

A BETTER LIFE AFTER THE WALL? *JA UND NEIN*:
PERSPECTIVES FROM TWO EAST GERMAN FAMILIES

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“*Wir haben verloren* — We lost.” My East German friend Uwe’s¹ voice was almost painfully resigned. We both knew the East Germans had given their best effort—some would say a “typical Prussian” effort—toward making communism a success in their nation. The German Democratic Republic or GDR had always been the model state, used by the Soviets in any show-and-tell event. But somehow all the efforts of the East Germans had become null and void almost literally overnight and their nation of 40 years had disappeared very much like a mirage in the desert, or perhaps more like an “Alptraum,” or nightmare.

I tried arguing with Uwe that he shouldn’t think of it that way. But my arguments were not very convincing to either one of us. My mind kept wandering back to my grade school days, when we practiced crouching under our wooden desks in the event that the Russians dropped an atomic bomb on southeast Idaho (on Arco maybe?). At that same time, my friend here was being warned about the aggressive capitalist Americans who at any moment might attack the Eastern bloc and try to replace the socialist welfare state with their morally decadent, imperialist system.

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Uwe brought me back to the more recent past: “In the GDR, everybody had a job, even if it was a meaningless one. But rent was about \$30 a month, food was very cheap, even though we couldn’t get fancy things like bananas, and public transportation cost maybe a dime a ride. The biggest negative was that we could only take vacations to the East (i.e., in another communist country).² Of course, subsidizing the necessities of life for everyone drove the country into bankruptcy. Well, now we’re in a united Germany, there is 15 percent unemployment in Berlin, and costs for housing, food, and transportation are horrendous. But I can travel anywhere I want. So tell me, which is the better system?”

EAST VS. WEST

Even 15 years after the Iron Curtain imploded, all is not well in *Deutschland*. Many civil separations in modern history have split nations into northern and southern blocks. Witness the United States, Vietnam, Korea, Iraq, and others. This has been true in Germany as well,³ where the internal stereotypes are that the sophisticated, orderly Prussians view the Bavarians as back-woods, lederhosen-wearing bumpkins⁴ and the more laid-back and yet innovative Bavarians view the Prussians as goose-stepping, hyper-organized sourpusses.⁵

During the Cold War, when the East Zone (Soviets) split off from the West Zone (British, French and Americans), it created a somewhat unnatural division. But 40 years of different political ideologies put a strain on the relationship between the two groups in a number of other ways as well. Today, the western Germans or *Wessis*⁶ view the eastern Germans or *Ossis* as poor cousins – worth pitying because of living in a repressive system for four decades, but at the same time they ask, “How much more of my paycheck is the government going to take in order to provide ‘foreign aid’ to those people?” The second question invariably asked is, “How is it that the *Ossis* can travel all over the world like they do? I know I certainly can’t afford that!”

The eastern Germans on the other hand view the *Wessis* as rich snob cousins who have been able to get everything they wanted for 40 years and now they’re whining about giving a little assistance. They often comment, “It’s not *our* fault that the (GDR) government ran the factories into the ground and ruined the environment. The unemployment rate here is twice as high as it is in the West, so if you’re going to come in and shut down all the factories, you need to provide some kind of compensation to us.”

In spite of the initial emotional euphoria, the monetary costs of reunification have been staggering. Nearly \$1 trillion has been transferred to the Eastern States since 1990, with the government paying out about \$75 billion per year to the East in what has been described as “the biggest capital transfer in economic history.”⁷ In addition to the economic support and outright subsidies to the East, factor in the costs of a major reform of German orthography at the turn of the century, which necessitated the reprinting of virtually every school textbook and reference book. Then there are the massive costs associated with introducing a totally new currency into Germany and most of the other members of the European Union.⁸

The conversations I describe in this article with the Sch. and the R. families took place during my third visit to Berlin over the past 21 years. I had visited there first as a Fulbright scholar in 1982, when the Wall was at full strength and the Cold War was in full bloom; then I spent three months working there for my previous company in 1995, during the five-year celebration of the reunification; and now I was visiting again in 2003, a full 14 years after the “accidental” collapse of the wall⁹. On each occasion, as I have walked the streets, listened to and read news reports, and visited with the people, I have thought over and over, “I’m too young to be able to watch history in the making. History is something that takes place over centuries, not over a period of a few years.” We live in remarkable times.

