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Rumania," *Slavic Review* 52(2), Summer, 1993, pp. 179-203.

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