



# YOUTH OPPOSITION IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (GDR)

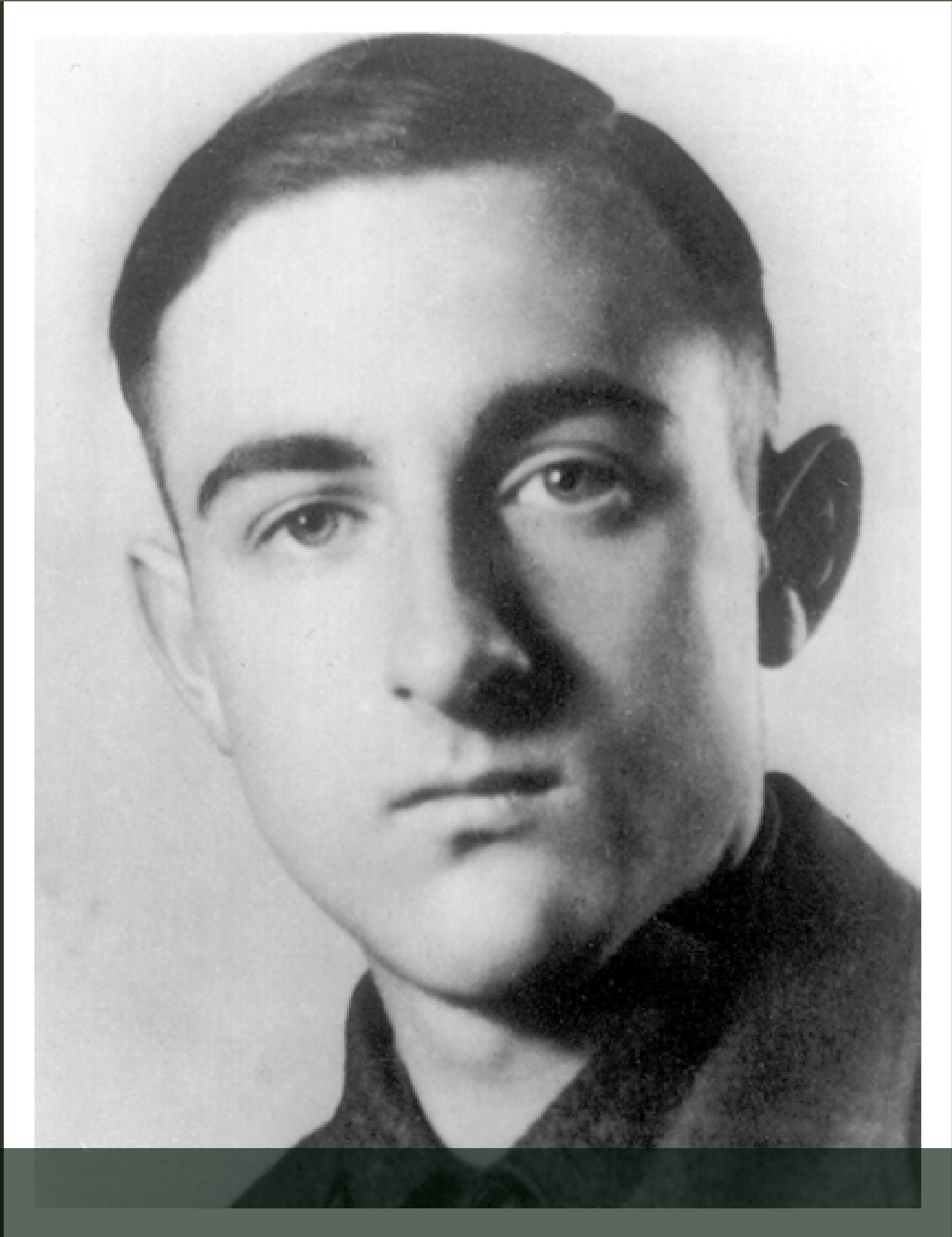
The dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) lasts forty years in the GDR, and dissent is articulated against it the entire time. Young people searching for guidance and truth confront over and over again the limits set by the regime. Music and literature are censored, music bands and writers forbidden; the militarization of the entire society gives the lie to official peace policies; elections are rigged. Whoever desires something else is penalized by the state, arrested, condemned. There are nevertheless people – from the Baltic Sea to the Thuringian Forest, in the cities and in the countryside – who resist and stand up for their ideals. It is often young people who take a stand. This exhibition presents some of the actors who emerged from this great variety of opposition and resistance.

*An exhibition of the Robert Havemann Society and the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship.*



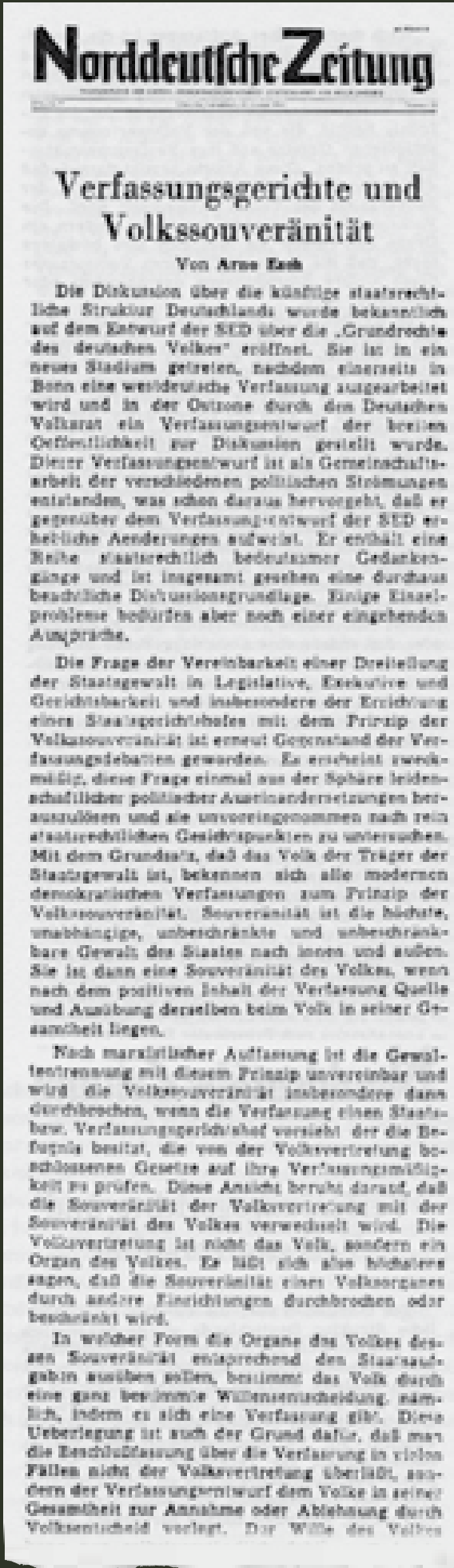
# ARNO ESCH

\* 1928 † 1951



Association of Former Rostock Students

“I feel closer to a liberal Chinese person than to a German communist.”



Norddeutsche Zeitung (newspaper), January 13, 1949

The clear thinker and sharp-tongued discussant writes numerous political newspaper articles. Excerpt from an article written by Arno Esch.

kann nun selbstverständlich dahin ausgedeutet werden, daß nicht ein Organ sondern mehrere Organe die Fülle der Staatsmacht ausüben. Das Volk kann auch in konkreter Form regeln, wie die Staatsorgane bei der Ausübung der Souveränität zusammenwirken sollen und ob das eine oder das andere eine ausschlaggebende Stellung besitzen soll. Wenn man aus diesem Gesichtspunkt die Frage der Verfassungsgerichtsbarkeit beleuchtet, ergibt sich zunächst, daß die Errichtung eines Verfassungsorgans nicht ohne weiteres als dem Prinzip der Volkssouveränität widersprechend angesehen werden kann. Doch muß noch ein anderes Moment in Erwägung gezogen werden, nämlich die verfassungsrechtlichen Formen des Zustandekommens der Staatsgerichtsbarkeit. Wenn ein Volk die Ausübung seiner Souveränität auf bestimmte Organe überträgt, dann mit der ausdrücklichen willensmäßigen Bestimmung ständiger Feststellung und Berücksichtigung des Volkswillens und ständiger Möglichkeit der Abberufung.

Als Beispiel sei hierbei auf die neuen deutschen Landesverfassungen Bezug genommen. Die west- und süddeutschen Verfassungen haben sich – soweit sie unverschieden fertiggestellt worden sind – am Anfang zum Prinzip der Staats- bzw. Verfassungsgerichtsbarkeit bekennen und sich dabei auch an diese überlieferen Bestimmungen gehalten. Die Landesverfassungen der ostdeutschen Bundesländer kennen mit einer einzigen Ausnahme eine solche Einrichtung nicht. Lediglich Thüringen hat sich ein Organ geschaffen, das – wenn auch der Ausdruck nicht verfassungsgemäß verwendet werden ist – alle Merkmale eines echten Verfassungsorgans aufweist. Über die Verfassungsgerichtsbarkeit von Göttingen entscheidet ein Gremium, bestehend aus dem Präsidenten und dem Vizepräsidenten des Landtags, einem Mitglied des Obergerichts, einem Mitglied des Verwaltungsgerichtes des Landes Thüringen und einem Vertreter der juristischen Fakultät der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. Die Beschlüsse dieses Ausschusses sind bindend und bedürfen keiner Bestätigung durch die Volksvertretung. Damit sind die Merkmale der Verfassungsgerichtsbarkeit gegeben.

Auch die Staatsgerichtsbarkeit der westdeutschen Länder besteht aus Personen, die entweder alle oder in der Mehrzahl durch die entsprechende Volksvertretung für eine in den einzelnen Verfassungen verschieden gewählte Zeitdauer gewählt werden. Meistens wird dieses Gremium aus Angehörigen der Volksvertretung und zum anderen Teil aus Fachleuten, das heißt aus Juristen zusammengesetzt. Dabei läßt sich in fast allen Fällen feststellen, daß mindestens die absolute Mehrheit der Mitglieder des Staatsgerichtshofes durch eine Wahl in diesen Amt berufen werden. In Konfliktfällen, das heißt dann, wenn der Staatsgerichtshof die Verfassungsmäßigkeit eines Gesetzes verneint, wird also nicht der Wille des Volkes durch ein Gremium gänzlich unabhängiges Organ unwirksam gemacht, sondern es liegt eine Meinungsverschiedenheit zwischen zwei Volksorganen vor, in dem die Meinung desjenigen entscheidet, dem für diese Fälle vom Volke durch ausdrückliche Willensbetätigung das Primat zugestanden worden ist. Von den anderen Aufgaben, wie sie verfassungsgemäß dem Staatsgerichtshofen zugewiesen werden und die man schlecht anderen Organen übertragen kann, soll in diesem Zusammenhang nicht gesprochen werden. Sicher ist jedenfalls soviel, daß von einer Durchbrechung des Prinzipes der Volkssouveränität durch die Errichtung eines Staatsgerichtshofes alleine nicht die Rede sein kann, als das Volk mittelbar oder unmittelbar die Zusammensetzung dieses Organs bestimmt.



Federal Archive / Poster 103-005-008

Arno Esch, who has not yet reached his sixteenth birthday, is drafted into the army in January 1944. After the war his family moves from Memel to Mecklenburg, where Esch begins to study at the University of Rostock in 1946. He aspires to an academic career, is considered to be extraordinarily talented and very hardworking.

According to Arno Esch’s liberal beliefs, individual liberty is the bedrock of human society. He helps expand the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Mecklenburg and becomes a member of the party’s executive committee in 1948. Esch calls for a democratic state governed by the rule of law, as well as for conscientious objection. As one of its first members, he brings his liberal values to the Free German Youth (FDJ), the – at first – seemingly nonpartisan and ecumenical youth organization. Arno Esch is also actively engaged in establishing independent youth organizations alongside the FDJ. All of this is a thorn in the side of the Soviet occupation power. While the FDJ is quickly made into a cadre training school for the communist SED, the Soviet secret police arrest Arno Esch in 1949. A Soviet Military Tribunal charges him with “counter-revolutionary activities”, “spying”, “anti-Soviet propaganda”, and “the creation of illegal groups”.

Arno Esch is sentenced to death in July 1950 and is shot in Moscow on July 24, 1951. He is only twenty-three years old.

The Liberals enter the 1946 elections in the Soviet zone of occupation with this poster. The twenty-year-old Arno Esch helped formulate his party’s program and rejects the idea of the LDP as a so-called “block party” forced to toe the SED’s line.



Photo Archive Marburg / LA 420915

The University of Rostock around 1950. Arno Esch studies law and economics here. In the fall of 1947, at the age of nineteen, he becomes the university advisor of the LPD state organization of Mecklenburg.



Rostock University Archive, Personnel File of Student Arno Esch

Arno Esch’s University of Rostock student ID. Shortly before his first state law exam, Esch is arrested – along with other mostly liberal students – by the Soviet secret police on October 18, 1949.



Robert Havemann Society

There are several resistance groups at the University of Rostock at this time. In the photo an excursion by a rowing group on Ascension Day in 1951. The following persons pictured here are condemned by a Soviet military tribunal in 1951: Hartwig Bernitt, Karl Alfred Gedowski, Alfred Gerlach, Otto Mehl.



Association of Former Rostock Students

Following Soviet penal law, a Soviet military tribunal in Schwerin gives either the death penalty or twenty-five years of hard labor to Arno Esch and thirteen other accused in 1951. Esch’s sentence is confirmed on April 4, 1951 in Moscow. He is shot. In the document shown here, the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union completely rehabilitates Arno Esch on May 30, 1991.



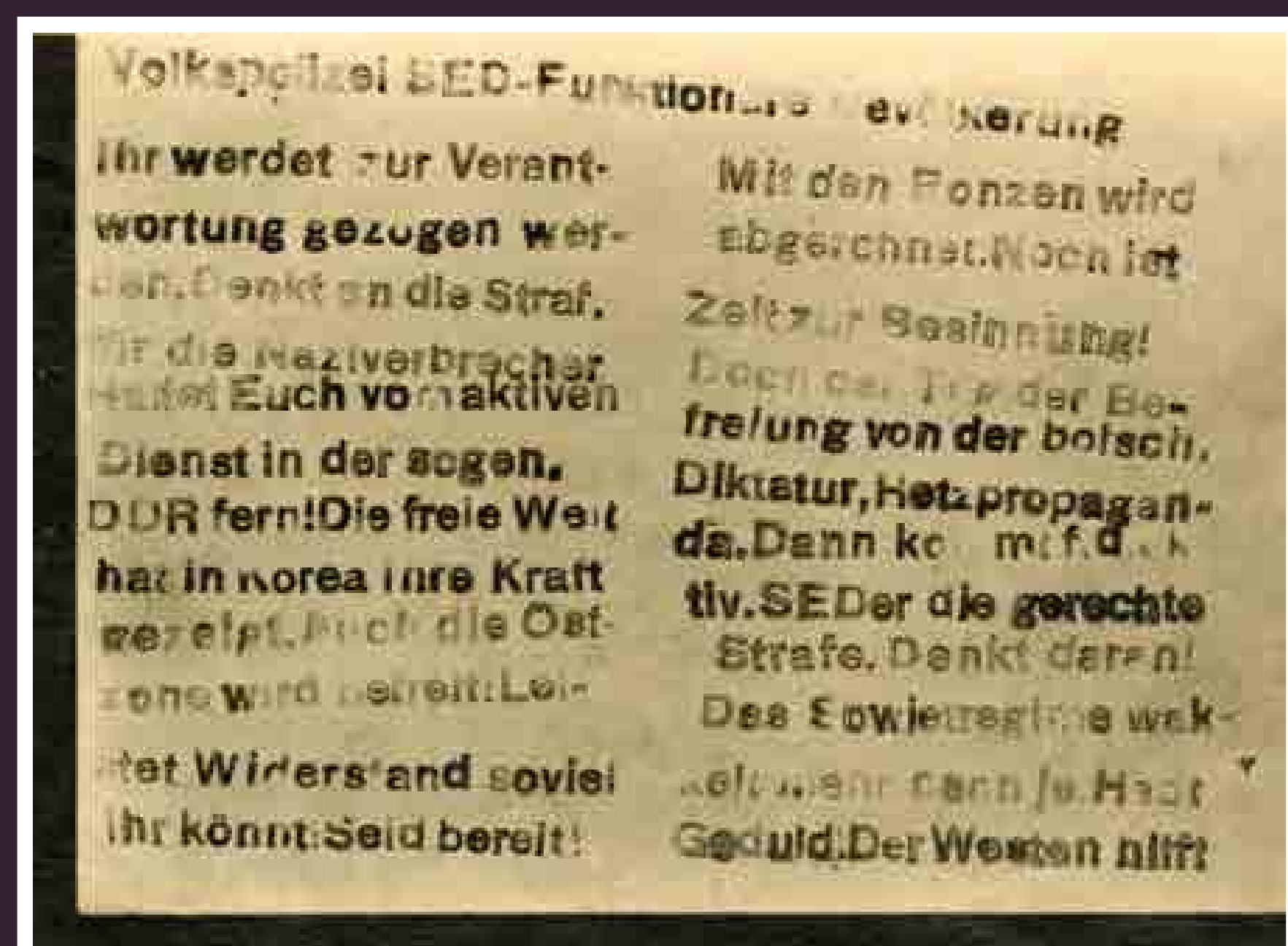
# HERMANN FLADE

\* 1932 † 1980



ullstein bild

*“I distributed the leaflets because of the political recognition that one had to struggle passively and actively against the GDR and its institutions.”*



BStU, MfS, Ast Chemnitz, AU 12/ 52, vol. 1

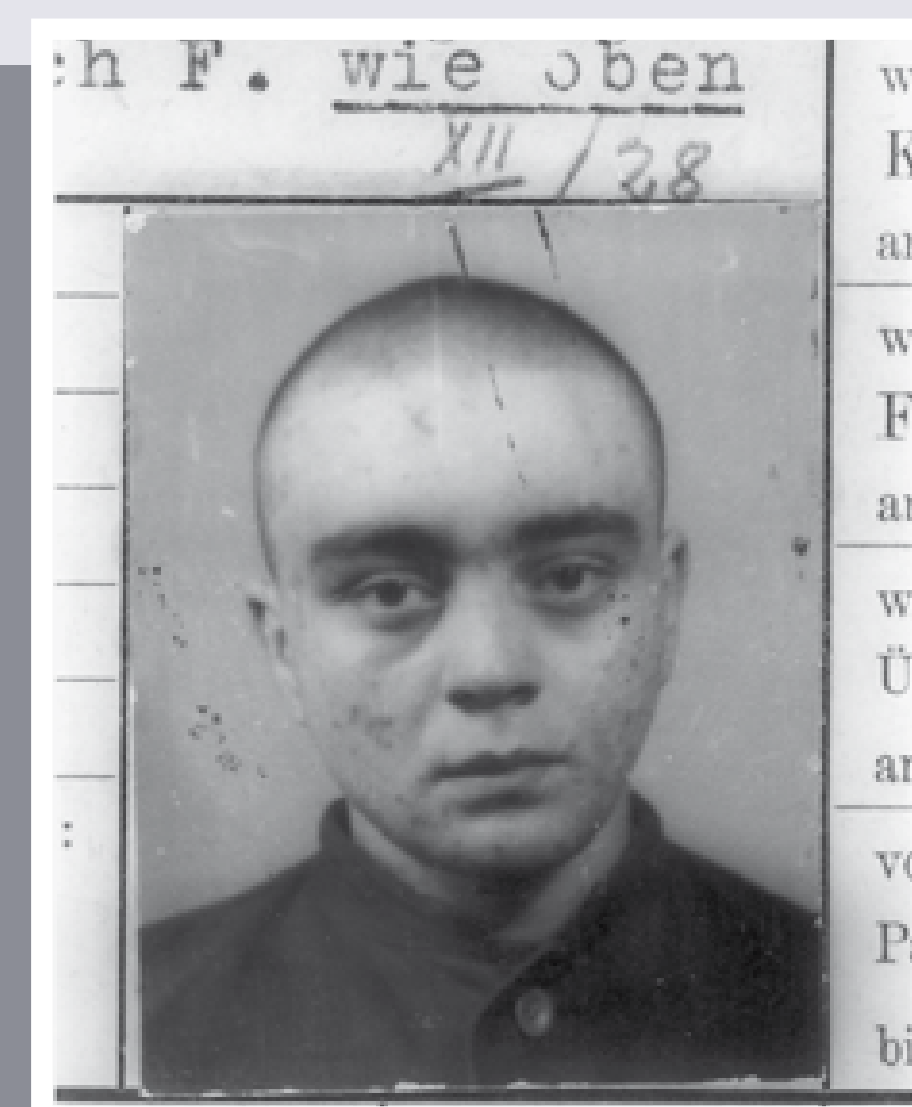
Flade makes such leaflets spontaneously and without any accomplices. He places them in mailboxes in his hometown Olbernhau.

