

«Tote Ehrenbürger lässt Gemeindeordnung nicht zu». Remembering Soviet repressions in Germany

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The article follows the traces of a memorial plaque installed in May 2023, which publicly names Arthur Jubelt, who died in the Buchenwald special camp in 1947, as a victim of Stalinist repression in East Germany. The memorial plaque is part of an international, post-socialist memorial initiative Last Address, which began in Moscow in 2014. The article attempts to analyse the social initiative within the German culture of remembrance and shows why the adaptation of a memorial project originating in Russia is not without conflict. By examining the history of coming to terms with Stalinist repression in the particular case of the GDR and the current landscape of remembrance in Germany, the article sheds light on the divergent interpretations and politicisations of this commemoration.

Keywords: Stalinist repressions, GDR/Soviet occupation zone, Nkvd special camp, Last Address project, Political commemoration.

Parole chiave: Repressione staliniana, Rdt/zona di occupazione sovietica, Speziallager, Progetto Last Address, Commemorazione politica.

On the morning of 18 August 1976, 300 passers-by witnessed a drastic protest action in front of St Michaeli Church in the small town of Zeitz. Pastor Oskar Brüsewitz doused himself with petrol and set himself alight. He had put up two posters denouncing the oppression of children and young people in the socialist system. A few days later, Brüsewitz died in Halle-Döhlau hospital. The funeral became a silent demonstration of resistance against GDR state socialism. In 1990, a memorial column to Oskar Brüsewitz was dedicated in front of the St Michaeli Church in Zeitz. This memorial site in Zeitz is a clear memorial to the injustice of the GDR and the individual willingness to make sacrifices in that system of injustice. It is one of over 600 memorial sites in Germany that commemorate the history of «the dictatorship of the Soviet occupation zone and the GDR»¹. On 26 May 2023, another memorial sign dedicated to a victim of communist repression was inaugurated in Zeitz. The memorial sign in the Brüderstraße bears the name of Arthur Jubelt. The publisher and short-lived mayor of the town died in 1947 in the Soviet special camp (Speziallager) no. 2 in Buchenwald. The plaque can be read as a symbol of ambiguity surrounding the place of the victims of Stalinist repressions in the German cultural landscape of remembrance.

This essay deals in general with the history of coming to terms with Stalinist repressions in the particular case of the GDR as well as the current landscape of re-

¹ *Orte des Erinnerns. Gedenkzeichen, Gedenkstätten und Museen zur Diktatur in SBZ und DDR*, hrsg. von A. Kaminsky, bpb, Bonn 2017, pp. 429-431.

membrance in the Federal Republic of Germany. It sheds light on the first attempts to commemorate Stalinism and the complex interpretations and politicisation of this commemoration. Due to the “double experience of dictatorship”, which the population experienced in an initial phase through Nazism and after 1945 through Socialism, the culture of remembrance is extremely complex, especially when the memory is individual and biographical.

In this article, I follow the multi-layered traces of the memorial plaque installed in May 2023 for Arthur Jubelt. The plaque was installed as part of the memorial initiative *Posledny adres* (Russian for: Last Address). This project sees itself as a “grassroots movement” and is primarily active in the post-socialist countries. The postcard-sized stainless-steel plaques commemorate the victims of Stalinist oppression. A group has also been active in Germany since 2019, since when nine plaques have been placed here. The initiative’s memorial plaque on Arthur Jubelt’s former home commemorates the special camp inmate as a victim of Stalinist repression in Germany. However, this remembrance is by no means consensual and conflict-free. The adaptation and dissemination of a Russian memorial project in Germany brings discourses of remembrance to the surface in which the questions crystallise as to who the victims of Soviet repressions in Germany are and whether and in what form they should be publicly commemorated. In my article, I will shed light on the mechanism of this civil society initiative, the cross-border idea of a post-Soviet mnemonic initiative, and the accompanying questions of victimhood and perpetration in the memory of the repressions of communism.

Soviet repressions in Germany

Thanks to the access to Soviet files since the 1990s, it was possible to analyse the activities of Soviet judicial and investigative authorities. There are now extensive publications on the Soviet security services that operated on German soil from 1944-45 onwards². It was thus possible to show that the search for ‘enemy spies’ was a constant throughout Soviet orders, reports and judgements of the Soviet secret service³. The final course of the second world war had enabled the Ussr to extensively export justice and values. The Red Army was accompanied by Special Security apparatuses during the hostilities. This was intended to ensure security and effectiveness in the combat and occupation zones. These included troops from the Nkvd (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs)⁴ and Smersh (“Death

² See for instance *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, hrsg. von A. Hilger et al., Böhlau, Köln 2003. For the history of the security organs in the Soviet occupation zone between 1945 and 1949 and the development of the East German secret police, see in particular N. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949*, Belknap Press, Cambridge 1995.

³ A. Hilger, *Counter-intelligence Soviet Style: The Activities of Soviet Security Services in East Germany, 1945-1955*, in «Journal of Intelligence History», n. 1, 2003, pp. 83-105, here p. 85.

