

**Purge or Purgatory: How the Flight of Three Veteran Communists Affected
East German Politics during the Ulbricht**

by

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**A Thesis
Presented to
The University of Guelph**

**In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
History**

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Purge or Purgatory: How the Flight of Three Veteran Communists Affected East German Politics during the Ulbricht Era

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Studies focusing on East German communism have largely centred on the political tactics, ideology and organization of the Socialist Unity Party (SED). Only a handful of studies have focused exclusively on the role of veteran communists. Veteran communists in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) held great influence and authority. Subsequently, they were rewarded for their pre-1945 revolutionary efforts and their loyalty to the party and its strain of Marxist-Leninist ideology was almost always unwavering, even when faced with political purges. Since very few veteran communists chose to flee the regime when faced with persecution, West German media sources sensationalized the stories of the ones who did – and often mocked them for their loss of faith in the communist movement.

This thesis examines the lives of three high-profile veteran communists who fled the GDR during the Ulbricht era and how the SED responded to the outburst of negative publicity being showcased in the West. Through the examination of the literary scholar Alfred Kantorowicz, the renowned Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, and the journalist Heinz Brandt, we are able to see how the East German leadership used a variety of tactics to try to minimize the damage caused by their decision to flee. After the propaganda coup surrounding the flight of Kantorowicz, the SED held back in its attack on Bloch in fear that his departure would have a similar effect. Ulbricht therefore granted Bloch just enough academic leniency to keep him on East German soil. Once Bloch did flee the GDR in the spring of 1961, the SED responded by

kidnapping Brandt, who was used as a scapegoat to vindicate East Germany's position as a socialist state. Brandt was promised his freedom if he publicly admitted that his departure was a "mistake." However, Brandt refused to cooperate with the SED, drawing even more negative media attention in Germany and abroad, culminating in disapproval from both communists and non-communists worldwide.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union

FRG: Federal Republic of Germany

GDR: German Democratic Republic

KPD: German Communist Party

NSDAP: National Socialist German Workers' Party

SA: Nazi Storm Troopers

SED: Socialist Unity Party of Germany

SPD: Social Democratic Party of Germany

SS: Nazi Protection Squadron

Stasi: Ministry of State Security

INTRODUCTION

Purge or Purgatory: How the Flight of Three Veteran Communists Affected East German Politics during the Ulbricht Era

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the East German regime, under the leadership of Walter Ulbricht, enacted a series of purges that sought to eliminate potential rivals or political opponents whose views were in opposition to Stalinist-style politics.¹ Close to 150,000 comrades were expelled from the ranks of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) through a series of show trials and arrests.² These purges took place during the period of High Stalinism (1949-1953), and only came to a halt after Joseph Stalin's death in March 1953. After Ulbricht successfully rid himself of potential rivals and dissidents, in what historian John Connelly has referred to as the "interrupted thaw," he pursued a short period where he lessened his grip on intellectual affairs, following a more liberal "New Course" which allowed for more open and critical discussions amongst academics and intellectuals.³ This "thaw" was Ulbricht's response to the general dissatisfaction felt amongst intellectuals in the early 1950s. Despite most intellectuals and SED members reacting passively to the political turmoil, many maintained a strong desire for more academic freedoms and there existed a consensus of understanding for the workers who revolted in June 1953. This "New Course" momentarily absorbed some of the discontent felt by remaining intellectuals and party members who had survived the earlier purges, and was further

¹ Catherine Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and their Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 153.

² Dirk Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany: Patriotism and Propaganda, 1945-53*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 220.

³ John Connelly, "Ulbricht and the Intellectuals," *Contemporary European History*, vol. 6, no. 3 (November, 1997): 338.

reinforced when Soviet Union leader Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalinism at the Twentieth Party Congress meeting of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1956.⁴

Khrushchev's "secret speech" in February 1956 resulted in a series of political uprisings that reverberated throughout the Eastern bloc. The most consequential of these revolts occurred in Hungary and Poland that same year. As a result, Ulbricht unleashed an attack against revisionism in the GDR, as he feared for the security of his leadership and was opposed to Khrushchev's plans for change.⁵ Although less severe than the purges of the late 1940s and early 1950s, Ulbricht issued a series of arrests, while also increasing repressive measures against the intelligentsia in hopes that "problem" intellectuals would leave the regime.⁶ The majority of these "problem" intellectuals were comprised of academics, writers and SED members who were targeted for having expressed, or were known for supporting revisionist thinking. Many of these intellectuals were also longtime or "veteran" communists, who had joined the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) prior to 1933.⁷ What separated pre-1933 communists from later generations during the 1950s was their unwavering loyalty to the party and its Marxist-Leninist ideology even when faced with political purges or even death, and very few chose to leave. However, there were a small number of veteran communists who chose to flee the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁸

This thesis examines the lives of three high-profile "veteran" communists who fled the GDR during the late 1950s, and in the case of Ernst Bloch, in the spring of 1961. Since very few

⁴ Connelly, 338.

⁵ Sean A. Forner, *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal: Culture and Politics after 1945*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 273.

⁶ Connelly, 350.

⁷ Epstein, 6.

⁸ Epstein, 4.

longtime communists fled the GDR,⁹ the West German media took interest in the ones who did, and often sensationalized their stories, sometimes mocking them for their belief in communism while simultaneously pointing out the political failures of the East German regime. In response, Ulbricht and the SED actively worked to discredit these men by attacking them in the East German media, removing them from their professional vocations, and denouncing their scholarship. Through the examination of the writer Alfred Kantorowicz, the philosopher Ernst Bloch, and the journalist Heinz Brandt, we are able to see why these longtime communists were persecuted by the SED, how their departures affected domestic politics in the GDR, and how they eventually came to terms with the failure of Soviet-style socialism.

This thesis makes two main arguments which broaden our understanding of the influence that veteran communists maintained in the GDR during the late 1950s. First, I argue that because very few veteran communists chose to leave the regime when facing persecution by the SED, the ones who did flee received more attention in both the East and the West than comrades who fled in the earlier 1950s. Since most veteran communists had joined the KPD in the early 1930s, they were not only granted special privileges such as better housing and higher incomes, but they held esteemed positions in East German society. Consequently, when they chose to flee the regime, they were not only considered to be turning their backs on socialism and antifascism but also providing the capitalist West with anti-communist propaganda which reflected the political inefficiencies of the regime. This was problematic for the SED for multiple reasons, as not only did it undermine the optimism and faith in socialism of East German citizens, but the SED then

⁹ As per Catherine Epstein in *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and their Century*, there were 29 veteran communists who harbored revisionist attitudes between 1956-57. Out of these 29 veteran communists, only two, Alfred Kantorowicz and Karola Bloch, left the regime. Ernst Bloch is not included because he did not officially join the KPD or the SED, and Heinz Brandt is not included because he was expelled from the KPD in 1933.

had to work at discrediting “revisionist” intellectuals and party functionaries both inside and outside of the GDR.

To this end, the second argument presented in this thesis is based on the level of public recognition maintained by each of my case studies and how their decision to flee affected domestic politics in the GDR. Since Ulbricht was often influenced by international pressure in his search for stately prestige and recognition, I argue that because the few veteran communists who fled East Germany maintained a highly prolific status, the media attention they garnered in West Germany gradually led Ulbricht to pursue a variety of tactics to vindicate the political legitimacy of the regime both at home and abroad. These various tactics included blacklisting each case study in East German society, removing their names from history books, and removing them from their professional positions. Each of these tactics failed to quell the negative attention being broadcast in the West which led Ulbricht and the SED to kidnap Heinz Brandt in attempt to force him to confess that his departure from the regime was a “mistake.” However, Brandt refused to cooperate with the SED and his unjust kidnapping and arrest unleashed an international campaign in support of his release that brought him and the GDR worldwide attention.

As this thesis documents the various methods that the SED pursued in attempting to quell the negative media attention that resulted from the departure of high profile veteran communists during the late 1950s and early 1960s, it is necessary to examine each case study independently. Thus, chapter one examines the life and departure of Alfred Kantorowicz, who actively sought out West German media attention, altogether depicting the East German regime as a repressive continuation of the Nazi dictatorship. Due to Kantorowicz’s openly critical demeanor, he encouraged other writers to express their discontent and his recognition as both a literary scholar

and writer put his name in the headlines of West German newspapers and radio broadcasts. Along these lines, the SED held back in its attack on the esteemed philosopher Ernst Bloch, who is the focus of chapter two. Despite Bloch being persecuted for his revisionism, Ulbricht desired neither to arrest nor expel him from the regime. After the media attention surrounding Kantorowicz, Ulbricht feared that Bloch's departure would have a similar effect. He therefore granted Bloch just enough academic leniency to keep him on East German soil. However, once Bloch did flee the GDR in the spring of 1961, the West German press sensationalized his story, and mocked him for his lack of commitment to socialism. Finally, chapter three examines the journalist Heinz Brandt, who was used as a scapegoat by the SED to vindicate East Germany's position as a socialist state. Brandt was promised his freedom if he publicly admitted that his departure was a "mistake" and continued living in the East. However, Brandt refused to cooperate with the SED and an even greater media campaign developed both in Germany and abroad, culminating in disapproval from both communists and non-communists worldwide.

This thesis is therefore based on the examination of memoirs and autobiographies of both the individuals included in each case study as well as their respective loved ones and family members. The use of biographical documents reveals not only the reasons why these men were highly regarded by the regime but also how the hardships they faced before the creation of the GDR influenced their decision to abandon the East German "socialist experiment." However, the aim of this thesis is not to simply present biographical accounts, but to develop a better understanding of why each case study figured so prominently within the overall framework of the domestic politics pursued by the SED during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Supplementary materials from the Foundation for the Archives of the GDR's Parties and Mass Organizations, a branch within the *Bundesarchiv*, are also examined. These include a considerable collection of

former SED member files ranging from archival papers, correspondence, personal reminiscences, newspaper clippings, as well as other personal documents. These supplementary materials were necessary for the completion of this project, as they helped to illuminate historical contradictions found not only within the background of what is presented in the personal writings of each case study, but also in past historical scholarship focusing on veteran communists.

As all three case studies examined in this thesis were not only socialists but also Jewish, it is important to address the role anti-Semitism played in the persecution of Jewish communists in the East German regime and the Eastern bloc. While both Kantorowicz and Bloch spent much of the Second World War in the United States, Brandt was a prisoner at Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz and the Buchenwald concentration camps. Although the GDR claimed to be built on an antifascist foundation, it was plagued by semi-official anti-Semitism throughout its existence.¹⁰ Despite both Jews and communists being persecuted by the Nazis, many members of the SED exhibited anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic tendencies. For example, Ulbricht was opposed to Jewish demands for reparations for the Holocaust and used this issue to exclude Jews from the ranks of the SED. One reason for these tendencies was that the SED felt threatened by the East German Jewish community and their claims of being the primary victims of Nazi persecution, and support for Jewish demands like reparations became a point of contention amongst the party leadership.¹¹

Jews also became associated with cosmopolitanism and an anti-cosmopolitanism campaign was initiated by Stalin in 1948. Jews were persecuted on the basis that their ties to cosmopolitanism were a key element of reactionary bourgeois ideology and American

¹⁰ Richard S. Levy, *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution, Volume 1: A-K* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABS-CLIO, Inc., 2005), 259.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

imperialism.¹² Due to Stalin's paranoia, the Soviet Union moved away from its initial support of a Jewish claim to statehood in Palestine (Zionism) in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and instead supported the Arab states in the Middle Eastern conflict. Under the direction of Stalin, official Soviet policy regarded Israel as a "capitalist lackey of the United States" and SED members who supported the Jewish claim to statehood, such as non-Jewish member Paul Merker, were purged from their party positions.¹³ The worst persecutions of East German Jews ceased after the death of Stalin in March 1953, however anti-Semitism was still present amongst SED members throughout the GDR's existence.

Jewish party members from other satellite states were also purged because of Stalin's anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns. For example, the Jewish First Secretary of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, Rudolf Slansky, was purged in September 1951 on the basis that he was encouraging American imperialism.¹⁴ Likewise, the Romanian Jewish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ana Pauker, was purged from the Romanian Party in 1952 and was arrested in 1953 for her support of Zionism.¹⁵ However, it was not only Stalin's anti-Semitism that affected Jewish communist party members, but also the prevalence of anti-Semitic sentiment amongst the general populations of each satellite state. Even Pauker at one point turned down the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party on the basis that the Romanian people would never accept a Jewish woman as their leader. The party leadership in Hungary also actively worked to discourage the prevalence of Jews in the rank and file of the party as it was believed that a heavy

¹² Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanies*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 109.

¹³ Philip Mendes, *Jews and the Left: The Rise and Fall of a Political Alliance* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 247.

¹⁴ Jay Howard Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany, 1945-1953* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 169.

¹⁵ Mendes, 247.

Jewish presence would alienate important sources of support, especially from the heavily anti-Semitic peasant population.¹⁶

However, Jews that proved to be loyal communists and who could be depended on to promote unpopular policies and defend the interests of the Soviet Union were often able to claim powerful party positions. These Jewish party members were usually highly educated, and able to speak multiple languages which made them valuable assets in areas such as propaganda, foreign affairs and education.¹⁷ Although Jews in East Germany and the rest of the Eastern bloc were linked to “cosmopolitanism,” and were often automatically assumed to be disloyal “spies and saboteurs,” Jews who proved to be orthodox communists and who had no connections to Jewish groups or organizations prior to the formation of the GDR were sometimes considered acceptable as long as they assimilated.¹⁸

Although Brandt helped organize the Victims of Fascism committee for concentration camp survivors in the Eastern zone of occupation after the ending of the war, he was not directly targeted by the SED for being Jewish. Brandt’s low-profile status may have played a role in his neutrality regarding the anti-Semitism of the SED, as he was not considered a political threat to the higher rank and file members of the party. In contrast to Brandt, both Kantorowicz and Bloch maintained a higher degree of recognition. Their work and reputation as scholarly intellectuals helped elevate the cultural status of the regime and they were therefore considered valuable East German citizens. All three case studies also identified as loyal socialists first and foremost, which was an important factor for why they survived the purges of the early 1950s and

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Herf, 124.

maintained respectable positions in East German society until targeted for their revisionist thinking in the later 1950s.

Historiography

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the opening of the SED archives, many scholars began to concentrate on various aspects of conflict in the GDR. While some scholars have examined the purges of the 1940s and early 1950s, others have focused on Ulbricht's attack on revisionism after the political turmoil that resulted from Khrushchev's speech in February 1956 and his denouncement of Stalinist politics. When the Polish communist Wladyslaw Gomulka was reinstated as the leader of the Polish Communist Party in October 1956, a similar incident occurred in Hungary a short time after. Gomulka had been removed from the party leadership in 1948 for advocating for a "Polish road to Socialism" and rejected the pursuit of rapid Sovietization of the state.¹⁹ Gomulka was eventually reinstated as leader of the Polish Communist Party after a group of intellectuals advocated for his release but not before the Soviet Army had mobilized and entered Warsaw. In desperation, the Polish communist leadership requested the *Bezpieka*, the state security ministry, to arrest close to 700 reformists and intellectuals. However, they refused to go through with the arrests. The protests for Gomulka's reinstatement became public, and around 50,000 members of the elite security army of the secret police mobilized against the Soviet forces. After a series of negotiations, Gomulka was reinstated as leader of the Polish Communist Party and succeeded in establishing his leadership on his terms.²⁰

¹⁹ Ivan T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993: Detour from the Periphery* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 111.

²⁰ Berend, 112-114.

The Hungarian uprisings in the autumn of 1956 followed a similar protocol as the ones in Poland. However, the results were much more devastating. After Gomulka's success in Poland, a group of students at the Technical University in Budapest drafted a list of demands which included that the Soviet forces stationed in Hungary withdraw, and that Imre Nagy be reinstated as prime minister.²¹ The students then started a demonstration which eventually evolved into a mass demonstration that included the entire population of Budapest. Close to 200,000 people were demonstrating, calling for national independence and democracy, and the statue of Stalin in the centre of the city was knocked down.²² The Hungarian leadership, under Erno Gero, called the Soviet Union for military aid and troops arrived; however the Stalinist government collapsed after only a few days. Nagy was eventually reinstated as prime minister but once the Soviet Union intervened for a second time, the resistance was suppressed and Nagy was eventually arrested and later executed by the order of Khrushchev in June 1958.²³

As a result of the political ferment in Poland and Hungary, Ulbricht feared that a similar situation would erupt and an East German "Gomulka" would challenge his leadership.²⁴ According to a party report from July 1956, Ulbricht was losing support amongst the East German population, as well as many members in the SED. Intellectuals and students were beginning to voice their concerns, some calling for free elections while others demanded the rights and freedoms being experienced by their peers in the West.²⁵ The improvement in West Germany's economic situation was also a major factor contributing to East German dissent, as

²¹ Janos M. Rainer, "The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Causes, Aims, and Course of Events: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: Hungarian and Canadian Perspectives*, edited by Christopher Adam et al. (Ottawa, ON: Ottawa University Press, 2010), 18.

²² Adam, 18.

²³ Adam, 20.

²⁴ Peter Grieder, *The East German Leadership, 1946-73: Conflict and Crisis* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 108.

²⁵ Grieder, 108.

the GDR experienced nowhere near the same economic transformation as the West.²⁶ Therefore, Ulbricht set out to rid the regime of any “problem” intellectuals or SED members who posed a threat to his leadership and anyone who had either publicly expressed, or was known for harbouring revisionist ideas became a target.

Peter Grieder thoroughly examines the opposition amongst the rank and file of the SED in his study *The East German Leadership, 1946-73: Conflict and Crisis* (1999). Grieder divides the anti-Ulbricht opposition between the years 1956-1958 into three sections. He suggests that the first section of opposition to Ulbricht during these years came from Paul Merker and Franz Dahlem, both rehabilitated SED members who were purged from the party during the early 1950s. The second section he refers to was the Karl Schirdewan and Fred Oelßner opposition in the politburo, and the third section was opposition in the central committee.²⁷ While Grieder examines the persecution of communists for their revisionism within these three sections, he only briefly addresses the role of veteran communist intellectuals such as Kantorowicz and Bloch. Although Grieder documents the “conflict and crisis” within the East German leadership, he fails to address the conflict surrounding the propaganda coup that erupted when veteran communists fled the GDR and how Ulbricht attempted to deal with the negative publicity being showcased in the West.