In 1944 at age twelve, Hermann Flade, who is raised Catholic, takes an extremely unusual step: he quits the Hitler Youth. After the war Hermann Flade goes to school in Olbernhau in Saxony. In October 1949 he takes a year of absence from school in order to help support his family financially. He becomes a hewer for Wismut, a Soviet uranium mining company. The strenuous underground manual labor pays well. He speaks often with a Catholic priest about deficiencies in the GDR in the GDR, and witnesses the propaganda during the lead-up to the East German parliamentary elections of October 15, 1950. Flade is supposed to vote in favor of the predetermined election list. He finds that appalling. He spontaneously expresses his criticism about the electoral procedure. Flade uses a rubber stamp to make approximately 190 leaflets, which he distributes at night in Olbernhau. While distributing the leaflets on October 14, 1950, he is surprised by a police patrol. Flade injures one of the policemen with a pocket knife during a scuffle, and flees. He is arrested two days later and sentenced to death on January 10, 1951. There are hefty protests against this in the GDR and in western Germany. The SED regime is forced to reduce the penalty to fifteen years imprisonment.



BStU, MfS, ZA / AS 41 / 57, p. 49

A January 1951 leaflet opposing the fifteen-year jail sentence



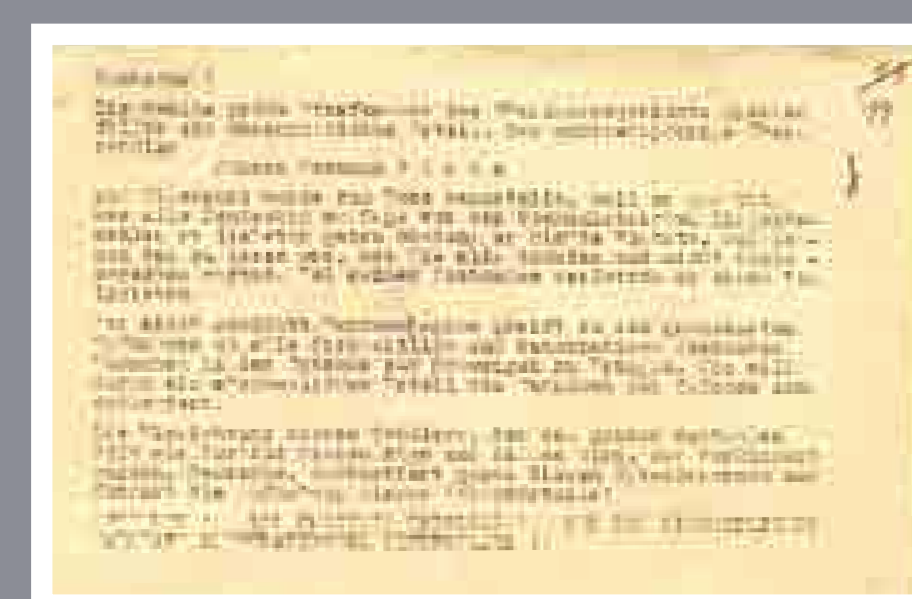
BStU, MfS, Ast Chemnitz

Hermann Flade is sentenced to death at a show trial because of “rabblousing”, “the plying of military propaganda”, “attempted murder”, and “resisting arrest”. A passport photograph from the arrest file in Waldheim.



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The communists want to consolidate their power in East Germany. Parliamentary and municipal elections are held in the fall of 1950 in line with the following motto by Walter Ulbricht, the head of the SED: “It has to appear democratic, but everything has to be in our control”. All of the seats are already assigned before election day, according to a preset distribution ratio, among the SED as well as the so-called block parties and mass organizations tolerated under their rule. An absolute majority is guaranteed for the SED since the majority of deputies from the mass organizations are SED members.



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Pupils from the town of Werdau formulate their protest against the death sentence in this leaflet. Because of such actions the youths are condemned a few months later to long-term prison sentences.



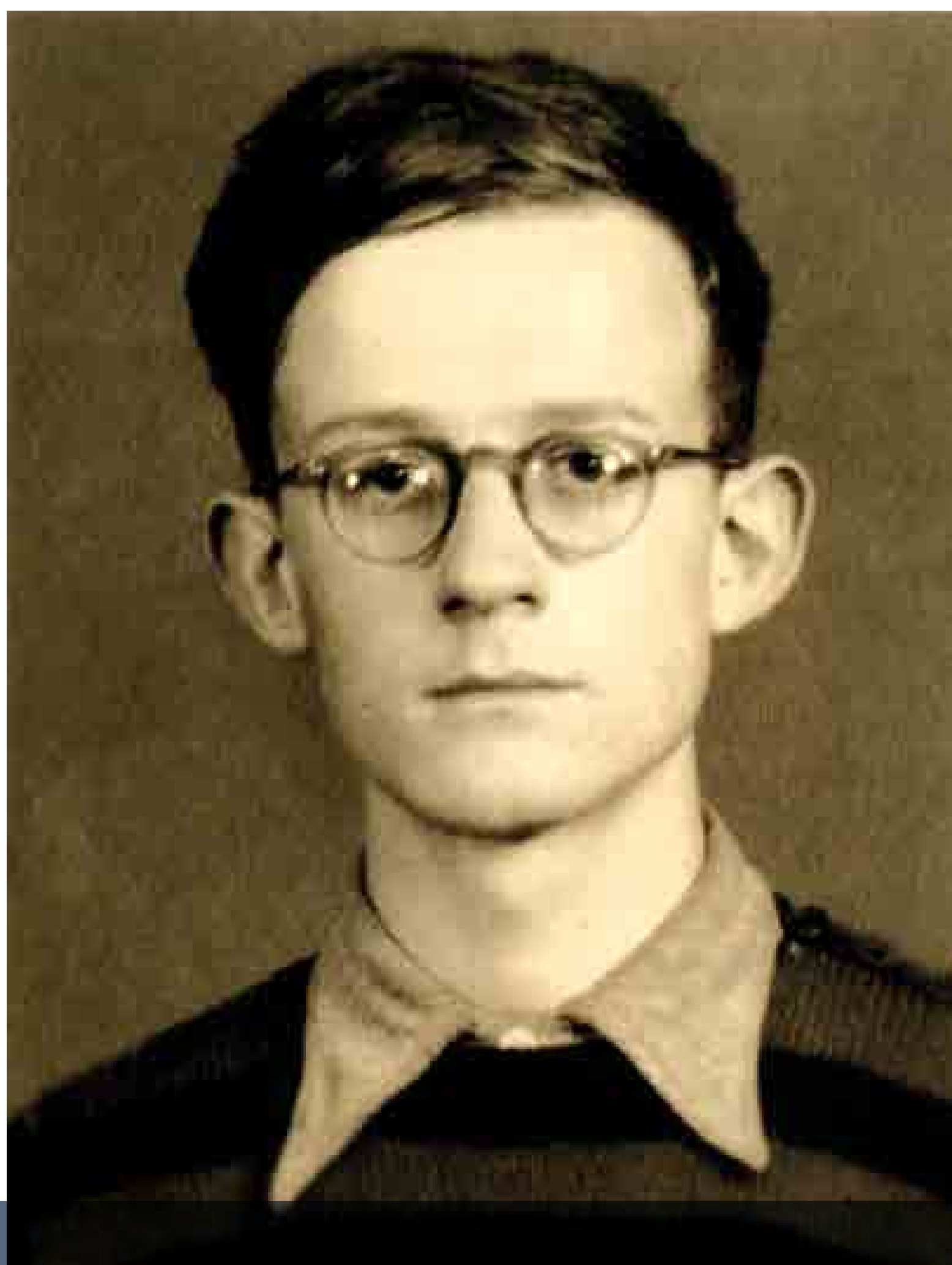
ullstein bild / dpa

Trauenstein in December 1960. Hermann Flade with his mother a few days after his release from prison and emigration to the Federal Republic. Flade dies in 1980, shortly before his forty-eighth birthday, as a result of the long-term effects of imprisonment.



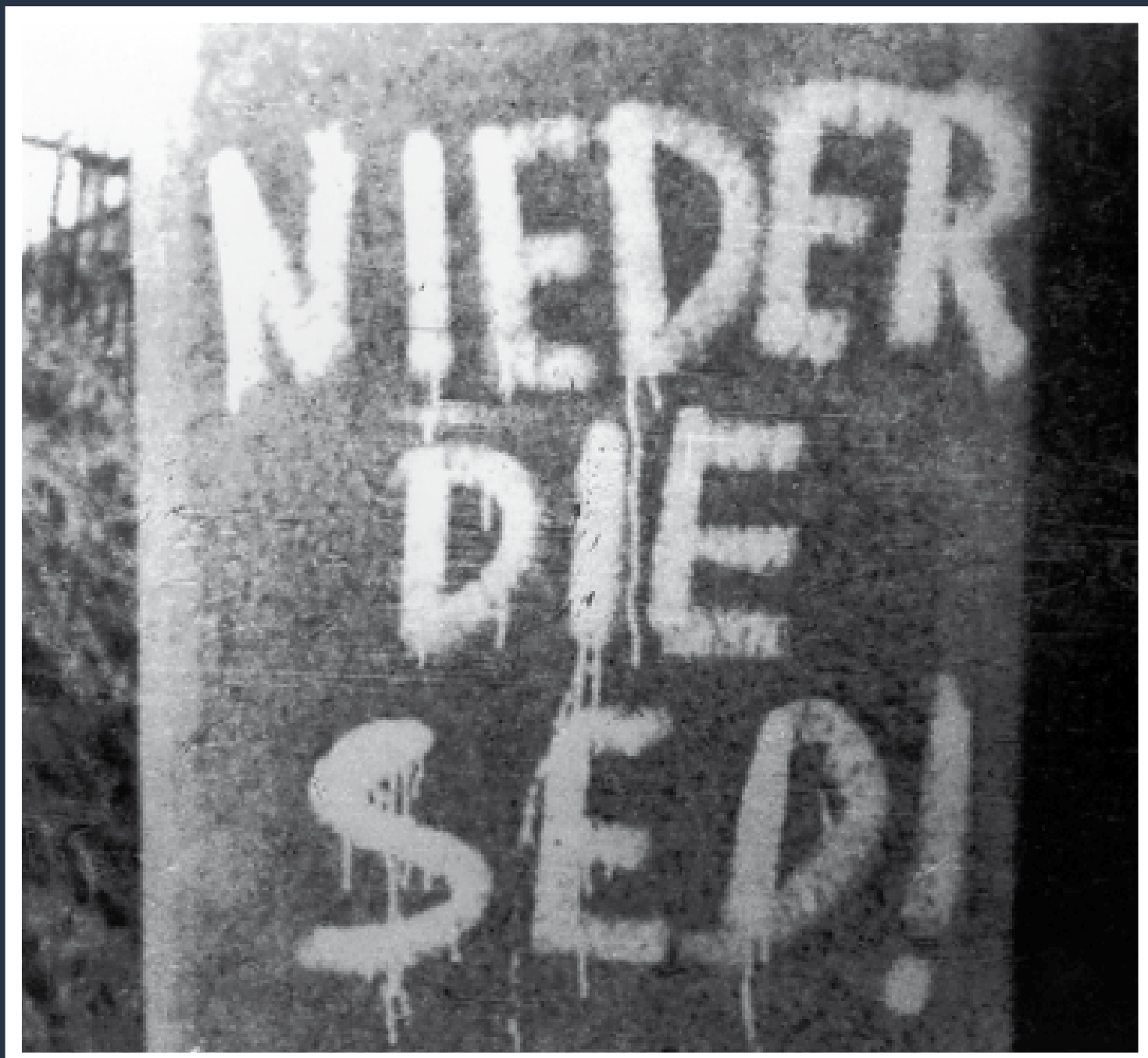
# THOMAS AMMER

\* 1937



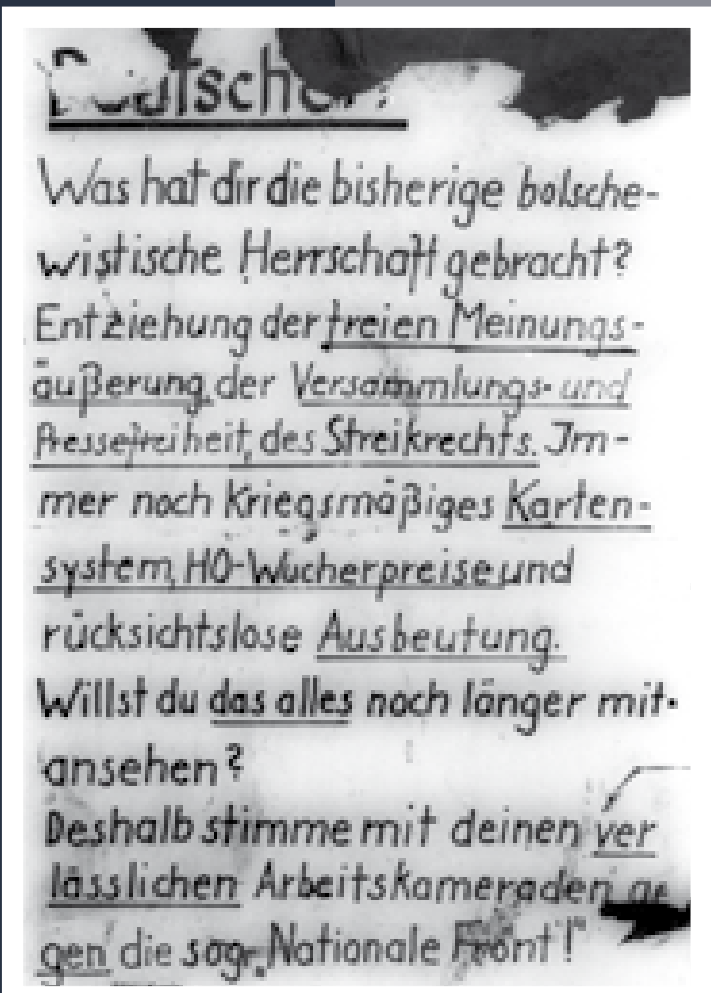
Robert Havemann Society

*“Given the recent experience of National Socialism, no one should be able to say that we did not defend ourselves.”*



BStU, MfS, Ast Gera, AU 33 / 58

In 1954, the Eisenberg Circle hangs this banner, which all travelers can easily read from the train on the railroad line between Eisenberg and Gera.



BStU, MfS, Ast Gera, AU 33 / 58

Thomas Ammer goes to school in Eisenberg in Thuringia. In 1952 the SED launches a campaign in the GDR, which is only three years old, against the Youth Community (*Junge Gemeinde*), the Protestant Church's youth organization. Thousand of youths are harassed and expelled from schools and universities. At the time, Ammer, who comes from an antifascist family, is the FDJ secretary of his school class. Outraged, he tries to defend his classmates affected by these measures. On June 17, 1953, Ammer witnesses the suppression of the East German people's uprising. His views of the GDR and the power politics of the SED become more and more critical. Thomas Ammer conducts discussions with classmates and, together with eleven other youths, establishes a resistance group in the fall of 1953. The so-called Eisenberg Circle works in a strictly conspiratorial fashion and is set up similarly to the communist party cell model. That is why all of them never meet together at the same time. Few besides Thomas Ammer know every member. The group demands free elections, freedom of the press, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and the release of political prisoners. Concrete actions follow from these discussion, such as the distribution of leaflets, the hanging of banners, and, in January 1956, arson at a firing range. The group takes a clear stand against the militarization of GDR society with the latter step. Thomas Ammer is arrested on February 13, 1958 and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment.

As in 1950, it is especially young people who protest against the rigged parliamentary elections in 1954. Thomas Ammer's group pastes up this poster in Eisenberg.



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The 1955 graduating class at the high school in Eisenberg. The members of the Eisenberg Circle include Thomas Ammer (in the front on the left), Joachim Marckstadt (behind him), and Hubert Gumz (all the way in the back on the left). The teacher Irene Geyer (in the middle in the front) encourages the pupils to develop a critical attitude toward the SED.



BStU, MfS, Ast Gera, AU 33 / 58

As a sign of protest against militarization, members of the group set aflame a firing range run by the Society for Sport and Technology, a paramilitary organization, in January 1956. The photo is from the files of the Ministry of State Security and serves as evidence in the trial.



BStU, MfS, Ast Gera, AU 33 / 58

On October 21, 1956, members of the Eisenberg Circle write their demands in red paint on a railroad car at the Hainspitz railway station near Eisenberg. A Stasi informant betrays the group in 1958. The youths are condemned to long-term prison sentences.



Robert Havemann Society

Thomas Ammer belongs to the first group of GDR prisoners whose freedom is bought by the Federal Republic. In the photo are Thomas Ammer with his mother in Austria, shortly after his ransom from prison in August 1964.



# MICHAEL GARTENSCHLÄGER

\* 1944 † 1976

Lothar Lienicke

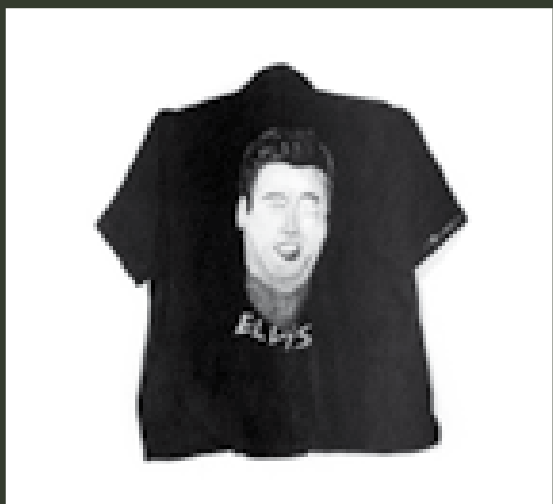


*“One must actively oppose totalitarian regimes regardless of their political shade.”*



Lothar Lienicke

East German fans of the West German rock-'n'-roll star Ted Herold – the Strausberg Clique in 1961: Gerd Peter Riediger, Karl Heinz Lehmann, Michael Gartenschläger and Jürgen Höpfner (from left to right). All four, along with the photographer Gerd Resag, are arrested in August 1961.



BSU

The rock-'n'-roll fans paint their shirts with pictures of their idol. During the trial against the youths, which takes place in the Culture House of the National People's Army in Strausberg, the shirt is presented in a glass case as evidence of “subversive activities against the GDR”.



BSU, MfS, Ast Frankfurt / O., AU 122 / 61, S. 74

The slogans that the youths write on the garages in Philipp Müller Street in Strausberg are a sign of protest against the erection of the wall and the SED regime.

Together with some classmates, Michael Gartenschläger establishes a Ted Herold fan club in 1960 in Strausberg, a city located east of Berlin. The pupils travel regularly to West Berlin to attend the popular singer's concerts and enjoy the uninhibited life of the big city. The GDR is largely closed off after the erection of a German-German border in 1952: only the escape hatch to West Berlin is still open. That is also no longer possible following the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. Michael Gartenschläger and his friends cannot accept this. They write slogans such as “NO SED” on public buildings in Strausberg. Shortly thereafter they set a barn on fire as a sign of protest. All of those involved are arrested on August 19, 1961. The SED stages the proceedings against the “jobs”, as they are called at the time in East and West, as a show trial. Michael Gartenschläger and his friend Gert Resag are condemned to lifelong imprisonment. The Federal Republic ransoms Gartenschläger after two escape attempts and ten years imprisonment. He can't forget about the inhumane GDR border even in Hamburg. He dismantles two spring guns from a metal lattice fence belonging to the separation barrier and presents them to the world. A spy betrays him during a third attempt. On the night of May 1, 1976, Gartenschläger dies at the border fence in a rain of bullets fired by a Stasi detachment.



Gerd Resag

Gerd Resag and Michael Gartenschläger with their girlfriends in the Federal Republic in 1972. Suffering from poor health, Gartenschläger is ransomed by the Federal Republic in 1971.



BSU

Close-up of the SM 70 spring gun at the German-German border. Michael Gartenschläger remains politically active. Despite public denials, the GDR installs cluster mines at the border beginning in 1970. Escapees trip the mines and are seriously injured or even killed. The mines are dismantled only in 1983 as a result of international pressure.



Lothar Lienicke

Michael Gartenschläger dismantles the mines at the border in order to demonstrate the existence of the SM 70. The picture shows Gartenschläger during his first dismantling effort on the night of March 30, 1976. He succeeds a second time on April 24. But on the third try during the night of May 1, a twenty-nine member Stasi task force ambushes him and shoots him to death.