⁴ The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs.

to spies”⁵. The violent practices of rule that characterised domestic and judicial policy under Stalin were also applied in the occupied territories⁶. In their search for “counter-revolutionary” elements, Soviet military tribunals invoked Article 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code thousands of times⁷. So far, 4,438 death sentences against German civilians imposed between 1944 and 1955 are known⁸.

The military tribunals mainly worked according to Soviet criminal law principles, and in some cases also according to Allied control council directives. Their task was to eliminate threats to the political order in the Soviet occupation zone. However, an important function was also to punish nazi crimes⁹. However, the temporality of the judicial judgements is important here, as most of the death sentences handed down by Soviet military tribunals between 1944 and 1947 related to nazi crimes¹⁰. In addition to the interest of Soviet military justice after 1945 in punishing war and nazi crimes, there must nevertheless be talk of an instrumentalisation of the legal system for the implementation of the political transformation of the Soviet Occupation Zone¹¹. In the light of the Cold war, Soviet security officials in East Germany endeavoured to follow Moscow’s course and justify Josef Stalin’s expectations of a bloc-wide threat¹². Especially after 1950 and the reintroduction of the death penalty – which had been abolished between 1947 and January 1950 – there were accusations of military espionage for Western intelligence services. This «indisputably reflects the growing mutual systemic confrontation» on the territory of the GDR¹³.

⁵ See A. Hilger, M. Schmeitzner, *Einleitung: Deutschlandpolitik und Straffjustiz. Zur Tätigkeit sowjetischer Militärtribunale in Deutschland 1945-1955*, in *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, v. 2, *Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten 1945-1955*, hrsg. von A. Hilger et al., Böhlau, Köln 2003, p. 21.

⁶ A. Hilger, *Der Gulag in Deutschland*, in *Ein Kampf um Deutungshoheit. Politik, Opferinteressen und historische Forschung. Die Auseinandersetzungen um die Gedenk- und Begegnungsstätte Leistikowstrasse Potsdam*, hrsg. von W. Benz, Metropol, Berlin 2013, p. 84.

⁷ Article 58 of the Soviet Penal Code was put in force on 25 February 1927 to prosecute those suspected of counter-revolutionary activities.

⁸ A. Weigelt, *Sowjetische Todesurteile gegen deutsche Zivilisten 1944 bis 1947*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik. Die sowjetischen Speziallager 1945-1950 im Kontext*, hrsg. von J. Landau, E. Heitzer, Wallstein, Göttingen 2021, p. 137, fn. 2; A. Hilger, M. Schmeitzner, *Einleitung: Deutschlandpolitik und Straffjustiz. Zur Tätigkeit sowjetischer Militärtribunale in Deutschland 1945-1955*, in *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, v. 2, *Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten 1945-1955*, hrsg. von A. Hilger et al., Böhlau, Köln 2003, p. 21. Many of the execution sites and the exact location of the graves of the victims are still unknown. See *ibid.*

⁹ J. Landau, E. Heitzer, *Einleitung*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von *idd.*, cit., p. 13; A. Hilger, *Der Gulag in Deutschland*, in *Ein Kampf um Deutungshoheit*, hrsg. von W. Benz, cit., pp. 86-87.

¹⁰ J. Landau, E. Heitzer, *Einleitung*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von *idd.*, cit., p. 13; N. Jeske, J. Morré, *Die Inhaftierung von Tribunalverurteilten in der SBZ*, in *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, v. 2, *Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten 1945-1955*, hrsg. von A. Hilger et al., Böhlau, Köln 2003, pp. 609-661.

¹¹ N. Jeske, U. Schmidt, *Zur Verfolgung von Kriegs- und NS-Verbrechen durch sowjetische Militärtribunale in der SBZ*, in *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, v. 2, *Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten 1945-1955*, hrsg. von A. Hilger et al., Böhlau, Köln 2003, pp. 155-192, p. 191.

¹² A. Hilger, *Counter-intelligence Soviet Style*, in «Journal of Intelligence History», n. 1, 2003, pp. 83-105, here p. 85.

¹³ A. Weigelt, *Sowjetische Todesurteile gegen deutsche Zivilisten 1944 bis 1947*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von J. Landau, E. Heitzer, cit., pp. 137-138.

The persecutions and arrests in occupied Central Germany symbolised an export of «Stalinist forms and characteristics»¹⁴ of judicial practice. An accompanying characteristic of the highly politicised jurisdiction of the military courts was the extensive secrecy of the proceedings. From 1950 onwards, the convicted persons were deported from Germany to Moscow and executed in the Butyrka prison¹⁵. As a rule, those arrested disappeared from the sight of their relatives – and from life – without any information whatsoever¹⁶. The actions of the Soviet military tribunals against German civilians were thus in «blatant contradiction to the principles of the rule of law»¹⁷. In the aforementioned judicial practice, factual evidence and circumstantial evidence were of secondary importance. As a result, hardly any forensic efforts were required in the run-up to arrests and during the proceedings. «The Soviet special camps were not a place of real investigative activity either», say Hilger and Petrov¹⁸.