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During this latest visit, I stayed in Berlin for a total of three weeks,¹⁰ living with two different families I had met while working there in 1995. The R. family members are life-long members of the LDS church, living in Falkensee (population 36,000) on the northwest outskirts of Berlin. The Sch. family are not LDS, and they live in Neuenhagen (population 15,000) northeast of Berlin. These two families don't know each other, but they do have something very significant in common: They both grew up in the German Democratic Republic, a country that simply ceased to exist.

Living in these dear friends' homes allowed me to gain insights I would not have been able to obtain otherwise. The following verbal snapshots emphasize the paradox that the essential achievement of the greater freedom and unity of two separated nations comes only with significant costs and hurdles, and that this paradox becomes clear when seen in the personal lives and experiences of these people.

PALE IS BEAUTIFUL

Westerners who traveled to East Germany during the Cold War typically commented on how pale and drab it was there. Not just the buildings with their "neo-communist" concrete blockhouse style but also the people's clothing and the very expressions on their faces seemed subdued and stark. But I learned that those who grew up in this world of gray tones and black and white photos still associate strongly with that style.

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In Gudrun and Uwe's living room, there are five or six original paintings from the Baltic island of Rügen, one of their favorite vacation spots – both before and after the *Wende*,¹¹ or fall of the Iron Curtain. As they described these paintings and the artist who created them, they did so with considerable pride and admiration in their voice, mixed at the same time with noticeable sadness. The paintings are done with loving attention to detail, and they are in color, but the colors are so muted that at first glance they look like a sepia photograph.

Therein lies the source of Gudrun and Uwe's sadness: Since the *Wende*, the artist has had to paint with his new clientele in mind, i.e. western Germans and non-Germans. So he uses much more vivid colors in his landscapes now, and to the East German eye this makes the artwork much less attractive. The saleslady in the gift shop we visited on Rügen was in complete agreement: "Somehow the paintings just aren't the same now," she sighs. There seems to be an unspoken message of, "It's fine if they want to change our political system, but do they even have to change our artistic impressions?"

“GOOD BYE, LENIN”

Uwe und Gudrun took me to see a new movie about the *Wende*. It was a uniquely German movie, but it had an English title: “Good Bye, Lenin.”¹² The story is about a single mother,¹³ a dedicated party leader in the GDR, who suffers a stroke when she sees her son Alex in an anti-government demonstration. While the mother is in a coma, the wall comes down and her country ceases to exist. When she awakes from the coma several months later, the doctor stresses to the son that any excitement will kill her.

So Alex tries to make it look like the *Wende* never happened. He buys old GDR clothes and furniture at the local thrift shop, he has neighbors stop by to sing the old socialistic party songs, and he convinces a friend to act like a GDR news announcer to try to explain changes that the mother does notice in spite of everything Alex can do.

One frustration Alex experiences is that they stopped producing many of the foods so loved by the East Germans within a few months after reunification. While watching, I tried to think of an analogous scenario that Americans could relate to: Imagine Canada suddenly assimilating the United States. Our nation no longer exists, and within months we can no longer find Oreos®, Pop Tarts® or root beer in stores.

I asked Gudrun and Uwe afterward what they thought of the movie. They said it was hard to watch. It stirred up many feelings that had been suppressed or largely forgotten in the 15 years since the fall of the Wall.

NOSTALGIA FOR THINGS EASTERN

It is no coincidence that another *Wende* movie called “*Sonnenallee*” (“Sun Avenue”) came out just a few months before “Good Bye, Lenin.” After a decade and a half of practically pretending the GDR never existed, there is a genuine resurgence of (nearly) all things Eastern now. A new word has even been coined by dropping the first letter of the German word for nostalgia, yielding *Ostalgie*, or a yearning for GDR goods and a less complicated life.

In fact, there were only two visible GDR cultural icons that managed to become adopted in the West compared to the hundreds that went the opposite direction: 1) the white-bearded Sandman who reads children a bed-time story on network TV each night, and 2) the green and red lighted stop light figures at certain crosswalks in Berlin, which are the sole exception to the European Union’s official regulation on crosswalk lights.