Deutsche Lehrerzeitung (newspaper), September 19, 1961

Propaganda piece about the trial in the “Deutsche Lehrerzeitung” (German Teachers' Newspaper) on September 19, 1961. In the picture (from right to left) are Gerd Resag, Michael Gartenschläger, Karl Heinz Lehmann, Gerd Peter Riediger, Jürgen Höpfner.



# REINER BOHLEY

\* 1941 † 1988



Private

Reiner Bohley is not yet four years old when his father dies during the last days of the war in the spring of 1945. The experience has a lasting effect on the family. Not one of the seven sons wants to ever pick up a weapon. This does not seem to pose a problem at first. In 1959, Reiner Bohley pre-enrolls at the College of Transportation in Dresden and performs a one-year apprenticeship at the train station in Merseburg. He ignores a summons to enroll in a training course for army reservists. Since participation in military training is not yet a requirement at institutions of higher learning, Reiner Bohley can begin his studies.

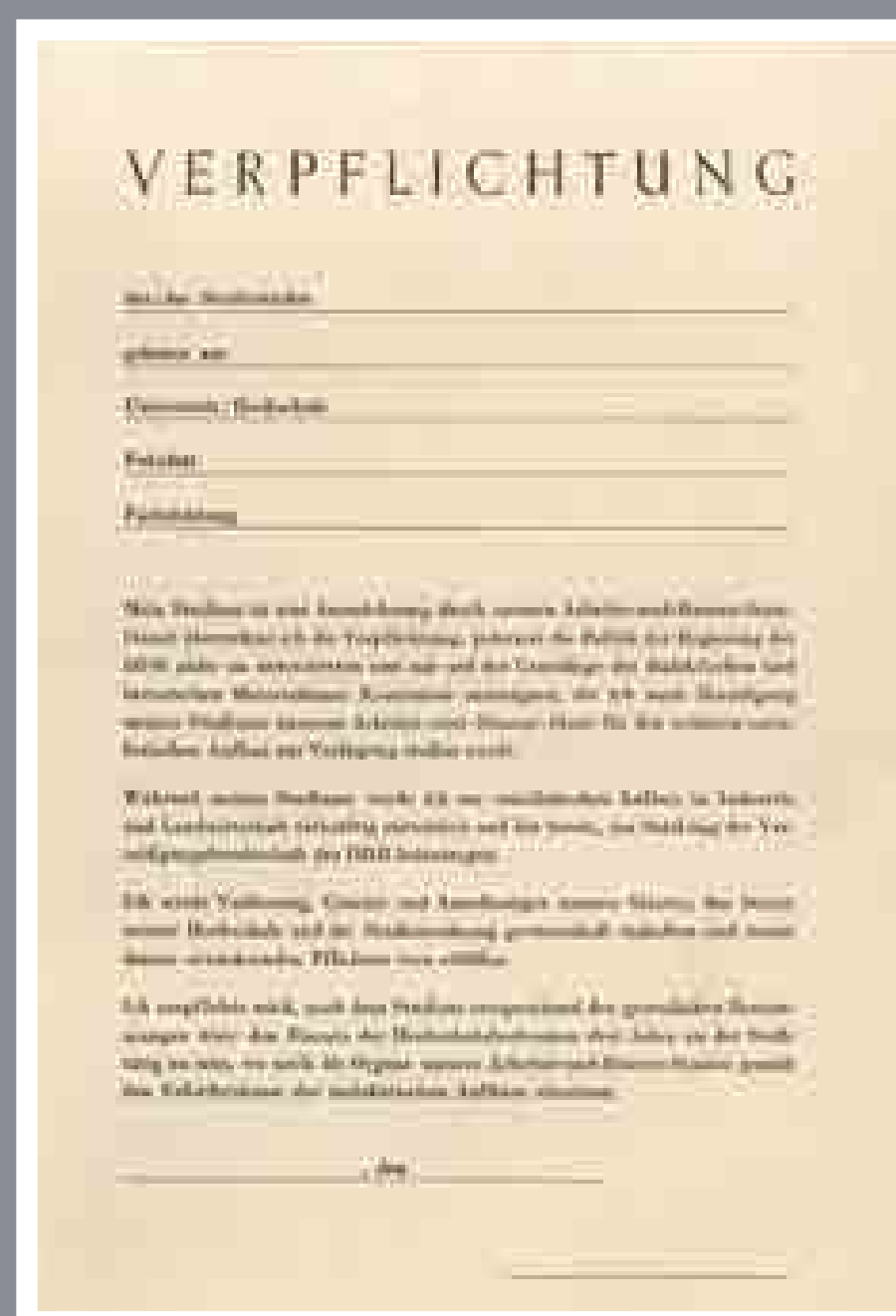
Universal conscription is introduced in the GDR beginning in January 1962, a few months after the construction of the wall. The closing of the border to West Berlin makes the introduction of conscription first possible. Many young men would have fled there prior to that, since there is no compulsory military duty in West Berlin.

Reiner Bohley refuses to comply with repeated demands to undergo military training. In February 1962 he reconfirms his declaration of November 1961 that he cannot perform service in the National People's Army (NVA) for religious reasons. He is subsequently expelled. Reiner Bohley is no longer permitted to study at a state institution of higher learning. In 1963 he begins to study Protestant theology at a church institution, the Naumburg Catechism Seminary.



Private

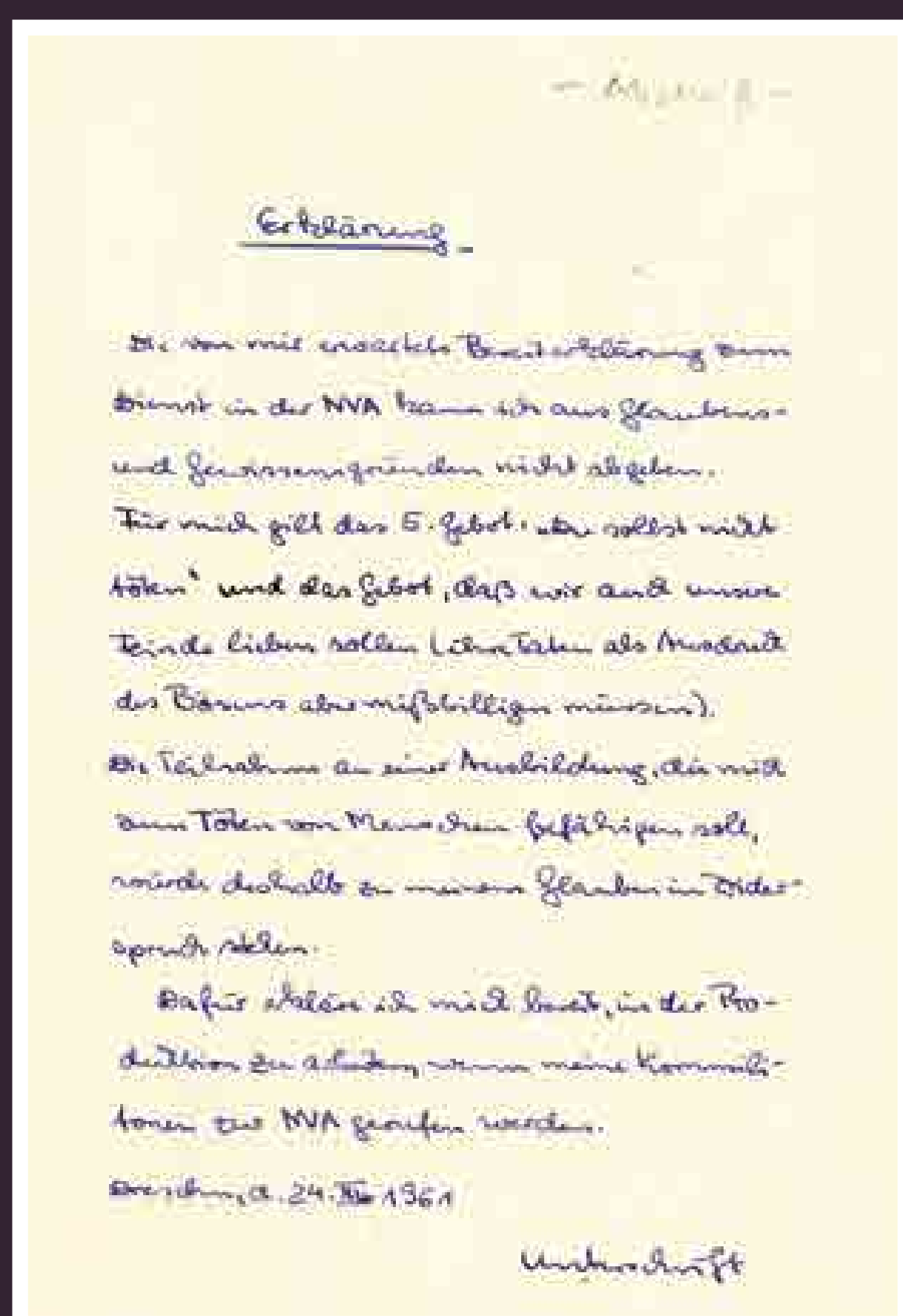
The seven Bohley brothers: Karl, Reiner, Michael, Dietrich (standing from left to right), Jochen, Peter, Eckart (sitting from left to right)



Private

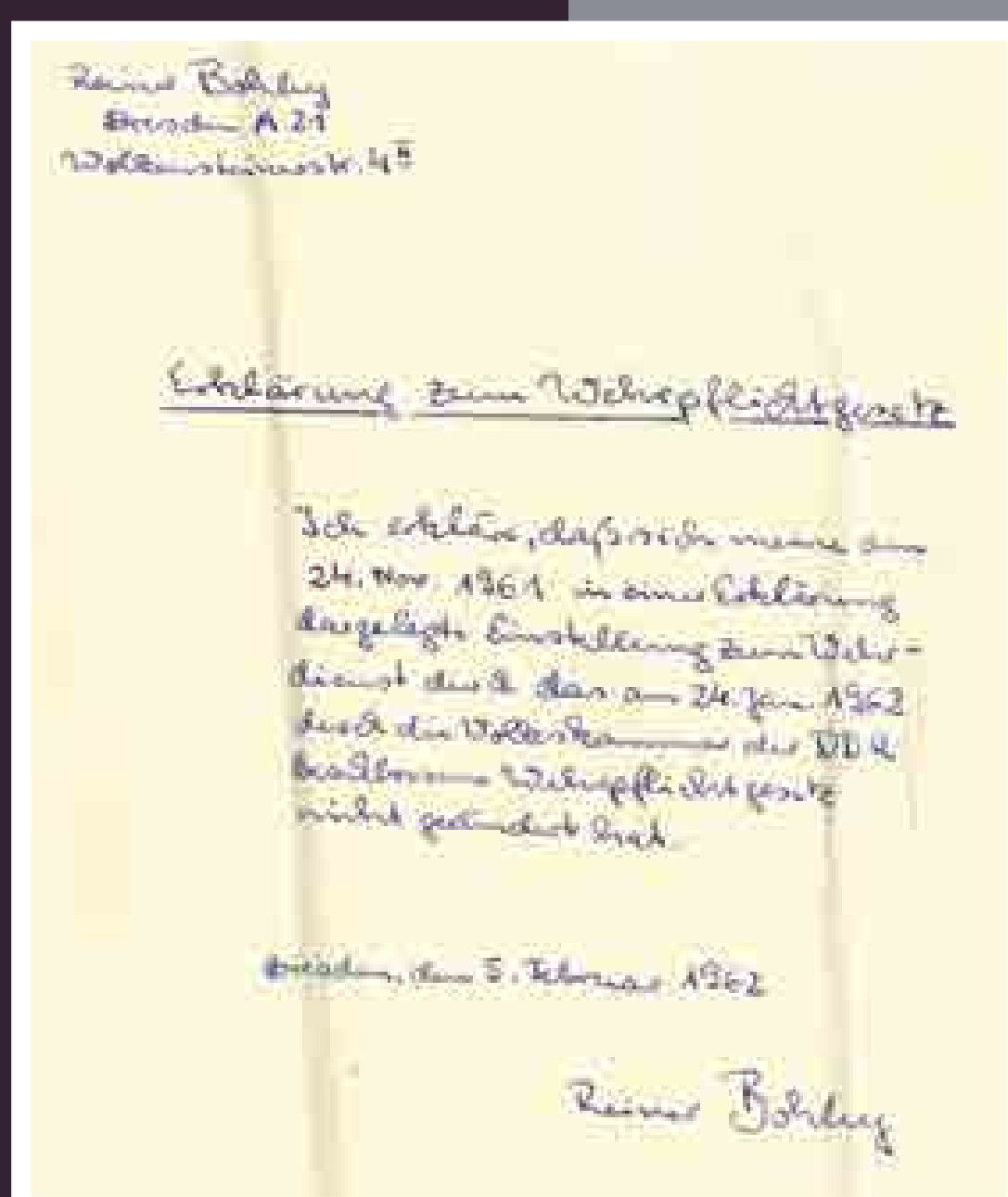
Most students in the GDR sign this customary commitment at institutions of higher learning – but not Reiner Bohley.

*“I won't abandon an oft tested religious conviction just because I could suffer disadvantages as a result.”*



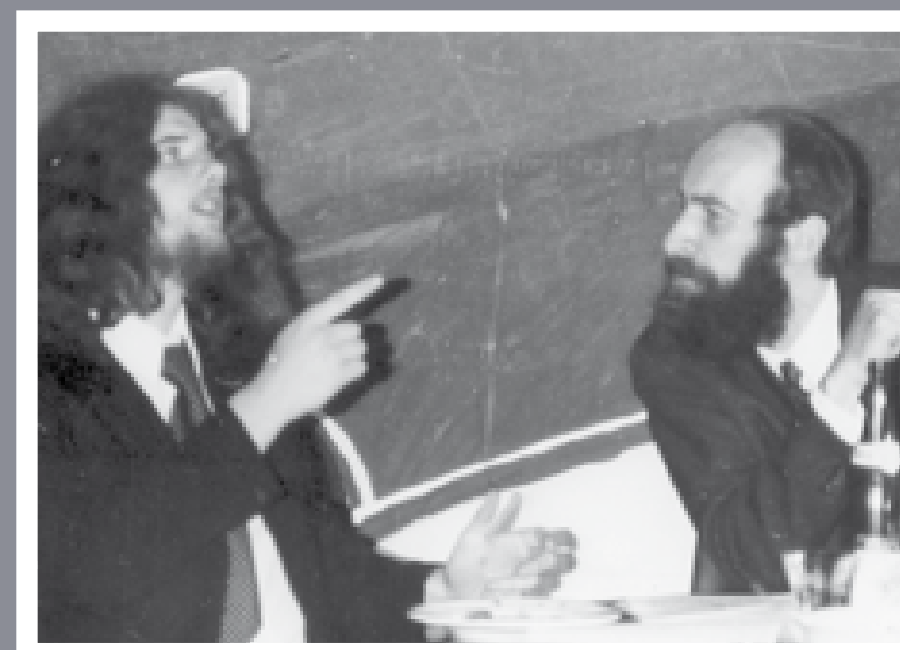
Private

Reiner Bohley describes his reasons for conscientious objection in this declaration of November 24, 1961.



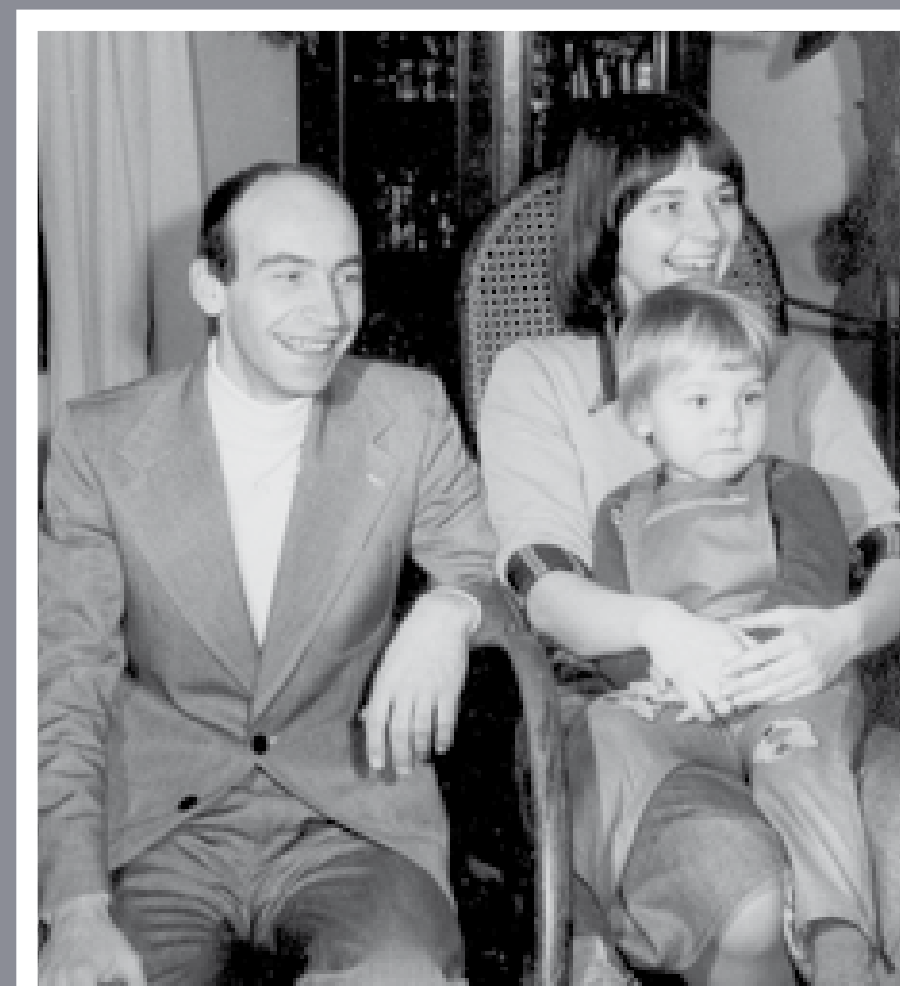
Private

Military training is already obligatory for male students as of January 1, 1962 – even before universal conscription is introduced on January 24. Reiner Bohley reconfirms once again in February 1962 that he is not willing to perform military service.



Private

At the end of his studies and after receiving his doctorate, Reiner Bohley becomes vice chancellor of the Ecclesiastical Proseminary in Naumburg. The photo (Reiner Bohley on the right) shows a 1975 theater performance by the proseminary.



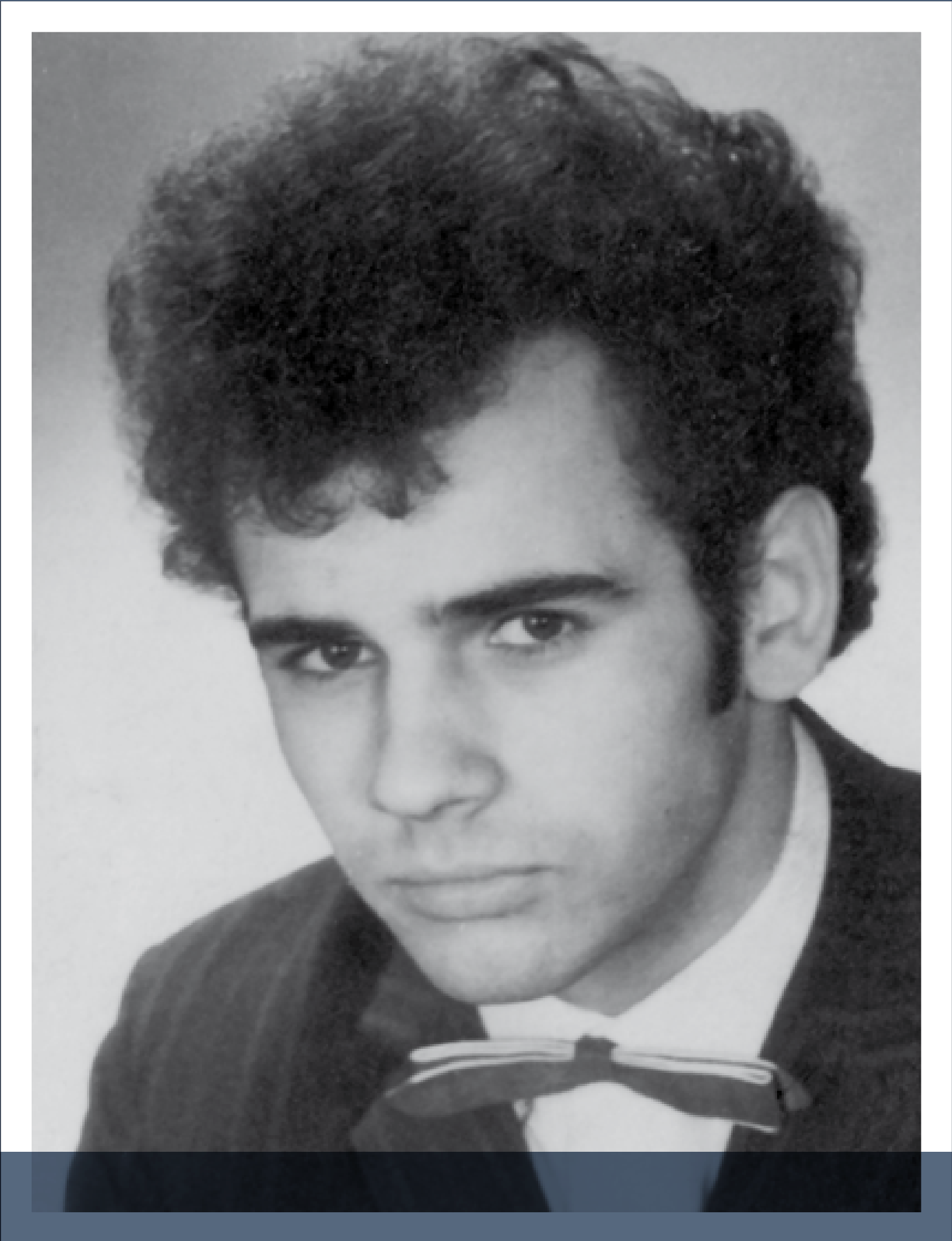
Private

Reiner Bohley with his wife Annette and their son Carl in 1976. Annette Bohley is refused permission to study medicine because she is not a member of the FDJ, the state youth organization. She then studies theology as well.