Another examination focusing on the effect of the Hungarian and Polish uprisings of 1956 on East German intellectuals is John Connelly’s “Ulbricht and the Intellectuals” (1997). Connelly argues that the East German intelligentsia was a creation of the SED and was characterized by both positive and negative factors. Not only did the SED actively choose members of its intelligentsia, but it also purposely excluded those who portrayed any reactionary

²⁶ Grieder, 109.

²⁷ Grieder, 109.

or bourgeois elements.²⁸ Connelly includes an examination of both Ernst Bloch and Alfred Kantorowicz and the wave of repression they experienced before deciding to flee, such as the restrictions placed on their rights to publish and teach at their respected universities. He also contrasts intellectuals such as Bloch and Kantorowicz with other intellectuals who chose the path of self-abasement when attacked for their “revisionism.” Connelly states that Ulbricht’s attack on revisionist thinkers during the late 1950s aimed to not only silence them, but to also encourage them to leave the GDR.²⁹

Although Connelly thoroughly documents the repression “problem” intellectuals faced when targeted by the East German leadership, he does not address how the reputation of each intellectual figured in how Ulbricht chose to deal with them. As will be examined in chapter three, when Heinz Brandt left the regime he was not a public figure and the SED showed less concern about his departure. In contrast, Ernst Bloch, who is the subject of chapter two, as a famous philosopher, was given special treatment in order to keep him in the regime. These special treatments included the ability to travel to West Germany as well as to publish two of his books. It can be concluded that Ulbricht did not encourage all “problem” intellectuals to leave the regime. In fact, if the intellectual was a culturally or intellectually renowned figure, such as Bloch, he often saw value in keeping them in the regime and therefore not all “problem” intellectuals were treated equally.

Although some scholars have noted the importance of veteran communists in East Germany, such as German historians Lutz Niethammer and Dorothy Weirling, who have both recognized the power that long-time communists wielded in the GDR in their respective works, there remained a major gap in the historical literature detailing this aspect. This major gap

²⁸ Connelly, 331.

²⁹ Connelly, 350.

became the focus of Catherine Epstein, who published her seminal work, *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and their Century* in 2003. Focusing exclusively on veteran communists in the GDR, Epstein details how old revolutionaries structured and dedicated their lives to the party and socialist movement, stating that the examination of veteran communists is important not only because they represent the “twentieth-century communist experience,” but because it was through their experiences during the Nazi era that the East German dictatorship was able to build and foster an “Old Communist regime.” For such actions, East German veteran communists were viewed by both young communists and communists of other nationalities as the *Avant-garde*, and it was through their influence that the GDR was able to maintain its political stability.³⁰

Most veteran communists participated in some form of antifascist resistance during the 1930s and 1940s, whether that included spreading propaganda, sabotaging German industry during the Nazi era, or fighting in the Spanish Civil War.³¹ Veteran communists were sometimes rewarded for their past revolutionary efforts by the SED through such measures as receiving higher incomes, improved housing, and better education for their children. Some veteran communists were also appointed to influential positions in East German society and all three case studies examined in this thesis benefitted from their pre-1945 revolutionary activities. Kantorowicz fought in the International Brigades against Francisco Franco and the Spanish Nationalists during the 1930s, Bloch publicly condemned the Nazi regime by protesting in Switzerland and through publishing various articles, and Brandt was arrested and imprisoned by the Nazis for close to ten years. For their hardships and revolutionary efforts, all three men were appointed to important positions by the SED, as both Kantorowicz and Bloch received

³⁰ Epstein, 5.

³¹ Epstein, 7.

professorships while Brandt was appointed as the Secretary for the Ministry of Propaganda and Agitation for the SED leadership in Berlin.

While Epstein's examination focuses on how veteran communists helped build the East German dictatorship based on their antifascist experiences, she fails to address how the departures of veteran communists directly affected the politics of the SED during the Ulbricht era. Since very few veteran communists fled the regime, a comprehensive study documenting how their departures affected East German domestic politics has yet to be completed. Therefore, this thesis examines the lives of three high profile veteran communists and how their decision to leave East Germany influenced how Ulbricht and the SED attempted to quell the negative media attention being showcased in the West. Although there were a small number of veteran communists who fled the regime during the earlier purges of the 1950s, such as Leo Bauer, Leo Zuckermann, and Joseph Scholmer, they were purged for various reasons including being Jewish and posing a political threat to the party elite. This thesis focuses specifically on the departures of three long-time communists who fled because of the political repercussions surrounding the events of 1956 and becoming targets for their political revisionism.

Although there are many personal histories on the three case studies examined in this thesis, only a handful have focused on the reasoning behind why they chose to flee the GDR. In regard to Heinz Brandt, there has been little to no scholarship that has specifically concentrated on why he chose to flee. Many newspaper articles have shared his story both in Germany and in North America, focusing on the involvement of British philosopher Bertrand Russell and Amnesty International in helping free him from prison but an examination of his reasons for fleeing and why he was targeted by the SED has yet to be conducted. In contrast, Kantorowicz has received more scholarly attention. Scholars such as Josie McLellan have focused on

Kantorowicz's literary work and the authenticity of his diaries detailing his experiences in the Spanish Civil War and then his time in the GDR.

In the case of Ernst Bloch, there are many personal histories focusing on him as a renowned Marxist philosopher. These personal histories focus less on Bloch's political involvement in the GDR and instead detail the development of his philosophical thought. He is also frequently mentioned in historical scholarship focusing on how the SED dealt with its intellectuals during the late 1950s. Such studies have narrowed in on Bloch's role in the SED's attack and arrest of the Humboldt University professor Wolfgang Harich. These studies have, for the most part, included Bloch as a minor participant in the arrest of Harich in 1956, mostly including him because he was Harich's former doctoral supervisor at the University of Leipzig, and was therefore questioned about his influence on Harich's personal commitment to socialism and the formation of his ideology.

One study which does focus on Bloch's role in the Harich affair more in depth is Peter C. Caldwell's *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the German Democratic Republic* (2003). Caldwell examines the effects of the Hungarian and Polish uprisings of 1956 in East Germany, and specifically the role of intellectuals like Bloch and their connection to the "Harich group." He argues that Ulbricht did not arrest Bloch during the late 1950s due to a lack of evidence connecting him to Harich, as well as the SED's disorganization in their initial attacks against him.³² In contrast to Caldwell, primary source evidence gathered for this thesis, such as West German newspaper clippings from the *Bundesarchiv* at Berlin-Lichterfelde, suggest that Ulbricht was reluctant to arrest Bloch not because of a lack of planning or evidence, but because he was the last great Marxist philosopher still residing in the Eastern bloc during the late 1950s

³² Peter C. Caldwell, *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the German Democratic Republic*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 133.

and early 1960s.³³ This evidence is significant because it adheres to the argument that Ulbricht was often influenced by external factors such as international pressure and stately prestige when deciding disciplinary measures against high profile veteran communists who fled the regime during the late 1950s and 1960s.

There are also many studies that have maintained a broader focus on East German history, covering a wide range of topics including leadership, opposition movements, repression and resistance, all briefly touching on the role of veteran communists throughout the GDR's existence. For example, Mary Fulbrook examines instances of political opposition from the June 17th, 1953 uprisings until the GDR's demise in 1989 in *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989* (1995). According to Fulbrook, intellectual dissidents in East Germany during the later 1950s faced less severe punishments in comparison to other Eastern bloc states. The East German leadership dealt with "heretical" intellectuals with relative ease through such measures as placing them under arrest, censorship, expatriation, and pushing them into exile.³⁴ Similar to Epstein, Fulbrook also states that the distinguishing characteristic that separated East German intellectuals from other disappointed intellectuals in the Eastern bloc was their overall commitment to some form of Marxism, which ultimately influenced problem intellectuals to usually obey the measures enforced by the state.³⁵

Likewise, Mark Allinson's *Politics and Popular Opinion in East Germany, 1945-68* (2000) also covers a broad range of East German history, from the establishment of the GDR's political structures to the Prague Spring in 1968. Although Allinson does not focus on veteran

³³ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, West German newspaper clipping, "The 'Principle of Hope:' The Prosecution of Leipzig Professor Ernst Bloch," unknown newspaper, February 21st, 1957.

³⁴ Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-89*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 176.

³⁵ Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 176-79.

communists or East German intellectuals, but rather the general population of East German citizens, he provides detailed information on the aftermath of Khrushchev's "secret speech" and the Hungarian uprisings on the East German population. Allinson states that because the East German media reported conflicting stories about the events of 1956, many East Germans, as well as SED members, relied on West German news sources to receive up-to-date information.³⁶

Allinson's examination of the general East German population's use of media helps rectify why media exposure of veteran communists who fled the GDR figured so significantly to Ulbricht and the East German leadership. However, it is unclear how the general population in East Germany reacted to the negative media being broadcast about veteran communists who fled to the West and further research would benefit from a more detailed examination of public policy reports of East German citizens and their reactions.

Epstein's *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and their Century* paved the way for more in-depth analyses to be conducted on the role of veteran communists in the GDR. Since very few major studies have explored the trials and tribulations of East German veteran communists, there is a need for more research and interpretation. Therefore, this thesis examines those old revolutionaries who lost their faith in the "socialist experiment" and decided to forever abandon their lives in the East, and how their status as members of the "Old Guard" affected Ulbricht's domestic policies in his attempts to legitimize the East German political system.

³⁶ Mark Allinson, *Politics and Popular Opinion in East Germany, 1945-68* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), 77.

CHAPTER 1

The Case of Alfred Kantorowicz: The Socialist ‘Renegade’

Where the functionaries speak, the muses are silent!

- Alfred Kantorowicz

The end of the Second World War came as a great triumph to many Communist Party of Germany (KPD) members who had suffered at the hands of the National Socialists.³⁷ The time had arrived when long-time KPD members and some Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) members could fully dedicate themselves to building socialism in East Germany.³⁸ Longtime KPD members had joined the communist movement prior to 1933 when the risks of supporting socialist ideology far outweighed the benefits and many returned from western exile, the Soviet Union, or were released from concentration camps filled with hope for a better socialist future for the Soviet occupation zone of East Germany.³⁹ This was the case for Alfred Kantorowicz, who had joined the KPD in 1931, volunteered in the International Brigades in Spain, and spent the Nazi era in exile in the United States. A writer and literary scholar, Kantorowicz was offered a professorship at Humboldt University in Berlin shortly after his return to Germany. He also held an esteemed position as the director of the Heinrich Mann Archives. However, after the political turmoil surrounding the events of 1956, Kantorowicz

³⁷ Epstein, 2.

³⁸ Epstein, 2.

³⁹ Josie McLellan, “The Politics of Communist Biography: Alfred Kantorowicz and the Spanish Civil War.” *German History*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2004): 538.

published an article in an East German newspaper which not only criticized the state but also encouraged other writers to follow suit. He quickly fell out of favour with the party but before he could be arrested, interrogated or reprimanded by the SED, he fled to the West.

Initially, Ulbricht and the SED had preferred it when problem intellectuals like Kantorowicz left for the West, but Kantorowicz proved to be of a different classification of “problem intellectual.”⁴⁰ Not only was he a reputable writer and literary scholar, but he was a veteran communist, one of the very few veteran communists who chose to leave the regime and the West German media monopolized this aspect, putting both Kantorowicz and the GDR in the (often negative) limelight. Not only was the West German media jumping at this opportunity but Kantorowicz appeared to be actively promoting the attention as well. Through the examination of Kantorowicz’s personal biography, we are able to see not only why he was a highly respected figure in the East German regime but also how his status as a veteran communist angered Ulbricht and the SED when he decided to leave. Kantorowicz was the first veteran communist who actively sought out media attention after fleeing and therefore altered the way Ulbricht and the SED responded to the departures of future veteran communists. This chapter examines the life of Alfred Kantorowicz, as both a dedicated socialist and then as a disheartened émigré, to better understand the power veteran communists wielded in the GDR, even when blacklisted by the party itself.

Alfred Kantorowicz: The Aspiring Socialist

Alfred Kantorowicz was born in Berlin in 1899 to conservative Jewish bourgeois parents. His early years were indistinguishable from other young German boys who were raised in an

⁴⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 176.

upper-class family and he was well educated and enjoyed his studies.⁴¹ Kantorowicz, or “Kanto,” as he was often referred to by friends, studied both law and German at the University of Berlin, and then completed his doctorate degree focusing on the international legal basis for a national Jewish home in Palestine at the University of Freiberg.⁴² His true passion was writing however, and he aspired to be a novelist, and spent much of the 1920s travelling between France, Germany and Italy as a cultural correspondent for a German newspaper.

Despite not being immediately drawn to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, Kantorowicz joined the KPD in 1931, as he believed the party to be the most realistic answer to the world economic crisis of the early 1930s and the rise of Hitler and the National Socialists.⁴³ He quickly became a journalist for multiple left-liberal newspapers and magazines in Berlin until his name appeared on a “wanted list,” and he went into exile in France in 1933. According to Josie McLellan, because Kantorowicz came from a bourgeois background and was Jewish, he spent most of the 1930s-1950s trying to prove himself as a “real” socialist, attempting to rid himself of his class guilt and identify with the workers.⁴⁴ McLellan states that often communists with bourgeois backgrounds would take extreme measures to prove themselves, and for Kantorowicz that involved joining the Spanish International Brigades.⁴⁵

Kantorowicz spent nearly three years in exile in France, where he helped to organize the German Writers Organization in Exile and continued working as a journalist for a series of newspapers before volunteering to fight in the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Motivated by a desire

⁴¹ Alfred Kantorowicz, *Exil in Frankreich: Merkwürdigkeiten und Denkwürdigkeiten* (Hamburg, Germany: Christians Verlag, 1983), 9-10.

⁴² Karola Bloch, *Aus meinem Leben*, (Koch, Germany: Verlag Günther Neske Pfullingen, 1981), 38.

⁴³ Dominik Geppert, “Bridge over Troubled Water: German Left-Wing Intellectuals between ‘East’ and ‘West,’ 1945-1949,” in *Germany and the ‘West:’ The History of a Modern Concept*, edited by Riccardo Bavaj and Martina Steber. (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2015), 267.

⁴⁴ McLellan, “Politics of Biography,” 32.

⁴⁵ McLellan, “Politics of Biography,” 33.

to prove himself as a true socialist, as well as to fight against European fascism, Kantorowicz joined the Republicans in their fight against Francisco Franco and the rebel Nationalists.

Kantorowicz was one of an estimated group of 5000 Germans and Austrians (though McLellan states these numbers are exaggerated) who volunteered in the International Brigades, which was made up of mostly middle-class, communist men.⁴⁶ First serving as an officer in the Eleventh Brigade, and then the Thirteenth Brigade, Kantorowicz made use of his writing abilities and was assigned to write for the International Brigade newspaper, acting as editor for the German edition.⁴⁷ However, the International Brigades efforts were cut short at the end of March 1939, when the German and Italian supported Nationalists took over Madrid, ending the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁸

Unable to return to Germany because of the Hitler regime, Kantorowicz was also not able to escape Europe via Spain or Portugal either because of his high-profile involvement as a writer and editor with the International Brigades.⁴⁹ After retreating from Spain, Kantorowicz spent time in internment camps in France until he was able to make his way to Bormes-les-Mimosas where he planned to travel by ship to New York City and then to Mexico.⁵⁰ Once arriving in New York, Kantorowicz and his wife, a longtime friend whom he married right before the voyage, decided to remain in the United States, living in New York City from 1941 to 1946.⁵¹ Kantorowicz worked for the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), intercepting and analyzing enemy

⁴⁶ Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades, 1945-1989* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16.

⁴⁷ R. Dan Richardson, *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1982), 136.

⁴⁸ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 40.

⁴⁹ Kantorowicz, 226.

⁵⁰ Kantorowicz, 226.

⁵¹ Jean-Michel Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America*, (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2006), 448.

broadcasts while his wife found work as Secretary of the Germanic Institute at New York University, and the newlyweds were truly happy in America.⁵² Kantorowicz found most Americans to be hospitable, open-minded and welcoming, and found personal satisfaction in publishing numerous articles in prestigious magazines and newspapers.⁵³ However, his communist ideals also led him to be critical of capitalism and he described Americans as “money mad people who turned everything into a business, and sometimes a racket.”⁵⁴ Despite the happiness Kantorowicz and his wife found in New York, when the Second World War ended they began preparations to return to Germany, and resettled in Berlin in late 1946.

Once back in Germany, Kantorowicz’s desire to belong and prove his commitment to socialism was reignited. He was once again working as a journalist for various newspapers and magazines, where he became more and more critical of American capitalism. Writing for *Neues Deutschland* (New Germany) in 1949, Kantorowicz proclaimed that any “American friends who needed to escape the claws of their gaolers in America would always be welcome in East Germany.”⁵⁵ He also started the journal *Ost und West* (East and West), which included critical opinions from authors in both zones of occupation. However, his journal was discontinued by the SED in 1949, for its promotion of a special path to German socialism.⁵⁶ This “special German path to socialism,” developed by Anton Ackermann, the chief ideologue of the KPD, had been based on the Weimar era traditions of the German left and argued that Germany did not have to follow the Soviet example in establishing socialism.⁵⁷ By 1948, as the Soviet zone became more Stalinized, the idea of a “special path” to German socialism was abandoned as it was viewed as a

⁵² Geppert, 267.

⁵³ Kantorowicz, 248.

⁵⁴ Geppert, 267.

⁵⁵ Geppert, 268.

⁵⁶ Geppert, 271.