Now, TV shows oriented toward the “new federal states” (read: the former GDR) are sprouting up right and left on German TV. “*Die Ostalgie-Show*” reflects back on the days of the stinky, noisy, two-cylinder Trabant

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automobile and Spreewald gherkins. “*Die DDR-Show*” is moderated by East German Olympic ice skater Katarina Witt and a West German. My friends Uwe and Gudrun regularly watch the 20 year old GDR news shows now re-broadcast nightly on network TV, not because they long for those days to return, but to remember a very different environment and to better see how their government had lied to them for 40 years.

“PAPA HAS WORK AGAIN”

Because of our previous discussions on unemployment in the East after the fall of the Wall, Uwe showed me a spoof trailer from the “Sonnenallee” movie. It shows the former GDR border policeman working on his Trabant, an East German car with an engine made of a fiberglass-like resin, while his family is in the house eating a typical East German breakfast. A radio announcer is droning on in the background when suddenly he reports, “The Wall will be rebuilt!” The man working on his car straightens up, goes into the house, puts on his old border guard uniform, and walks into the kitchen. “Don’t you look great!” the family says. The man responds, “Yup, Papa has work again.” (*Ja, Papa hat wieder Arbeit.*)

THE “AMERICAN WAY”

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Uwe took me to a shopping mall¹⁴ where he works, located in the middle of former East Berlin. On the second level we stopped at a store called “American Way.” It was filled with velvet Elvis paintings, books, posters, clothing, kitchy American souvenirs of all types. Uwe introduced me to the owner, who quickly rummaged through the two baskets in front of him and pulled out an Idaho license

plate, which he proudly displayed to me.

HARRY V

The fifth book in the Harry Potter series came out in England and the U.S. on June 21 last year. The German translation wasn’t scheduled to be published for another five months, on November 10. Still, for nearly four months, the top-selling book in German was *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*...in English! At the end of July, I watched Ilona’s niece Svea lying on the floor, Harry Potter 5 to the left, English-German dictionary to the right, working carefully through the text page by page. Even though Svea had had several years of English in school, like most German youth, it was still a laborious process. Two thoughts came to mind: 1) How small the world has become, with cultural events being

shared globally so readily, and 2) the influence of Anglo-American culture (for good and bad) on other cultures. I wondered about the chances of, for example, a Spanish-language book by a Mexican author becoming the best-selling book in the U.S. for even one week.

IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD

When I visited with the R. family, most of my questions revolved around living as LDS church members in a communist state. Lothar explained that things were quite difficult at first: Lists of sacrament meeting speakers and the topics they spoke on had to be given to state security officials, all meetings had to be likewise reported, and so on. Later on, perhaps because of the church's stand on sustaining the law of the land, only the church meeting times had to be reported. Lothar said he had never experienced any disadvantage or persecution from the state because of his religious affiliation. At the same time, none of his family attempted to study at a university, which according to anecdotal evidence was more difficult for people of faith.

One big challenge in the GDR was the lack of church curriculum materials. Only the scriptures themselves were officially sanctioned. Very few precious copies of Sunday School and other manuals were able to be reproduced using typewriters and many layers of carbon paper. The local church leaders emphasized that no such curriculum materials were to be brought to church or directly quoted from in lessons, because of the state security police, or *Stasi*.

Lothar pointed out that members in the East did have a few clear advantages over members in the West. A General Authority was present at nearly every stake conference, which is no longer the case after the *Wende*. Also, he felt that having to car pool in rickety cars or having to ride the train for 3 to 6 hours to get to stake conference was not necessarily a disadvantage. It made the conference all the more special. "You had to make plans for the meetings much longer in advance, so you were more prepared to receive the message," he explained. Now he wonders if members in the western parts of the country who have had it so easy all along would be willing to make that kind of sacrifice when they complain about having to drive to another church building in the stake to listen to General Conference or for other meetings. This is a question that those of us living in areas with high LDS populations should perhaps ask ourselves.