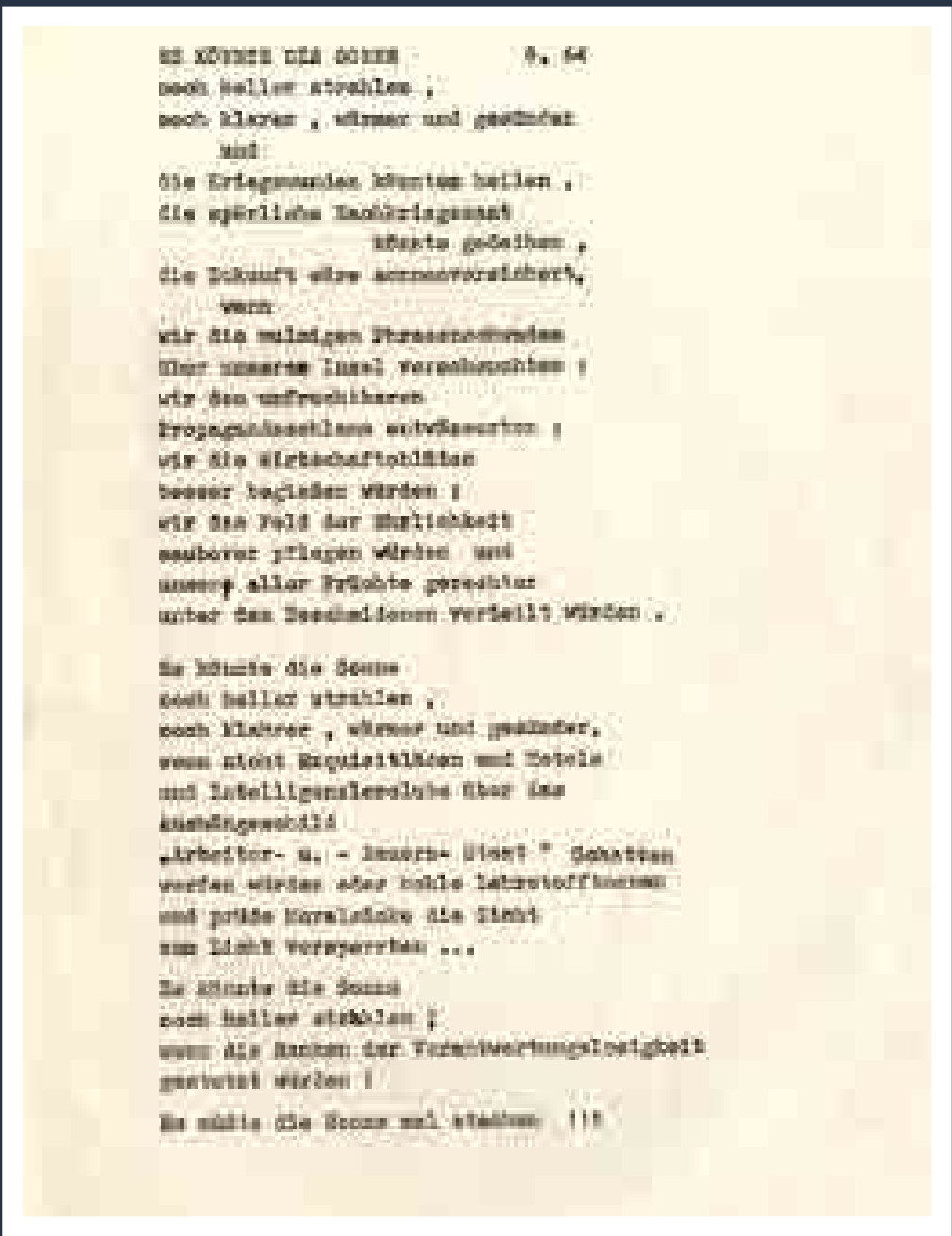


# SIEGMAR FAUST

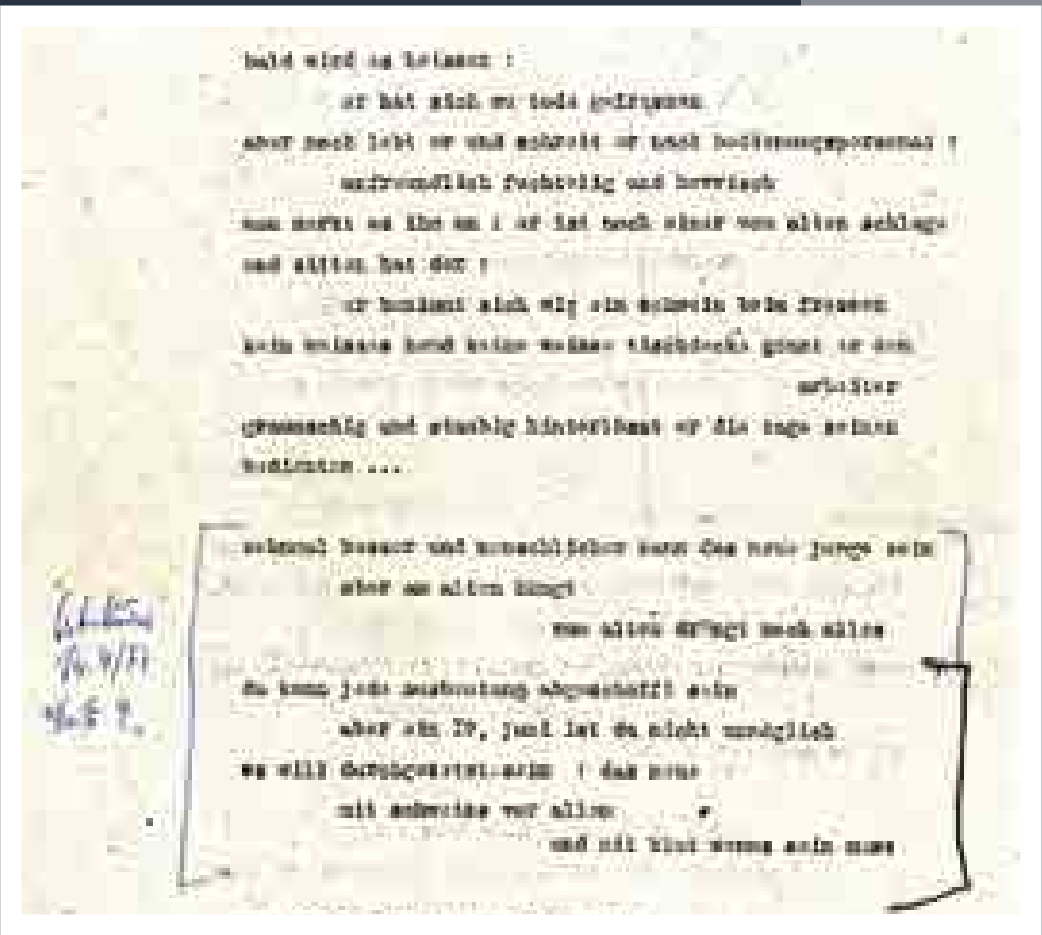
\* 1944



*“I was expelled from university twice and arrested twice, psychologically and physically abused, before I was able to abandon my old religion, Marxism-Leninism.”*



Private  
Faust writes texts, especially poetry, long before starting his study of literature. The poem “The Sun Could” is from June 1964.



Private

Siegmund Faust already writes poetry in high school and is crazy about the American poet Walt Whitman. He believes in Marxism, in the construction of a better world under socialism, and applies for membership in the SED. During his study of art education and history in Leipzig, Faust organizes a series of events at the university called “Uncensored Lyric”. He reads aloud some of his own texts, which the secret police regard as “statements of a politically negative nature”. Faust is expelled and put “on probation doing manual labor”. That means the interruption of his studies and the forced delegation to a workplace. Siegmund Faust must labor for a year cleaning rayon in the small Saxon town of Pirna. He begins a second round of studies in 1967 at the Literature Institute in Leipzig and publishes poetry. The Stasi tries to recruit him as a spy. Faust refuses. The confrontation with the system is finally revealed in his “Ballad of the Old Sulfuric Acid Oven”, which mentions the people’s uprising of June 17, 1953. Faust is expelled once again and, after a two-time extension of his probationary period, dropped as a candidate for membership in the SED. From now on he works as an assistant coxswain and night porter, and also makes progress on his first novel. Since Faust is not permitted to publish in the GDR, he tries to do so in the West. He organizes an illegal “motorboat reading” in the reservoir at Elster in Leipzig and forms an artistic group with friends. Siegmund Faust is subsequently kicked out of Leipzig.



BStU, MfS, ASt Leipzig, AOP 809 / 72, vol. 1, p. 224  
The Stasi observes Siegmund Faust (on the right) and Wolfgang Hilbig during the Leipzig Book Fair on March 7, 1969. Having been robbed of every possibility to publish, Faust tries to make contacts for himself, as well as for his colleagues Wolfgang Hilbig and Gert Neumann, with publishing houses in the West.



BStU, MfS, ASt Dresden, AU 3268 / 74, GA vol. II, p. 98  
Expelled for a second time, the doors to the university are now shut for Faust. He works in production factories. On the occasion of elections held on May 19, 1974, he hangs up this text in the People’s United Paper Factory in Heidenau.



Leipzig Contemporary History Forum / LEDA F 4 / 436  
Siegmund Faust is arrested in 1971 and released in 1972 thanks to a statewide amnesty. He applies for the right to emigrate in 1973. He is arrested again a few months later. He is sentenced to 400 days of solitary confinement for writing flyers while in jail. After repeated requests and after suffering numerous forms of repression, Siegmund Faust (fourth from left) is finally allowed to emigrate to the West. The farewell party in Dresden takes place on August 31, 1976 during the night before his emigration.



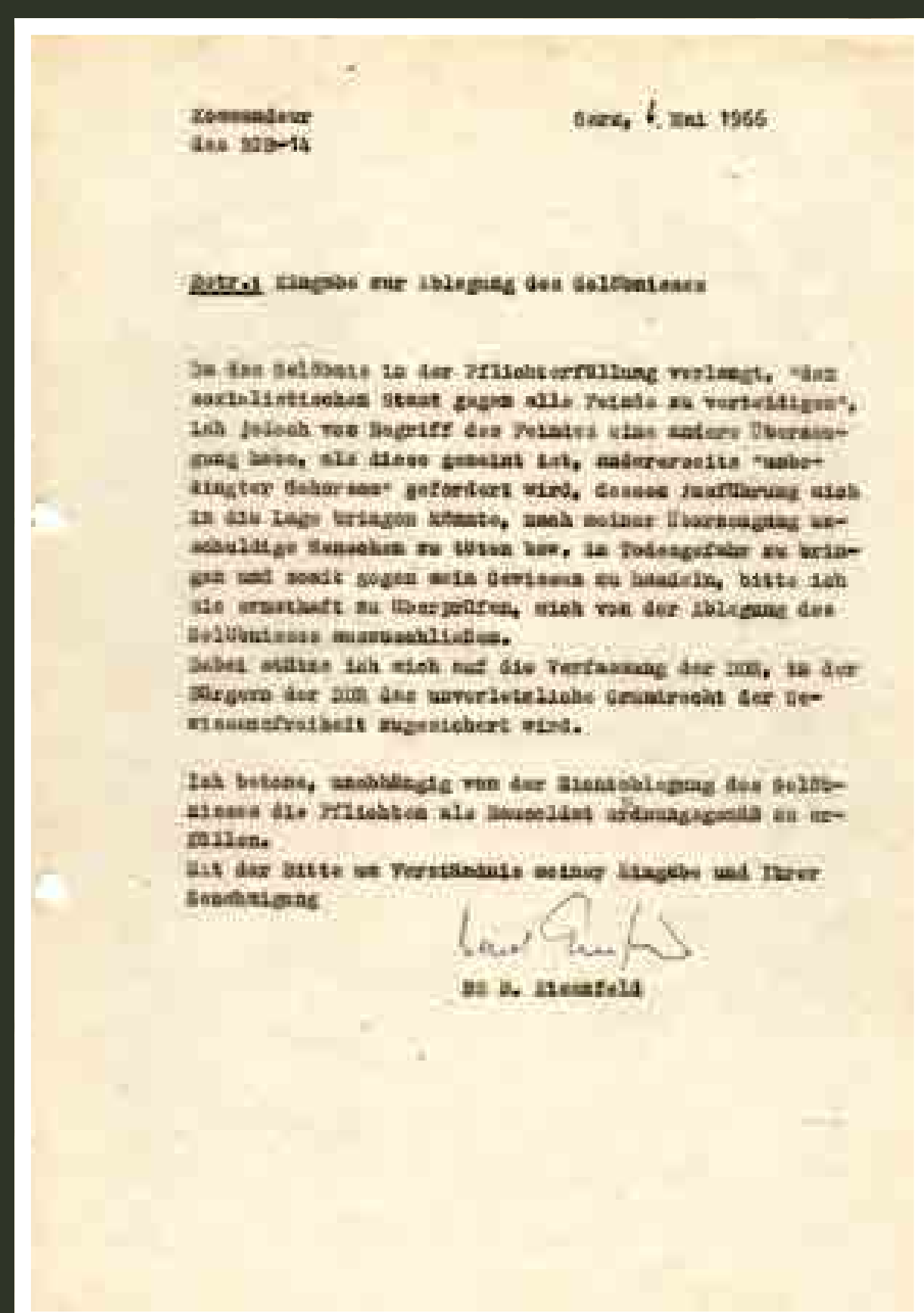
# BERND EISENFELD

\* 1941 † 2010



Robert Havemann Society

*“They are driving me up a mountain that allows for no other decline than that of one’s conscience.”*



Robert Havemann Society

Bernd Eisenfeld explains in writing why he cannot take the oath. Along with other regime opponents, he demands an alternative to military service – one that involves no military activity whatsoever. The Stasi observes and persecutes him, as well as three other conscripts who perform non-military construction work, in a procedure called “Operation Degradation”.

The pupil Bernd Eisenfeld is a good chess player. At the age of fifteen he wants to take part in a tournament in the West German city of Erlangen. That is not allowed. Though raised to play along with the system rather than resist, he develops a more critical attitude beginning with this experience. The suppression of the people’s uprising of June 17, 1953 and the construction of the wall lead him to openly reject the authority of the SED. Eisenfeld speaks out against German division and demands democracy in the GDR. He will not take an oath to the state. That is why he refuses in 1966 to perform military service. As a conscript allowed to perform non-military construction work, Eisenfeld refuses, along with other regime opponents, to take such an oath. From this point on he is persecuted by the Ministry for State Security. Eisenfeld, who is versed in philosophy, turns against socialism that lacks bourgeois freedoms. He welcomes Prague Spring downright euphorically in 1968. Censorship is eliminated, foreign newspapers are permitted, independent groups emerge, the borders are opened in Czechoslovakia. Eisenfeld publicly endorses “socialism with a human face”. On September 20 and 21, 1968, he protests against the invasion of Czechoslovakia by five Warsaw Pact states with flyers he makes himself. He sends a telegram to the Czechoslovakian embassy expressing solidarity. The Stasi arrests Bernd Eisenfeld in February 1969. He is sentenced to jail for two-and-a-half years.



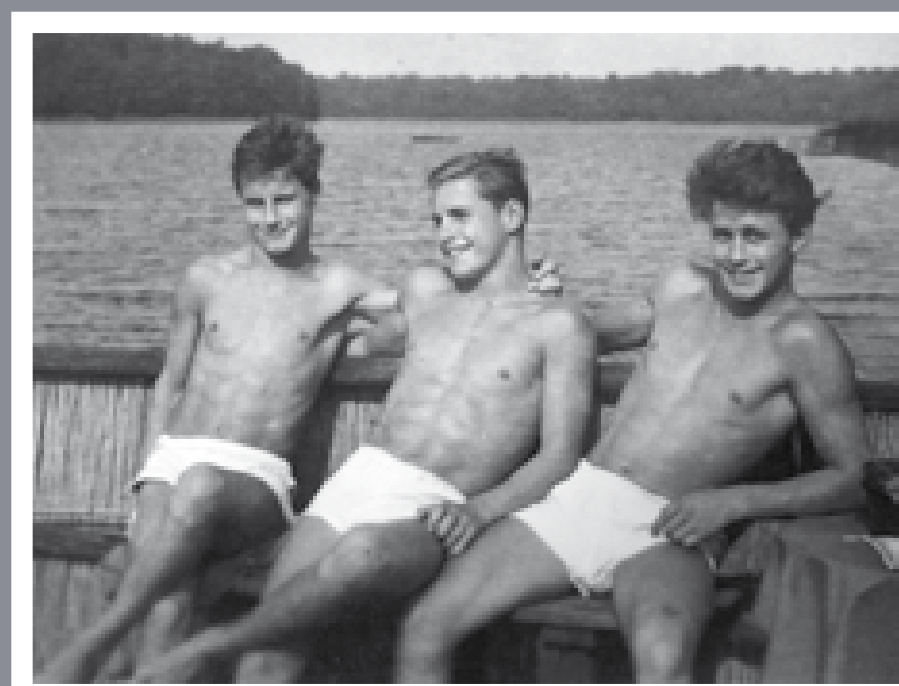
Robert Havemann Society

Bernd Eisenfeld sends the Czechoslovakian embassy this telegram protesting the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia.



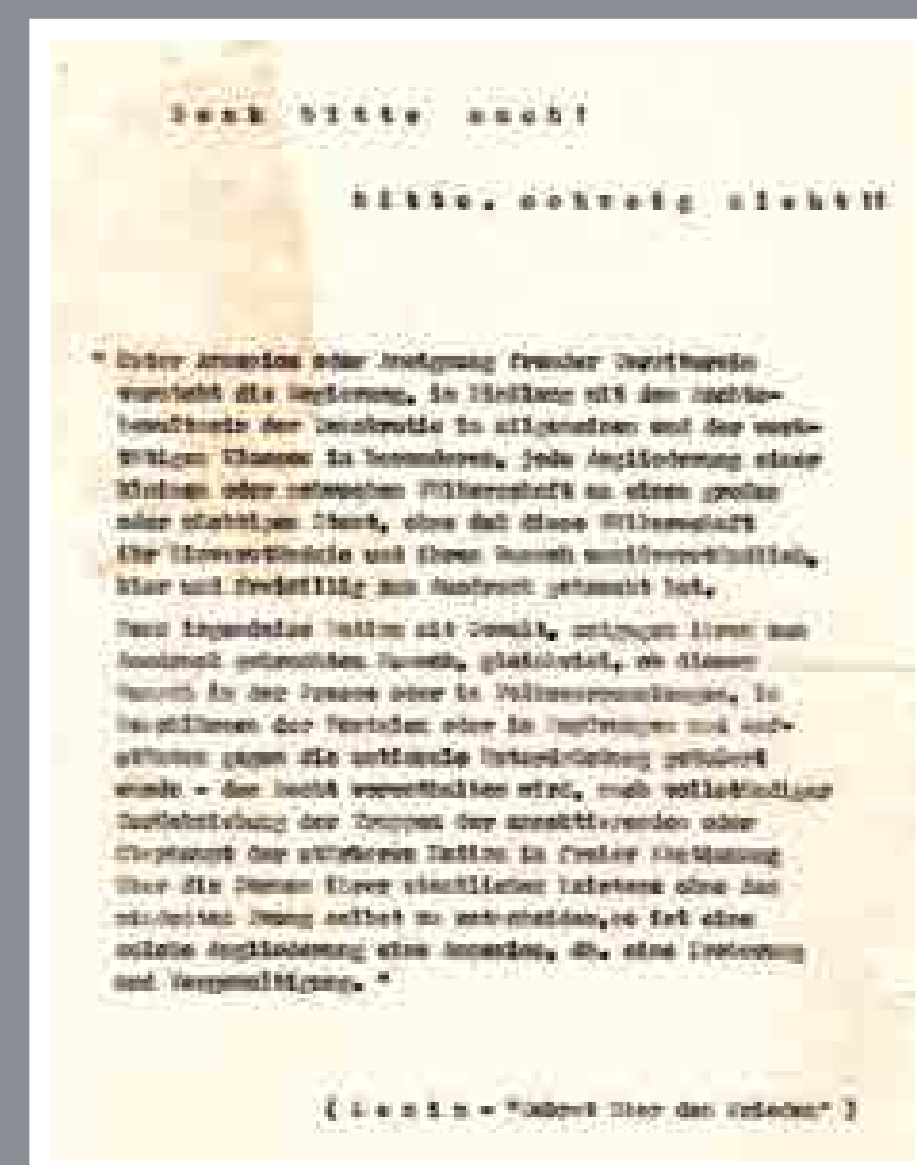
Robert Havemann Society

Conscripts performing non-military construction work near Luckau in 1966 (Bernd Eisenfeld in the background). After his time in the army, he loses his job as an economist at the State Bank in 1967. He works in the chemical engineering sector in Leipzig and organizes, under the umbrella of the church, meetings of conscripts who perform non-military construction service.