⁵⁷ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 49.

pronouncement of independence from the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ Despite the loss of Kantorowicz's passion project, he was recognized by East German authorities for his journalistic work, and in late 1949 the SED appointed him as a professor of literature, and then in 1954, the Chair of German Literature at Humboldt University in East Berlin.⁵⁹

During the early 1950s, Kantorowicz experienced a heightened level of prestige for his participation as an antifascist fighter in the Spanish Civil War. Former members of the International Brigades became part of an "antifascist elite," even ranking above former concentration camp survivors like Heinz Brandt, who were viewed as only passively resisting fascism.⁶⁰ For his part, Kantorowicz was finally being recognized for his commitment to socialism and he was considered a high-profile member of the SED. Not only did he hold a position of authority and prestige at Humboldt University, but the SED also relied on him to help write and edit special chapters about East German antifascist fighters and their experiences in Spain.⁶¹ For a short time, this was enough for Kantorowicz, and he remained passive and loyal to the policies pursued by the party during the early 1950s.

Despite there being many leading revisionist intellectual figures within the GDR, an intellectual challenge to the Stalinist regime never fully blossomed in East German society.⁶² According to John Connelly, intellectuals in East Germany differed from other Eastern bloc states in that there existed an intellectual culture which was characterized primarily by loyalty to the party and state.⁶³ Nearly all veteran communists firmly believed that "communist power,

⁵⁸ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 50.

⁵⁹ Geppert, 272.

⁶⁰ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 46.

⁶¹ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 64.

⁶² Connelly, 329.

⁶³ Connelly, 330.

once attained, should not be attenuated, much less relinquished.”⁶⁴ However, even though the older generation of East German intellectuals showed solidarity with the party, especially during the June 1953 uprisings, there was still an air of discontent and Ulbricht responded by lifting some of the repressive policies that had been implemented during the early 1950s by means of his “New Course.” Although the uprisings of June 1953 were dismissed by East German authorities as a “fascist provocation” instigated by “Western agents,” the SED had clearly recognized – under ‘advice’ from Moscow – that there was a strong desire amongst the various echelons of East German society for a better life.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, hopes for a continued liberalization of SED policies was short lived and Ulbricht reinstated many of his repressive policies towards academics by 1956.

Before the Hungarian and Polish uprisings of 1956, Kantorowicz was working with the SED on literary projects surrounding the Spanish Civil War. Although able to finish his book on the Chapiev Battalion of the International Brigades, the book was rushed into print to prevent SED authorities from cancelling its publication.⁶⁶ With the outbreak of events in Hungary and Poland, East German authorities became particularly suspicious of intellectuals. Even high-ranking antifascist fighters like Kantorowicz came under suspicion. For Kantorowicz, he was doubly impacted because not only was he an academic, but he had also spent the 1930s and part of the 1940s in France and the United States, and had served as a volunteer in the International Brigades which, according to the SED, put him in direct contact with non-communists such as social democrats, anarchists, and non-aligned leftists.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Epstein, 9.

⁶⁵ Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 115.

⁶⁶ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 64.

⁶⁷ McLellan, “The Politics of Biography,” 539.

Once Khrushchev announced his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), many intellectuals felt that they now had more leniency to express their criticisms regarding Stalinism. Prior to Khrushchev's announcement, many intellectuals, including Kantorowicz, kept their criticisms to themselves as not only had the East German intelligentsia been formed by the SED but many intellectuals believed that loyalty to the party was the only guarantor of achieving an improved socialist state.⁶⁸ Kantorowicz, who had remained silent in the past, decided to publish an article in the *Berliner Zeitung*, criticizing the SED's cultural policies. He stated that, as a writer, he acted as the "conscience and warning of the people" and condemned the actions taken by the Soviet Union against Hungary.⁶⁹ Kantorowicz immediately became a target of Ulbricht and the SED and faced criticism as a professor and for his management of the Heinrich Mann Archives at the Academy of Sciences. Kantorowicz was at "the end of [his] nervous forces and could not last longer" in the GDR, and when rumours circulated indicating that a warrant was issued for his arrest, he packed up his most important belongings and headed to West Berlin in August 1957.⁷⁰

Kantorowicz's problems were not remedied by moving to the West. Because he had been a member of the KPD since 1931, a volunteer antifascist fighter in the International Brigades, and a member of the SED in East Germany, Kantorowicz was initially denied refugee status and it took over nine years of him fighting with the West German courts to be officially recognized as a politically persecuted person.⁷¹ Despite these problems, Kantorowicz took up residence in Hamburg where he became a member of the West German branch of the Academy of Arts and continued working on various manuscripts. In 1959, he published the first part of his personal

⁶⁸ Connelly, 349.

⁶⁹ Alfred Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch; Zweiter Teil*, (München, 1961), 3.

⁷⁰ Geppert, 272.

⁷¹ Forner, 278.

diaries detailing his experiences in France and Spain, and then the second part about his life in the GDR in 1961. Since most personal accounts being published at that time were heavily edited memoirs, Kantorowicz garnered a great deal of literary recognition and was hailed for his honesty and integrity.⁷² Kantorowicz became a recognized name in West Germany, and continued writing and publishing various books and news articles until his death in 1979.

From the International Brigades to Socialist “Renegade”

Kantorowicz justified his decision to flee, not only because he faced persecution from the state, but because he claimed the regime’s repressive policies had turned it into a new form of “fascism and barbarism by *apparatchiks*.”⁷³ His discontent with the East German leadership is first documented in 1949, when the SED cancelled his literary journal *Ost und West*, which published contributions from writers on both sides of the Iron Curtain in hopes of achieving a better understanding of Germany’s overall economic, social and ideological problems. Despite being offered a notable position at Humboldt University, Kantorowicz soon came to realize that the East German leadership was neither practical nor progressive in their pursuit of establishing a socialist state. Commenting on the cancellation of his journal in 1949, and subsequent appointment at Humboldt University, Kantorowicz wrote in his diary, “...it is the way out. The vocation gives me the opportunity to build walls around me, to persist in a decent manner in the ‘ivory tower of science.’”⁷⁴ Although granted a privileged vocation, Kantorowicz understood that, like his journal *Ost und West*, his scholarship in the regime would be heavily restricted.

⁷² McLellan, “The Politics of Biography,” 536.

⁷³ Geppert, 272.

⁷⁴ Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch. Zweiter Teil*, (München, 1961), 668.

Unlike Ernst Bloch, who will be discussed in the next chapter, there was far less scandal surrounding Kantorowicz prior to his decision to flee. Although he had been heavily exposed to Western culture during his exile in France and the United States, the main reason Kantorowicz fell out of favour with Ulbricht and the SED was because he had publicly criticized the party in his *Berliner Zeitung* article in late 1956.⁷⁵ As soon as he began to receive criticism for his work at the university and his managing of the Heinrich Mann Archives, he understood it was only a matter of time before he found himself in hot water. When some of his friends and colleagues warned him of a possible arrest, he wasted little time in leaving the GDR and fled in August 1957.

It is not clear how Kantorowicz truly felt about leaving East Berlin. While both Ernst Bloch and Heinz Brandt were reluctant to leave the regime, Kantorowicz showed no signs of indecision. A common factor that often stalled East German professionals from leaving was that they would lose their pension once applying for refugee status in the West.⁷⁶ As a man who had been attempting to prove his dedication as a communist since the beginning of the 1930s, his decision portrays just how unfavorably he came to view the communist dictatorship. Since former longtime communists who fled the GDR were looked at unfavorably and were labelled as “traitors” to socialism, it is clear he understood that he would never be welcomed back to the GDR again. For veteran communists and longtime party members, turning your back on the GDR was not only viewed as giving up on socialism, but also as joining sides with the fascist Western powers who reclaimed and rehabilitated former Nazis.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Stephen Brockman, *The Writer's State: Constructing East German Literature, 1945-1959* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015), 327.

⁷⁶ Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 85.

⁷⁷ McLellan, “The Politics of Biography,” 537.

Kantorowicz was not the only openly critical writer in the GDR during the Ulbricht era (1949-1971). Similarly, the writer and poet Wolf Biermann began to openly express discontent for the regime, first through his plays and then through his poetry and songs.⁷⁸ What differentiated Biermann and many other critical East German writers from Kantorowicz, however, was their refusal to leave the GDR, even when faced with censorship and restrictions on publishing and performing. Although Biermann became more vocal during the 1960s, after the Berlin Wall had been erected in 1961, he believed that his political dissent could only be impactful if he stayed in the GDR – and he was eventually forced out of the regime in 1976.⁷⁹ Clearly, “exile” meant different things to different intellectuals. Biermann and many other loyal socialists chose to remain in the GDR in hopes of encouraging, or at least waiting for change. It can be argued that, for Kantorowicz, “exile” meant not only freedom from the repressive policies of the SED but also the opportunity for him to pursue his personal ambitions. His Weimar era aspirations of becoming a novelist never truly dissipated and his desire for attention and recognition was evident as soon as he crossed the border to the West, as he was quick to give interviews with West German news sources and published his first volume of diaries in 1959.

The West German government was not thrilled with Kantorowicz’s appeal for refugee status either. Due to his longtime membership in the KPD and then the SED, he was treated with suspicion. Kantorowicz also had no direct evidence that he was being persecuted by the SED and West German authorities therefore questioned why he, as a respected university professor, wanted to leave the GDR.⁸⁰ Kantorowicz’s refusal to denounce communism also worked against him. Despite relocating to Hamburg and applying for refugee status in the West, Kantorowicz

⁷⁸ G. Anna Stamp Miller, *The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic: The Voices of Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller*, (Boca Raton, FL: Brown Walker Press, 2004), 83.

⁷⁹ Stamp Miller, 83.

⁸⁰ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 195.

remained loyal to communist ideology which altogether led West German authorities to label him a “perpetrator.” Even in the first editions of his diaries, detailing his experiences in Spain and in the GDR until 1957, he withheld some of his criticisms and instead focused on cultural disappointments. He did not write about the events of June 17th, 1953, or of the political turmoil of 1956, and also avoided descriptions of the privileges he enjoyed in the GDR as a respected and high-ranking professor.⁸¹ Literary scholars such as Hermann Kuhn have suggested that Kantorowicz’s diaries were partially falsified in order to secure his status as a political refugee in the West, as the content of his diaries focus less on the positive experiences of his time in the GDR and instead read as a justification for why he chose to flee. Kuhn also states that Kantorowicz chose not to write about certain political events because he did not want to cause problems for any of his former acquaintances still residing in the East.⁸² By focusing on the cultural letdowns he experienced as a writer in the regime, he was able to argue that he fled the GDR for professional reasons while still proclaiming his loyalty to socialist ideology.

Despite the authenticity of Kantorowicz’s diaries being called into question by scholars, the first edition of his diary on the Spanish Civil War garnered him literary acclaim and recognition. Kantorowicz became especially popular with young literary scholars in West Germany and was considered a model of personal and political integrity.⁸³ By portraying his disillusionment with the SED and the restrictions imposed on him as a writer and academic, Kantorowicz’s supporters saw this as his break with communism which ultimately led to a propaganda coup in the West.⁸⁴ Despite Kantorowicz’s avoidance of directly criticizing the

⁸¹ Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch. Erster Teil*, München, 1959; *Zweiter Teil*, München, 1961.

⁸² Herrmann Kuhn, *Bruch mit dem Kommunismus: Über autobiographische Schriften von Ex-Kommunisten im geteilten Deutschland*, (Münster, Deutschland: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1990), 96.

⁸³ McLellan, “The Politics of Biography,” 536.

⁸⁴ McLellan, “The Politics of Biography,” 537.

politics of the SED in his diaries, he quite often referred to Ulbricht and the regime in derogatory terms, labelling the Stasi as “Ulbricht’s Gestapo,” referring to high-ranking SED functionaries as “vermin,” “rats,” or East German “*Sturmabteilung* (storm detachment paramilitary from the Nazi era).”⁸⁵ West German news sources made sure to capitalize on Kantorowicz’s critical references against the East German regime which they used to their benefit in their propaganda war against the East.

The propaganda war between East and West Germany during the 1950s and 1960s was ignited by the realization that there would be no uniting of the two separate occupation zones. West Germany was recognized by the Western world as the “true” German state and therefore worked to maintain this status by frequently attacking the GDR in the media. West Germany had also put forward the Hallstein Doctrine in 1955, which threatened to break off diplomatic relations with states that gave political recognition to East Germany.⁸⁶ Similarly, the East German leadership was searching for its own political legitimization and international recognition as a separate state from the West, and these tensions resulted in a Cold War rhetoric where West Germany castigated the GDR as a repressive, totalitarian dictatorship in contrast to their own free, liberal, and progressive democracy.⁸⁷ In retaliation, the East German government labelled West Germany as the continuation of the fascist National Socialist regime, which harboured ex-Nazis. The division between East and West Germany also intensified due to the economic progress being experienced in the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany), which made sure to highlight the differences between the “golden West” and their “poor brothers and sisters

⁸⁵ Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch. Erster Teil*, München, 1959; *Zweiter Teil*, München, 1961.

⁸⁶ Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-2014*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), 174.

⁸⁷ Mary Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies, 1945-1990: Problems of Interpretation*, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1992), 27.

in the East.”⁸⁸ As Ulbricht and the SED were in constant competition with their Western counterpart, Kantorowicz’s fame and recognition became a thorn in Ulbricht’s side as Ulbricht was attempting to not only gain political legitimacy for the regime but to secure his leadership after the events of 1956.

The rise of Kantorowicz as an acclaimed writer and political refugee in the West was also problematic for Ulbricht due to problems with the East German media. After Khrushchev’s “secret speech” in February and the Hungarian uprisings, East German radio stations and newspapers reported conflicting stories about the events. For example, at the height of the Hungarian uprisings, radio broadcasts claimed that Hungary was quiet, leading many East German citizens to suspect that media reports were heavily censored by Moscow. Many East Germans and even SED members began relying on Western, and even Swiss and Austrian news sources, for more accurate and up-to-date information.⁸⁹ Not only had the East German media been discredited but the events of 1956 also undermined people’s faith in socialism. The general perception was that, if people in Hungary and Poland were revolting, there must be something very wrong with the socialist system.⁹⁰ However, most East German citizens remained guarded over their political opinions. The Soviet Union maintained an even stronger presence in the GDR in 1956 in comparison to June 1953, and this helped quell any serious attempts at resistance and any known calls for strikes or dissent were usually found on placards posted on walls by unknown identities.⁹¹

⁸⁸ J.K.A. Thomanek and Bill Niven, *Dividing and Uniting Germany* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 28.

⁸⁹ Allinson, 77.

⁹⁰ Allinson, 78.

⁹¹ Allinson, 77.

Since West German news sources sensationalized the departure of longtime communists like Kantorowicz and Bloch, this only made matters more difficult for Ulbricht and the SED in their attempts to gain political legitimacy. The departure of Kantorowicz was especially upsetting for the East German leadership because he actively sought out media attention. Even some of his close friends were disappointed in how he handled his departure to the West and cut ties with him. According to Kantorowicz's friend Marta Feuchtwanger, he had

left East Germany with great fanfare, which was very unclever... And we [her husband Lion Feuchtwanger] corresponded some. But my husband didn't approve of the way he left East Germany. He never interfered in other people's opinions, but Kantorowicz made so big a clash out of it... It was very unwise; even the West Germans didn't like it in the beginning.⁹²

In a West German news article from 1959, Kantorowicz is depicted as a victim of the “zealous” SED, who had no other option but to flee the regime or end up being shamed and abused by the party.⁹³ Kantorowicz gave a radio interview after arriving in the West, which was also printed in the West German newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, where he proclaimed that he had originally settled in East Berlin to fulfill his dream of building a “new, just, and free Germany,” however, his “dream” was crushed by the fascist and barbaric “functionaries’ dictatorship.”⁹⁴ If a longtime communist such as Kantorowicz had lost faith in socialism, how were other East German citizens supposed to remain optimistic?

⁹² Marta Feuchtwanger, “An Émigré Life: Munich, Berlin, Sanary, Pacific Palisades.” 1976. Interview by Lawrence M. Vjeschler. September 9th and 12th. Tape number: XXVI, Side 2. Transcript. Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles. Los Angeles, CA.

⁹³ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/11/255, SED notes on West German news article “German Questions: Information for East and West” which discusses Alfred Kantorowicz, June 12th, 1959.

⁹⁴ Forner, 276.

Kantorowicz also exerted a great deal of influence with his initial criticisms printed in the *Berliner Zeitung* in 1956. Kantorowicz's criticism of the regime encouraged other writers and revisionists to go public. In a letter sent to Kantorowicz in 1958, former SED member Alfred Weiland described the impact the article had on him. He wrote to Kantorowicz about the abuse he received in the early 1950s while imprisoned by the SED and how he ended up in the West. He told Kantorowicz that, after reading his article in the *Berliner Zeitung*, he became inspired to be more critical and to pursue the fight against the East.⁹⁵ Kantorowicz received attention even until the 1970s for his decision to cooperate with the media. Former East German politician Ernst Niekisch, who left the GDR in 1953, met with Kantorowicz several times after he left to discuss the shortcomings of the regime and together they held a symposium with other former East German emigres to discuss the abuses they had suffered at the hands of the SED.⁹⁶ In 1967, French writer Jean Cassou also wrote to Kantorowicz, expressing his solidarity for his decision to go public, and advised him to hold his head high in the face of the criticisms being launched against him.⁹⁷

To counter the negative publicity brought on by these veteran communists like Kantorowicz and Bloch, the East German leadership went to great lengths to discredit them. As soon as Kantorowicz had left for West Germany, the SED began to publicly shame him by encouraging his former friends and acquaintances to write defamatory articles about him in the East German media. One of his former comrades from the International Brigades wrote in a newspaper article, "Once in Spain, you knew what solidarity was. In those days, you were on the

⁹⁵ Alfred Weiland, "Brief vom 12. April 1959," in *Wache im Niemandsland: Zum 70. Geburtstag von Alfred Kantorowicz*, (Koln, Deutschland: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1969), 58.

⁹⁶ Ernst Niekisch, "Brief vom April 1957," in *Wache im Niemandsland: Zum 70. Geburtstag von Alfred Kantorowicz*, (Koln, Deutschland: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1969), 96.