A TEMPLE IN A COMMUNIST LAND

These blessings and challenges of church members were epitomized by the surprising announcement of the first and only temple to be built

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in a communist nation.¹⁵ Lothar shared with me that church leaders had told the members in the GDR many times to prepare to go to the temple, but they could not understand how that was to be possible. They knew the closest temple was in Switzerland, but they also knew they would never be allowed to leave the country as families unless it was in some kind of special train with armed guards.

He pointed out that the Frankfurt temple in West Germany had actually been announced before the Freiberg temple in the GDR, but there were problems getting land and zoning permits in Frankfurt. Although the Freiberg temple was announced a few years later, it was actually completed before the Frankfurt temple, which the eastern Saints viewed as yet another miracle in their midst. Being in a communist country actually aided in the construction of the Freiberg Temple, since once the “Party” decided something would happen, it happened without any further obstructions.¹⁶

IT STARTED WITH A PRAYER

On the subject of religion in the GDR, I fear that the role of other churches in bringing down the Wall might be too easily overlooked or forgotten. When we were living in West Germany in the early 80s, a grass-roots peace movement called “Swords to Plowshares” had been started in the GDR. Protestant Church leaders and lay members took up the cause, which the government tolerated at first. However, as the movement grew, the government realized it could get out of control, so they shut it down, making it illegal to display the logo showing a blacksmith pounding a sword into a plowshare.

Only five years later, the Protestant Church tried a different approach. People started gathering in the churches to hold candle-light sermons and prayer sessions. Most notably in the Nikolai Church in Leipzig, pastors held open prayer meetings with candle-lit processions of people walking silently through the streets, usually past the local Stasi headquarters. These processions grew larger and spread to other cities toward the end of the 80s until the Wall miraculously collapsed.

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Fifteen years after the *Wende*, this divine intervention in the events of an officially godless nation has been downplayed or forgotten. As noted in Tietensee, E. Neubert, a religious sociologist, has lamented, “The bananas have pushed aside the candles.”¹⁷ There are many similarities here with the pride cycle repeated so frequently in the Book of Mormon.

THE BACK FENCE

The first time I visited Lothar in 1995, he took me out to his back yard. He showed me the small water basin which had served as the

baptismal font for his three daughters before the *Wende*. Beyond this was his vegetable garden, followed by the back fence. Behind the fence used to be a wall of concrete. Not just any wall...The Wall. Before the Wall came down, the “death strip” was the scenic view out their back door, and they were on the “wrong” side.

We stepped over the low fence, through some brush and into the former death strip. Five years after the *Wende*, it was simply a cleared area roughly 100 yards wide, covered with brush and young trees except for a narrow jogging strip. The land had been raked through three times by the German *Bundeswehr*, looking for any leftover land mines. Lothar showed me where the two closest guard towers had stood. He pointed to the other side of the strip, where the second wall¹⁸ had been located. He explained how after the Wall had been torn down, they made a significant discovery: If they had attempted to climb over the first wall, successfully navigated past the guard towers and through the land mines, guard dogs, and booby-trapped machine guns in the death strip, and climbed over the second wall, they would not have made it to freedom in the West. As it turns out, the area behind their property was a recreation area for East German border guards and security police. Had they attempted to escape, they would have been right in the middle of it all!

Lothar told me previously about the night the Wall came down. Like most GDR residents, he had heard the press conference given by communist party boss Günter Schabowski, but he didn't think anything of it and went to bed. It was only when he woke up the next morning and was listening to the radio while shaving that he realized what had happened. He drove into work as usual, but his supervisor met him and said, “Haven't you heard? The border is open! Go home, get your family, and go see the West!”

So Lothar and Ilona loaded up the girls, and they drove to West Berlin for the first time in their lives. They went to a bank, picked up the 100 deutschmark (roughly \$50) “greeting money” which had been offered to any GDR citizen entering into the West, and looked around. The first thing they bought was bananas, which they had never tasted. I watched Lothar as he told me the story. He was not simply relating an event; he was actually reliving it as he talked. It was a very moving experience.

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THE MEMORIAL

While standing at the top of the new glass dome above the Reichstag building on this latest visit, I reflected that perhaps no other building reflects the history and dichotomy of this city as well. This very structure, built in 1894, has witnessed the fledgling steps of the first German empire, the fumbings of the Weimar Republic, and the first and last National Socialistic rantings of an Austrian immigrant with a Charlie Chaplin

mustache. Even though the outside walls have been patched and smoothed as part of the reconstruction of the building when the Bundestag (German federal parliament) moved from Bonn back to the “new-old” capital city, there is still ample evidence of the thousands of rounds of ammunition fired at the building during the Battle for Berlin in early 1945.