Robert Havemann Society

In March 1968 in Halle, Bernd Eisenfeld publicly expresses sympathy with the reform communist movement in Czechoslovakia. After that the Stasi persecutes him in an action known as “Operation Economist”. His twin brother Peter and his brother Ulrich (from left to right) are also in the Stasi’s sights. The three of them nevertheless travel, unnoticed by the secret police, for a few days to Prague in May 1968.



Robert Havemann Society

On September 20 and 21, 1968, Bernd Eisenfeld distributes in Halle approximately 100 self-made flyers protesting the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. He is arrested on the second evening.



Robert Havemann Society

The Eisenfeld family in Halle in 1972. During Bernd Eisenfeld’s time in prison, the Stasi applies pressure on his wife. After his release in 1971, the family repeatedly submits applications to emigrate. They are only allowed to emigrate to West Berlin in 1975. Bernd Eisenfeld’s twin brother must remain behind in the GDR.



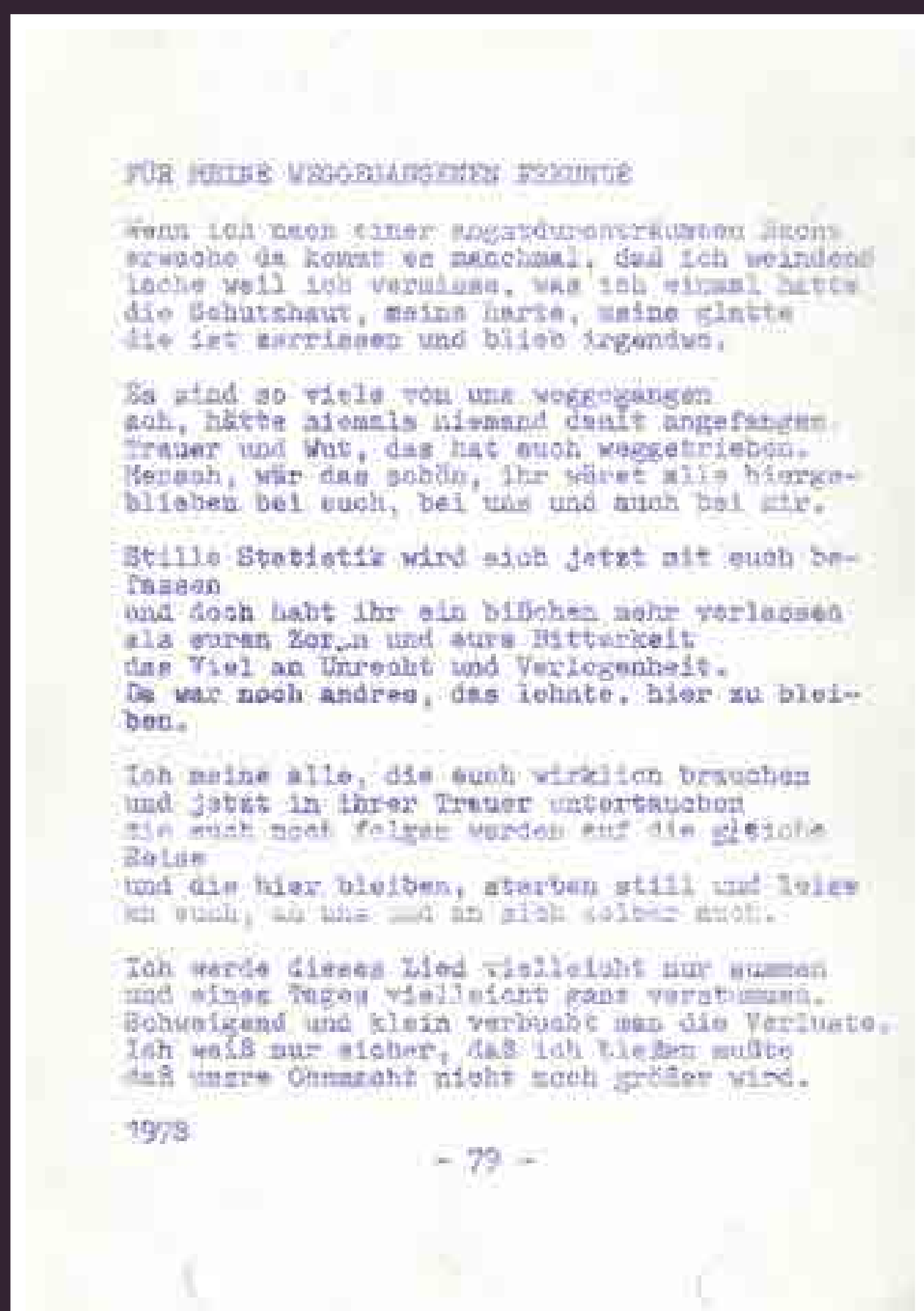
# BETTINA WEGNER

\* 1947



BSU, MfS, HA XX, Fo / 1278

*“My foundational experience was to have a five-month old child – and enter jail at age twenty.”*



Robert Havemann Society

Bettina Wegner wrote the song “For My Friends Who Have Gone Away” in 1978. After the expatriation of Wolf Biermann and the repressive measures subsequently taken against those who protested that decision, many intellectuals left the country for the Federal Republic.



BSU, MfS, AU 303/90, vol. 1, p. 213

The young acting student Bettina Wegner is convinced that socialism is the better system. She, like her boyfriend Thomas Brasch, grew up in a communist home. It is incomprehensible to them both that the states belonging to the communist Warsaw Pact brutally invade their ally Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968. Outraged, Brasch and his friends compose leaflets on the day of the invasion itself and distribute them in mailboxes. Those involved are arrested that very night. Despite being warned by her boyfriend not to participate in this action – as the mother of their child – Bettina Wegner cannot remain silent.

She writes slogans on slips of papers at her kitchen table and then distributes them together with friends. Bettina Wegner drives afterwards to her parents, where she is captured by the state security service (Stasi, or MfS). She is provisionally released after a week in custody, but has to appear at the secret police for daily interrogation. She is expelled from acting school. In October 1968, Bettina Wegner receives a prison sentence of sixteen months but is put on probation and must “prove herself manually” by working for two years in a factory. She does not want to return to acting school afterwards. She sings, writes texts, receives her profession credentials as an entertainer-artist in 1973, and organizes critical events.



Robert Havemann Society

Bettina Wegner participates in the protest against the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia – not despite but rather because of her five-month old child. She does not want to be told later on by her son that she had done nothing to combat injustice.



Thomas Höpker / Magnum Photos / Agentur Focus

Bettina Wegner with her husband, the writer Klaus Schlesinger, in their apartment. They are among the GDR artists who protested against the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in November 1976.



Robert Havemann Society / Bernd Markowsky

In concert in 1982. Performance prohibitions and Stasi persecution are a part of Bettina Wegner's everyday life. After an investigation is started against her for an alleged customs offence, she has to go for interrogation four times a week. She finally leaves for West Berlin in 1983.

Leaflets that Bettina Wegner wrote and distributed in Mühlen Street in the Pankow section of Berlin. “I could not simply accept the fact that socialist countries march into another socialist country.”



# CHRISTIAN KUNERT

\* 1952



*“We would never have thought of wanting to establish a political party or write a programmatic paper. Our program was simply to write cool songs.”*



Robert Havemann Society

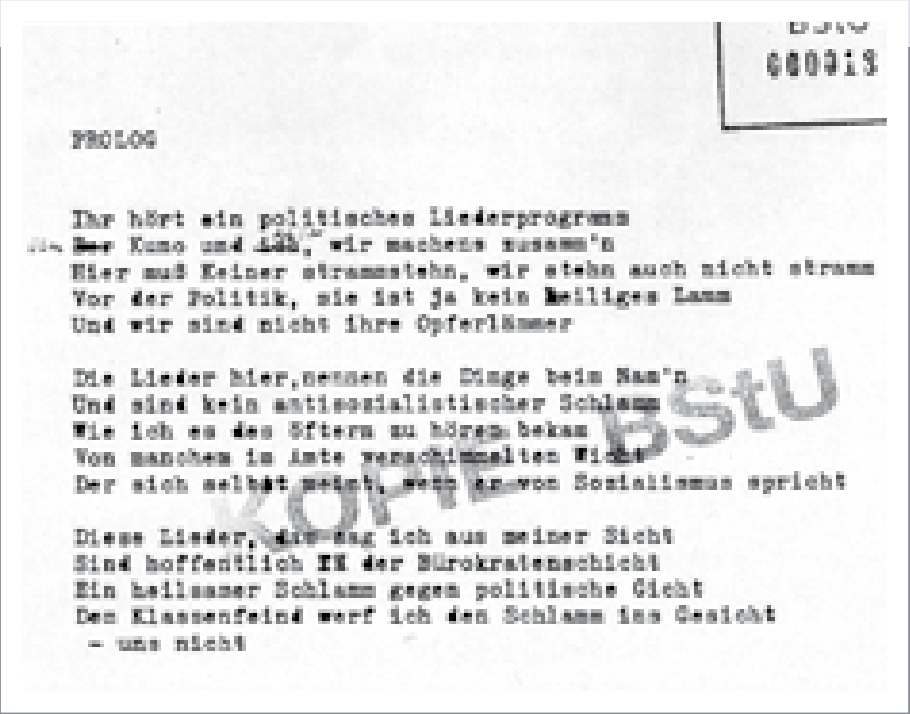
Sixty percent of the music played in all discotheques in the GDR have to be from socialist states, even though youths prefer Western music and fashions. Several GDR bands are nevertheless very popular. The ones whose lyrics strike a chord with young people and their attitudes about life include “Renft”.



Graphics: Klaus Vonderwerth; Photos: Rolf Heynemann, Peter Langner

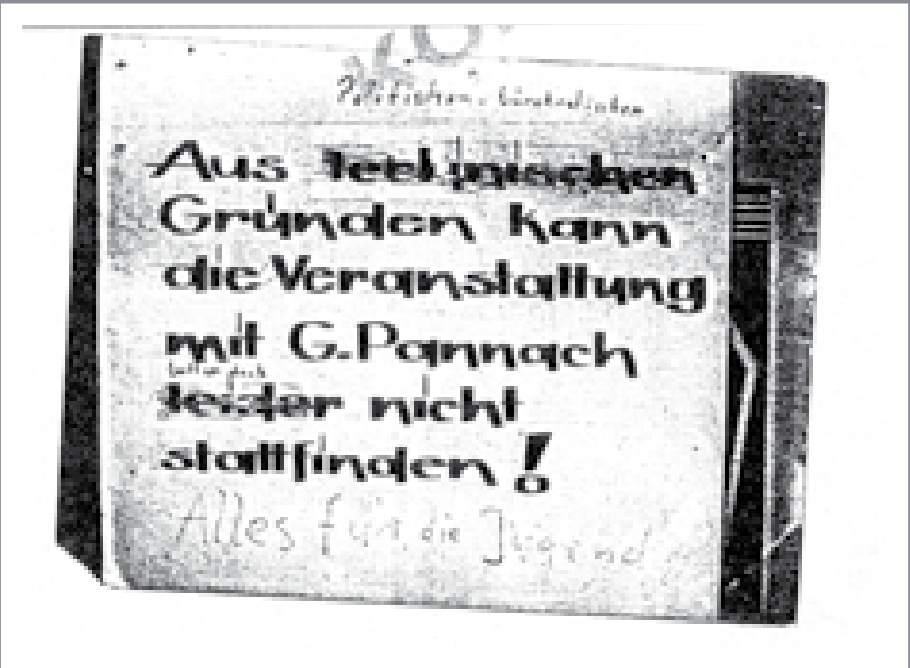
Album cover from 1973. In the mid 1970s, the SED leadership takes drastic measures with respect to youth and cultural policies. Several critical events are forbidden. This measure also affects the “Klaus Renft Combo” in late September 1975.

He sings in the St. Thomas Choir of Leipzig as a child, establishes his first band, “The Little Stars”, at age twelve. Christian “Kuno” Kunert does not want to join the army and, in 1970, begins his studies as a music teacher. Teachers are so urgently needed at this time in the GDR that they can begin their studies right away, even without having first performed basic military service. Christian Kunert nevertheless switches to the Leipzig Conservatory and studies the trombone. At age nineteen he plays the keyboard for the “Renft Combo”, one of the most beloved bands in the GDR. Many of the band’s critical texts are written by Gerulf Pannach, who is banned from performing in 1974. The musicians refuse to put up with this. At Kuno’s suggestion, Pannach continues to play with “Renft” illegally. The entire group is banned in September 1975. Pannach and Juno write new songs and develop a program that does not receive official approval – which is tantamount to a ban from the profession. They pile crates from now on at a vegetable business, and protest when their friend, the famous dissident songwriter Wolf Biermann, is expatriated in November 1976. They are arrested on November 21. After nine months in prison they emigrate to West Berlin.



BSTU

Every music program in the GDR has to be inspected by a state commission before a public performance can take place. The Pannach / Kunert duo introduce a new program in the summer of 1976. Gerulf Pannach wrote this greeting for the commission. The program is not approved.



BSTU

Gerulf Pannach is already banned from performing in 1974. His already announced concerts are cancelled because of alleged technical difficulties. The handwritten comments by audience members who had travelled to the concert show that nobody believes such claims.



Robert Havemann Society / Johanna Elbauer

The photograph shows the friends (from left to right) Christian Kunert, Gerulf Pannach, the songwriter Wolf Biermann, and the writer Jürgen Fuchs in West Berlin in 1977. The three were arrested because they spoke out against the expatriation of Biermann in November 1976.



Robert Havemann Society

Fuchs, Pannach, and Kunert’s statement about their involuntary expatriation to West Berlin.



# DORIS LIEBERMANN

\* 1953



“I try to live in truth but encounter many lies”

During her school years growing up in a village, Doris Liebermann is not averse at first to state-organized youth activities. At the same time, however, she has contact with the church. A pastor from a neighboring village introduces her to the literary world of Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Max Frisch. She goes to the University of Jena wishing to study Slavic languages. As a child of farmers, she is supposed to become the FDJ secretary of her college seminar group and represent the policies of the SED. She does not wish to do so. Feeling pressured to make a decision between the church and the state, she ends her studies, and spends a year as a deacon. She begins to study theology in 1976 and gets involved in Protestant public youth activities. The youths in Jena appreciate Wolf Biermann’s critical songs, which give expression to their feelings and doubts. Recordings are passed around since, for years, the communist Biermann is not allowed for years to publish or perform in the GDR. The young people are outraged when they hear about his forced expatriation. On the evening of November 17, 1976, the writer Jürgen Fuchs reads to Doris Liebermann on the phone a petition to the GDR leadership protesting the expatriation. She writes down the text. The following evening, fifty-six young people from Jena sign the protest. Betrayed by an informant, the signatories are arrested beginning the next morning. Doris Liebermann is subject to hour-long interrogations for two days, but then released. From that point on she concerns herself with those who are still imprisoned, among whom is her friend Thomas Auerbach. She accompanies her friend, who is sent off to West Berlin right after being released from prison, on December 17, 1977.



Robert Havemann Society  
Members of the Jena “scene” hiking in the early 1970s. Bernd Markowsky (second from right in the front) and Walfred Meier from Erfurt (in the back on the right) are in prison for a long time for signing the protest letter.



Robert Havemann Society  
Vacation in Romania. Doris Liebermann together with her friend Thomas Auerbach, the social deacon of downtown Jena's Young Community, a religious youth organization. The secret police keep him in prison and interrogate him for nine months.



Robert Havemann Society  
Gerd Lehmann, Wolfgang Hinkeldey, Doris Liebermann (from left to right). The expatriated meet up again in West Berlin. Lehmann and Hinkeldey report about their imprisonment and interrogation by the Stasi.



Robert Havemann Society  
From now on in the West, Doris Liebermann (standing in the back) and Thomas Auerbach support members of the opposition in the GDR. Since they are not allowed to travel to the GDR, they meet their friends from Jena in Czechoslovakia or in Poland – for example in August 1980 in the Masurian Lake District.

**OFFENER BRIEF**  
**Abkürzung der Berliner Künstler vom 17.11.1976**

Wolf Biermann war und ist ein unbequemer Dichter, den hat er mit vielen Dichtern unserer Vergangenheit gemein, Unser sozialistischer Staat, eingedenk des Wortes aus Marxens "18. Bruchteil" "dennoch die proletarische Revolution sich unendlich selbst kritisierte, mühte im Gegensatz zu menschenfeindlichen Gesellschaftsformen eine solche Unbequemlichkeit gelassen nachdenklich ertragen können, Wir identifizieren uns nicht mit jedem Wort und jeder Handlung Wolf Biermanns und distanzieren uns von den Versuchen, die Vorgänge an Wolf Biermann gegen die DDR zu missbrauchen. Biermann hat selbst nie, auch nicht in Kuba, Zweifel darüber gelassen, für welchen der beiden deutschen Staaten er, bei aller Kritik, eintritt. Wir protestieren gegen seine Ausbürgerung und bitten darum, die beschlossene Maßnahme zu überdenken.

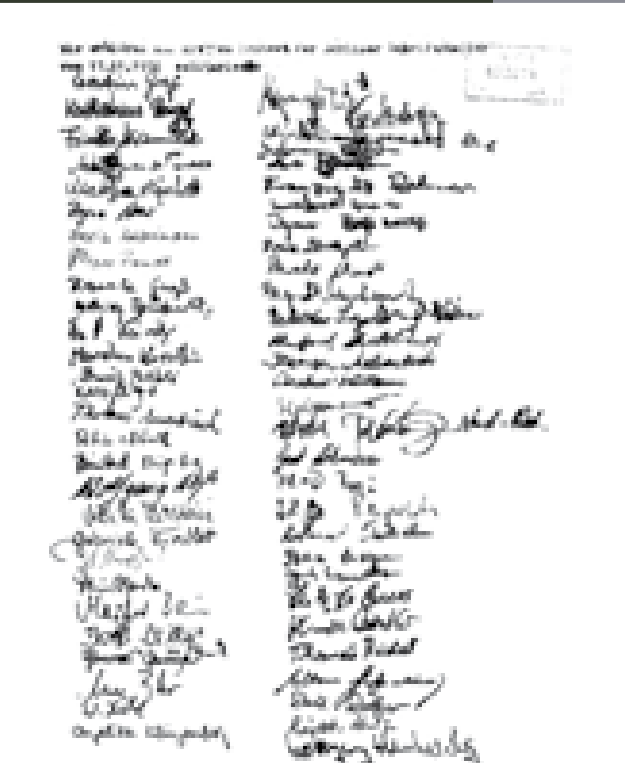
Christa Wolf	Gera Kirsch	Volker Braun
Gernard Wolf	Rolf Schneider	Stefan Hermlin
Erich Arendt	Franz Fühmann	Stefan Heyn
Jurk Becker	Günter Kunert	Reiner Müller

**Zusatz:** Wir erklären uns mit dem Protest der Berliner Schriftsteller vom 17.11.1976 gegen die Ausbürgerung von Wolf Biermann solidarisch:

Jutta Hoffmann	Rolf Fudwig	Robert Havemann
Katharina Thalbach	Käte Reichelt	Christian Kunert
Wendro Krug	Hina Hagen	Sybilie Havemann
Ulrich Finkler	Bra-Maria Hagen	
Klaus Schlesinger	Bettina Hegger	
Fritz Rudolf Fries	Sissela May	
Thomas Brusch	Christiane Uffels	
E.K. Fragulehn	Peter Hermann	
H.-J. Schädlich	von der Reiff-Gruppe	
Kurt Bartsch	Thomas Schoppe	
Hans-Joachim Giese	Brigitte Jürgen Büttcher	
Hilmar Thabe	Gerrit Fennach	
Angelika Dörfler	Jürgen Fuchs	

nicht zum Brief gehörend:  
Die Veröffentlichung dieses Briefes in westlichen Massenmedien war nicht geplant. Wahr ist, daß er an Erich Honecker und der Redaktion des "Neuen Deutschland" mit der Bitte um Veröffentlichung übergeben worden ist.