⁹⁷ Jean Cassou, "Brief vom 13. Dezember 1967," in *Wache im Niemandsland: Zum 70. Geburtstag von Alfred Kantorowicz*, (Koln, Deutschland: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1969), 133-34.

right side. What would you have thought, said, and done then, if somebody had gone over to Franco and said that he had done it because of his solidarity with the workers?”⁹⁸ Johannes R. Becher, president of the *Kulturbund* (the Cultural Association of the GDR), also condemned Kantorowicz for his “hostile attitude” and flight to the FRG in an article published in *Neues Deutschland* in October 1957.⁹⁹

East German authorities did not only attack Kantorowicz by forcing or encouraging his former friends and acquaintances to denounce him in the East German media, but they also worked to remove his name from books and histories on the Spanish Civil War.¹⁰⁰ In an SED memorandum from 1972, which discussed the required edits for a publication of an article focusing on antifascist resistance fighters from the International Brigades, the writer of the article was criticized for having praised the “Renegade Kantorowicz,” which “had to be changed!”¹⁰¹ And in the same memorandum, the SED reviewed plans for the publication of a book focusing on East German communists and their participation in the Spanish Civil War, which contained close to 150 contributions. The purpose of the book was to “trigger the emotions of young readers,” by reflecting the “great heroism of the freedom fighters” which would overall “make the youth render to socialist moral.”¹⁰² According to the reviewer of the manuscript, there were

⁹⁸ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 196.

⁹⁹ Dorothea Dornhof, “The Inconsequence of Doubt: Intellectuals and the Discourse of Socialist Unity,” in *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Michael Geyer, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 69.

¹⁰⁰ McLellan, “The Politics of Biography,” 537.

¹⁰¹ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, NY 4072 NL 72/230, SED comments on East German International Brigade contributors for the reprinting of a book on the Spanish Civil War. December 12th, 1972.

¹⁰² NY 4072 NL 72/230, SED comments on East German International Brigade contributors for the reprinting of a book on the Spanish Civil War. December 12th, 1972.

some “excellent contributions,” but also some very “moderate and weak memoirs” and Kantorowicz had to be removed from the book because he was deemed “unworthy!”¹⁰³

It is difficult to determine how successful the SED was in its attempt to discredit longtime communists who fled the regime. Kantorowicz received a great deal of literary recognition in the West, but how he was viewed by the general population in the East is hard to assess exactly. However, Kantorowicz’s former neighbor in East Berlin, Joel Agee, who was a young boy when Kantorowicz fled to West Germany in 1957, remembers him in an unfavourable manner in his autobiography published in 2000:

How contemptible, in comparison, seemed Alfred Kantorowicz, our onetime neighbor in Gross-Glienicke, who was now hurling diatribes against us from West Germany, in books, articles and on the radio. What had *he* suffered? Just disgust and frustration; no jail, no exile. What a venomous, small-minded man – how could he forget, beneath the merely human errors of well-meaning bureaucrats, politicians, judges, and journalists, the noble foundations of a new and more humane society? How could he, a Jew, join forces with former Nazis, unpunished and still in power in West Germany?¹⁰⁴

Similar to other veteran communists who fled the GDR during the 1950s or who were persecuted by the SED, their defamation in the East German media seemed to influence at least some of the general public. According to Mark Allinson, after the events of 1956 and into the late 1950s, the SED experienced a decline in party membership amongst workers who were influenced by Western news reports about former party members who fled to the West. One worker stated “I’d be happy to join the party, but supposing things change?”, while another expressed concern that “if a war comes, membership of our party would be disadvantageous” and many workers delayed

¹⁰³ NY 4072 NL 72/230, SED comments on East German International Brigade contributors for the reprinting of a book on the Spanish Civil War. December 12th, 1972.

¹⁰⁴ Joel Agee, *Twelve Years: An American Boyhood in East Germany*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 185.

their applications as they waited for the political turmoil surrounding Hungary and Poland to die down.¹⁰⁵ However, Allinson also states that many East Germans during the late 1950s were less concerned with the party's internal politics and their condemnation of revisionist intellectuals and instead were more interested in how they could acquire essential items such as meat, marmalade and margarine.¹⁰⁶

After Kantorowicz fled the GDR, he remained loyal to socialist ideology, but advocated a more humanist approach. Following the Yugoslavian politician Milovan Đilas and his "New Class" argument,¹⁰⁷ that communism in the Eastern bloc was not egalitarian, but instead was establishing a new entitled party elite, Kantorowicz blamed the failure of the East German communist movement not on the ideology itself but on the functionaries who, "in denying the humanist ideals of the 'true' socialists, had established a dictatorship that would put the 'spirit' in chains."¹⁰⁸ Even as late as 1968, Kantorowicz argued that he was not anti-communist. In an essay titled "The Spiritual Resistance in the GDR," he documents how revisionist intellectuals felt about the totalitarian rule of the SED during the 1950s, emphasizing the fact that they were not anti-communist but exerted a "spiritual resistance" to the regime that was characterized by a "critical vigilance and spiritual autonomy" against the system.¹⁰⁹ He also accounted for why so many critical intellectuals refused to leave the GDR, stating that many revisionists retreated into an "inner emigration," where they remained silent against the abuses of the SED in hopes that one day there would be fundamental change.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Allinson, 70.

¹⁰⁶ Allinson, 70.

¹⁰⁷ See Milovan Đilas' *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (1955)

¹⁰⁸ Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch. Zweiter Teil*, (München, 1961), 18.

¹⁰⁹ Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch. Zweiter Teil*, (München, 1961), 123.

¹¹⁰ Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch. Zweiter Teil*, (München, 1961), 123.

Conclusion

The West German media took a special interest in Kantorowicz's departure from East Germany because he had dedicated a large portion of his life to the pursuit of socialism. As a member of the KPD during the Weimar and Nazi periods, and then a member of the SED during the late 1940s and 1950s, Kantorowicz's decision to flee the GDR provided the West with political cannon fodder in their defamation against the East German state. Kantorowicz also voluntarily spoke with reporters and discussed his departure on the radio, making him one of the very first veteran communists to cooperate with West German news sources after fleeing. This was also problematic because he had enjoyed a higher level of prestige than other communists who fled persecution from the regime. If an esteemed East German professor and writer, who had been dedicated to Marxist-Leninist ideology since the early 1930s lost faith in the SED and the socialist movement, then how unstable was the regime? How were regular East German citizens supposed to believe in socialism if someone like Kantorowicz had lost faith? And, how were outsiders supposed to believe that socialism in the GDR was a stable and functioning political system?

To address these complications, the SED attempted to discredit Kantorowicz by printing their own defamatory articles about him in the East German media. They also removed his name from East German histories and books concerning his involvement in the Spanish Civil War. However, the story of Kantorowicz is important not only because he angered Ulbricht and the SED over his decision to leave for the West, but because he changed how Ulbricht attempted to come to terms with other high profile veteran communists who posed a risk of leaving the regime and causing a similar outburst of negative publicity. This change can be seen in how Ulbricht chose to address the revisionism and possible departure of Ernst Bloch, one of the most

influential Marxist philosophers in the Eastern bloc, and even the world during the 1950s, who is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Ernst Bloch: The “Trojan Horse” Philosopher

The most tragic form of loss isn't the loss of security, it's the loss of the capacity to imagine that things could be different.

- Ernst Bloch

General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, with no forewarning at the Twentieth Party Congress meeting of the CPSU on February 24th, 1956, denounced the “cult of personality” that had formed around Stalin and stated his plans to de-Stalinize the Eastern bloc.¹¹¹ This incident became known as Khrushchev’s “secret speech,” even though his words quickly spread to other socialist states and the rest of the world.¹¹² Loyal communists throughout Eastern Europe were shocked, while others became radicalized. The two groups which had been the most heavily targeted by communist regimes, workers and intellectuals, were especially affected by Khrushchev’s words and uprisings occurred in both Hungary and Poland which brought the downfall of their Communist Party leaders.¹¹³ Obviously paranoid about the security of his own leadership, Walter Ulbricht reacted to these events by increasing internal security measures, especially by attacking and silencing “problem” intellectuals who had expressed even the slightest sentiments in favour of political reform.

¹¹¹ Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 192.

¹¹² Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956* (Toronto, ON: Random House of Canada Limited, 2012), 453.

¹¹³ Applebaum, 452.

As a Marxist philosophy professor, Ernst Bloch quickly became one of Ulbricht's targets. Known for his openly critical and passionate lectures, as well for his friendship with Georg Lukacs, a main instigator of the Hungarian uprisings, and his own student's challenges to the regime, Bloch was severely implicated by the events of 1956. After losing his professorship at the University of Leipzig in 1957, faced with restrictions on teaching, lecturing and publishing, and experiencing social exclusion, Bloch and his family moved to Munich in 1961.¹¹⁴ Bloch had been a loyal Marxist since the 1920s, and was also a supporter of Stalin and the Soviet Union since the 1930s but experienced a shift in his political orientation after the events of 1956 and he became more critical of the SED.

Although Ulbricht and the SED ignited an anti-Bloch campaign in the GDR, denouncing him as a leading Marxist philosopher and imposing restrictions on his scholarship, he was never arrested and was even granted special privileges which allowed him to pursue his academic interests abroad. Similar to Kantorowicz, Bloch was also a veteran communist; although he had never officially joined the KPD or SED, he was directly affiliated with each party through his wife Karola, who had been a member since the early 1930s. Bloch also maintained a high degree of authority and recognition in the GDR, even more so than Kantorowicz and it is this fact that changed how Ulbricht chose to deal with him as an influential revisionist thinker.

After the outbreak of media attention focusing on Kantorowicz when he left the regime, Ulbricht feared that a similar situation would occur with Bloch. Instead of hoping that Bloch would pack up, taking his "heretical" ideas along with him and leave, Ulbricht actively tried to prevent Bloch from fleeing. However, Ulbricht was not only worried about the negative publicity

¹¹⁴ The exact date that Ernst Bloch decided to stay in West Germany is unknown. Bloch was travelling throughout West Germany on a lecture tour with his family in the spring of 1961. It was during this spring lecture tour that he made the decision to not return to the GDR.

that could result if Bloch decided to flee. Bloch was considered one of the greatest German philosophers of the post-1945 era, and losing him to West Germany would be a great loss for the GDR. Therefore, despite Ulbricht seeing Bloch as an influential revisionist who was a danger to the political stability of the state, he refused to arrest him due to the socialist prestige he brought to the GDR and to prevent him from lending his renowned reputation to West Germany, while also fearing the negative repercussions that his departure would have on the regime.

The Development of a Marxist Philosopher

Bloch was born in the town of Ludwigshafen, Germany in 1885. His family were well-to-do assimilated German-Jews, his father a senior official for the Imperial Railways and his mother a homemaker.¹¹⁵ At the turn of the nineteenth-century, Ludwigshafen was a dreary industrial city that lacked the kinds of academic circles in which a budding intellect like Bloch could expand and build on his philosophical interests.¹¹⁶ His parents were also not supportive of his academic pursuits and hoped he would pursue a respectable career like his father's. Bloch's enthusiasm for philosophy was stronger than his parent's will however, and he often travelled to the neighbouring town of Mannheim across the Rhine, to enjoy the cultural centre's theatre, concerts and library.¹¹⁷

From an early age, Bloch politically and philosophically confronted the reality of capitalism as a leftist and pacifist, as his experience of growing up in Ludwigshafen illuminated

¹¹⁵ Jack Zipes, "Introduction: Toward a Realization of Anticipatory Illumination," in *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, translated by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), xiii.

¹¹⁶ Zipes, xiii.

¹¹⁷ Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (London, UK: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1982), 5.

the difficulties faced by the working class.¹¹⁸ Although he was unable to correspond with likeminded individuals in his own region, he regularly wrote to leading German philosophers of his day, such as Theodor Lipps, with whom he studied as a university student in Munich.¹¹⁹ Despite being well-versed in Marxist doctrine, as well as having been influenced by the writings of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, Bloch did not fully develop his Marxist position until the mid 1920s.¹²⁰ Bloch, like many other intellectuals of his time, was greatly influenced by the Russian Revolution which he welcomed and viewed as a positive political turning point for Russia. However, he was also critical of Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks, as he disliked autocracy and feared the repercussions of the Leninist dictatorship.¹²¹ His position as a Marxist philosopher became more definite after meeting his second wife Karola Piotrkowska, a Polish architect and art student, in Paris in 1926.¹²² Karola, also thoroughly well-versed in Marxist literature, greatly influenced Bloch and together they travelled around Europe before settling down in an apartment in the “Red District” of Berlin in 1930.¹²³

Bloch quickly became a leading critic of the Nazis and an antifascist writer while residing in Berlin. While Karola joined the Communist Party of Germany after their move to the “Red District,” Bloch remained critical of the policies of the KPD and maintained his distance.¹²⁴ Despite considering himself a Marxist, he viewed the KPD and its members as not being truly aligned with Marxist ideals and even blamed them for helping the Nazis achieve political

¹¹⁸ Hudson, 5.

¹¹⁹ Ivan Boldyrev, *Ernst Bloch and his Contemporaries: Locating Utopian Messianism*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 7.

¹²⁰ Vincent Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch*, (London, UK: Routledge, 1996), 14.

¹²¹ Geoghegan, 14.

¹²² Zipes, xvii.

¹²³ Zipes, xvii.

¹²⁴ Boldyrev, 8.

power.¹²⁵ Once the Nazis had legally assumed power in Germany, he and Karola fled for Switzerland, as they feared being arrested for their ties to the KPD. Ernst and Karola married in Zurich in 1934 before being expelled by the Swiss government for their participation in Nazi resistance groups. They roamed around Europe living in Vienna, Prague and Paris before emigrating to the United States in 1938.¹²⁶

First settling down in the country, the newlyweds moved to New York City then to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Bloch worked on various manuscripts while Karola, fluent in English, held different jobs to support them.¹²⁷ Bloch was unhappy and bored in the United States, partially because he was unable to speak English, meaning he could not pursue his line of work. Karola took a job as a waitress and then as an insurance agent while their American neighbours often criticized Bloch for not having a typical job. Refusing to take a manual labour position, Bloch felt like an outsider in the United States because he did not fit the American model of masculinity, as he was not the sole supporter of his family.¹²⁸

Bloch was sixty-three years old when he was offered a position at the University of Leipzig in 1948 and after spending eleven years in the United States, he and Karola returned to East Germany in 1949. Upon arrival in East Germany, Bloch was soon surrounded by admirers and his first lecture was enthusiastically received.¹²⁹ Bloch accepted the professorship at Leipzig understanding that he may face opposition from some of the more orthodox communists in the GDR and so he demanded absolute freedom to teach and study what he wanted. This was agreed

¹²⁵ Zipes, xviii.

¹²⁶ Geoghegan, 16.

¹²⁷ Gabrielle Kreis, "Jewish Women in the Diaspora," translated by Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey, in *Homemaking: Women Writers and the Politics and Poetics of Home*, edited by Catherine Wiley and Fiona R. Barnes, (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996), 269.

¹²⁸ Kreis, 270.

¹²⁹ Karola Bloch, 192.

upon, and Bloch joined a university which boasted some of the finest Marxist intellectuals of the period such as Georg Meyer, Hans Mayer, and Fritz Behrens.¹³⁰ Bloch quickly became a favourite of Leipzig's philosophy students, for he provided a Marxist discourse which was often in opposition to the official politics of the state. Although he considered himself a Stalinist, his lectures and essays often criticised Stalinism for disregarding the important role of culture in the development of social relations as well as the need for creative experimentation for the successful completion of the socialist experiment in East Germany.¹³¹ Despite his criticisms, he defended the Soviet Union on the grounds that it was the "guarantor of genuine freedom" and if only "the Soviet Union were not threatened by the imperialist tactics of western capitalism, it would be able to get on with the socialist experiment and allow greater civil liberties."¹³²

Bloch publicly advocated for Stalinist-style politics, showing solidarity with the East German communists, as his wife was an official member of the SED, but in private with close acquaintances and sometimes his work colleagues, he expressed his desires for political reform which ultimately led to his academic downfall.¹³³ Although many East German academics faced suppression and harassment in regard to their scholarship, those who remained loyal to Stalinism and the party were granted special privileges within their institutions.¹³⁴ These special privileges sometimes included the ability to travel, a doubled income, better housing, and better education for their children, which often blinded them to the realities of socialism.¹³⁵ Bloch himself often travelled outside East Germany for academic conferences, and he and his family lived in a beautiful six-bedroom villa which had been previously owned by a family who moved to the

¹³⁰ Karola Bloch, 200.

¹³¹ Zipes, xxii.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Connelly, 337.

¹³⁵ Connelly, 337.

West.¹³⁶ Bloch was presented with various awards by the GDR for some of his essays and was greatly respected as both a scholar and a Marxist intellectual until 1956, when events abroad significantly altered the leniency of Ulbricht and the SED toward East German intellectuals.

Just as Alfred Kantorowicz in the previous chapter had been targeted by East German authorities for revisionism after Khrushchev's "secret speech" in 1956, Bloch and other leading intellectuals were subjected to waves of repression. When Khrushchev exposed the crimes of the Stalin regime, workers in Poland engaged in strikes, riots, and demonstrations while an armed uprising against the Communist Party and Soviet control took place in Hungary.¹³⁷ These instances of political revolt occurred only three years after the June 17th, 1953 uprising, and East German authorities intensified internal security measures in fear that the political fervor might spread. The Stasi also increased its flow of information from informants, who were to report every demonstration, protest, and even personal sentiments of discontent.¹³⁸

The events of 1956 made life difficult for Bloch due to the West German press labelling him as the East German "Georg Lukacs."¹³⁹ Lukacs, also considered one of the leading orthodox Marxist intellectuals of the period, had involved himself with Imre Nagy, the former Hungarian prime minister who led the Hungarian uprisings.¹⁴⁰ Due to Lukacs' close ties to many East German intellectuals, and in particular his lifelong friendship with Bloch, the SED became wary that the circle formed around Bloch would likewise revolt against the regime in demand of an

¹³⁶ Karola Bloch, 196.