The new glass dome, designed by British architect Sir Norman Foster, is an observation deck accessible to the general public (after a thorough security check). A long spiral ramp leads up the inside of the dome once you have reached the roof of the Reichstag via elevator.

As I surveyed the city from this unique vantage point, I focused on another significant historical landmark, the Brandenburg Gate. Built in 1791, this edifice has served as part of the ceremonial parade route for the troops of men like Napoleon and Hitler. In 1963, John F. Kennedy stood on a platform just outside the “anti-fascist protection wall” in front of the Gate after delivering his famous “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech¹⁹ at the Schöneberg City Hall a few minutes before. Some 24 years later, Ronald Reagan again stood here and demanded, “Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.”²⁰ And of course this is where the world watched as revelers from East and West danced atop the concrete on that glorious night of November 9, 1989. On a somewhat less historical note, when I returned to Berlin in 1995, I walked through the Brandenburg Gate several dozen times during my stay, just because I *could*.

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Returning to my vantage point atop the Reichstag, my eye caught some construction going on a little south of the Brandenburg Gate. The place is not marked, but it is well known to most passers-by as the location of Hitler’s former Reichs Chancellery and the bunker where he shot Eva Braun and himself. During the Cold War, this area was simply another pile of dirt, from which the rubble had been carried away some time before. Ironically located inside the “death strip,” this land was actually protected from all site-seers and would-be grave robbers by concrete, barbed wire, tank traps, booby-trapped machine guns, guard towers and German shepherds.

But what I saw now quite literally caught my breath. I knew there had been discussions since the *Wende* about creating a national Holocaust memorial. But I hadn’t realized *where* in Berlin they had decided to put it: One of the few places in the city where there was still available land; the site of Hitler’s bunker. The ground was being prepared²¹ for the installation of a rolling wave of thousands of upright squared concrete pillars, representing the roughly 6 million Jewish victims of one of history’s greatest atrocities.

To demonstrate how politically sensitive this entire issue is, while I was there, construction on this project was brought to an immediate stop

when it was learned that a sub-contractor to the principal construction firm was the company that had developed and produced Zyklon B, the insecticide that was used in gas pellets to snuff out the lives of thousands and thousands of Jews in the “showers” of hundreds of concentration camps across the Reich.

REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

Shortly after I returned from this latest visit to Berlin, I was invited to visit a class of local junior high students and talk about modern Germany. The students asked a variety of questions, but I became increasingly concerned as they asked more questions about World War II and National Socialism. After the class was over, the teacher confided in me that many of these students were quite convinced that most Germans were still war-mongering Nazis.

The contrast between this stereotypic view and the worldview of the people with whom I had just lived for three weeks literally stunned me. Many of the friends and former co-workers I had visited with are ardent pacifists; who had marched in anti-Bush and anti-Iraqi War demonstrations; who recycle all paper, cardboard, and three colors of glass; and who buy only eggs hatched by free-ranging chickens if possible.²²

After some pondering I realized that, aside from an occasional exchange student, the only Germans these junior high students had ever seen were on TV shows or in the movies. I then tried to remember the last time these students or I would have seen a German who was *not* a Nazi when portrayed on American TV or in the movies. In like fashion, many Germans have the perception that daily life in the U.S. is filled with narrow escapes from handgun-toting gangsters and with encounters with radical war-mongers, because the American shows they see on German TV are mostly crime shows, war shows, or ludicrous sitcoms.

A few days later I wrote some thoughts to share with those junior high students and with my own children, as I feared I had not taught my own children sufficiently. I will repeat this clearly simplistic overview below in the hopes that it may provide some insight even to a far more sophisticated audience:

Try to imagine that you grew up in Germany about 100 years ago. Germany only became a unified country in 1871, so you live in a new nation, much younger than the United States. Still, it is one of the most civilized, cultured nations in the world, with a strong economy and a reasonable government. However, suddenly your country is drawn into a world war in 1914 because of some involved treaties with several other countries. If you are male, you're sent off to a war that you have no real interest in. After four years of fighting, your country is defeated and the world makes you responsible for starting the

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war, demanding that you repay all the other countries for having started it. In four short years you've gone from being a world power to being everybody's whipping boy.