Robert Havemann Society  
Several East German artists criticize Biermann's expatriation in a public letter. Biermann's friend Jürgen Fuchs dictates the text over the telephone to Doris Liebermann, who copies it on a typewriter. She throws the carbon paper she uses for copying into a wastepaper basket. The Stasi uses it as evidence of her 'rabblousing' against the state.



BStU, MfS, Ast. Gera 740/77, vol. 3



# GABRIELE STÖTZER

\* 1953



Private

*“I no longer wanted to remain silent. And I didn’t want to leave.”*



Gabriele Stötzer / Heike Stephan

The artist Gabriele Stötzer explores different forms of expression during the 1980s. The photo shows a 1983 performance: the self-portrait “Female Caller”.



Gabriele Stötzer

After finishing middle school in Gotha in 1969, Gabriele Stötzer begins training as an assistant medical technician in Erfurt. She gladly attends meetings of the local youth “scene” in front of Café Angereck, works toward earning a high school diploma at an evening school, and, in 1973, begins studying art education and German at the Pedagogical College. She is twenty years old, a top student, deputy secretary of her study group’s FDJ organization, and a member of the student theater. When one of her fellow students calls for a less dogmatic form of Marxist-Leninist education, he is expelled. Gabriele Stötzer expresses solidarity with him and, as a result, must also leave the college in mid 1976. Friends knock at her door on the evening of November 20, 1976. They bring along a petition protesting the expatriation of songwriter Wolf Biermann. Gabriele Stötzer copies the text and is the first of twenty people in Erfurt to sign it. She is arrested two days later, but is released again after a night. The Stasi picks her up again repeatedly over the next several weeks. During an interrogation on January 6, 1977, she is told to withdraw her signature. When she refuses to do so, she is immediately sent to the Stasi detention center in Erfurt. She is found guilty and has to spend a year in a women’s prison. During this time the twenty-four-year old writes a report about her imprisonment, which is then secretly passed around from hand to hand – for there is no official information about prison conditions in the GDR.

Gabriele Stötzer heads the private art gallery “Galerie im Flur” in Erfurt beginning in 1980. She offers a venue here to nonconformist artists here. The Stasi intensely observes the artist and shuts down the gallery in 1981. After that Gabriele Stötzer works on the documentation pictured here.



BStU / Montage: Robert Havemann Society

Following the signing of the petition: the opening of an investigation against Gabriele Stötzer and Thomas Wagner on November 22, 1976. After a year in jail she is released in 1977. She does not wish to leave the GDR for the West.



Robert Havemann Society / Jo Doese

Following her release, Gabriele Stötzer must “prove herself” by performing manual labor. That means that she must work for two years in a shoe factory. At the same time she begins to pursue art. She writes, takes pictures, makes films. The well-known GDR author Christa Wolf finds her texts good, but she fears that publication will lead to repression. Gabriele Stötzer subsequently enters the artistic underground.



Private

A group called “Women for Change” is founded in Erfurt in 1989 (Gabriele Stötzer standing on the left). The women campaign for social reforms, demand freedom of opinion and assembly, and speak at demonstrations.



Sascha Fromm

The occupation of the Stasi building in Erfurt on December 4, 1989. Gabriele Stötzer (last row, third from left) is among the women who occupy the first Stasi district administration – consequently giving the starting signal for the dissolution of the communist secret police.



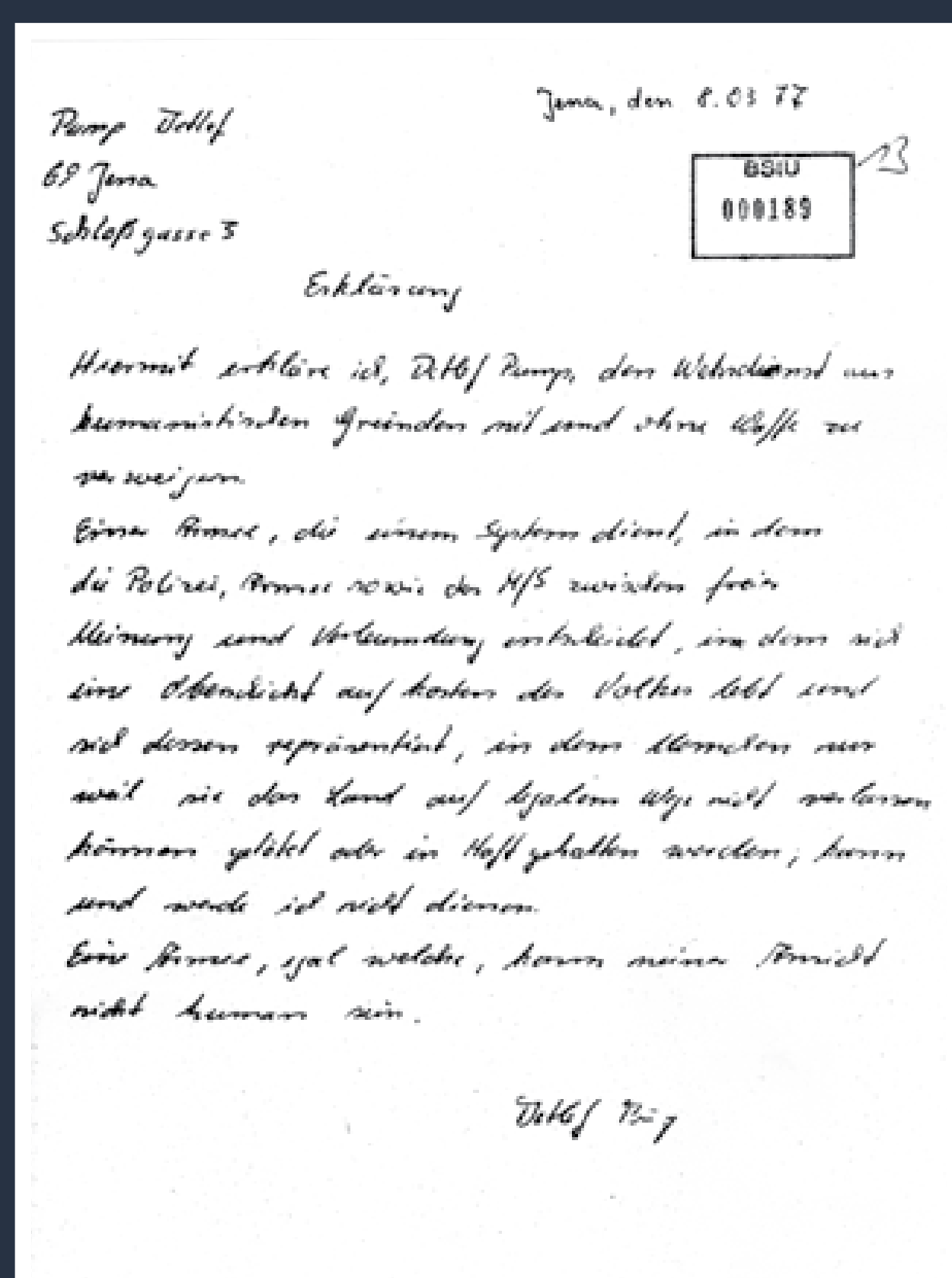
# DETLEF PUMP

\* 1954



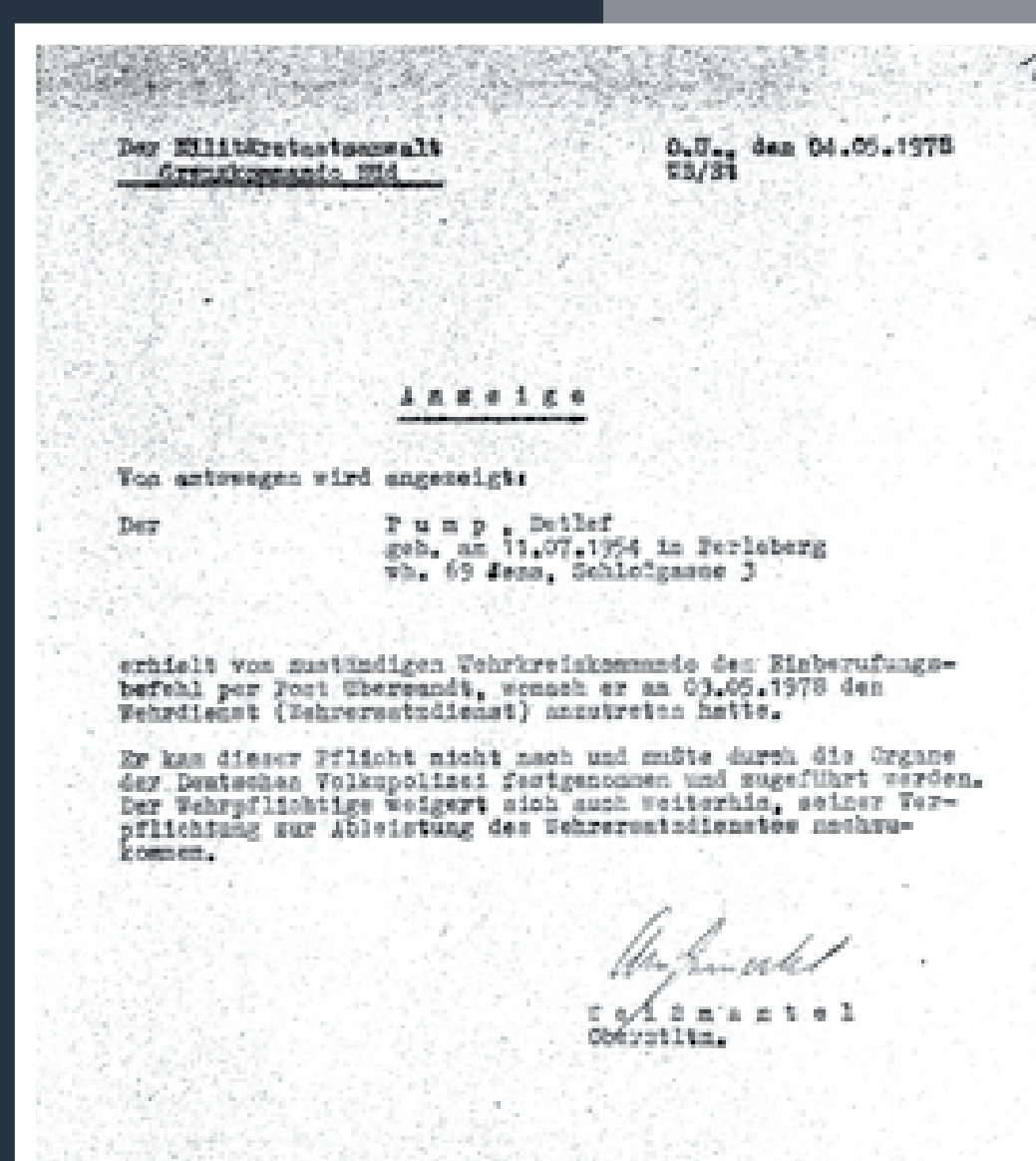
Robert Havemann Society

*“An army, regardless of which one, cannot, in my opinion, be humane.”*



BSU, MfS, OV Opponent, AOP 1020/81, vol. X, p. 189

Detlef Pump declares in writing the political reasons for his conscientious objection. Between 1962 and 1989, a total of approximately 6,000 draftees refuse to perform military service; 3,144 of them are sentenced.



Robert Havemann Society

An official notice by the attorney general of the military against conscientious objector Detlef Pump.

Detlef Pump leaves his place of birth in Brandenburg in 1971 to begin an apprenticeship as a machinist at Carl Zeiss in Jena, where he remains after completing his training. By this time he belongs to Jena’s alternative youth “scene”. Several youths who protested against the expatriation of songwriter Wolf Biermann are arrested in November 1976. Detlef Pump is close friends with some of them. A wave of military recruitment follows in an attempt to remove other critical spirits from the public sphere. Detlef Pump is among those who reject conditions in the GDR most radically. Though earlier rejected from military service for medical reasons during his apprenticeship, he must also attend a military recruitment inspection.

On March 8, 1977, Detlef Pump declares in writing his conscientious objection to military service. He bluntly offers political reasons and also refuses to perform alternative service in the army as a weaponless “construction soldier”. He submits an application to leave the GDR in September 1977: on May 3, 1978, he receives a draft call. Detlef Pump does not show up and is arrested the next day at his place of work. He is in jail for two years. He resubmits his application to leave but is nevertheless kept in the GDR. He is allowed to leave for West Berlin only in 1981. That is especially important to him because West Berliners cannot be drafted into the military because of its occupied postwar status.



Robert Havemann Society / Hans-Helmut Kurz

The oppositional “scene” in Jena often meets for day-trips to the surrounding region: here a hike to the village of Vollradisroda in March 1976 with Detlef Pump (second from the left in the back).



Robert Havemann Society / Hans-Helmut Kurz

Entry by Detlef Pump in the “Kundenbuch” (“freak’s Book”) (April 1976). They call themselves hitchhikers, bluesmen, or “freaks”, and are the East German counterpart of the flower children. They try to escape the philistine narrowness of everyday life in the GDR. They write down their texts and poems in Hans Helmut Kurz’s “Kundenbuch” and, in this way, express how they understand themselves.



Robert Havemann Society / Hans-Helmut Kurz

Detlef Pump (second from left) in June 1976 with friends on a hike in the environs of Jena. Uwe Behr and Thomas Auerbach sit on his right. Both are put in jail a few months later because they protested against Biermann’s expatriation.



Robert Havemann Society / Olaf Weißbach

“Man cannot live by bread alone” – Detlef Pump as living proof of this quotation (taken in 1989 shortly after his release from jail)



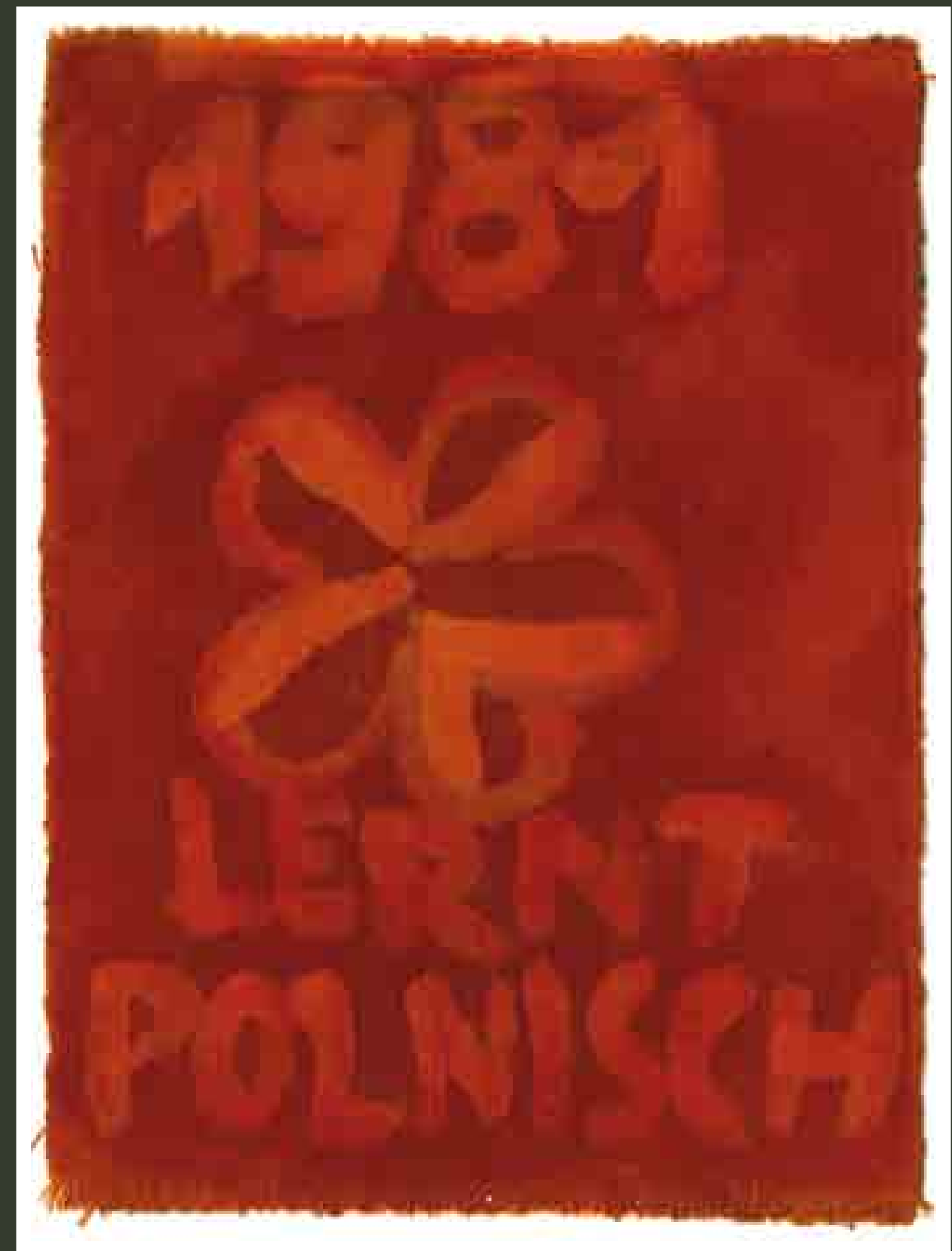
# THOMAS KRETSCHMER

\* 1955

Robert Havemann Society / Hans-Helmut Kurz



*“Poverty, beauty, nonconformity. Rock’n’Roll!”*



Robert Havemann Society / Thomas Kretschmer

During his time as a “construction soldier” in the National People’s Army, Thomas Kretschmer makes batik cloths like these as a New Year’s greeting and sends them to friends. One cloth is found in his locker. That, among other things, is used as a reason for sentencing him in 1982 to four years in prison.



Associated Press

Thomas Kretschmer is raised as a Catholic and grows up near Jena. Although a member of the state youth organization, the FDJ, he does not participate in the socialist confirmation ceremony (*Jugendweihe*). In order to become a medical doctor, he begins professional training in 1972 and works toward a high-school degree. That same year he quits the FDJ and announces his refusal to perform military service. He is forced to end his studies. He then begins training as a medical orderly. The seventeen-year old tries to flee the GDR in June 1973 but is caught and must spend fifteen months in a youth penitentiary. The Stasi recruits him there as an informant – but while still in custody he takes back his extorted agreement. Thomas Kretschmer is released in late 1974. He returns to Jena, makes contact with the Protestant church’s “Open Work” (*Offene Arbeit*) organization, and converts in 1976 to Protestantism. Newly married, he moves with his family in 1977 to a rural parsonage near Erfurt and completes his studies in a theological seminary. His house becomes a shelter for youths who are viewed critically by the church hierarchy and observed by the Stasi. He refuses to serve after being drafted into the National People’s Army. He is arrested again. After six weeks in detention and a probationary sentence, he becomes a “construction soldier” in Leipzig. Here he openly demonstrates his support of the Polish Solidarity union and the emerging East German peace movement. That is why he is sent to jail a third time, from 1982 to 1985.

A demonstration by the Polish Solidarity union at the pilgrimage site Tschenschau in Poland in the early 1980s. The independent union is founded in 1980 following social unrest in Poland and officially forbidden in 1981. It nevertheless continues its work and becomes the most important force in the Polish revolution.



Robert Havemann Society / Hans-Helmut Kurz

Thomas Kretschmer (on the left in the picture) on the sidelines at a soccer match between the “freak teams” from Jena and Gera in May 1975. Youths who wish to distance themselves from official norms call themselves “freaks”. They wear anoraks and jeans, have long hair, and are observed by the Stasi and the police.



Private

The Kretschmer family in 1983: without father and husband Thomas, who is in jail from 1982 to 1985. Despite urging by his lawyer Wolfgang Schnur, who is active at the same time as a Stasi informant, the family does not want to go to the West.



