IN THIS ISSUE

›We want to live / not to die like dogs‹ was one of the slogans chanted at a large demonstration in Munich on 23 January 1948, which is depicted on the cover of this issue. The exceptional drought of the summer of 1947 led to a food crisis in the following winter with considerable social and political consequences, which *Victor Jaeschke* examines in his article using the example of the Bizone. The American and British military governments in occupied Germany initially underestimated the situation. The shortage of seeds, animal feed and fertiliser, water for agriculture, power stations and fire brigades, as well as the poor harvests of 1947 (not only in Germany) gave rise to fears of a famine, created distribution conflicts and jeopardised the legitimacy of the occupying powers. Massive US food imports, especially from December 1947 onwards, alleviated the hardship somewhat, but at the time of the demonstration depicted on the cover, the situation remained dire. Jaeschke's article not only contributes new insights into the history of Allied occupation policy in Germany; it also draws attention to the fact that the experiences of the ›hunger winter‹ and ›drought summer‹ in the early post-war period already triggered scientific discussions about possible ›climate change‹ in Europe. Because of the obvious topicality of this issue, Jaeschke argues for broader research into droughts and how they were dealt with politically in contemporary history.

The cover photo of this open issue (with different themes) comes from a specific historical situation, but it also has contemporary relevance. The slogan ›We want to live / not to die like dogs‹ could also be expressed in their respective languages by people today in Ukraine, the Middle East, Sudan, Turkey, Belarus and many other parts of the world. However, they are generally unable to take to the streets in their thousands, as they did in Munich in 1948. The fact that this slogan with its universal message still resonates with us today is probably due to the fact that the right to a (good, dignified) life encompasses more than just the existential minimum of food. It was and still is about basic needs such as social participation and human contact, political freedom and protection from arbitrary state power, broad education and adequately paid gainful employment, as well as internal and external security. Karl Schlögel, who was born in the Allgäu region in March 1948 and has long been one of Germany's most prominent historians of Eastern Europe, spoke emphatically in his acceptance speech for the 2025 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade about pain and bewilderment, about the unnaturalness of peace and freedom, not only with regard to Ukraine.[1]

1 Karl Schlögel, Learning from Ukraine. Lessons of Resistance, 19 October 2025, URL: <https://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/en/alle-preistraeger-seit-1950/2020-2029/karl-schloegel>. His contributions to our journal can be found at <https://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/autoren/karl-schloegel>.

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In her article, *Charlotte Adèle Murphy* recalls the biography and work of Ukrainian-born sculptor Vadim Sidur (1924–1986), who was unable to travel to the West himself, but whose sculptures became known in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1970s thanks to interested Western cultural mediators. Some of his works were erected here in enlarged form as monuments – a revealing case of cultural transfer during the Cold War and, in part, afterwards, in which the contexts and meanings of the artworks changed. Murphy examines the genesis and reception of three monuments in Kassel, West Berlin and Würzburg that refer to Nazi terror and the Second World War. Sidur survived the war but was scarred by a facial injury. His artistic work rejected the cult of heroes in official memory politics, which severely limited his opportunities in the USSR but made his studio a meeting place for interested Western visitors. It is noteworthy that informal German-Russian contacts and encounters were often closer in the 1970s and 1980s than they can be today.

Vadim Sidur knew the Soviet writer Vasily Grossman (1905–1964), who was also born in Ukraine and had been a war correspondent for the Red Army, collecting documents on the Nazi extermination of the Jews. In recent years, Grossman's literary works have been retranslated in Germany, including the novel *Stalingrad*, whose complicated textual and editorial history since 1952 is explored in detail by *Matthias Schwartz* in our ›Literature Revisited‹ section. From today's perspective, the novel is interesting in several respects: as a counterpoint to the current Russian appropriation of the ›Great Patriotic War‹, as an alternative to the West German narratives of Stalingrad that were prevalent for a long time, and as ›a literary testimony to Jewish history‹ (Schwartz).

A second contribution to the ›Literature Revisited‹ section also relates to Eastern European and Jewish history, but focuses on a more recent book with a broader temporal and geographical scope. Under the rather immodest German title *Das Jahrhundert verstehen. Eine universalhistorische Deutung* (Understanding the Century: A Universal Historical Interpretation), Dan Diner presented in 1999 a thoroughly ›idiosyncratic‹ synthesis of the 20th century, as *Maurus Reinkowski* writes. The book does not claim to be a global history, but focuses on the European space, albeit with a stronger emphasis on the peripheries of Europe and the ›Orient‹ than in comparable accounts. The cover of the 2015 German paperback edition, which is still available, shows the famous steps of Odessa, a city about which Karl Schlögel was still able to write euphorically in 2001,[2] but which suffered severe war damage in 2022/23. In 2025, Dan Diner received two important awards: the Ludwig Börne Prize and the Sigmund Freud Prize for Academic Prose – the jury for the Freud Prize expressly referred to *Das Jahrhundert verstehen*.

