

In this issue

A good two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the GDR, we are still – or again – confronted with questions surrounding the functioning mechanisms of the SED's rule, how it produced cohesion and where there was potential for conflicts. *Jens Gieseke* explores these questions on the basis of reports on the public mood the Ministry for State Security (MfS) compiled for the SED leadership in the 1960s and 1970s. He discusses the value of these reports as primary sources and traces recurring themes, such as people's complaints about the consumption situation and their hopes for a loosening of the travel restrictions between the two German states. However, it would be overly simplifying to detect the first heralds of the system change of 1989/90 in these accounts of the public mood. Gieseke rather discerns a contradiction imminent to the system: On the one hand, the SED commissioned reports on the public mood in the country; on the other, it responded with an increasing 'perception resistance' to these observations. *Axel Doßmann's* contribution both complements and contrasts Gieseke's article. In the section 'rediscovered classics', he introduces a book comprising both text and photographs by the two journalists Marlies Menge and Rudi Meisel, who travelled throughout the GDR in the late 1970s in order to gain an impression of 'everyday life' there. However, the authors do not appear to have developed any feel for the functioning of political power in the 'other' Germany. Instead, the book reveals a sentimental viewpoint. Menge and Meisel describe the GDR as a chronotope with an entirely different life rhythm, but tend to neglect actual experiences and prevailing contradictions.

As we know, German-German history was part of the larger, global constellation of the Cold War, which according to widespread understanding also came to an end in 1989/90. In the context of scholarly research on this era, which has already yielded – and continues to yield – important findings, the historical-cultural question of how the Cold War can best be portrayed and conveyed in museums is currently gaining in significance. Which places and objects, events and developments, atmospheres and antagonism were characteristic of the Cold War? This question is relevant especially with regard to the urban landscape of Berlin. While until recently Berlin was a central arena in which the global system competition was carried out, today the remnants of the Cold War have become scarce and are no longer self-explanatory. Before this backdrop, we want to initiate a debate on the possibilities and problems surrounding the musealization of the Cold War. In this sense, *Muriel Blaive's* enlightening critique of the exhibit 'Cold War Modern. Design 1945–1970', which was recently shown in London and will open again in fall 2009 in Vilnius, supplements the debate section of this issue. In its display of design objects from both sides of the Iron Curtain, the exhibit reveals similarities and

differences, dissociations and the intertwining between the two blocs, and reflects these aspects on a high theoretical level. However, Blaive poses the critical question whether or not the concept 'Cold War', which is quite established in the West, is really a meaningful category in analyzing the Eastern European experience. *Riccardo Bavaj* also addresses conflicts from the Cold War era, but in his case from the perspective of the history of ideas. In his article for the section 'rediscovered classics', he introduces Raymond Aron's work *L'opium des intellectuels* from 1955, in which the French sociologist challenges the myths and ideologies of the Western (Marxist) Left. Aron's liberal counter-position specifically to Sartre today appears ambivalent – it vacillates between cunning observations and irritating generalizations, between scholarly analysis and political polemics. However, precisely these attributes identify his writing as an intellectual legacy of the Cold War.

Besides Jens Gieseke's contribution on the history of the GDR, the article section contains two explorations of the history of remembrance in the FRG. These two texts make for interesting parallel reading as they both deal with the mid 1960s and thus reveal the coincidence between seemingly unconnected debates and events. *Birgit Schwellung* reconstructs the history of the 'Friedland memorial'. The idea for this memorial to the 'aftermaths of war' goes back to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and was eventually erected close to the inner-German border by the *Verband der Heimkehrer* (Association of Returnees) in 1966/67. It commemorates the German prisoners of war, refugees and expellees. Its sheer dimensions and design underline its ambition towards central representation. Oscillating between the particularistic interests of the said association and universal commemoration – Schwellung argues – it had an 'un-concrete message', which was in many ways typical of the time. Nonetheless, this form of remembrance had already crossed its zenith at the memorial's inauguration in 1967, and hence the 'Friedland memorial' soon declined in significance. The persecution and extermination of the Jews during the Nazi era now increasingly became the focus of attention, although at this point in time this was certainly not yet a matter of course in the political culture of the Federal Republic. *Gerd Kühling* describes Joseph Wulf's futile attempts to establish a memorial and research centre at the former House of the Wannsee Conference in Berlin. He particularly focuses on Wulf's conflict with the provost Heinrich Grüber, who disapproved of this endeavour. The author maps out the problematic lines of argumentation and deep personal divisions of the debate at the time. Kühling and Schwellung moreover both come to a more general conclusion: For decades, and especially in the mid 1960s, memory and commemoration politics as well as remembrance culture in the Federal Republic were marked by a 'persistent basic tension', a 'search movement', which can also be understood as this society's 'institutionalized ambivalence' in the post-war era.¹

Another contribution on the history of the Federal Republic, this time in the section 'Sources', addresses the audio-documents of the Stuttgart Stammheim trial conducted between 1975 and 1977 that were (re)discovered in 2007.² While the course of the trial has long been known through the protocol of the proceedings, these audio-documents provide a specific acoustic added value, as *Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann* elucidates: The voices of the accused RAF-terrorists and the other participants in the trial provide important new insights into the proceedings. The impression popularized through various films that the tried individuals always behaved hysterically in court must be revised. As far as a critical approach towards primary sources is concerned, this case also demonstrates that contemporary history has not yet developed sufficient instruments for the interpretation of audio-documents as a specific medium. The tools for assessing visual media are certainly better developed. Oftentimes, however, research in this field solely focuses on prominent 'icons', while less spectacular mass sources are largely neglected. A DVD-edition of approximately 22,000 collectable advertisement images with historical themes from 1870 to 1970, which *Sandra Schürmann* critically assesses in this issue, redeems this lack to some degree. For example, this edition makes it possible to search for certain motives, their circulation and modifications over time. Particularly interesting in this context is the question of how texts and images interact in these albums – if they amplified, complemented or in some cases even contradicted one another. Although the edition leaves much to be desired in this respect, it is nevertheless important to appreciate its attempt at developing systematic compilation practices for visual sources in the field of contemporary history per se. This endeavour should be expanded and elaborated.

The Editors
(translation: Eva Schissler)

¹ Klaus Naumann, Institutionalisierte Ambivalenz. Deutsche Erinnerungspolitik und Gedenkkultur nach 1945, in: *Mittelweg* 36 13 (2004) Issue 2, pp. 64-75, quotes on p. 67 and p. 70.

² This elaborates on a point of focus from 'Zeitgeschichte-online': Die RAF als Geschichte und Gegenwart. Texte und Materialien zum 'Deutschen Herbst' und seinen Folgen, ed. Jan-Holger Kirsch and Annette Vowinckel, online under URL: <<http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/md=RAF-Geschichte-Inhalt>>.