Archive StAufarb, amnesty international holding, Nr. 1027

Amnesty International acts on behalf of Thomas Kretschmer. In 1985 he becomes a “prisoner of the month” and is released that same year.



Robert Havemann Society / Andreas Bley

Thomas Kretschmer in 1990. In the fall of 1989, he participates in the occupation of the local Stasi bureau and participates as a member of the citizens’ committee that disbands the Stasi in the state of Thuringia.

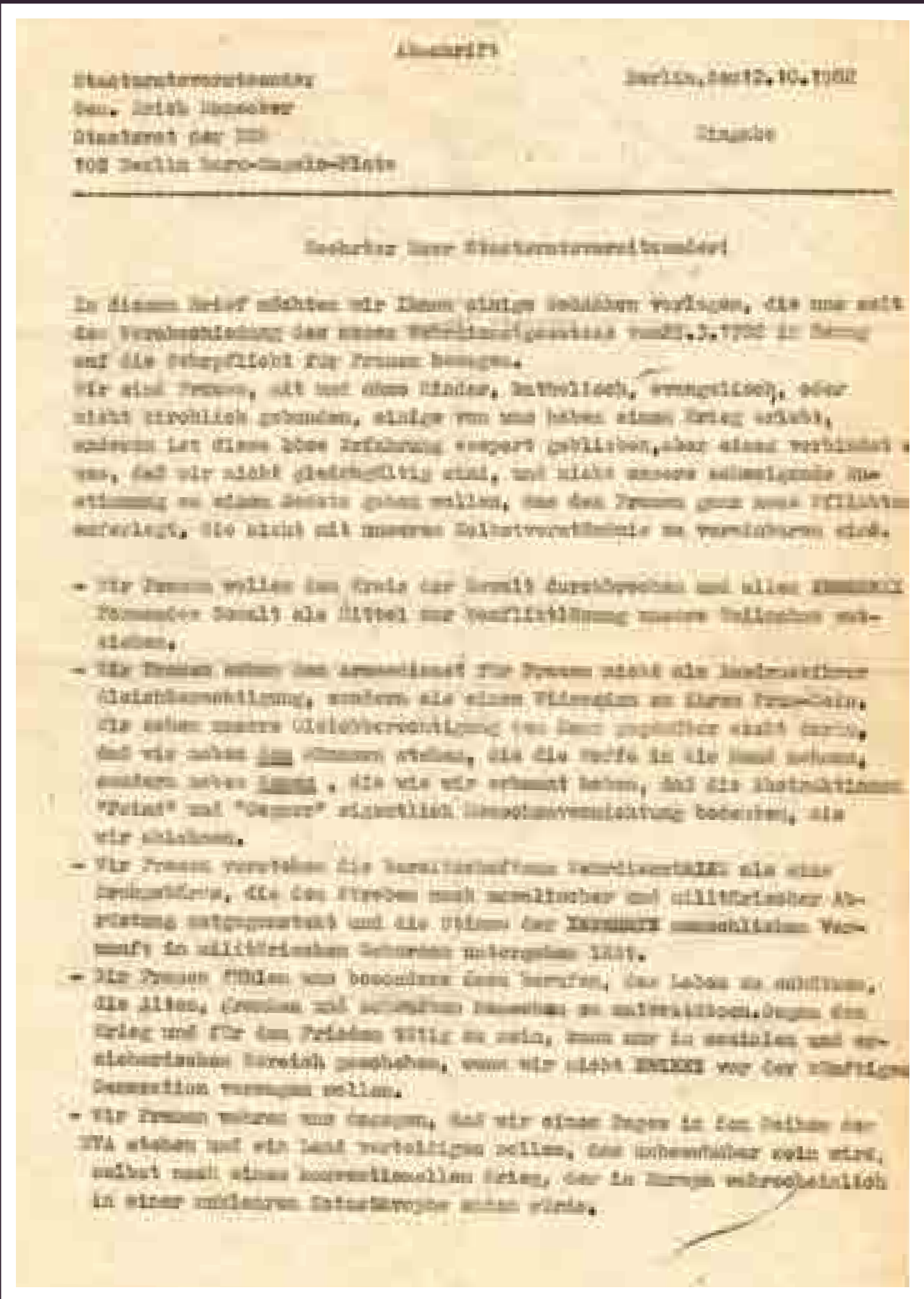


# TINA KRONE

\* 1957



“I don’t want to just clench my fists in my pockets.”



Robert Havemann Society

Courageous women convey their criticism about the draft law to SED chief and head of state Erich Honecker. When Tina Krone's friend appears at her door with this letter one October evening in 1982, Tina Krone hesitates at first before signing. But she does want conditions to change and thus decides not to hide her true opinion anymore.



BStU, MfS, BV Berlin XV 4345/82

Conditions in the GDR are criticized at home: the stepfather spent almost four years in jail for trying to flee the republic illegally. Tina Krone is not supposed to talk about that at school. She must learn to distinguish early on between what may be said in private and in public. In 1977 she goes to Berlin to begin her pedagogical studies. Through a college friend she comes across Rudolf Bahro's book *The Alternative*, which is forbidden in the GDR: it makes a great impression on her. The book explains why official propaganda and experienced reality diverge, and what an alternative to that could be. More people should learn about this, she believes, so Tina Krone establishes a secret reading group. In 1982 the GDR leadership issues, without any public discussion, a new military draft law, according to which women can be drafted into the army in a "crisis situation". For Tina Krone, this is a further step toward the militarization of society. In October she signs a petition protesting the law, even though she knows that this will have consequences for her.

Tina Krone pays for her political engagement with the loss of her occupation. Beginning in 1986 the teacher may only work in the daycare center at a special school for difficult children. Tina Krone is not intimidated. She works in various peace groups and at an illegal radio station, and participates in the publication of an underground magazine. She becomes active in the fall of 1989 in the citizens' group New Forum.

Criticism of the military service law adopted in March 1982 is prohibited. A leaflet illegally distributed in April 1982 demands the right, anchored in the East German constitution, to discuss laws before their adoption.



Robert Havemann Society

Altogether 150 women sign the protest against the military service law and make up the statewide movement "Women for Peace". An information stand of the women's group at the "Peace Workshop" in 1983.



Robert Havemann Society / Hartmut Beil

Tina Krone in the middle of the photo during a "peace workshop" held on the grounds of the Berlin Church of Redemption.



taz (newspaper), November 25, 1986

A small leaflet is passed around in East Berlin in October 1986. It announces the creation of the illegal radio station "The Black Channel". The producers are members of the East Berlin opposition, among them Tina Krone. The program is broadcast from West Berlin. The East German secret police is alarmed.



Robert Havemann Society

Tina Krone is involved with the Friedrichsfelde Peace Circle since 1985 and participates in the publication of the underground magazine *Friedrichsfelder Feuermelder* (Friedrichsfelde Fire Alarm). A protest that she formulated is published on the cover of the June 1989 edition.



# RALF HIRSCH

\* 1960



Robert Havemann Society / Klaus Mehner

*“Remaining silent would have damaged us.”*



Robert Havemann Society

A blues fair in the Church of Redemption in 1983; Ralf Hirsch is one of the organizers. The blues fairs take place in Berlin churches between 1979 and 1986. Approximately 8,000 to 9,000 youths temporarily travel to Berlin from across the entire GDR. Their increasing attraction stems from the mixture of concert, unconventional sermons, prayer, and critical skits about problems that were otherwise not discussed in the GDR.



Robert Havemann Society

Ralf Hirsch's engagement in the GDR peace movement does not abate despite penalties and other repressive measures against him. Ralf Hirsch: first from the right during a “peace workshop” on the grounds of the Church of Redemption in Berlin on June 29, 1986.



BStU, MfS, HA XX/ Fo/ 738, Picture 18

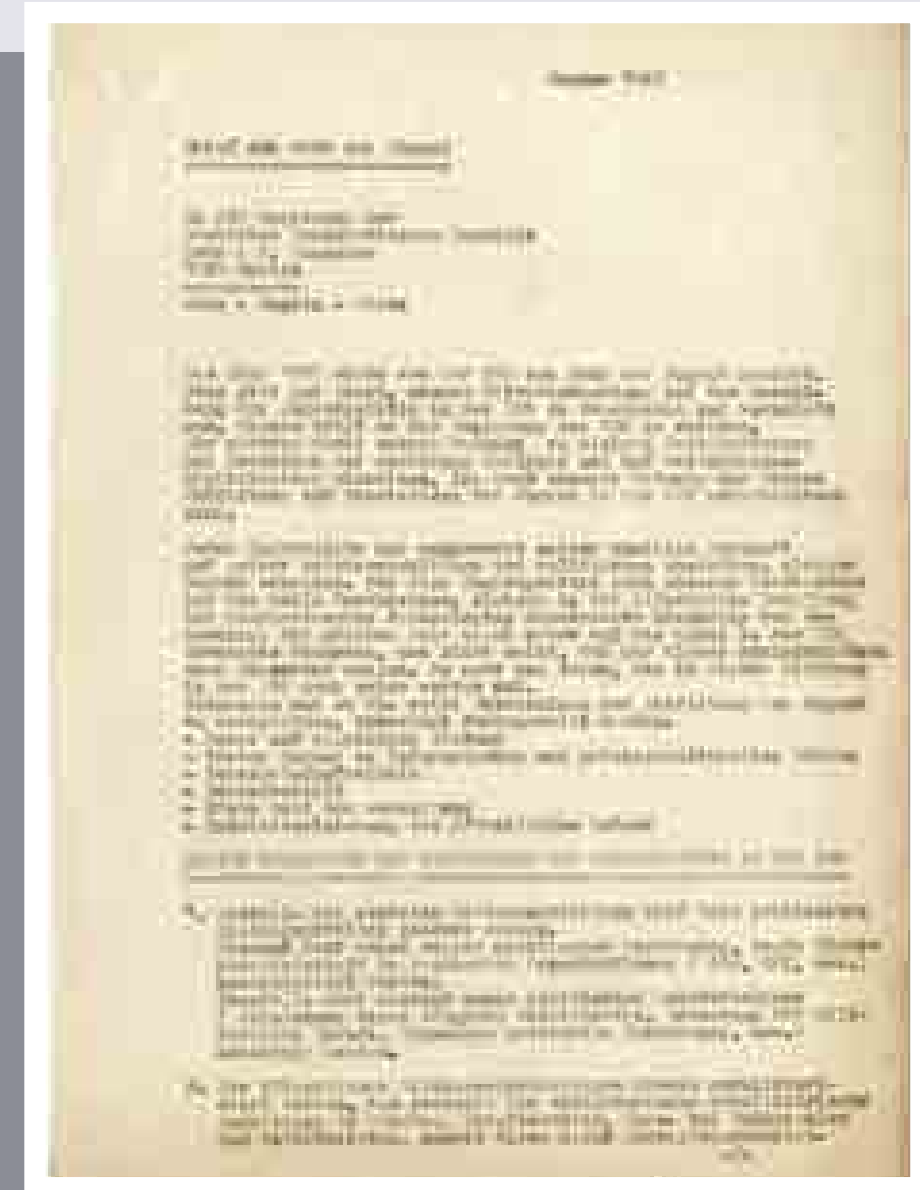
Stasi observation photo from August 28, 1987. Ralf Hirsch (in the center of the picture) and other members of the “Peace and Human Rights Initiative” distribute a critical “Statement about the Work of the Mass Media” during an event organized by the state Association of Journalists.

Like his peers, the fourteen-year-old Ralf Hirsch becomes a member of the FDJ, the state youth organization. But flag ceremonies and strategic game-playing aren't his thing, which is why he quits just a few months later. A year after that, he and his friends experience firsthand the great severity of state authority after distributing leaflets protesting military service. Ralf Hirsch is assigned in 1976 to the youth works yard in Hummelshain. He refuses to work and, as punishment, must go for six months to the enclosed youth works yard in Torgau. The youths there are subject to nonstop drills and violence, and are supposed to learn to obey meekly. After his release in 1978, Ralf Hirsch receives the discriminatory identity papers known as “PM 12”; he has to report weekly to the city district council, and is not allowed to leave Berlin without permission.

All disciplinary efforts nevertheless fail. Now he really gets involved in the dissident movement: he works with the Peace Circle of the Berlin Samaritan Community and participates in the organization of “blues fairs” that soon become known across the land. Feeling strengthened in his steadfast antimilitary position, Ralf Hirsch refuses to serve under arms in 1982 and enters the military instead as a “construction soldier”. Ralf Hirsch plays a major role in the establishment of the “Peace and Human Rights Initiative”: he is a speaker of the oppositional group and co-editor of the illegal newsmagazine *Grenzfall* (Borderline Case). Ralf Hirsch is arrested in 1988 and expatriated to the Federal Republic.

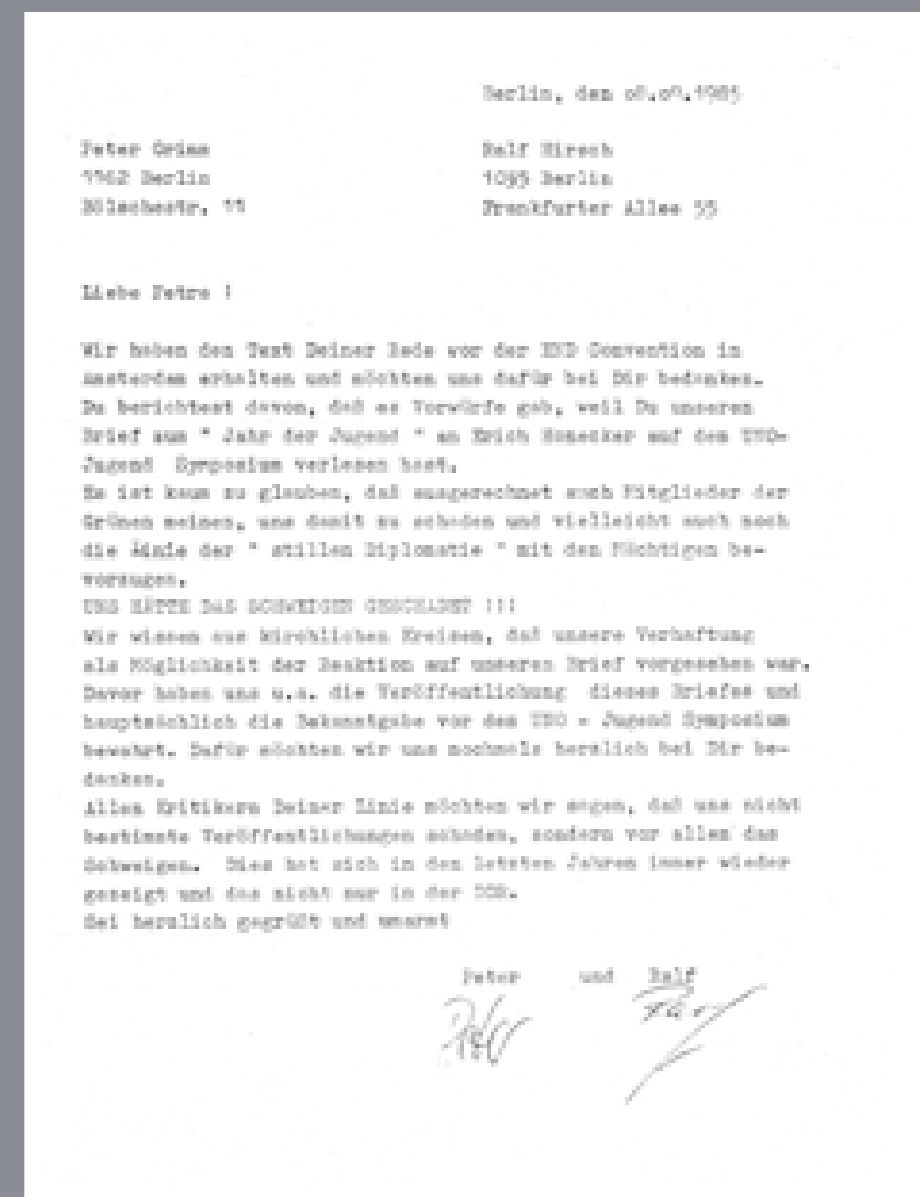


Robert Havemann Society / Peter Rölle



Robert Havemann Society

In 1985 during the UN's officially proclaimed “International Year of Youth”, Ralf Hirsch and his friends assert the right to send a letter to the GDR government demanding radical changes. By demanding the demilitarization of public life, as well as freedom to assemble and travel, they attack fundamental pillars of the dictatorship.



Robert Havemann Society

Since the authors of the letter are not allowed to travel to the West during the Year of Youth, Petra Kelly reads it aloud for them at a peace conference in Amsterdam. She is heavily criticized in the West for this, but the youthful members of the GDR opposition, Ralf Hirsch and Peter Grimm, are grateful. They emphasize the fact that publicity in the West protects them from arrest.



Robert Havemann Society

Gert Bastian speaking with Ralf Hirsch and Bärbel Bohley (from right to left). Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian are among the few West German politicians who visit and support members of the opposition in the GDR.

*Grenzfall* (Borderline Case) is an illegal publication. The first edition is presented at the Peace Workshop held at the Berlin Church of Redemption on June 29, 1986. Seventeen editions appear altogether.



# CHRISTIAN HALBROCK

\* 1963



BSU, MFS, BV Berlin, Abt. XX / 2746

*“We have to undermine the state monopoly on information.”*



Robert Havemann Society

Because Christian Halbrock wears such a patch on his anorak, he is no longer permitted to enter the school building during his occupational training. The Stasi finally seizes the anorak along with the patch.



Robert Havemann Society / Johannes Beleites

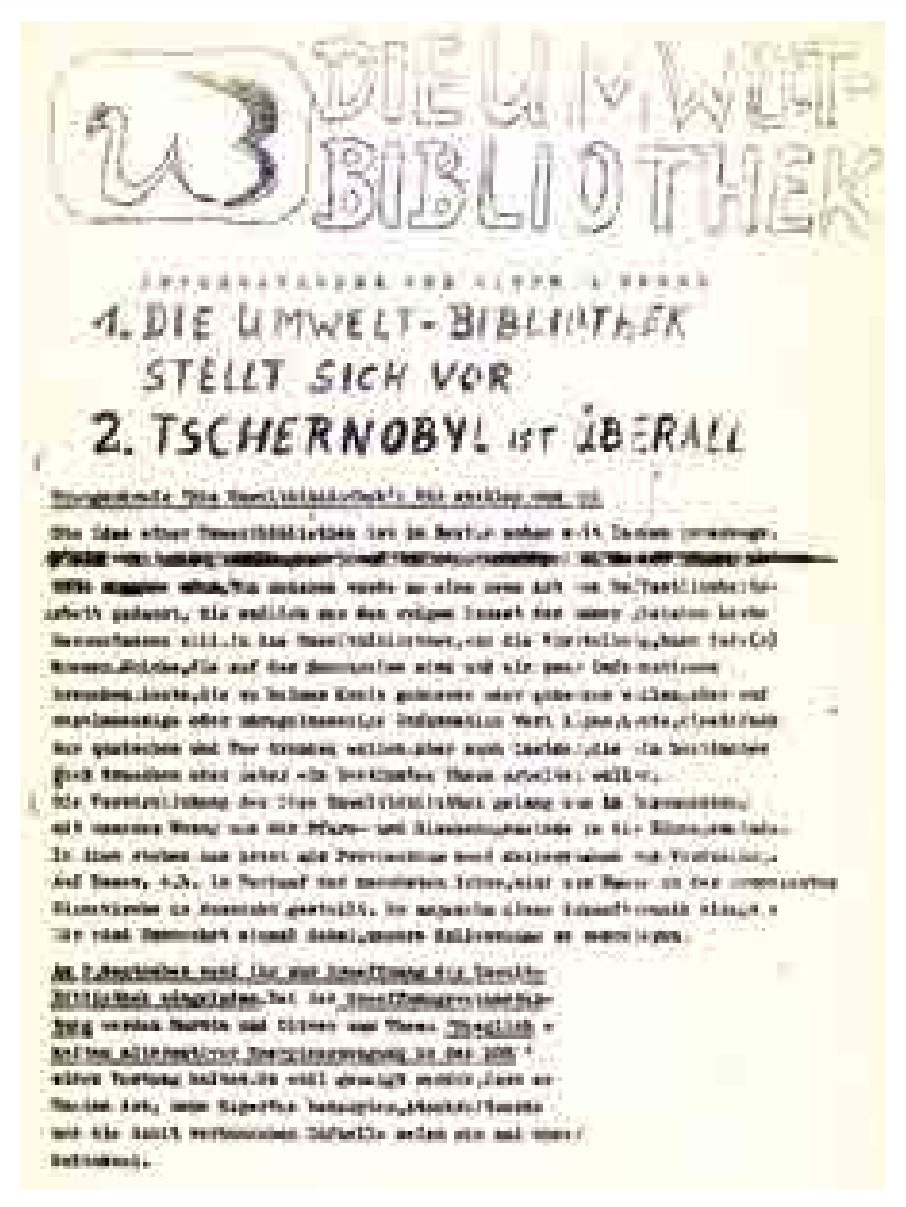
The youth pastor from the Bitterfeld district and Michael Beleites (on the left) organize this public protest on May 19, 1984 against environmental degradation in the chemical region. Two years later, Christian Halbrock (in the center of the picture covering his face) belongs to the initiators of the East Berlin Environment Library.