¹³⁷ Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990. From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 361.

¹³⁸ Weitz, 361.

¹³⁹ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, West German newspaper clipping, "The 'Principle of Hope:' The Prosecution of Leipzig Professor Ernst Bloch," unknown newspaper, February 21st, 1957.

¹⁴⁰ Geoffrey Westgate, *Strategies Under Surveillance: Reading Irmtraud Morgner as a GDR Writer* (New York, NY: Rodopi B.V., 2002), 22.

alternative interpretation of socialism.¹⁴¹ Bloch was also severely implicated because of the actions of his former student Wolfgang Harich, who was greatly influenced by Lukacs. An investigation on Bloch and his circle at Leipzig was launched and it was determined that his teachings were counterrevolutionary to the worldview of the SED, and that he was leading his students astray.¹⁴²

During the early postwar period (1949-1961), there were many East German intellectuals and party members who sought a “Third Way” in establishing a form of democratic socialism that would lie between Stalinist communism and conservative capitalism.¹⁴³ Facing challenges to his leadership and to the rule of the party, Ulbricht issued a series of purges throughout the early 1950s to rid the regime of these “Third Way” thinkers. However, as events transpired in Poland and Hungary in 1956, Ulbricht once again faced factionalism, especially from the young philosophy professor Wolfgang Harich, who had drafted a platform that sought to reform the SED from within and reconcile with the SPD in the West, which ultimately led Ulbricht to arrest him, resulting in the only show trial of the late 1950s.¹⁴⁴ Harich had been influenced by Lukacs in Hungary, as well as taught by Bloch himself, and in January 1957, Bloch was forced into retirement by the SED.

Shortly after Bloch was made to retire, Karola was summoned to Berlin for a party meeting where she was questioned about her friendship with Lukacs. She was not expelled from the party until a few months later, when a fellow co-worker claimed she was a “Polish

¹⁴¹ Westgate, 22.

¹⁴² Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, Letter from the SED Institute for Philosophy to Ernst Bloch, January 18th, 1957.

¹⁴³ Mary Fulbrook, *Interpretations of the Two Germanies, 1945-1990*, second edition (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), 17.

¹⁴⁴ John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and its Legacy* (Minnesota, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 50.

revanchist” and an enemy of the workers. The woman who testified against Karola later apologized, stating that she was put up to the betrayal by other party members. However, the damage was done and Karola was heartbroken, as she had been a member of the Communist Party since 1931.¹⁴⁵ The Blochs stayed in East Germany until they were forced to leave. Ernst and Karola not only lost their jobs, but they were being rejected from public places and Ernst’s son Jan was being targeted by his teachers. One night Ernst and Karola went to a local theatre where the doorman refused to let them in because of the anti-Bloch campaign that had been launched in the East German media. Jan’s sociology teacher was also giving him failing grades at school because of his father’s political revisionism.¹⁴⁶ Isolated and abandoned by many of their friends, the Blochs, while vacationing in Munich in 1961, learned of the building of the Berlin Wall and decided to remain in the West.¹⁴⁷

Ernst and Karola lived in West Germany for the remainder of their lives. Ernst took a teaching position at the University of Tübingen, while also guest lecturing at several universities around Europe. Once a supporter of Stalinism, Bloch became a staunch anti-Stalinist by the time he emigrated to the West, where he remained both academically and politically active. He publicly supported the Prague Spring in 1968, the rights of Israel’s claims to statehood and was critical of “American imperialism” and the Vietnam War. Although Bloch was half-blind for the last ten years of his life, he continued teaching philosophy seminars at Tübingen until his death in 1972.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Karola Bloch, 225.

¹⁴⁶ Karola Bloch, 227-28.

¹⁴⁷ Zipes, xxiv.

¹⁴⁸ Zipes, xxv.

The ‘Trojan Horse’ Philosopher

Bloch’s departure from the GDR does not fit the typical definition of “fleeing,” as he was already in West Germany with his family when he made the decision to stay in the spring of 1961. Pushed out of the GDR because of the anti-Bloch movement that had gained momentum in his last years as an East German citizen, Bloch was regularly travelling to West Germany due to the social isolation he was experiencing in Leipzig. Faced with restrictions on scholarship, being removed from his position at the university, banned from giving public lectures, and being portrayed in the East German media as a revanchist, Bloch was being shunned by former colleagues and friends alike.

The anti-Bloch movement that resulted from the political turmoil in Poland and Hungary in 1956 caused many difficulties for Bloch and his family. Bloch was accused of “seducing the youth” with his ideas and the SED held on-going investigations on him and his students.¹⁴⁹ Due to Bloch’s life-long friendship with Lukacs, he was condemned as the “spiritual leader” of the Wolfgang Harich group which desired a renewal of the party and a form of socialism that was freed from Stalinism.¹⁵⁰ Harich was also one of Bloch’s former students at the University of Leipzig and when he was arrested in November 1956, he was quick to implicate both Bloch and Walter Janka, his co-editor for the East German publisher *Aufbau-Verlag*.¹⁵¹ When questioned about Harich’s accusations against him, Bloch feigned ignorance to the Central Committee

¹⁴⁹ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, Letter to Gen. Mohwald from SED Party Secretary, September 15th, 1959.

¹⁵⁰ David Childs and Richard Popplewell, *The Stasi: The East German Intelligence and Security Service*, (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001), 99.

¹⁵¹ Connelly, 345.

members interrogating him, stating that despite his past working relationship with Harich, he was unaware of his political commitments.¹⁵²

East German authorities were right to suspect that Bloch was using his base at Leipzig to promote a humanist alternative to the Stalinism being practiced by the regime. Bloch's lectures on philosophical Marxism before his removal from the university were often at odds with East German standards. After the events of 1956, Bloch began to "ruthlessly" attack the "narrow gauge Marxism" of the SED and argued that philosophy should set the goals of the Marxist praxis.¹⁵³ However, despite Bloch's advancement of the need for a more humanist and universal form of Stalinism, he was, and had always been loyal to Stalinism and the party.¹⁵⁴ From the 1920s until the late 1950s, Bloch was critical of orthodox Marxism which he viewed as being theoretically inadequate. Although he refused to join the KPD during the 1930s, he was supportive of his wife Karola's membership. During the 1930s and 1940s, Bloch viewed contemporary politics through a narrow lens which offered only two options: Hitler or Stalin, and he viewed Stalin as the only realistic alternative to Hitler during the rise of fascism in Europe.¹⁵⁵ Bloch had also publicly supported the Moscow show trials of the 1930s and the Stalinist purges of the 1940s.¹⁵⁶

As a philosopher, Bloch's support of Stalin alienated him from other Marxist intellectuals in the West, who were already opposed to the repressive measures of Stalinist-style communism and it was not until the events of 1956 that Bloch began to take on a more humanistic view. With the June 17th, 1953 uprisings, Bloch and many of his contemporaries at the University of Leipzig

¹⁵² Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, Letter from Ernst Bloch to Georg Mayer, January 22nd, 1957.

¹⁵³ Hudson, 15-16.

¹⁵⁴ Hudson, 16.

¹⁵⁵ Hudson, 12.

¹⁵⁶ Karola Bloch, 219.

had welcomed the arrival of the Soviet forces and even helped to secure university buildings, as the uprisings in Berlin had also spread to other parts of East Germany, including Leipzig.¹⁵⁷ Jan Bloch recalls his father reacting passively to the demonstrations, despite both Ernst and Karola having personally despised Ulbricht, hoping to see him removed from power.¹⁵⁸ Bloch's attitude changed by 1956 and he expressed support for the Hungarian revolution to Karola, which he hoped would spread to the GDR and invoke change.¹⁵⁹ Bloch had finally opened his eyes to the "moral horror" of Stalinism and the "truth of reports which he had dismissed for years as capitalist lies."¹⁶⁰ He also publicly responded to Khrushchev's "secret speech" by stating that the Soviet Union was not the "sole model of socialism," and he called for an end to dogmatism, different national forms of socialism, an end to dictatorship over the proletariat, and a return to democratic centralism.¹⁶¹

Although Ulbricht issued a warrant for the arrest of Bloch in 1957, he withdrew it at the last minute.¹⁶² Instead, the SED delivered a letter to the Bloch family home on January 19th, 1957, criticizing Bloch for his political behavior, describing his philosophy as "un-Marxist," and informing him that he could no longer resume his teaching duties at the university.¹⁶³ After being forced into retirement in 1957, the SED advised Bloch's former graduate students to renounce his philosophical influence. Some of his former students obliged, while the ones who refused were either arrested or fled to the West.¹⁶⁴ In desperation, Bloch denied the revisionist circle that

¹⁵⁷ Connelly, 338.

¹⁵⁸ Connelly, 338.

¹⁵⁹ Karola Bloch, 222.

¹⁶⁰ Hudson, 16.

¹⁶¹ Hudson, 16.

¹⁶² SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, West German newspaper clipping, "The 'Principle of Hope:' The Prosecution of Leipzig Professor Ernst Bloch," unknown newspaper, February 21st, 1957.

¹⁶³ Karola Bloch, 223.

¹⁶⁴ Connelly, 338.

had formed around him at Leipzig, and even argued that he was not responsible for some of the views held by his graduate students. He also claimed to Central Committee members that he only accepted graduate students who were members of the SED and stressed that there were “deep differences” between himself and Harich.¹⁶⁵ Bloch felt “embarrassed” that he was being “sacrificed” by the party because of his ties to Lukacs and argued that he did not support such counterrevolutionary actions. He also directly condemned anyone who supported or took part in the Hungarian uprisings and stated that the SED needed to increase its efforts for the cause of socialism in the GDR.¹⁶⁶

Some of the evidence used against Bloch included the dissertations of his former graduate students. The SED found that many of the students who had studied under Bloch maintained philosophical ideas that contradicted the “Marxist-Leninist” principles followed by the regime, most notably their equation of socialism with democratic humanism.¹⁶⁷ Bloch contested these allegations, stating that as a philosophy teacher he posed traditional philosophical questions to which his students independently drew their own conclusions and new avenues of thinking.¹⁶⁸ He also accused the Central Committee members who analysed these works, of being simple minded and not qualified to make such accusations.¹⁶⁹ Despite his continuous denials, the events of 1956 and his ties to Lukacs had permanently stained his reputation in the East.

¹⁶⁵ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, Letter from Ernst Bloch to Georg Mayer, January 22nd, 1957.

¹⁶⁶ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, Letter from Ernst Bloch to Georg Mayer, January 22nd, 1957.

¹⁶⁷ Hudson, 16.

¹⁶⁸ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, Letter from Ernst Bloch to Georg Mayer, January 22nd, 1957.

¹⁶⁹ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, Letter to Gen. Mohwald from W. Unknown surname, acting Party Secretary, September 28th, 1959.

Ulbricht did not arrest Bloch or his wife Karola, even though he unleashed a massive anti-Bloch campaign against them. Both had lost their jobs, Ernst at the university and Karola as an architect for the SED, and East German magazines that once hailed Ernst as a “philosophical genius” were now dragging his name through the mud.¹⁷⁰ Historian Peter C. Caldwell argues that Bloch was not arrested by Ulbricht due to insufficient evidence of his involvement in the Harich affair and because the initial attacks against him were “ill-informed” and had “largely missed their mark.”¹⁷¹ While this is true, as the SED was not able to find direct evidence linking Bloch to the supposed counterrevolutionary conspiracy planned by Harich, and he had not publicly condemned the SED in a published article like Kantorowicz, he was guilty of being critical of Ulbricht and the SED, which proved to be enough political fodder for Ulbricht to arrest other revisionists or independent thinkers, who he considered a threat to the stability of the regime.

In contrast to Caldwell, a West German newspaper held an entirely different view for why Ulbricht was reluctant to issue an arrest. It stated that Ulbricht was hesitant to arrest Bloch because he was the only internationally renowned Marxist philosopher left within the Eastern bloc.¹⁷² The SED took pride in the fact that East Germany, before 1961, claimed the only intelligentsia in Europe that consciously chose socialism over capitalism.¹⁷³ Although the East German leadership denounced Bloch as a revisionist, his residence in the GDR prevented him from lending his renowned reputation to West Germany. Ulbricht also understood what the repercussions of putting a well-known Marxist intellectual behind bars would be, as he was still experiencing the repercussions from driving Kantorowicz out of the regime. Just as

¹⁷⁰ Karola Bloch, 221.

¹⁷¹ Caldwell, 133.

¹⁷² SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, West German newspaper clipping, “The ‘Principle of Hope:’ The Prosecution of Leipzig Professor Ernst Bloch,” unknown newspaper, February 21st, 1957.

¹⁷³ Connelly, 350.

Kantorowicz's departure cast a negative shadow on the dictatorship, arresting Bloch, who was a much more famous and internationally renowned figure, would have had a more detrimental effect.

Bloch's punishments were quite lenient in comparison to other revisionist intellectuals and party members who were attacked by the SED. For example, Harich was given a ten-year prison sentence for his counterrevolutionary activities and ties to Lukacs, while Janka faced a five-year sentence.¹⁷⁴ According to Mary Fulbrook, East German intellectuals were easier to police in the GDR than in other Eastern European states because most were predominantly loyal to socialism. Therefore, Ulbricht's attacks against the intelligentsia during the late 1950s were less severe than the purges of the early 1950s.¹⁷⁵ At worst, Bloch was labelled by Ulbricht as trying to promote a "Maoist 'Hundred Flowers'" movement in the GDR, in comparison to the short lived Chinese program initiated by Mao Zedong in 1956, which encouraged intellectuals to share their ideas.¹⁷⁶ Other than losing his professorship, the most severe incident enacted against Bloch was in April 1957, when the SED's party representatives at the University of Leipzig held a two-day conference which aimed to attack Bloch's theories on existentialism, theology, mysticism, and "social democratism" and the conference papers were published in a volume entitled *Ernst Bloch's Revision of Marxism*.¹⁷⁷

Bloch was well-known for his revisionism in the classroom as well as his public statements calling for reform after the events of 1956. Other intellectuals who were less expressive, such as Heinz Brandt in the next chapter, were more severely targeted and even arrested. In 1959, Bloch was planning to release the third edition of *The Principle of Hope*, but

¹⁷⁴ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 68.

¹⁷⁵ Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 176-79.

¹⁷⁶ Hudson, 16.

¹⁷⁷ Caldwell, 134.

because he had lost his rights to teaching, lecturing and publishing, he had to threaten the SED. If he was not able to publish the third edition of his book in the East, he threatened to publish with *Suhrkamp-Verlag* in West Germany. Ulbricht caved to Bloch's demand and allowed him to publish his book completely intact with no alterations. Bloch then republished one more of his books in 1960.¹⁷⁸ The first edition of *The Principle of Hope* (1955) was awarded the National Prize and the Order of the Fatherland, two of the highest honours in the GDR.¹⁷⁹ Ulbricht clearly had an ulterior motive for not arresting Bloch. For a "renegade" philosopher, Ulbricht was willing to give Bloch much more leeway than other condemned intellectuals and his approval of publishing the third edition of Bloch's acclaimed book, portrays his determination to keep both him and his scholarship in the regime.

Interestingly, Ulbricht also allowed Bloch to travel outside of the regime. Bloch regularly travelled around West Germany to lecture and even held regular guest lectures at the University of Tübingen, where he was offered a permanent teaching position.¹⁸⁰ Travelling for East German citizens was not only expensive, but travelling to West Germany was also restricted.¹⁸¹ Some intellectuals and other working professionals were granted rights to travel outside of the GDR however, and as already mentioned, travel privileges were most likely granted to "problem" intellectuals who the regime hoped would permanently leave.¹⁸² Bloch maintained an ambiguous position in regard to being granted travelling rights, as Ulbricht did not want him to leave, but also understood that what Bloch desired most was the freedom to lecture and share his ideas.

¹⁷⁸ Zipes, xxiv.

¹⁷⁹ Zipes, xxiv.

¹⁸⁰ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, SED notes on Ernst Bloch, unknown author, September 26th, 1959.

¹⁸¹ Scott Moranda, *The People's Own Landscape: Nature, Tourism, and Dictatorship in East Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2014), 89.

¹⁸² Forner, 275.

Evidently, Ulbricht had to be more lenient in order to keep Bloch as an East German citizen. It can be concluded that Ulbricht's leniency toward high-profile East German intellectuals was determined by what value they provided to the regime, and what consequences their departure would have once in the West – and therefore, not all veteran communists or East German intellectuals who fled the GDR were treated equally.

Despite the measures taken against Bloch, Ulbricht wanted to neither arrest nor expel him. Briefing notes on conversations between Bloch and SED authorities during 1960 and early 1961 reveal that East German authorities appeared more interested in whether Bloch planned to remain on East German soil than in the progression of his political views. Bloch's interrogators outright asked him on multiple occasions whether he planned to move to the West, to which Bloch claimed that he did not want to appear as a "martyr" of socialism for the benefit of the "golden West."¹⁸³ He was truthful in his convictions, as he did not want to leave East Germany, and was even offered a lecturing position at the University of Tubingen, which he declined and openly shared this information with the SED. He claimed that if he made the move to West Germany, he would be viewed as a "Trojan horse," in that he would have more freedom but would always be considered a dangerous and "covert Bolshevik."¹⁸⁴ Satisfied with Bloch's verbal commitments to remain in the GDR, the anti-Bloch campaign began to die down at the beginning of the 1960s.

Bloch was considered one of the greatest German philosophers of the postwar era, alongside Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, and Ulbricht wanted to keep him in the regime for the sake of the GDR's own prestige. If Bloch were arrested, the West German press would

¹⁸³ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, SED notes on an interrogation of Ernst Bloch, unknown author, September 26th, 1960.

