

Editorial

Usually the topic of emigration in the 20th century is linked with that of escape from communist, National Socialist, or fascist regimes. Due to oppression, persecution, lack of freedom and horrendous living conditions, countless numbers of people fled from the East European block countries. The main focus of this issue of *Totalitarismus und Demokratie* is on the relatively few emigrants who left Greece, Spain and Chile to flee *into* the Warsaw Pact states. Special attention is devoted to the situation of these asylum seekers living in the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

Whilst politically motivated emigration to the western countries has already attracted much attention – a fact proven by a number of large-scale studies on the topic¹ – much less attention has been paid to politically-motivated emigration into the Eastern Bloc countries.² Nevertheless it was widely known at the time that Greek, Spanish and Chilean political dissidents sought refuge in the German Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Poland, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and other Eastern Bloc countries. A reason for the widespread omission of this issue in academic literature might be the relatively small number of emigrants who were actually involved.

In the course of 1949 and 1950, 1 128 Greek children fled from the civil war that was raging in their country to take refuge in the Soviet Occupation Zone in Germany (at a time in which the zone was becoming the new German Democratic Republic). Most of them came to the state of Saxony. In his article, Stefan Troebst, a professor for cultural studies at the University of Leipzig and vice-director of the *Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas – Leipzig (GWZO)* details their plight. Since nearly all of these refugees had lost their Greek citizenship, the GDR authorities considered them political emigrants and gave them the status of “*Griechen ohne Heimat*” – literally “Greeks without a home”. Most of them remained in the GDR until the first half of the 1980s. At first the children were very isolated from the society which hosted them, and which considered them to be temporary guests. The government of the GDR planned to send them back to Greece after attaining vocational education and military training. Only after it became clear that the international political situation would not allow their return, did the government order their integration. By now the children had become adults. This integration occa-

1 See above all: Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Migration und Politik. Westdeutschland – Europa – Übersee 1945–1961*, Osnabrück 1995; Bernhard Santel, *Migration in und nach Europa. Erfahrungen – Strukturen – Politik*, Opladen 1995; Klaus J. Bade (ed.), *Europa in Bewegung. Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 2000.

2 The topic of political emigrants was especially mentioned in Jan C. Behrens/Thomas Lindenberger/Patrice G. Poutrus (eds.), *Fremde und Fremd-Sein in der DDR. Zu historischen Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Ostdeutschland*, Berlin 2003.

sioned considerable tension, leading to an intensive surveillance by the leading Socialist Unity Party (SED) and the East German Secret Police (MfS, or *Stasi*). Troebst portrays the ideological frictions which existed between the German communists – who maintained their Stalinist orientation even after the ‘thaw’ of 1956 – and their Greek comrades. When in 1968 the exiled Greek Communist Party split into orthodox-marxist and euro-communist factions – a division which had an affect on their GDR-Greek compatriots – the *Stasi* began to monitor the refugees more intensely. Troebst underlines how the policy of the ruling SED Party toward the Greeks wavered. At times they would pursue the goal of their complete integration into East German society, while later on they would exclude the refugees from society, an exclusion based upon the formal criterion of their statelessness. Following the new wave of repressions that began in 1968, several hundred Greeks moved to the Federal Republic of Germany. The onset of diplomatic relations between Greece and the GDR in 1973 then allowed the return of a limited number of refugees to their homeland. After the accession of the PASOK to power in Greece in 1981, the vast majority of the remaining Greeks went back home. Only a few dozen of them remained to witness the 1989 implosion of the German half-state to which they had fled four decades before.

After the catastrophe of National Socialism, and under the conditions of the Cold War, the German states were looking for specific ways of dealing systematically with the topic of political asylum. The article by historian Patrice Poutrus of the *Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung (ZZF)* in Potsdam analyses and compares the early asylum laws and policies of the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), as well as examining what impact they had on political emigrants. In the GDR, the SED tried to support other communist parties and anti-western movements in the third world through the granting of political asylum to so-called “political emigrants”. This measure was adopted in the hope that the GDR would garner world-wide recognition, and therefore legitimacy. Of course this issue became instrumentalized for political purposes, and in reality the GDR’s readiness to accept asylum seekers was actually very limited. It was also a contributing factor to the low level of integration into a conflict-laden East German society for the few “political emigrants” that the GDR did accept.