Christian Halbrock grows up as the son of a Protestant pastor in Belitz near Rostock. Politics plays a large role in his family, which has a critical view of the GDR. Halbrock begins training as an electrician in 1980 after not being allowed to attend high school. Because he makes known his pacifist position by wearing a “Swords into Ploughs” patch, there is a danger that he will not be allowed to complete his training – for criticism of the SED’s military policies leads to repression and persecution in all state educational establishments. Halbrock makes the first contacts with environmental activists in 1982, gets involved in activities protesting environmental destruction in the Bitterfeld-Wolfen chemical region and also caused by the construction of a highway near the city Schwerin; he also participates in bicycle demonstrations in Berlin. But it is not enough for him just to discuss things in secret groups. He is in search of a public forum, wants to act and inform people in the GDR about various wrongs and mobilize them to protest. In 1986, the year of the reactor catastrophe in Chernobyl, Halbrock establishes, together with like-minded spirits, the “Environment Library” (*Umweltbibliothek*) in East Berlin. Pastor Simon of the Zion Church parish allows access to his basement for this dissident activity. A public library is set up; it collects and makes available books forbidden in the GDR. Events are organized and limited numbers of information pamphlets are published. This center of opposition is fought by the state but becomes more and more popular.



Robert Havemann Society

Poster and leaflet of the Environment Library.



Robert Havemann Society

First edition of the library's information pamphlet. There is just about no official information in the GDR about the causes and consequences of the major disaster in Chernobyl. The East Germans are greatly concerned and ask about proper modes of behavior and secure foodstuffs. The Environment Library collects data and facts and organizes events about this topic.



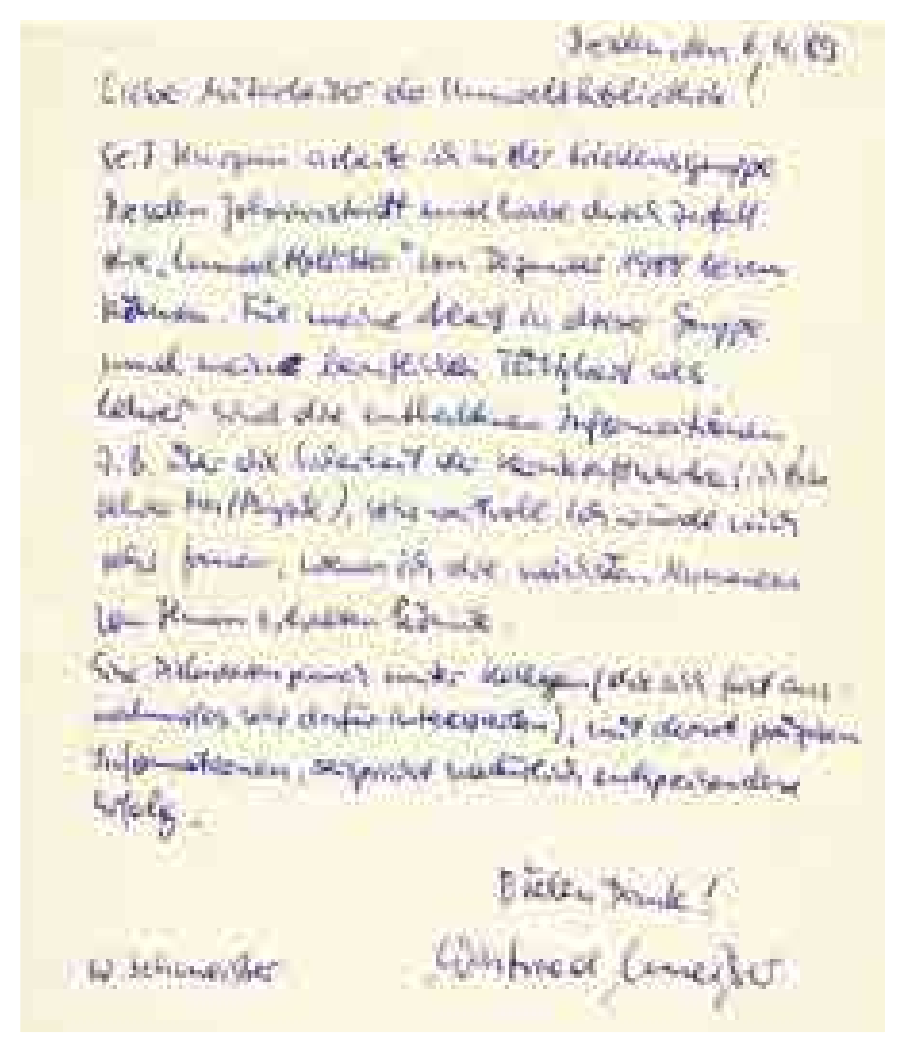
Robert Havemann Society / Ann-Christine Jansson

Visitors can drink coffee and see exhibitions in the gallery that are not shown elsewhere in the GDR. Public prosecutors and secret police carry out a raid in November 1987 and arrest a number of staff members.



Robert Havemann Society / Dirk Moldt

Dirk Moldt's call for solidarity with the arrested staff members of the Environment Library. Statements of support arrive from East and West, followed by donations of paper and books. The opposition group is suddenly well known and more and more visitors show up.



Robert Havemann Society

Interest in environmental topics increases, as this letter from a teacher shows. He signs with his name and address. Fear of the all-powerful SED is gradually overcome by the late 1980s.



# EVELYN ZUPKE

\* 1962

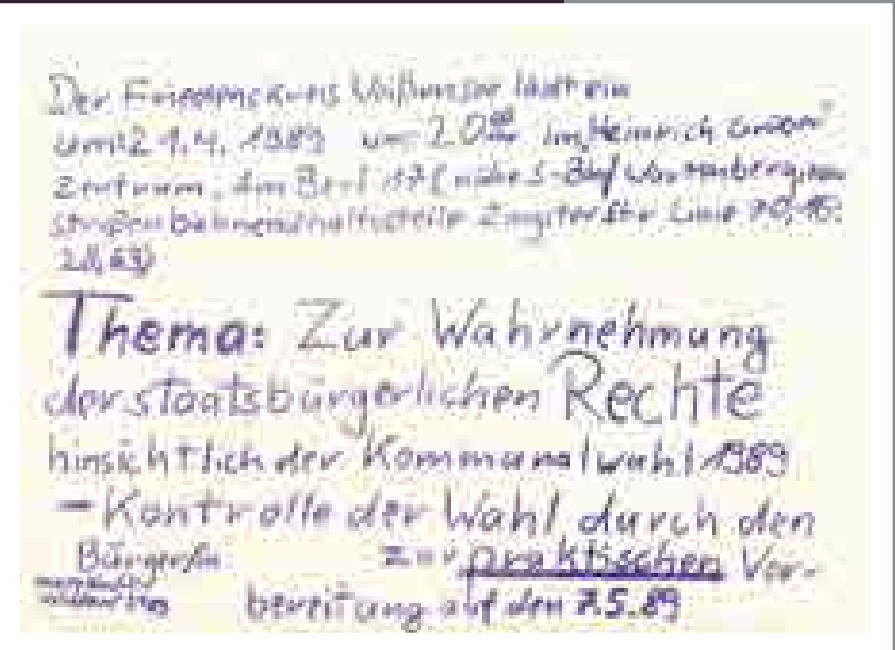


“The entire education system in the GDR is dishonest and hypocritical.”



Election officials are involved in the manipulation of the vote. Evelyn Zupke is not allowed to observe the counting of the ballots. She complains on May 13, 1989 to Lord Mayor Erhard Krack, who, as a leading functionary of the ruling SED, serves at the same time as chair of the voting commission in East Berlin.

Evelyn Zupke goes to school in the town of Binz on the island of Rügen. She receives good grades and belongs to the Pioneers, a state organization for youngsters. Her views about the GDR become more critical during high school. A fellow pupil who reneges on his agreement to train as an officer in the military is supposed to be kicked out of school. Evelyn Zupke and her friends are the only ones who support him – against everyone else. She gives up the chance to study at university because she finds the requisite political conformity abhorrent. Instead she works in a vacation home. Evelyn Zupke makes no secret of the fact that she does not want to participate in the local 1984 elections. The head of the home tries to change her mind but she maintains her stance. Shenanigans at work are the consequence and Evelyn Zupke applies to train as a health educator with the church. In 1987 she goes with her son to Berlin, works in a daycare center for seriously disabled children, and gets involved in the oppositional Peace Group in the Weißensee section of Berlin. Her main concern remains recurring election falsification in the GDR. The Peace Group carefully prepares itself for the local elections of May 7, 1989. The votes at the polling stations are counted in public. Members of the opposition organize it so that voting results from as many polling stations in Weißensee as possible are written down and added together. The action is a success. When the SED newspapers publish the official election results, the fraud is obvious and Evelyn Zupke brings formal charges of election fraud.



Robert Havemann Society

At events already held months before the election, the Weißensee Peace Group provides information about the action planned for May 7, 1989. Large numbers of allies support the project and observe the counting of the ballots.



Robert Havemann Society / Siegbert Schefke

Members of the Weissensee Peace Group (from left to right): Ralf Skörries, Evelyn Zupke, Beate Pankow, Gunther Seifert (Stasi informant), Klaus Kupler, Frank Pfeifer. Through its activities, the opposition group is decisively involved in the 1989 revolution.



Robert Havemann Society

Oppositional groups prove electoral fraud – not just in Berlin but also in Dresden, Leipzig, Rostock, and other large cities. Statistics from civil rights activists are documented and distributed in the illegal publication *Wahlfall* (Election Case).



Frankfurter Rundschau (newspaper), May 8, 1989

West German correspondents – like Karl-Heinz Baum in an article in the newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* – pick up on the data supplied by the opposition and report about the electoral fraud in the GDR. East Germans learn of the proof concerning manipulation from West German television and radio reports.



Robert Havemann Society / Hans-Jürgen Röder

On every seventh day of the month following the election, there are demonstrations in Berlin against the election fraud – seen here is the first demonstration on June 7, 1989 in front of St. Sophia's Church in Berlin. Three months later, protesters are brutally arrested by communist secret police in the middle of Alexander Square.



Robert Havemann Society

The only free parliamentary election ever in the GDR takes place on March 18, 1990. Evelyn Zupke is a member of the electoral commission.



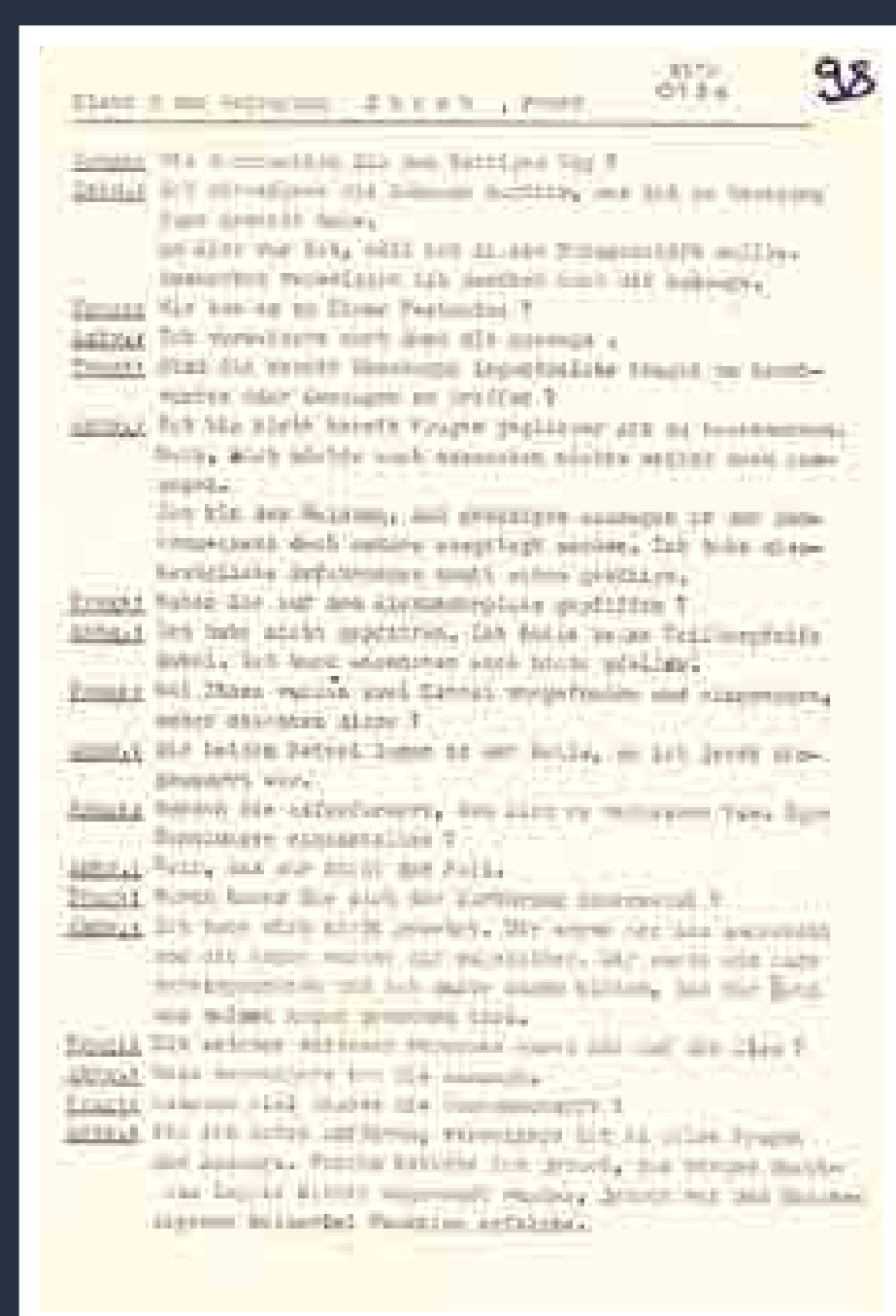
# FRANK EBERT

\* 1970



Robert Havemann Society

*“Remain in the country and defend yourself every day.”*



BStU, MfS, Ast Berlin, KD Prenzlauer Berg, 7271, p. 134

Frank Ebert protests against the electoral fraud on September 7, 1989 on Alexander Square and is arrested. The interrogation records demonstrate: he is not intimidated.



BStU, MfS, HA XX / Fo / 59, Picture 8

Paper is always in short supply. Anyone in the GDR who buys more than two packages of type-writer paper is suspect. Copy machines and ink arrive illegally from the West. Their import is forbidden. Individual journalists and diplomats flout the prohibition.



Robert Havemann Society

In addition to the publications of the Environment Library, such as *Umweltblätter* (Environment Leaves) and *Telegraph*, Frank Ebert also prints thousands of copies of leaflets and statements by other oppositional groups, civil rights movements, and political parties in the fall of 1989.

Frank Ebert is a rebellious pupil. During instruction at school he refuses to calculate the throwing angle of a hand grenade; “Swords into Ploughs” is displayed on the cover of his homework heft. At age fourteen he moves in with his older sister, who is active in the oppositional “scene” in Halle. Frank Ebert quits the FDJ youth organization during school because he does not wish to belong to the “fighting reserves” of the SED.

Frank Ebert hears in the Western media about the East Berlin Environment Library. After his first visit, the eighteen-year old helps out at first in the café and sets up exhibitions. Later he prints underground magazines and leaflets in the basement. It is in this way that he becomes involved in the creation of *Wahlfall* (Election Case), which demonstrates electoral fraud by the SED regime. Every month a small group of young people meet in Alexander Square to protest against the fraud that took place during the local elections of May 1989. Frank Ebert is arrested three times doing this.

More and more people are arrested as the number of street protests increase beginning in September 1989 in Leipzig, Dresden, and other cities. That is why Frank Ebert and his friends organize a vigil in early October in the East Berlin Gethsemane Church. They demand the release of all political prisoners in the GDR. Over the following days thousands of people meet daily in the church. Security forces gather in front of the church. The Gethsemane Church becomes a focal point of the Peaceful Revolution.



Caro / Jandke

The Gethsemane Church becomes an information center during the early days of October 1989. Reports about oppositional activities and arrests across the entire land are called in by telephone around the clock. Physical assaults by the state are recorded in memory depositions.



picture-alliance / dpa / Wolfgang Kumm

Egon Krenz, the new SED leader for just a few days, is made head of state by his vassals on October 24, 1989. Many East Germans do not agree. That same day thousands demonstrate against this in front of the State Council building in East Berlin. The photo shows Frank Ebert with a flag.



Der Spiegel (newsmagazine), October 30, 1989

In the fall of 1989 first hundreds, then thousands, and finally hundreds of thousands of East Germans take to the streets calling for civil and human rights and force the SED regime to its knees. Frank Ebert (under the red flag) is there as well.



Robert Havemann Society

In the summer of 1990 both German governments want to seal up the Stasi records in the Federal Archive. Frank Ebert participates that September in the occupation of the Stasi record archive in East Berlin. The occupiers force the opening of the records and victims of the SED regime can still view today the records of the GDR secret police.





# YOUTH OPPOSITION IN THE GDR

## Robert Havemann Society

The Robert Havemann Society documents and tries to convey the history and experiences of the opposition and resistance against the East German communist dictatorship. Using the Archive of the GDR Opposition, which the Society administers, it researches this theme, publishes historical and political publications, develops exhibitions, provides access to contemporary witnesses, and participates in political education. The papers of Robert Havemann, as well as the archival records of the New Forum, the Peace and Human Rights Initiative, the East Berlin Environment Library, the Independent Women's Association, many Round Tables of the Peaceful Revolution, as well as numerous holdings of members of the GDR opposition are all located in the archive. ➤ [www.havemann-gesellschaft.de](http://www.havemann-gesellschaft.de)

## The Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship

The Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship promotes engagement with the history and consequences of communist dictatorships, German and European division, as well as the surmounting of that division. It was established by the German parliament in 1998 and has since given more than 33 million Euros in support of 2,400 projects across Germany. It has a library and archive, and maintains a public presence through exhibition and publications. The Federal Foundation supports pluralistic debate about history and, though its activities, works against a glorification of the SED dictatorship. ➤ [www.stiftung-aufarbeitung.de](http://www.stiftung-aufarbeitung.de)

## Portal to Contemporary Witnesses

It is possible, via the online link [www.zeitzeugenbuero.de](http://www.zeitzeugenbuero.de), to establish contact with members of the East German opposition. One also finds there interlocutors about central themes related to German division and unity. New contemporary witnesses are continually added to the website: they can provide information about how young people took a stand against the SED regime.

## Youth Opposition in the Internet

The exhibition **Youth Opposition in the GDR** is accompanied by comprehensive internet offerings by the Robert Havemann Society and the Federal Foundation for Political Education. A great deal of further information is available online in addition to that about the persons and activities portrayed in this exhibition. Photos, documents, films, and accounts by contemporary actors vividly and emotionally convey the situation and hopes of young people in the GDR. The multimedia offerings, which also include study materials, vivid texts, glossaries, and biographies, received a Grimme Online Award. They are especially suited for use in schools and other educational institutions. ➤ [www.jugendopposition.de](http://www.jugendopposition.de)



## Masthead

The exhibition **Youth Opposition in the GDR** was initiated and brought into being by the Robert Havemann Society. Tom Sello was the head of the project; Stefanie Wahl was responsible for the concept and texts (wahl\_büro Berlin, [www.wahl-buero.de](http://www.wahl-buero.de) / [www.erinnerungslabor.de](http://www.erinnerungslabor.de)); the Robert Havemann Society conducted research and editing. The exhibition was translated into English by Dr. Andrew I. Port, associate professor of modern German history at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan (<http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/aiport>). Dr. Thomas Klemm (Agentur für Gestaltung, Leipzig, [www.thomasklemm.com](http://www.thomasklemm.com)) designed the exhibition, which is published jointly by the Robert Havemann Society and the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship.

## Photo Credits

Despite careful research, not all persons owning the rights to the photos in the exhibition could be determined. They have the possibility of contacting the Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e. V., Schliemannstraße 23, 10437 Berlin.

*An exhibition of the Robert Havemann Society and the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship.*