¹⁸⁴ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, SED notes on an interrogation of Ernst Bloch, unknown author, September 26th, 1960.

sensationalize the ordeal, as Bloch was considered the intellectual elder statesman of the GDR.¹⁸⁵ Ulbricht also understood that, if he was not lenient enough with Bloch, that East Germany would lose him to the West and plans were already underway to prevent such occurrences. The Berlin Wall was erected in 1961 to not only prevent citizens from fleeing to the West, especially young professionals and skilled workers, but to also increase the GDR's legitimacy as a socialist state. To gain political legitimacy, the East German leadership made serious attempts to catch up with, if not to surpass, West Germany both economically and in terms of its cultural, sporting, and social provisions.¹⁸⁶ East German achievements were to emphasize not only the provenance of Marxism, but to also distinguish the GDR as the most "advanced Marxist-Leninist state."¹⁸⁷ Since Bloch was recognized as the leading Marxist philosopher in the Eastern bloc, Ulbricht made concessions to ensure he remained content enough to stay.¹⁸⁸

Bloch's discontent with the GDR hit its tipping point when plans to build the Wall were put in place, as he was still very active as an academic and was unwilling to lose his right to share his ideas outside of the regime. Like Kantorowicz, Bloch faced extreme criticism when he decided to stay in West Germany. Considered a traitor in the East, Bloch received both public and personal attacks for his departure. In 1961 he received a letter from fellow Leipzig professor of economic history, Jurgen Kuczynski who, after expressing extreme criticism for his decision to flee, signed the letter with "hatefully yours...."¹⁸⁹ Even after Bloch was fully settled in the West, the SED held a series of meetings to discuss whether Bloch should still be included in the

¹⁸⁵ John Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse: A History of Eastern German Education, 1945-1995*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93.

¹⁸⁶ Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), 557.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Connelly, 349.

German Academy of Sciences. The Academy had undergone a split in the summer of 1962, and the East German branch made the decision to expel Bloch, labelling him a “renegade.”¹⁹⁰

Not only was Bloch considered a traitor to socialism by his peers in the East, but he was also berated by West German newspapers. West German newspapers sensationalized Bloch’s decision, mocking him for his support of Stalin and the Soviet Union and his “hope” in communism. He was also considered an “unwelcome guest” by many West German citizens due to his outspoken criticisms of capitalism and West German society prior to his escape.¹⁹¹ Since Westerners during the 1950s viewed the GDR as a ‘totalitarian’ state which was comparable to both the Stalin and Hitler regimes – it is not surprising that both Kantorowicz and Bloch were less than enthusiastically received in the FRG.¹⁹² The Cold War rhetoric being played out between the two Germanies posed the “freedom and democracy” of West Germany against the “totalitarian dictatorship” of East Germany, and support for communism was viewed as being opposed to the basic notions of fundamental human rights.¹⁹³

Although both Bloch and Kantorowicz generated a great deal of media attention for their departures from East Germany, there was a significant difference between how each case was perceived in the West. The attention garnered by Kantorowicz focused more on his loss of faith in socialist ideology and the repression he experienced as an academic. Kantorowicz also publicly addressed these issues, where he was able to explain his reasons for leaving and why he still considered himself a communist. Although West German news sources made sure to capitalize on Kantorowicz’s negative experiences and still cast East Germany in a negative light,

¹⁹⁰ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, West German newspaper clipping, “The ‘Principle of Hope:’ The Prosecution of Leipzig Professor Ernst Bloch,” unknown newspaper, February 21st, 1957.

¹⁹¹ Zipes, xxv.

¹⁹² Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies*, 27.

¹⁹³ Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies*, 27.

the attention surrounding Bloch's departure was quite different. Due to Bloch's celebrity as a philosopher, the multiple awards he received from the regime, and his past support of Stalin, West German media sources not only sensationalized his story but harshly mocked him.

Even before Bloch fled the GDR, West German newspapers were keeping tabs on him, publishing stories about his participation in the Harich affair and that he was let go from the University of Leipzig.¹⁹⁴ As early as March 1957, newspapers began contrasting content from *The Principle of Hope* to his personal circumstances in the regime. One such article commented:

To this end, he [Bloch] quotes in the first volume: *The Principle of Hope* (p. 171), the sentence of the young Marx: "Our assertion must therefore be: reform of consciousness not by dogmas, but by analyzing the mystical consciousness that is unintelligible to itself, whether it manifests itself in a religious or political form."

If one considers how far this view is removed from the intention of the party's consciousness formation, according to the scheme of SED-training, it will be understood that Ernst Bloch, with the Soviet zone, chose the wrong utopia to call his homeland and that the opposites of the rulers of the East to his evolutionary doctrine of hope did not emerge from the Marxist development. Bloch himself, however, must now recognize that hope does not exist without freedom.¹⁹⁵

Bloch was not only depicted as having lost faith in socialism, but his entire life's work became the joke of newspaper articles and radio broadcasts. This was especially apparent in articles discussing *The Principle of Hope*, as journalists had a field day mocking Bloch for his failed "hope" in the communist movement.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, West German newspaper clipping, "Bloch "Ruhestgrand," WELT, March 24th, 1957.

¹⁹⁵ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, West German newspaper clipping, "The 'Principle of Hope:' The Prosecution of Leipzig Professor Ernst Bloch," unknown newspaper, February 21st, 1957.

¹⁹⁶ SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/163, West German newspaper clipping, "The 'Principle of Hope:' The Prosecution of Leipzig Professor Ernst Bloch," unknown newspaper, February 21st, 1957.

Shortly after leaving the GDR, Bloch gave a lecture at the University of Tübingen on November 17th, 1961, addressing the humiliation he felt for his “hope” in the East German communist movement. The lecture, entitled “Can Hope Be Disappointed?” drew a packed audience in a lecture hall at the university, where Bloch publicly responded to the negative media attention he had garnered since fleeing. He stated:

Even a well-founded hope can be disappointed; otherwise it would not be hope. In fact, hope never guarantees anything. It can only be daring and must point to possibilities that will in part depend on chance for their fulfillment. Thus, hope can be frustrated and thwarted, but out of that frustration and disappointment it can learn to estimate the tendencies of countervailing processes. Hope can learn through damaging experiences, but it can never be driven off course. The substance of its goal is “real humanism,” and since this goal is not present, one can neither speak about it out of experience nor formulate it completely. To do so would be pure invention, not definition. Still, it is possible to determine the direction toward real humanism, a direction that is invariable and unconditional; it is indicated precisely in the oldest conscious dream of humankind: in the overthrow of all conditions in which the human individual is a humiliated, enslaved, forsaken, despised creature.¹⁹⁷

Clearly, the negative media attention surrounding Bloch’s life work and departure from the regime left him feeling defiant. The packed audience also shows just how interested West Germans, whether academics or not, were in his coming to terms with the failure of East German socialism. It was not just Bloch who was “humiliated, enslaved, forsaken, [and] despised” however, but also the East German leadership. Bloch was the last great Marxist philosopher residing in East Germany, he was an award winning, high profile communist, whose loss of faith in the socialist experiment was a direct reflection of the GDR – and his departure, just as Ulbricht had foreseen and tried to prevent, culminated in widespread media attention and embarrassment for both Bloch and the regime itself.

¹⁹⁷ Zipes, xxv.

The media attention surrounding Kantorowicz and Bloch was part and parcel of a larger problem plaguing the GDR. Between 1945 and 1961, close to 3.5 million people fled the regime to West Germany, which has been referred to as *Republikflucht* (flight from the Republic).¹⁹⁸ The flight of so many East Germans to the West proved to intensify Cold War tensions between the two Germanies, as the SED blamed the FRG for luring East German citizens to cross the border, while the West blamed the flight of so many GDR citizens on deplorable living conditions and totalitarian repression.¹⁹⁹ East Germans were said to be “voting with their feet” when leaving and the West German government purposely shamed the SED by referring to former citizens as “refugees” instead of as “migrants.”²⁰⁰ It is easy to see then, how the departures of Kantorowicz and Bloch angered Ulbricht: as they were both high profile veteran communists that were “voting with their feet,” providing the West with Cold War propaganda that reinforced their claims that East German citizens were victims of a politically inefficient and repressive dictatorship. However, as the departure of one high profile veteran communist made Ulbricht and the East German leadership think twice, the departure of a second even more prolific veteran communist led Ulbricht to pursue more extreme measures to counter the negative propaganda being generated in the West, and this will be the concentration of the next chapter in the case of Heinz Brandt.

Conclusion

After leaving the GDR in 1961, Bloch continued to advocate for a more humanist form of socialism. Despite awakening to the horrors of Stalinism in East Germany, he believed that a

¹⁹⁸ Major, 56.

¹⁹⁹ Major, 59.

²⁰⁰ Major, 59.

complete re-organization of society could not be carried out without some mistakes and political inadequacies and he maintained hope that a more progressive form of socialism would one day be pursued.²⁰¹ Although he conceded that Soviet-style communism lacked an emphasis on safeguards, as well as an overall enlightenment in Marxism itself, he remained true to socialism until his death.²⁰² Throughout his final years in Leipzig, Bloch faced continuous interrogations from SED members, who routinely questioned him not only about his political views but whether he planned to move to the West. After the departure of Kantorowicz, Ulbricht attempted to pursue a more tolerant approach in dealing with Bloch. The East German leadership saw value in Bloch's East German citizenship and therefore did not want to expel or arrest him, as his academic work and reputation as a Marxist philosopher helped elevate the GDR's status as the most advanced socialist state in the Eastern bloc. However, after Bloch left the East, another Western propaganda coup erupted, which led Ulbricht and the SED to pursue a more extreme approach in their attempt to vindicate the East German socialist regime.

²⁰¹ Karola Bloch, 202.

²⁰² Hudson, 18.

CHAPTER 3

The Case of Heinz Brandt: The ‘Humanist Socialist’

In whatever hell we may be sojourning... we find people who give us the joy of hope and the surety of the future. No matter how much evil may create new evil, every humane deed, every human act of goodness, is like a torch that lights the blood-stained narrow path... while we discern, like a presentiment, a human society truly worthy of man.

- Heinz Brandt

Personal accounts of significant historical periods or events such as memoirs and autobiographies of veteran Communist Party members who fled the GDR during the 1950s allow us to see similar patterns of perspectives and approaches and what they reveal about the intricate structures of East German society.²⁰³ This chapter examines the personal reflections of former veteran communist and SED functionary Heinz Brandt and how he dealt with the failures of socialism in the GDR during the 1950s, why he was targeted by the SED, why he turned his back on the socialist experiment by fleeing to West Germany in 1958, and why he was kidnapped in the summer of 1961. Through the examination of Brandt’s life and persecution by the SED, we are able to see how both Kantorowicz and Bloch’s departures from the regime ultimately led Ulbricht to issue the kidnapping and imprisonment of a veteran communist who had fled the regime in an attempt to recast the GDR in a more positive light. Despite Brandt not being as

²⁰³ Ute Hirsekorn, “Thought Patterns and Explanatory Strategies in the Life Writing of High-Ranking GDR Party Officials after the Wende,” in *German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Birgit Dahlke, Dennis Tate and Roger Woods (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 179.

outspoken as Kantorowicz after relocating to West Germany, nor being a highly regarded intellectual like Bloch, the SED jumped at the opportunity to kidnap him only a few months after Bloch's departure in hopes that he would confess to the error of his ways. Planning to use Brandt as a scapegoat, the SED attempted to force him to publicly admit that his flight from the regime was a mistake, which would refute the castigations brought on by the negative attention surrounding the departures of Kantorowicz and Bloch. However, not only did the East German leadership fail in its attempt to make an example out of Brandt, but their persecution of him after he fled the GDR caused an even more harmful international controversy which reflected the overall failures of the socialist experiment both at home and abroad. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the life of Brandt and how his personal biography contributed to an even more defamatory debacle for the East German dictatorship.

The Life of Heinz Brandt

Brandt was born August 16th, 1909 in the town of Posen, formerly located on the eastern edge of Prussia, today called Poznan, a part of Poland.²⁰⁴ Born into a Jewish bourgeois family, Brandt was a child when the First World War broke out and the events of 1914-18 significantly impacted him for the rest of his life. As a child, he was often present when his parents discussed the horrors and pointlessness of the war. His parents also discussed the happenings taking place in Russia at the time. The Russian Revolution of 1918 profoundly impacted Brandt and he began reading Russian literature such as the works of Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Maxim Gorky.²⁰⁵ He remembered how his parents became "heartfeltly devoted" to the cause of

²⁰⁴ Albert Fried, "Heinz Brandt, 'Prisoner of the Year,' 1963," *The New York Times*, Feb. 15th, 1970.

²⁰⁵ Heinz Brandt, *The Search for a Third Way: My Path Between East and West*, (New York, NY: Doubleday Publishing, 1970), 39.

socialism and the Bolshevik slogan “Peace, land, and bread!” which was being printed in German newspapers.²⁰⁶ Brandt was forever influenced by the rise of the Bolsheviks, especially after the destruction and despair of the First World War.

After completing his secondary education, Brandt moved to Berlin in 1926 to study economics and he soon joined the Young Communist League and the Red Students Federation.²⁰⁷ This period he described as “the most beautiful period... of [his] life... [He] was filled with a messianic hope for the future... [He was] the salt of the earth.”²⁰⁸ Unlike other political youth movements in Weimar Germany which focused on sporting or cultural activities, the Young Communist League was much more militant and its members helped disseminate propaganda by making and selling KPD posters and engaging in agitation.²⁰⁹ These skills would serve Brandt later in life, when he was appointed as the Secretary for Agitation and Propaganda in the Berlin SED leadership during the early 1950s.²¹⁰

Brandt was transferred from the Young Communist League to the German Communist Party proper in 1931 where he was responsible for “agit-prop activity.”²¹¹ Even as a young man Brandt found himself in disagreement with some of the party’s platforms and it was not long until he received his first “punishment” from the German Communist Party. The KPD was becoming increasingly Stalinist after Joseph Stalin’s rise to power in the Soviet Union in 1927, and Brandt became openly critical of the “Red Plebiscite” policy, which rejected an anti-Hitler

²⁰⁶ Brandt, 39.

²⁰⁷ “Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986).” *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*. Accessed Dec. 23rd, 2016. <https://www.stsg.de/cms/bautzen/biografien/heinz-brandt/>

²⁰⁸ Brandt, 59.

²⁰⁹ Russel Lemmons, *Hitler’s Rival: Ernst Thälmann in Myth and Memory*, (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 235.

²¹⁰ Multiple sources note that Brandt was appointed as Secretary for Agitation and Propaganda in the Berlin SED leadership in 1952. However, no exact date is given. Brandt also does not mention a specific date in his memoir *The Search for a Third Way: My Path Between East and West* (1970).

²¹¹ Brandt, 66.

alliance with other leftist groups.²¹² Dictated by Stalin, the policy further backed the National Socialists and helped them achieve power through combined efforts to remove the SPD leadership in Prussia.²¹³ The KPD initially believed that Hitler would eventually fall from power, signalling the emergence of a proletarian revolution.²¹⁴ After expressing his concerns about the policy one evening at a party meeting, Brandt was immediately removed from his position in the KPD. However, he soon joined another leftist group that referred to themselves as the “Conciliators,” who supported an anti-Hitler alliance and the removal of KPD leader Ernst Thälmann.²¹⁵

Despite Brandt’s move to join the “Conciliators,” he still regularly attended KPD functions. Standing behind a KPD election poster on the night of the last Berlin communal election on March 5th, 1933, he was seen by a group of Weissensee *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Detachment or SA).²¹⁶ The following day, as Brandt was walking in that same district, some SA men from the previous night caught sight of him and arrested him – an act which they could legally perform now that the Nazi Party had officially come to power.²¹⁷ Shoving him in a police wagon, they took him to the SA barracks on Hedemannstrasse in Berlin where he was beaten profusely and interrogated for hours on end.²¹⁸ An SA member with a wooden leg questioned Brandt about a document which he was not familiar with and after two more rounds of beatings, being ordered to sweep and mop the barracks, and reciting “Heil Hitler,” he was finally released.²¹⁹ The reign of Hitler and the National Socialists had begun.

²¹² Fried, “Heinz Brandt, ‘Prisoner of the Year,’ 1963.”

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ “Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986).” *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

²¹⁶ Brandt, 82.

²¹⁷ “Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986).” *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

²¹⁸ “Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986).” *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

²¹⁹ Brandt, 87.

Brandt spent the greater part of the Nazi era either behind bars or in concentration camps. Next to Jews, communists were the second most persecuted individuals during the Nazi period and on December 4th, 1934, while visiting some comrades in the district of Spandau, Brandt was again arrested by the SA.²²⁰ Brandt was sentenced to six years in prison by the Berlin Supreme Court for the distribution of illegal newspapers, considered a “preliminary act of high treason.”²²¹ Brandt spent six years in prison, moving from the Luckau Penitentiary to the Brandenburg-Görden Penitentiary, and then to the central Berlin police prison on Alexanderplatz before being transferred to the “Sachsenhausen open-air health resort” in February 1941.²²² Although Brandt completed his six-year sentence, he was not a free man. Not only had he been convicted for distributing illegal communist newspapers, but he was also Jewish and was therefore sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. While imprisoned at the “Alex,” Brandt despairingly waited for weeks to learn his fate. His ultimate fear was that he would end up in a concentration camp instead of being freed. However, much later in life he realized had he not been sent to Sachsenhausen, he would have left for the Soviet Union to enrol in the Lenin school where he most likely would have suffered an even worse fate.²²³ Many German communists who fled Germany for the Soviet Union during the Second World War ended up victims of the Stalinist purges and were either sent to a Gulag (Soviet prison camp) or executed.²²⁴

Brandt was at Sachsenhausen for less than two years before being transferred to Auschwitz.²²⁵ After being tattooed with “69912” on his left forearm, he and the other new arrivals to Auschwitz, still naked from the showers, were forced to run lanes under the

²²⁰ Epstein, 2.

²²¹ Brandt, 109.

²²² Brandt, 133.

