

## GERHARD ZWERENZ: The Trotsky Taboo

Gerhard Zwerenz, a student of Ernst Bloch, who was expelled from the German Democratic Republic to the West in 1957 celebrates his 75th birthday this year. He is one of the few consistent anti-Stalinist veterans of the German left. With gentle irony, Zwerenz examines the German left's relationship to Leo Trotsky. And spares no one in the process, not even the small group of German Trotskyites, that is except Jakob Moneta. While Trotsky had always been present in French left thought, the situation in Germany was almost as bad as in Russia. Here, as well as there, Trotsky continued to be regarded as a non-person. Zwerenz discusses six different images of Trotsky: the writer, the reporter, the critic and analyst, the socialist and Menshevik, the Leninist Bolshevik and revolutionary strategist, the revolutionary opponent of Stalin, the exultant and the victim. The author concludes with the question: would a Trotskyite Soviet Union have also degenerated into brutality, the same way the Stalinist one did. His hope is that the reader's answer will be ›No‹.

## RUTH MAY: Stalinstadt 1955.

### A report of the German ›Quick‹ magazine

50 years ago, in summer of 1950, the corner stone was laid for a new town near Fürstenberg an der Oder in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The town was envisaged to become the home of the workers of an Eisenhüttenwerk (an iron smelting plant) which also had been in construction since 1950. This was referred to as the ›first socialist town in Germany‹ by GDR propaganda. From 1953 to 1961 the town's name was Stalinstadt, since then it carried the name Eisenhüttenstadt. In 1955 Hilmar Pabel was the first West-German journalist allowed to visit the town. His photo-reportage is the theme of the urban planner and ›Stalinstadt‹ specialist Ruth May's article. Having been a frontline reporter during war, Pabel had a very specific perspective of his subject leaving Cold War stereotypes aside. He only depicted the finished parts of the town which, at the time of his visit, was still under construction a camp consisting mainly of huts. Pabel's intention was to tell his people back home about the ›Neue Mensch‹ concept (the new socialist human being to be created, as propagated at the time) which he perceived as the continuation of the Nazi era concept of the national community and therefore, the real threat to the West.

Ruth May, who lives in Dortmund, subtly deciphers the currently prevailing Western view of the East.

## ULRICH BUSCH: Friedrich Nietzsche and the GDR

»The world in which we spiritually exist is one that is, in most regards, formed by Marx and Nietzsche« (Max Weber) – with this quotation Ulrich Busch starts his impressive review of how the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and his writings had been handled during the period of ›state socialism‹ in East Germany (the former German Democratic Republic). Paradoxically the works of Karl Marx – who comes from Trier, a town very close to the French border – officially

had a far greater reputation than those of Nietzsche – who was born and lived most time of his life Prussian province ›Saxonia‹, a core region of East Germany. No places or roads bare even his name. But the two great thinkers, Marx (in the West) and Nietzsche (in the East), deserved the same ›political functions‹ as ideological images of ›the evil‹. The rejection of Nietzsche in the GDR was originally based on the misuse of his works under the fascist Hitler-regime. Later his writings became taboo making a critical discussion of his philosophy impossible (and ›forbidden‹ by the political rulers). But during the 1970s occurred a remarkable change. In that time the works Nietzsche (together with Luther, and other former ›non-persons‹) were officially integrated into a revised ›concept of historical legacies of the first socialist German state‹.

### SIMONE BARCK: »Main Principle: Antifascist Resistance« The Perception of Resistance in the GDR until 1970

Communist resistance to Nazism prevailed nearly exclusively as the sole reference to resistance until 1970 in the GDR. Simone Barck draws a very faceted picture of research efforts of communist resistance. The disbanding, February 1953, of the VVN (Association of Victims of Nazi Persecution) persistently restricted possibilities to portray this resistance. With eagle eyes, the leadership of the SED made sure that the lion's share of recognition was granted to the ›leading role of the Communist Party of Germany« and its Moscow-based centre headed by Walter Ulbricht, even though, in fact, the leadership of the Communist Party – more often than not – had played an unimportant role. The key question was who, on the basis of what historic merits, should be entitled to a share of power. The eight-volume ›History of the German Labour Movement«, with the last volume published in 1966, finally established the legend of the leading role of the Communist Party's leadership as official truth of the party. It remained an eternal truth until the end of SED rule.

### JULIANE WETZEL: The Perception of Resistance in the Federal Republic of Germany until 1989

Until the 1960s West German public awareness of the manifold forms of resistance against Nazism mainly concentrated on the ›Men and Women of the 20 July 1944« (Graf Stauffenberg's attempt to assassinate Hitler). In the beginning they were regarded traitors. Only after 1952, when the then President of the FRG Heuss gave a positive assessment of their activities, the 20 July 1944 group together with ›Kreisauer Kreis« (Kreisau Circle) and ›Weiße Rose« (White Rose) began to play a legitimising role for the Federal Republic of Germany. As the GDR leadership relied on the role of communist resistance, no mentioning of it was made in the Federal Republic. In the 1960s public awareness gradually grew to the entire framework of political resistance, and with the 1970s, the resistance of ›the man in the street« also became part of public awareness. A hierarchy in the assessment of resistance – with 20 July 1944 at the top – even today continues to persist.

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