For the Federal Republic of Germany, the burden of the past would prove to be a heavy one for an emerging democratic society. The especially overt formulation of Article 16 of the Fundamental Law (*Grundgesetz*) led the early FRG towards a very liberal asylum policy which was a unique example of liberality and which showed a high obedience to the rule of law. Nevertheless this unique procedure was also rooted in the strong need of West German policy-makers to positively distance themselves from the preceding National Socialist dictatorship, as well as from the emerging communist block system in Eastern Europe. The long-lasting economic boom in the West in the 1950s and 1960s, allowed any form of migration into the labour market. Later the only effectual legitimizing function of the admission of refugees disappeared as a result of West Germany’s

transition towards a policy of détente and with the liberalization of domestic society. The restriction process of the asylum laws, which began in 1976, can be seen to have anticipated the later modifications of the asylum provisions of the Fundamental Law. It was a necessary element of the normalization of West German conditions, showing their alignment with other democratically-constituted states, and presenting a part of West Germany's "Path to the West".

The contribution of Enrique Líster differs from the other articles in that it combines autobiographical experience with objective analysis. Líster is the son of the legendary Enrique Líster, a general of the Spanish Communist Party (Partido Comunista Español), and he has lived in Poland, France, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In his article, Enrique Líster Jr. depicts the complex journeys which led Spanish communist emigrants to Eastern Europe. Between 1939 and 1946 these emigrants stayed for the most part in the Soviet Union. After World War II, the circle of the states ready to welcome them expanded to include other European countries. In 1946 numerous Spaniards left the Soviet Union for France or Latin America. After the erection of the Iron Curtain, it was no longer possible for those Spaniards who had come to the Soviet Union to leave the country. Enrique Líster Jr. gives a detailed account of the fate of the Spanish Communist Party in the Soviet Union, France, the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Poland. In the repatriation of these new emigrants throughout the different socialist states, the city of Prague played the role of an operational center. Líster judges that the Spaniards identified themselves to a great extent with the every-day life of the population in the countries receiving them. They developed sympathy towards the problems and frustrations which many of the people there had in coping with their governments, but nonetheless refrained from interfering with the internal affairs of their adoptive countries. After Spain legalized the Spanish Communist Party in 1976, many emigrants returned to their home country. Today only a few of them still live in their countries of exile. Naturally, a great many of those belonging to the exiles second generation were born into mixed marriages.

Following the 1950 ban on the Spanish Communist Party in France, a small group of Spanish asylum-seekers fled from there to the GDR. Furthermore, small groups of emigrants continued to come directly from Spain to the GDR until the 1960s. In his article, Axel Kreienbrink, a historian at the Migration and Integration Research Department of the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Nuremberg, describes the attitude of the SED-State towards these Spanish political emigrants. His analysis of their admission to the GDR, of their life there, and of their partial repatriation to Spain, is based on the files of the Internal Relations Section of the Central Committee of the SED. It reveals an ambivalent picture. At first the GDR was surprised by the arrival of refugees, but it soon developed a specific admission procedure for them. The approval of refugee status, for example, remained a sovereign act, if not of the state, at least of the party. This decision was made with the approval of the Spanish-communist sister party. For historical reasons – given the fact that German cadres had