²²³ “Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986).” *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

²²⁴ “Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986).” *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

²²⁵ Brandt, 140.

supervision of the guards. Whoever was unable to keep the pace was declared unfit for work and was loaded onto the “death truck” to be gassed.²²⁶ Brandt maintained his strength throughout his imprisonment at Auschwitz and by the end of 1944, the gassing of prisoners came to a halt. Rumours circulated that Heinrich Himmler was negotiating with the Western powers and that the camp would be evacuated.²²⁷ The prisoners of Auschwitz were rounded up and sent on a three day “Death March” before being loaded onto freight cars which took them to the Buchenwald concentration camp.²²⁸ Anyone who was not strong enough to complete the “Death March” was clubbed to death or shot on the spot and left to die. Brandt was already “half dead” by the time he made it to Buchenwald in January 1945 and it took him months to recover.²²⁹ By March 1945, he was back on his feet and joined the other inmates in an armed rebellion, liberating the Buchenwald camp and rounding up close to thirty SS guards (*Schutzstaffel* – Nazi Protection Squadron) who were turned over to the American forces that arrived a short time after.²³⁰

Germany surrendered to the Allies in May, 1945, and after ten years of imprisonment Brandt began his “third life” by settling down in Berlin.²³¹ The ending of the Second World War heralded a new political era for longtime communists like Brandt, as no longer were communists merely part of a tormented oppositional movement but close to one third of the German population now fell under the dictates of Stalinism.²³² Veteran communists began work to set a new political agenda based on concerns that ran parallel to their pre-1945 life experiences such as the anti-fascist struggle, the provision of goods, and the dangers of enemy infiltration.²³³

²²⁶ Brandt, 141.

²²⁷ Brandt, 144.

²²⁸ “Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986).” *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

²²⁹ Brandt, 145.

²³⁰ “Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986).” *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

²³¹ Wolfgang Proisinger, “Die vielen Leben des Heinz Brandt,” *Der Badischen Zeitung*, Januar 10, 2016.

²³² Epstein, 100.

²³³ Epstein, 7.

Brandt took a post working for Berlin's city administration while returning to his political endeavors during his free time. He joined a coalition of communists and socialists in the Soviet occupation zone that participated in the establishment of reform programs that helped nationalize industry, democratize schools, and abolish the Junker class.²³⁴ Brandt and other concentration camp survivors also helped found a branch of the "Victims of Fascism" committee (*Opfer des Faschismus – OdF*), a non-partisan body which aimed to help victims persecuted by the Nazi regime.²³⁵

In 1952, Brandt was appointed the position of Secretary for Agitation and Propaganda in the Berlin SED leadership, where he oversaw the control and censorship of political information and media. However, as the GDR became more totalitarian he became more critical.²³⁶ Brandt fully understood that if he wanted to survive and make a difference, he would have to wait silently for his time to "disassociate [East Germany] from the Stalin empire."²³⁷ Veteran communists had not only brought their pre-1945 concerns to centre stage during the founding of the GDR, but also their pre-1945 political mores based on party discipline, the purging of political suspects, a fear of factions, and an authoritarian party hierarchy.²³⁸ Brandt was constantly haunted by the idea that he would be arrested for his "antiparty" past as well as his connections to other revolutionaries who sought a "third way."²³⁹ Even concentration camp survivors were targeted by the SED, as it was believed that because they remained imprisoned

²³⁴ Fried, "Heinz Brandt, 'Prisoner of the Year,' 1963."

²³⁵ "Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986)." *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

²³⁶ Fried, "Heinz Brandt, 'Prisoner of the Year,' 1963."

²³⁷ Brandt, 157.

²³⁸ Epstein, 7.

²³⁹ "Biografien: Heinz Brandt (1909-1986)." *Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten*.

during the Nazi era, they were unable to keep up with the evolution of the German communist movement and therefore held “sectarian” views when finally released.²⁴⁰

Brandt first began to lose favour with the party in the summer of 1953, after the June 17th uprising in Berlin, which began the previous day when a group of construction workers began protesting the possibility of a decrease in their wages, and which then spread to the rest of the city.²⁴¹ Assigned by the SED to oversee the situation at the People’s Own Bergmann-Borsig plant in Berlin-Wilhelmsruh, Brandt organized the workers to meet in the plants main hall and announced on a loudspeaker “Today this plant has become your plant, but by the same token what happens to it has also become your responsibility. First, don’t wreck anything; second, elect a shop committee here and now!” and the workers banded together and developed a resolution which they presented to the SED.²⁴² This act was enough to cast an unfavourable shadow on Brandt within the party and in August 1954 he was removed from his party position.²⁴³ However, the SED claimed that he was not let go for his participation in the events of June 17th, 1953, but for immoral indecency.²⁴⁴ The SED released him from his position on the claims that he suffered from alcoholism, was guilty of sexual misconduct and for supposedly spreading pornography.²⁴⁵ Brandt remained in East Berlin working various journalist positions until 1958, when rumours began circulating that he would soon be arrested and he, his wife and three young children left the GDR for West Germany.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁰ Epstein, 103.

²⁴¹ Schmid, “Entführt von der Stasi – das Beispiel des Heinz B.”

²⁴² Brandt, 215.

²⁴³ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV A 2/20, Letter to Bertrand Russell from Otto Gotsche. October 10th, 1963.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Schmid, “Entführt von der Stasi – das Beispiel des Heinz B.”

In contrast to Bloch in the previous chapter, the East German leadership appeared to be much less concerned about whether Brandt chose to remain in the GDR. While the SED regularly interrogated Bloch about his plans to stay in the regime, Brandt seemed to go unnoticed for close to four years before he heard news of a warrant being issued for his arrest. Between his removal from the SED in August 1954, Brandt was able to live a somewhat free life until the autumn of 1958. Similar to Kantorowicz and Bloch, Brandt was eventually targeted as a result of the political events of 1956. However, unlike Bloch, Brandt was not initially a high-profile veteran communist and he belonged to the class of “problem intellectual” which the SED preferred would leave. Brandt’s departure also did not significantly factor in the SED’s pursuits until a few years later, when the controversy surrounding Kantorowicz and Bloch had already garnered a great deal of negative publicity for the regime and it was in the summer of 1961 that Brandt was kidnapped.

After departing for West Germany, Brandt settled in Frankfurt, where he took the position as head editor for the metal worker’s trade union magazine IG Metall. He spent close to three years in Frankfurt before returning once again to East Berlin for a trade union conference in June 1961. One evening he was invited for drinks by a female acquaintance named Eva Walter, a “bar maid” introduced to him by a friend. Brandt visited Eva in her apartment where he enjoyed a few glasses of whisky. After visiting for over an hour, Brandt left the home, where he collapsed on the street and then woke up in the Hohenschonhausen Prison.²⁴⁷ Eva Walter was not a “bar maid,” but a Stasi employee who lured Brandt back to her apartment and then drugged him with an anaesthetic.²⁴⁸ Brandt was sentenced to thirteen years imprisonment for propaganda and

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

agitation, charges which the SED were willing to drop if he agreed to confess to his wrongdoings and admit that he was a traitor to the cause of communism and the GDR.²⁴⁹

Apparently, Brandt had not endured enough suffering. He refused to cooperate with the East German police and spent another three years under lock and key.²⁵⁰ Brandt's distant cousin, the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, had enlisted the assistance of British philosopher Bertrand Russell who campaigned on Brandt's behalf.²⁵¹ Due to an outpouring of international attention, the East German government finally gave in and let Brandt go free on May 23rd, 1964.²⁵² When asked by media outlets how he felt about his freedom, he replied: "I feel resurrected for the third time! The first time was in March 1933, when I was released from the Berlin SA barracks on Hedemannstrasse; the second time was when the concentration-camp prisoners in Buchenwald were freed at last on April 11, 1945; and now I am resurrected for the third time."²⁵³ After being released by the SED, Brandt returned to West Germany where he resided for the remainder of his life. He continued to advocate his socialist ideals and went back to work as editor for IG Metall, where he supported the metal workers trade union and took part in various demonstrations in support of the peace movement. He continued to be critical of the GDR and of Stalinism, but he never lost his idealistic vision of Marxist-Leninism and his search for a "third way."

Amnesty International's 'Prisoner of the Year, 1963'

For Brandt, leaving the GDR was a logical decision. If he had stayed in East Berlin, there was no doubt he would have been arrested by the Stasi and imprisoned. Brandt fled the GDR in

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Brandt, 301.

²⁵¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), 272.

²⁵² Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV A 2/20, Letter to Bertrand Russell from Otto Gotsche. May 23rd, 1964.

²⁵³ Brandt, 299.

1958, at the height of a series of political purges issued by Ulbricht against anti-Stalinist intellectuals and ideological reformers. While the darkest years of Stalinism occurred between 1936 and 1953, the SED still maintained a siege mentality of “he who is not with us, is against us” until the 1980s.²⁵⁴ Brandt, who had been removed from his SED position in 1954, and who had encouraged a group of workers to stand up to the SED in June 1953, became a target of the attacks issued by Ulbricht in the late 1950s. Brandt was forewarned about plans for his arrest by some of his loyal acquaintances when rumours began circulating that he was working as a spy for West Germany and was directly helping to orchestrate a spy ring for the SPD-Ostbüro (an agency set up by the Social Democratic Party of West Germany for East German SPD refugees), and he wasted little time in leaving.²⁵⁵

A recurring theme which stands out in each case study, is that those socialists who chose to flee the GDR were committing the ultimate betrayal to the ideology of Marxist-Leninism. Even Brandt’s closest comrades, with whom he openly expressed his plans, discouraged him from going into exile. Upon hearing Brandt’s plans to flee, Robert Havemann, a professor at Humboldt University, told Brandt in a letter that he understood the dangers he faced if he stayed in the GDR but if he were in Brandt’s situation he would “have preferred prison in the DDR to living in a cleric-fascist restorationist state.”²⁵⁶ This sentiment was also prevalent amongst SED members and criticism was regularly printed in the media. In February 1964, *Neues Deutschland* published an article expressing sentiment from Hanna Wolf, a Central Committee member who stated at a party meeting: “I do not say this to agitate the comrades present... Comrades, I must say I had to practice self-criticism... when a comrade hears that someone has taken flight from

²⁵⁴ McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory*, 178.

²⁵⁵ SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV A 2/20, Letter to Bertrand Russell from Otto Gotsche. May 23rd, 1964.

²⁵⁶ Brandt, 252.

the republic, a comrade's first reflex must be – at least it's so with me – that that person is a pig...”²⁵⁷ For loyal socialists, it was not only despicable to be critical of the regime's style of politics, but it was even worse to flee as it was viewed as giving up on socialism altogether.²⁵⁸

According to Brandt, the date of June 16th, 1961, when he was lured by the undercover “bar maid” was no coincidence. He claimed that because he encouraged the workers of the June 17th, 1953 uprising to take collective action against the regime, that he became a personal target of Ulbricht, who almost fell from power as the General Secretary of the SED.²⁵⁹ However, would the SED purposely organize a metal workers trade union conference on that specific date just to entrap Brandt? It is more likely that the Stasi had been keeping tabs on Brandt (and other former party members who fled) and jumped at the opportunity to capture him. The criminal code under which Brandt was convicted also included the death penalty as one possible punishment. If Brandt was such a danger to the security of the GDR, why was he not executed? Why did the SED keep him imprisoned for three years when he refused to talk? Despite evidence suggesting that political executions became less common after 1953, they were not completely ruled out as executions were documented up until 1989.²⁶⁰ If Brandt was such a dangerous man, why was the Ulbricht regime willing to let him free if he confessed to the errors of his ways?

Brandt was found guilty under Article 14.24 of the Criminal Proceedings Act. Under this act, anyone who participated in activities that threatened the peace of the workers, farmers or other peaceful citizens of East Germany by betraying the political and/or economic interests of the state were guilty of treason and espionage and could face imprisonment for no less than three

²⁵⁷ Brandt, 253.

²⁵⁸ Brandt, 257-58.

²⁵⁹ Brandt, 219.

²⁶⁰ Anthony Glees, “Social Transformation Studies and Human Rights Abuses in East Germany after 1945,” in *Recasting East Germany: Social Transformation after the GDR*, edited by Chris Flockton and Eva Kolinsky (Oxon, UK: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1999), 177.

years to a lifelong sentence, or even face execution.²⁶¹ Brandt was accused of “heavy-espionage” for attempting to recruit close to thirty GDR citizens into a “spy-ring” which aimed to collect secret information about the SED. Brandt’s prison sentence was also justified on the grounds that he continued to spread hateful propaganda against East Germany even after fleeing.²⁶² Was Brandt guilty of spreading hateful propaganda against the GDR and leading a spy ring in East Germany on behalf of the “militaristic and fascist” SPD-Ostbüro? No. Brandt may have been guilty of living an “immoral” lifestyle, as both his memoir and SED documents describe his taste for alcohol. He was also lured to an apartment by a female “bar maid” who was not his wife, where he was fed two to three glasses of whisky, indicating that SED officials clearly knew how to entrap him. However, he was not guilty of the criminal charges laid against him.

It is difficult to imagine that a person who spent ten years in concentration camps under the Nazi dictatorship could support any type of fascist or militaristic pursuits. The accusations against Brandt, that he was working for the “militaristic and fascist” SPD-Ostbüro, do not align with any documented political activities or attitudes regarding him. Brandt remained loyal to socialism even after fleeing East Germany and his work as a journalist for IG Metall in Frankfurt proves this through the various articles he wrote about the metal workers trade union. Brandt considered himself a “humanist-socialist,” who sought peace over war. He was critical of the Stalinization of the East German regime but made no effort to attack it. His political activism consisted of intellectual pursuits, discussing what a “third way” of “humanist socialism” would entail and how it could be achieved. He only once actively promoted a group of workers to express their grievances to the SED in June 1953 and lived a low-profile existence after being let go from his party position as a result. Since his termination as Secretary for Agitation and

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

Propaganda for the Berlin SED, Brandt wrote articles, shared illegal literature and made alliances with other revolutionaries who shared his ideals. However, he did not orchestrate a spy-ring and was not guilty of espionage. Even the evidence used against Brandt during his court proceedings was problematic because it was based only on various testimonies of some of Brandt's former acquaintances and there was no hard evidence.²⁶³

After being kidnapped by the Stasi, Brandt was immediately offered a plea deal that would allow him to go free. If Brandt was willing to make a statement that he had come willingly to the GDR, asked his family to join him, and publicly expressed his remorse for fleeing to the press, radio and on television, he was promised immunity.²⁶⁴ It was also suggested that if his family refused to return to East Germany, he could live "the prospect of a gay life as a single man" as long as he confessed publicly to the errors of his ways.²⁶⁵ True to his ideals, Brandt refused these suggestions, as he had "no intention of placing the seal of approval on kidnapping and awarding them [the SED] a premium for political efficiency for having confused politics with crime."²⁶⁶ Instead, Brandt presented some of his most recent articles written for *IG Metall*, attempting to prove that he was not the militaristic, revanchist that the SED claimed him to be.

During the period of the 1950s and 1960s, the GDR was attempting to gain recognition as a separate state from West Germany and prove to the rest of the world their political efficiency as a socialist state. When former KPD and SED members chose to flee the regime, it greatly enhanced what was already being showcased to the rest of the world, that socialism in East Germany was not working. Brandt's political sentiment evolved from "doubt and questioning to

²⁶³ SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV A 2/20, Letter to Bertrand Russell from Otto Gotsche. May 23rd, 1964.

²⁶⁴ Brandt, 302.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

outright resistance” and his choice to leave the GDR only exacerbated his “conviction that as a political and moral imperative socialism can mean only more and not less freedom than exists in the West.”²⁶⁷ Brandt was kidnapped and convicted by the SED not because he was a dangerous spy who expunged hateful propaganda against the GDR, but because he, Kantorowicz and Bloch were a direct reflection of the political failures of the East German dictatorship. By offering Brandt his freedom, the SED hoped that he would confess to his “mistake” of leaving, therefore signalling that the regime was not as illegitimate and politically corrupt as it appeared to be.

During his three-year imprisonment, Brandt attempted to strike his own plea deal with the East German authorities. Though he outright refused to confess to any wrongdoing on his part, he did promise that if he were released, he would not condemn the GDR for his kidnapping.²⁶⁸ His offer was continuously refused. The reality of Brandt’s situation remained grim until Bertrand Russell took up his cause, sending a series of letters to top functionaries in the SED such as Walter Ulbricht and even Khrushchev.²⁶⁹ Russell emphasized the injustice of Brandt’s persecution in his letters but his initial attempts to gain Brandt’s freedom were unsuccessful.²⁷⁰ The SED evaded all of Russell’s attempts to communicate until October 30th, 1963, when Otto Gotsche, Ulbricht’s official spokesman, sent an eleven page letter to Russell extensively detailing why Brandt had been arrested, why his thirteen-year sentence was justifiable and why the state refused to issue him a pardon.²⁷¹ According to Gotsche, “the spy Brandt” was convicted for “high treason” and the “reduction of the sentence by act of grace” could not be granted due to

²⁶⁷ Brandt, 299.

²⁶⁸ Brandt, 299.

²⁶⁹ Russell, 274.

²⁷⁰ Russell, 276.

²⁷¹ SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV A 2/20, Letter to Bertrand Russell from Otto Gotsche. May 23rd, 1964.

the serious nature of his espionage activities.²⁷² Gotsche concluded in his letter to Russell: “I may assume that you too, dear Mr. Russell, will appreciate after insight... that in this case the criminal law must be fully applied... in the interest of humanity.”²⁷³

Russell refused to give up on Brandt and on January 7th, 1964, he sent another letter to Ulbricht which greatly changed the course of events.²⁷⁴ Only a few years prior to Brandt’s kidnapping, Russell had been awarded the Carl von Ossietzky Peace Prize by East Germany for his Cold War peace campaigns, an award which he threatened to return if Brandt was not released and which ironically, mirrored many of the circumstances facing Brandt’s unjust imprisonment.²⁷⁵ Carl von Ossietzky was a German journalist who served two-years of military service during the First World War. Significantly influenced by the horrors of war, Ossietzky became a staunch pacifist, and during the Weimar period he published an article claiming that Germany was secretly training paramilitary groups, violating the Versailles Treaty.²⁷⁶ Although arrested, he was quickly released by the Weimar government until a similar incident emerged in 1931.²⁷⁷ Ossietzky once again published an article, this time accusing the Nazis of planning and preparing for war in the near future and he was once again arrested.²⁷⁸ However, as Hitler gained full power in 1933, he was sent to a concentration camp instead of being released at the end of his prison sentence.