A new government is established, with a new currency. But after only four more years, inflation takes over like a plague. It reaches the point where you have to be paid daily just so you can run to the store after work and buy whatever you can, because the next day the money will be absolutely worthless. Then the stock market crashes and the Great Depression hits around the world.

In the midst of massive unemployment, a politician in your country offers to give every able-bodied man a job to feed his family, and the country back its respect by refusing to continue to repay the war debts from WWI. Some of this fellow's ideas are enticing, but most people think he's a little "off." He never does win a single popular election. Instead, the aging president names this man—Adolph Hitler—to be the new chancellor. In a matter of weeks you find yourself living under a dictatorship with a ferocious secret police force (*Gestapo*) that is very vicious in arresting and torturing people if they say anything against the new government.

Next you find your country embroiled in another world war, and the nation suffers horribly during the war. You experience bombing raids day and night, you have to send your children off to the mountains for their protection, you hear something about concentration camps but you can't say or do anything about it because you're trying to eke out your own existence through this period of living hell.

After six years of fighting, you find yourself on the losing side again, and your country gets carved up into four pieces. If you're in the eastern part, you get a communist government established by the Soviets, with a concrete wall or a border with land mines and barbed wire to keep you where you are. You live under this repressive government, with its own secret police (*the Stasi*²³), for 40 years. Suddenly, almost by accident, the wall and the borders are opened. You're excited about the change in government, but then you find that your neighbors to the West stream into your area, revamping your schools, your businesses, and every aspect of your life, reminding you that you are a loser because you lived in a "loser" economic system.

Can you understand how this historical background would impact your outlook on life? If you were an 80-year old person living in eastern Germany today, you would have lived through six changes of governmental and monetary systems by now. There has been a mandatory draft in Germany since shortly after WWII, but more and more young people are declaring themselves conscientious objectors and opting to work in civil service (working in hospitals, etc.) instead. Yes, there are a few "Skinheads" and other Neo-Nazi movements, which are significant problems in Germany. But these groups get most of their literature

from printing presses in Kansas and similar places, since it's against the law to publish pro-Nazi information in Germany.

As far as my friends from eastern Germany go, although neither one of these families wants the GDR times to return, they are both somewhat disillusioned with the westernization of their lives. Lothar mentioned that some of his extended family were always extolling the virtues of the West during the GDR days, but it is those same family members who are doing the most complaining about nearly everything from the West now. As for Gudrun and Uwe, when I was driving with them one day, they made the very unexpected comment that they really liked going to McDonald's! When I expressed my surprise at this, they quickly explained, "The rest rooms are always free, and they are always right at the front of the store. We never go there to eat!"

So, do these families feel like things are better now for them after reunification? To answer that, I need to explain about a word the Germans have created that indicates a sense of "there's good news and there's bad news." If there is no clear answer either way to a question, or if they can't decide, they combine the word for "yes" (*ja*) with the word for "no" (nein) to make *jein* (pronounced "yine"). So are things better now? Perhaps the best, or even the only, response is a very definite *jein*. ☺

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NOTES:

- 1 In keeping with German privacy norms, I will refer to my friends as Uwe and Gudrun Sch. and as Lothar and Ilona R. Both couples are in their early 50's.
- 2 In fact, there was only one travel agency in the entire GDR, in East Berlin, and it serviced only government officials. Now that the borders are open, huge numbers of former East Germans are understandably visiting exotic places around the globe.
- 3 Germany is only a little more than 100 years old as a nation, after "Iron Chancellor" Bismarck convinced hundreds of kingdoms, duchies, and principalities to unite in 1871. Yet even today, most Germans will tell you they are a Bavarian, Saxon, etc. first and a German second.
- 4 When the Bavarian government recently canceled generous subsidies for lederhosen shorts due to budgetary cutbacks, this resulted in a storm of protests. See "Stoiber spart bei Lederhosen." *Spiegel Online*. < <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/0,1518,292054,00.html> > 15 April 2004.
- 5 Uwe and his wife Gudrun told me quite earnestly that they had seriously considered becoming members of the Bavarian CSU political party simply because one of the party platforms was to have Bavaria secede from the union!
- 6 The terms Ossi and Wessi are not inherently pejorative, but they are politically charged, somewhat like *Yankee* and *Confederate* in this country.
- 7 Marcus, Aliza. (Oct. 19, 2003). "East still lagging 13 years after Germany's reunification." *The Boston Globe*, A14. <http://docs.newsbank.com> (visited 2004, May 2)