When attempting to understand the 20th century, it may be helpful to listen to some of the people who played a role in it. Sound recordings and audio archives, which have gained in importance since the beginning of this century, provide access to history

2 Karl Schlögel, Auf der Treppe von Odessa. Eine Stadt in der Zeit großer Erwartungen, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 February 2001, p. II.

that goes beyond written and visual documents or supplements them. However, they do not provide an ›immediate‹ or ›authentic‹ insight into the past – early audio documents in particular are strongly influenced by the possibilities and limitations of the recording technology of the time, as well as by arrangements that were staged with varying degrees of care. They are therefore historical sources for the recording as well as the recorded material itself. The historicity of ways of speaking and styles of speech also becomes clear. The audio edition ›Jahrhundertstimmen‹ (Voices of the Century), with historical audio documents primarily from the German Broadcasting Archive, invites listeners to explore this in more detail and immerse themselves in the wealth of acoustic tradition. It would take more than 60 hours to listen to the entire collection. In his contribution, *Daniel Morat* provides a helpful overview and highlights striking examples; he points out media peculiarities as well as gaps in the material and the edition.

Three longer research articles in this issue deal with the history of the Federal Republic of Germany from different perspectives. *Alexander Zinn* is able to differentiate the previous picture of the prosecution of homosexuals in the 1950s and 1960s by using the example of the situation in Frankfurt am Main to demonstrate more precisely how the police and judiciary dealt with the relevant sections of the Criminal Code. After a phase of intensive prosecution in 1950/51, which was sharply criticised in the media, the sentences became significantly milder; the proportion of acquittals and fines increased. According to the author, this does not mean that homosexuality was now generally accepted – it was still not allowed to be known or visible. However, according to Zinn, the thesis of ›an unbroken continuation of Nazi persecution policy‹ needs to be corrected.

The next two articles examine the Federal Republic of Germany in a transnational context, focusing specifically on the actions of the federal governments in the areas of foreign, military and development policy. *David Kuchenbuch* provides a concise case study on the 1970 television series ›Keine Zeit für Abenteuer‹ (No Time for Adventure), which was initiated and largely financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation at ZDF in order to promote the benefits of West German development aid to a broad audience. However, the series, set in Brazil, had the completely opposite effect; even at the time, it was criticised as an expression of ›neo-colonialism‹. Kuchenbuch argues that the accusations were justified, but that the historical analysis should not stop there. He describes how the ministry's PR idea came about, how political and media logics clashed, and why the series was already out of step with the times in the year it was broadcast. The growing ›reflexivity of development thinking‹ (including within the ministry itself) demanded and enabled other forms of representation.

Torsten Konopka examines a longer period, tracing German military cooperation with Rwanda from the country's independence in 1962 to the genocide of 1994. Political debates repeatedly raise the question of what responsibility the Federal Republic of Germany may have had for the mass murder. In contrast, this study focuses on the background: what were the objectives of the Bundeswehr's equipment and training assistance, and what was the scope and impact of this assistance? At the time of

German and European division, the main purpose was to limit the influence of the GDR and the ›Eastern Bloc‹ in Africa and to promote ›sympathy‹ for the Federal Republic. Some Rwandan police officers and soldiers received training in the Federal Republic; in addition, vehicles and communication systems were delivered to Rwanda. A small group of Bundeswehr advisers had been active in the country since 1978. However, the federal ministries did not want to become more politically or militarily involved in Rwanda. The advisers had close contacts with the Rwandan leadership, but apparently had no insight into the planning of the genocide. Since the German representatives (including those from the embassy, development aid and Deutsche Welle) were evacuated from Rwanda at the end of April 1994, they were no longer able to exert any influence on the ground. It remains a depressing story that testifies to a lack of foresight in foreign policy.

To avoid ending on this rather gloomy note, we would like to mention that, in 2025, we had the opportunity to participate in panel discussions at the 7th Swiss History Days in Lucerne and the 55th German Historians' Conference in Bonn. In keeping with the respective themes of the two conferences, the discussions focused on the (in)visibility of academic journals and the dynamics of power in academic publishing. Immediately after the panel discussion in Lucerne, a podcast conversation was recorded for H-Soz-Kult,[3] and the Bonn panel discussion is documented on the Gerda Henkel Foundation's science portal.[4] Anyone who was unable to follow the conferences or these discussions live is cordially invited to gain a little insight into the editorial work and its broader contexts via digital media.

Jan-Holger Kirsch for the editorial team
(Translated from the German by Lee Holt)

3 (Un-)Sichtbarkeit geschichtswissenschaftlicher Fachzeitschriften. Staffel 3, Episode 6 des H-Soz-Kult-Podcasts »Vergangenheitsformen«, recorded on 10 July 2025, published on 12 September 2025, URL: <https://www.hsozkult.de/podcast/staffel-3/un-sichtbarkeit> (with Tina Asmussen, Christine Bartlitz and Jan-Holger Kirsch).

4 Konkurrenz und Kooperation. Dynamiken der Macht beim Publizieren in und von Fachzeitschriften, panel discussion on 17 September 2025, published on 24 September 2025, URL: <https://lisa.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/historikertag2025_fachzeitschriften> (with Jens Bisky, Jan-Holger Kirsch, Julia Menzel, Yvonne Robel and Benjamin Seyd).