²⁷² Das Archiv des Bundesbeauftragten für die Stasi-Unterlagen – Berlin, BStU 000022-23, Letter from Heinz Brandt to family, October, 1958.

²⁷³ Russell, 277.

²⁷⁴ Russell, 77-8.

²⁷⁵ Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990*, (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2010), 266.

²⁷⁶ Burton Feldman, *The Nobel Prize: A History of Genius, Controversy, and Prestige*, (New York, NY: Arcade Publishing, 2001), 307.

²⁷⁷ Feldman, 307.

²⁷⁸ Feldman, 307.

Similar to Brandt, peace campaigns gained prominence around Europe and North America for Ossietzky's release.²⁷⁹ In 1935, Ossietzky was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize but the Nazi regime refused to allow him to accept the award. Although he was released from prison, it was under the condition that he remained politically inactive.²⁸⁰ Time magazine held an interview with Ossietzky in 1937, where he claimed that he had been granted approval to accept the \$40,000 prize money, and openly praised the Nazi regime.²⁸¹ However, when the article was published, it was made clear that "hollow-eyed and pale, Ossietzky knew that if he got himself imprisoned again, it would be his death."²⁸² Just like Brandt, Ossietzky's freedom was dependent on whether he was willing to shine a positive light on the dictatorship in which he was held captive.

Ossietzky and Brandt shared many similarities. Both were deeply affected by the First World War, both sought peace above all else, both were simultaneously imprisoned in concentration camps under the Nazi regime, and both gained their freedom because of international pressure placed on the irrespective regimes in which they resided. However, Brandt refused to grant the East German regime any praiseworthy attention, an act which Ossietzky could not have considered due to his old age and poor health. But just as Russell and others campaigned for Ossietzky, Brandt received world-wide attention which helped gain his freedom. In 1963, Brandt was named "Prisoner of the Year" by Amnesty International who demanded that he be released.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Noah Rayman, "The Tragic Nobel Peace Prize Story You've Probably Never Heard," *Time*, October 10th, 2014.

²⁸⁰ Rayman, "The Tragic Nobel Peace Prize Story You've Probably Never Heard."

²⁸¹ Feldman, 307.

²⁸² Rayman, "The Tragic Nobel Peace Prize Story You've Probably Never Heard."

²⁸³ Fried, "Heinz Brandt, 'Prisoner of the Year,' 1963."

Brandt was freed from prison on May 23rd, 1964.²⁸⁴ Bertrand Russell's threat to return the Ossietzky Peace Medal was the defining factor that led to Brandt's release. The SED recognized the attention Brandt's case was gaining internationally, especially the similarities between the two cases and the comparisons between the fascist Nazi regime and their own "anti-fascist" movement. George Matthews, the editor-in-chief of the British newspaper *The Daily Worker* wrote to GDR authorities in 1963, explaining that a considerable propaganda effort was being mounted in Britain amongst not only trade unionists and peace campaigners, but amongst many who were normally sympathetic to the East German cause.²⁸⁵ This struck a chord with the SED, as they were especially sensitive to international opinion during the 1950s and 1960s. The FRG was not only recognized by western countries as the politically legitimate "Germany," but the FRG actively tried to isolate the GDR from pursuing a more active role on the world stage. The SED was consistently making a concerted effort to enhance its global stature and gain international legitimacy in the face of West Germany's attempts to isolate the East German state and international sympathies for Brandt's imprisonment were not helping in this regard.²⁸⁶

The international movement for Brandt's release grew exceptionally as people around North America and Europe were informed about Brandt's misfortunes. How could a government kidnap and imprison a man who had already suffered close to ten years in multiple concentration camps? Brandt's personal history had appealed to the masses through the campaign initiated by Amnesty International and discouraged even those supporters who were loyal to the GDR. By

²⁸⁴ Brandt, 297.

²⁸⁵ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv – Berlin, SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV A 2/20, Letter from George Matthews to Otto Gotsche. August 20th, 1963.

²⁸⁶ Luis Madureira, "'Kalashnikovs, Not Coca-Cola, Bring Self-Determination to Angola: The Two Germanys, Lusophone Africa, and the Rhetoric of Colonial Difference'" in *German Colonialism: Race, The Holocaust, and Postwar Germany*, edited by Volker Langbehn and Mohammad Salama (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), 283.

the time of Brandt's release, it was clear that the East German leadership fully understood what the repercussions would be had Western news outlets broadcast that Russell had returned the Ossietzky Peace Medal. Ulbricht realized that newspapers, radio and television would be highlighting the many parallels between both cases, and it would instead be the GDR that appeared to be a continuation of the fascist Nazi dictatorship and not West Germany as the SED liked to claim it to be.

Once Brandt was released and returned safely to West Germany, he held a press conference in June 1964, where he provided details about his kidnapping, time in prison and answered questions from the press. A West German reporter asked Brandt if the East German government had admitted to the abduction and whether they attempted to disassociate itself from it. Brandt replied that the SED, both during and after his abduction, completely "denied it and spread the most mendacious, contradictory stories of how... [he] had happened to land in their midst."²⁸⁷ Brandt viewed both his imprisonment and release as a sort of "miracle." Although there had been others that were kidnapped and imprisoned by the SED, Brandt's case proved to be different. He was abducted as an essentially low-profile veteran communist and was released as a well-known figure not just in East and West Germany, but around the world. In regard to his being let go early by the SED, Brandt stated in his memoir:

To be sure, this surprising gesture on the part of Walter Ulbricht did not happen by accident. Nor would it be correct to attribute my release exclusively to international actions. If my abduction, which was not the first, has been the last, if I have thereby contributed to lowering, even slightly, the walls of hate that have been built on both sides, that shall be the thanks I would like to give to human society for all that contributed to the dramatic change of my fate.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Brandt, 306.

²⁸⁸ Brandt, 304.

Brandt had been abducted and imprisoned on the basis that he, Kantorowicz, and Bloch, as veteran communists, had abandoned the regime in favour of West Germany, casting an unfavourable shadow on the GDR. His kidnapping was not supposed to turn out the way it did however, as the SED fully expected that, after all of Brandt's suffering during the Nazi era, he would be quick to implicate himself in order to be freed. That was not the case and luckily for Brandt, he had friends in high places who helped stir the hearts and minds of individuals worldwide. What had originally been a plan to vindicate the negative publicity brought on by Kantorowicz and Bloch, ironically blew up into an international affair that had an even further reaching impact on how the world viewed the regime than the amount of publicity garnered by Kantorowicz and Bloch combined.

Whether the international pressure that resulted from Brandt's abduction directly impacted Ulbricht's policies toward "problem intellectuals" is difficult to assess. Sources examined for this project do not directly link the cases of Kantorowicz, Bloch or Brandt to the policies pursued by Ulbricht and the SED in the 1960s. However, after the negative media attention brought on by all three case studies, especially the worldwide attention surrounding Brandt's kidnapping and release, significant developments did take place. Brandt was released in May 1964. Wolfgang Harich, who was arrested and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for his revisionist ideas in 1957, was released early in December 1964, only seven months after Brandt.²⁸⁹ Another high-profile socialist who was dealt with quite differently than the "problem" intellectuals of the 1950s, was the poet and musician Wolfgang Biermann. Biermann was very outspoken through his poetry and music during the 1960s and 1970s. He shared similar political ideas as Harich, as they both sought a "Third Way" between East German communism and West

²⁸⁹ Connelly, 355.

German Social Democracy.²⁹⁰ Biermann's music and poetry made light of the political contradictions of the SED and he gained notoriety in both the East and the West. The SED refused to arrest him, and instead they forbade him to publish his poems or perform his music. However, Biermann smuggled his songs on cassette tapes to the FRG and his music continued to spread through the GDR. Biermann was eventually given permission to perform in the West in 1974 and the SED used that opportunity to revoke his East German citizenship and refuse him re-entry into the regime in 1976.²⁹¹

The East German leadership changed how it dealt with its "problem" intellectuals after the outburst of negative publicity surrounding Kantorowicz, Bloch and Brandt. If Brandt's kidnapping had not made such an impact internationally, would the SED have released Harich early? If Biermann had been voicing his political concerns in the late 1950s, how would he have been dealt with? Would the SED have so willingly expelled him after the negative attention brought on by Kantorowicz and Bloch? It can be concluded that Ulbricht and the SED failed in their attempts to control the media attention surrounding Kantorowicz, Bloch and Brandt during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and in turn realized that their efforts were in fact more detrimental for the image of the regime. Therefore, the East German leadership began pursuing less severe measures such as kidnapping or lengthy prison sentences, after having learned from the experiences of the three case studies examined in this thesis, in hopes of alleviating some of the negative attention being brought on by "problem" intellectuals during the 1960s.

²⁹⁰ Stamp Miller, 80.

²⁹¹ Stamp Miller, 81.

Conclusion

Heinz Brandt lived the twentieth-century communist experience. He joined the Young Communist League during the Weimar period, he was a KPD member and then a “Conciliator” during the Nazi period, and for a short while he worked for the Ministry of Propaganda and Agitation for the SED leadership in Berlin. Persecuted repeatedly for his commitment to socialism, Brandt never gave in to the corrupt powers which imprisoned him during the Nazi and East German dictatorships. Despite his anti-fascist resistance, he was still targeted by the East German state and his decision to flee the regime further angered SED leaders and he was drugged and kidnapped by the Stasi in 1961. Imprisoned once again, Brandt refused all negotiations presented to him. Unwilling to let the East German dictatorship’s crimes go unnoticed, he stayed true to his ideals as a ‘humanist-socialist’ in hopes of paving the path for a “third way.” With the assistance of notable figures such as Bertrand Russell, Erich Fromm and organizations like Amnesty International, Brandt was released after serving only three years of his thirteen-year sentence. His imprisonment worked against the regime because he refused to admit that he was guilty or apologetic for fleeing and the growing support for his release further illuminated some of the existing parallels between the GDR and the Nazi regime, which had been previously foreshadowed by the West German media when documenting the stories of both Alfred Kantorowicz and Ernst Bloch, whose departures as high profile veteran communists proved just how intolerable Ulbricht and the SED could be.

CONCLUSION

The three case studies examined in this thesis shared many similarities. Most importantly, Kantorowicz, Bloch and Brandt were veteran communists. Kantorowicz joined the KPD in 1931, fought against Franco and the Spanish Nationalists during the 1930s, and joined the SED after returning from exile in the United States in 1946. Bloch never officially joined either the KPD or the SED, but he was affiliated with each party through his wife. Bloch was also appointed his position at the University of Leipzig by the East German leadership and was recognized for his dedication to socialism since the mid-1920s. Brandt had also been a dedicated socialist since the mid-1920s, as he had joined the Young Communist League in 1926, and worked as the Secretary for the Ministry of Propaganda and Agitation for the SED leadership in Berlin from 1952 to 1954. All three men were dedicated communists, and it was their long-time faith in socialist ideology which appealed to the West German media when they were targeted and fled the regime.

While other SED members were persecuted and purged from the party during the late 1940s and 1950s for being Jewish, none of the three men examined were directly affected by anti-Semitism in their decisions to flee the regime. Although many Jewish communists in East Germany and the Eastern bloc were condemned as spies and saboteurs for their cosmopolitan origins, the SED made exceptions for some who proved to be valuable in some way to the regime.²⁹² Before fleeing the GDR, Brandt maintained a low-profile and was therefore not a threat to Ulbricht or other high ranking SED functionaries. In fact, his removal from the party in 1954 appeared to go unnoticed until after the political events that occurred in 1956. In contrast to Brandt, both Kantorowicz and Bloch were highly recognized East German citizens both inside

²⁹² Herf, 109.

and outside of the dictatorship. Kantorowicz was a highly regarded writer and literary scholar, while Bloch was a renowned Marxist philosopher. Their East German citizenship helped elevate the prestige of the regime in cultural terms – especially Bloch as he was considered one of the greatest German philosophers in the post-war era. As East Germany was attempting to gain recognition as a separate state from the FRG, it was not only important to Ulbricht and the SED to be able to compete with the West in terms of its cultural provisions, but to also highlight that their dictatorship was the only state in the Eastern bloc with a socialist intelligentsia that consciously chose socialism over capitalism by living in the East.

However, their recognition as high profile veteran communists (or lack thereof in the case of Brandt) failed to safeguard them after the political events of 1956. After Khrushchev announced his “secret speech” at the Twentieth Party Congress meeting in February 1956, and the resulting political uprisings that reverberated in Poland and Hungary shortly after, Ulbricht’s fear of factionalism led to the persecution of East German intellectuals and SED members who showed even the slightest revisionist sentiment. Kantorowicz was targeted for openly criticizing the SED in a *Berliner Zeitung* article, while Bloch was labelled as the “spiritual leader” of the Wolfgang Harich group that sought a “Third Way” between the Stalinist-style socialism being practiced by the regime and West German social democracy. Even Brandt became a victim of Ulbricht’s search for revisionism despite being left alone by the SED for close to four years after being expelled from the party.

Although Kantorowicz was a loyal socialist, he continued to maintain his life-long aspirations of becoming a novelist and when the SED took away his teaching and publishing rights, and then he heard that a warrant was issued for his arrest in 1957, he decided to leave. Likewise, Brandt also heard from some of his friends and loyal acquaintances that the SED had

issued a warrant for his arrest and after spending close to ten years imprisoned during the Nazi era, he left for Frankfurt in 1958. It took Bloch a few more years than Kantorowicz and Brandt to leave the regime. Although an anti-Bloch campaign had been launched by the SED and he was removed from his university position and faced social exclusion from former friends and colleagues, he did not want to leave. Due to his high-profile status as a Marxist intellectual and philosopher, he maintained an ambiguous position as a “problem” intellectual in the GDR. Bloch was granted permission to travel outside of the regime to lecture and he was also eventually allowed to publish two of his books. Ulbricht wanted to keep Bloch in the regime because of his reputation and therefore made concessions to ensure that he would stay.

The departure of all three case studies to the FRG portrays their loss of faith in the East German socialist movement. As a result of their long-time commitment to socialist ideology, the West German press took special interest in their departures. While Kantorowicz refused to publicly denounce communism, the media viewed his repression as an academic as his break with socialist ideology. Bloch also remained a committed socialist after fleeing. Although he once supported Stalinist-style politics, that changed after the events of 1956. After learning of the uprisings in Poland and the ever more tragic demonstrations in Hungary, Bloch finally opened his eyes to the moral crimes of Stalinism. Likewise, Brandt had also distanced himself from the politics of the regime and had remained in the GDR until news spread about a warrant for his arrest. However, his loyalty to the party during the late 1950s was influenced by his hope that an intellectual challenge would emerge within the ranks of the SED and invoke change. While all three case studies had lost their faith in the politics being practiced in the East, they all maintained their faith in socialism. However, their faith was in humanist socialism, which promoted peace and the equal participation of all people in political decisions.

Although each case study shared many similarities as described above, it was their differences that made Ulbricht and the SED deal with each case on an individual basis. The most important difference between Kantorowicz, Bloch, and Brandt was how much recognition they had achieved prior to their departures. When Kantorowicz fled in 1957, he had already made a name for himself as a writer, scholar and veteran communist. His decision to flee generated a great deal of media interest in the West as a result of his status. This angered Ulbricht and the SED, and in response, they attempted to prevent Bloch, who was even more famous than Kantorowicz, from leaving the regime. The East German leadership feared that if Bloch fled to the West that there would be a similar, or even worse, outburst of negative publicity. Therefore, Bloch was given special treatment as a “problem intellectual.” Despite being considered dangerous and harbouring “heretical” ideas, Ulbricht wanted neither to arrest nor expel him as a result of the attention Kantorowicz had garnered after his decision to leave.

Ulbricht’s consideration of how much of a public persona each case study maintained was especially apparent with Brandt. Since Brandt was not a particularly famous or well-known veteran communist when he fled the regime, his direct lack of a public persona made him a perfect target for kidnapping. If the West German media paid less attention to the departure of Brandt in comparison to well-known scholars like Kantorowicz and Bloch, then his kidnapping should have proved to be less of a risk in generating negative publicity. Brandt had served close to ten years imprisoned during the Nazi era and the SED did not expect him to refuse their plea deal. Brandt appeared to be the perfect victim of the SED’s kidnapping scheme. He had suffered for many years under lock and key and it was expected that he would do anything to maintain his freedom, he was a veteran communist who had been dedicated to socialist ideology since the

1920s, and as a lesser known journalist, the West German media was not following his every move since he left the dictatorship.

By kidnapping Brandt, East German authorities could control his story for their benefit, ultimately vindicating the departure of long-time socialists who fled the regime by printing stories about how Brandt had awakened to the failures of West German capitalist society. Unfortunately for Ulbricht and the SED, that did not happen. Brandt stood by his convictions and refused to reward the regime for their crime of kidnapping and chose prison instead. This was not what the East German leadership had planned would happen, and even less expected was that Brandt would have a famous figure campaigning on his behalf.

When the famous philosopher Bertrand Russell threatened to return the Ossietzky Peace Prize awarded to him by the regime, Brandt's situation began to change. Brandt had garnered international interest over his kidnapping. He was named "Prisoner of the Year" in 1963 by Amnesty International and he was eventually released in 1964. Brandt may not have been a well-known figure before he was kidnapped, but he had become one by the time of his release. Ulbricht and the SED responded to the negative publicity surrounding Kantorowicz's departure by formulating more lenient domestic policies to prevent a similar situation from occurring with Bloch. When Bloch fled to the West, the SED responded by taking an even more extreme approach to vindicate the legitimacy of the regime by kidnapping Brandt. However, the SED failed in its attempts to quell the negative media attention being broadcast in the West and Brandt's kidnapping instead culminated in an even more defamatory scandal that reflected negatively for the East German regime.

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