- 8 In spite of this, the US dollar is taking a tremendous beating by the euro.
- 9 The decisive moment in the virtual collapse of the wall came when East Berlin party boss
Günter Schabowski casually mentioned at the end of a dry press conference on Nov. 9,
1989, that residents of the GDR could visit other countries without formal application
through the government. When stunned international reporters asked when this policy
was to go into effect, Herr Schabowski looked as though that point hadn't been addressed
in party meetings. He hesitated, but without consulting anyone else, he responded, "As
far as I know, it is effective immediately." This event is often referred to as a "fortunate
accident," but those of us old enough to remember President Kimball's visual presentation
of the church spreading throughout the world will recognize it as much more than that.
One other key to this miracle was the important fact that none of the GDR border guards
started shooting at the hordes of people approaching the crossing points and climbing over
the lower wall near the Brandenburg Gate, even though the guards had not been informed
of any change in their orders to shoot to kill. We Americans often make reference to the
Kent State shootings, but a single set of jittery nerves on this night could have led to a
horrendous blood-bath.
- 10 The principle reason for my stay in 2003 was to attend an international information
conference with information specialists from 130 nations. It is tempting to include some of
the fascinating experiences from the conference here as well, but that would go beyond the
scope of this present article.
- 11 *Wende* is officially translated as "transformation," to distinguish this process from a
revolution or more violent overthrow of the ruling governmental system. In any other
context, *Wende* refers to a "turning point," which I feel is even more descriptive. All
chronology in the East is established first as being before or after *die Wende*, much like the
reference standard in Rexburg is before or after "the Flood."
- 12 The German version of this movie had a rating of "6 years and up." I understand the
American version of the film has been given an "R" rating, so this description should not
be considered an endorsement of the film.
- 13 Ironically, most of the parts in this film were actually played by West Germans.
- 14 I learned that the new German word for shopping mall is feminine; it's *die Mall*
(pronounced "dee moll").
- 15 Originally a very modest 7,500 square feet, the Freiberg Temple was expanded to 13,300
square feet in 2002.
- 16 For more detail on the building of the Freiberg Temple, see: Monson, Thomas S. *Faith
Rewarded: A Personal Account of Prophetic Promises to the East German Saints*. Salt Lake:
Deseret Book, 1996.
- 17 Eberhard Tiefensee. "Die Friedensgebete in Leipzig und die Wende 1989." *Liturgisches
Jahrbuch* 49.3 (1999): 145-170.
- 18 It may not be readily apparent that there were actually two walls around West Berlin.
These 99 mile (165 km)-long parallel structures ran along either side of the 100-yard wide
"death strip."

- 19 For an in-depth discussion of the urban legend that has developed about Kennedy making a grammatical faux pas in this speech, please see: <http://www.byui.edu/employee/haderlieb/Berliner/Berliner.htm>
- 20 When the wall did come down just two years later, trucks carrying large loads of Gorbachov brand vodka (the same spelling as Germans use for the former Soviet president) became very popular in Berlin in particular.
- 21 When Soviet and GDR leaders saw the political changes occurring in 1988, they demolished and hauled away all remaining vestiges of the former chancellery and bunker to avoid any chance of this area becoming a Neo-Nazi shrine at some future point.
- 22 West Berlin had always been a center for pacifism, since students who studied there were exempt from the compulsory draft. The West German government did this in an effort to attract people to come live in a “concrete cage” and keep Berlin a viable place.
- 23 See also John O. Koehler, “Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police” Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999 or Anna Funder, “Stasiland” London: Granta, 2003. Both can be found in the McKay Library.