fought on the side of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War – the Spaniards could rely on special sympathy from the SED. On the other hand they were eyed with some degree of suspicion by the Party – as were all foreigners. The point and purpose of their stay was the preparation for their return to Spain. As it became clear that such a return would not be possible in the near future, a certain level of integration was pursued. However, the official East German perspective was that integration into the local work force was desirable, but not quite yet into the greater society of the GDR. As far as the details of their stay can be retraced, with very few exceptions the Spaniards seem to have led a life free of conflict in the GDR. They were prone neither to fight among themselves nor with the local population. Even so, this does not mean that their stay in the GDR was free from any dissatisfaction. Disputes were often triggered by such things as the distribution of scarcely available goods, such as apartments, or by the bureaucratic procedure which awaited them for having to prolong their foreigner's passports after short intervals. The SED-State reacted harshly towards those criticizing it or behaving in a non-conformist way. Not all officials demonstrated understanding for the official support of the Spaniard's repatriation. Indeed, some of them perceived it to be a defection to the class enemy rather than a commitment to the fight against fascism on Spanish soil. As a matter of fact, repatriation itself proved controversial, even though the principle of it had not always been disputed. Nevertheless beginning in the late 1960s, and more so after the revocation of the ban on the Communist Party in Spain, most of the political emigrants living in the GDR returned home.

Following the putsch against Allende's left-wing government in Chile on September 11th 1973, some 2 000 people fled the country for the GDR. The historian Jost Maurin, a foreign correspondent for the Reuters News Agency – German branch office, shows in his article that SED leaders barely pursued humanitarian motives in according asylum to the fugitives. The circle around Erich Honecker instead tried to strengthen socialism in Chile and consolidate its power. Therefore asylum was granted mainly to communists. The asylum seekers, who were mostly intellectuals, were meant to be educated by low-qualified work, lack of discipline being perceived as the main cause of the failure of the socialist experiment in Chile. The emigrants received social benefits, but these served a political purpose. In co-operation with the Chilean communists, the SED supported the Moscow-oriented communists with material aid, while they obstructed their opponents. From the perspective of SED propaganda, the Chilean emigrants were a symbol of the "deeply humanitarian" character of the GDR. Yet the admission of the emigrants was also a source of potential threat to the SED. The Central Committee tried to gain control over this threat through a massive restraint of the emigrant's rights. The Chileans also suffered under strict travel restrictions placed upon them by the SED. For the Party, the "safety" of the GDR was their foremost concern. Any suspicion that any one might be working for the Chilean Secret service was used by the Stasi to move against asylum-seekers who made criticisms. Among other cases, the notorious Stasi man-

aged to have a member of the Radical Party expelled from the country on political grounds.

In the introduction to his article “Asylum during the Cold War”, Patrice Poutrous underlines the latent tension between two paradoxically linked concepts: a process of national identification based on exclusion and an inclusive argument of universal human rights. Both principles – the national as well as the universal one – meet in the issue of trans-national migration and must prove their ethical viability in the concrete process of humanitarian action. The history of the United States of America also demonstrates this tense dynamic, as Poutrous also observes.

In his discussion of “The Concept of Freedom in the Anglo-American World” – a theme which lies outside of the main focus of this issue – Gerhard Besier argues that American national identity is based on a universally-oriented, missionary concept of freedom. He explores the interactions which thrive within this. On the other hand, the USA often fails to achieve these high civil-religious objectives, both at home and in their foreign relations. But here, in ways that are quite impossible in dictatorships of any kind, many influential popular movements within American society show an astonishing power, through which societal self-adjustment is made possible. Minorities need not flee the United States. They liberate themselves, even though this process is often difficult and painful.

In his short article Enrique Líster Jr. uses the example of the Soviet leader Lavrenty Beria to describe the problems of the Soviet cultural industry in the context of de-Stalinization and in other circumstances. Since the 50 volume “Great Soviet Encyclopedia” was not based on a loose leaf system, its readers were condemned to update it themselves – which meant cutting out the disgraced articles and replacing them with the latest, government approved versions.

Finally, Francesca Weil reports on the workshop “Medical Action under Two Dictatorships”, which she organized in mid-February 2005. This was done in the context of her research on “The Collaboration of Doctors with the GDR’s Stasi”, and came about in cooperation with the *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* and the *Stiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*.

Gerhard Besier