Between 1950 and 1955, around 1,000 GDR citizens and a number of West Germans and West Berliners were sentenced to death on the territory of the GDR under Article 58 for acts against the Soviet occupying power or against the political and social changes in the GDR¹⁹. The reasons for the judgements in these cases appear to be disputed. Andreas Weigelt summarises: «After evaluating the relevant files on these cases, it has been established that the vast majority of the grounds for the verdicts were correct, even if this finding by no means justifies the death sentences»²⁰. At the same time, the majority of these victims were rehabilitated by the Russian military prosecutor's office in the 1990s and the sentences declared unlawful. The Last Address Initiative in Germany addresses this group of victims with reference to the memorial book *Shot in Moscow. The German Victims of Stalinism in Moscow's Donskoye Cemetery 1950-1953*²¹, which documents the fates of approximately 1000 people who were shot in the Soviet Union.

¹⁴ A. Hilger, *Strafjustiz im Verfolgungswahn. Todesurteile sowjetischer Gerichte in Deutschland*, in "Tod den Spionen!" *Todesurteile sowjetischer Gerichte in der SBZ/DDR und in der Sowjetunion bis 1953*, hrsg. von id., Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, Göttingen 2006, pp. 96-97.

¹⁵ A. Hilger, M. Schweitzner, *Einleitung: Deutschlandpolitik und Strafjustiz. Zur Tätigkeit sowjetischer Militärtribunale in Deutschland 1945-1955*, in *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, v. 2, *Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten 1945-1955*, hrsg. von A. Hilger et al., Böhlau, Köln 2003, p. 17.

¹⁶ The fact that family members disappeared without a trace is a recurring theme in the recollections of the surviving families of the repressed as a traumatic experience. For example, the memories of Ute Görge-Waterstraat, who had a sign put up for her father, who was shot in Moscow, as part of the Last Address Initiative. See U. Görge-Waterstraat, *Abgeholt zur Vernichtung-Geschichte der nicht abgeholten Asche*, Wahrzeit, Frankfurt am Main 2011.

¹⁷ F. Schroeder, *Rechtsgrundlagen der Verfolgung deutscher Zivilisten durch Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, in *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, v. 2, *Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten 1945-1955*, hrsg. von A. Hilger et al., Böhlau, Köln 2003, p. 58.

¹⁸ A. Hilger, N. Petrov, "Erledigung der Schmutzarbeit"? *Die sowjetischen Justiz- und Sicherheitsapparate in Deutschland*, in *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, v. 2, *Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten 1945-1955*, hrsg. von A. Hilger et al., Böhlau, Köln 2003, p. 97.

¹⁹ A. Weigelt, *Sowjetische Todesurteile gegen deutsche Zivilisten 1944 bis 1947*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von J. Landau, E. Heitzer, cit., pp. 137-138.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ A. Kaminsky et al., "Erschossen in Moskau..." *Die deutschen Opfer des Stalinismus auf dem Moskauer Friedhof Donskoje 1950-1955*, Metropol, Berlin 2008.

Nevertheless, the historiographical categorisation and evaluation of the imprisonments in the Soviet special camps – which often ended in death – is highly complex. «The composition of the internees and convicts in the special camps and the question of their nazi involvement were and are the subject of controversial debate»²². The overlap between the internment of nazi functionaries and political prisoners is what makes the interpretation of the camps as Stalinist organs of repression so controversial. The Soviet security organs arrested and interned at least 122,671 Germans in the special camps without a court order.²³ In other words, the vast majority of prisoners were not sentenced by a military tribunal. It was not until 1948 that officially convicted prisoners were admitted to the special camps. This is significant insofar as the Russian military prosecutor's office in the 1990s only cancelled political sentences that had been imposed by a military tribunal. Those who were imprisoned in the special camps as unconvicted internees for politically fabricated crimes were thus denied this legal rehabilitation²⁴.

Arthur Jubelt was arrested in August 1945 by the Zeitz Nkvd operative group as newspaper editor and sent to Soviet special camp no. 2 Buchenwald²⁵. Jubelt was appointed provisional mayor by the US authorities when the city of Zeitz was liberated by American troops in spring 1945. He was then arrested by the Soviet administration as part of its denazification policy after the city was handed over to Soviet troops in accordance with the Yalta resolutions. The decree issued by Nkvd chief Lavrentiy Beria on 18 April 1945 defined the group of people who were to be interned. Among them: «spies, divers and terrorists, active Nsdap party members, leaders of fascist youth organisations, employees of the Gestapo and SD, heads of local administrations, newspaper editors and authors of anti-Soviet publications»²⁶. Jubelt was imprisoned because he was active as a publisher and editor in the nazi state. However, there was never an official conviction; it has therefore not been possible for the descendants of Arthur Jubelt to apply for rehabilitation since the 1990s – regardless of the outcome.

«If one side sees [the special camps] primarily as a means of inter-allied denazification, the other side recognises above all the continuity of Stalinist injustice»²⁷, Julia Landau and Enrico Heitzer recently attested. The two historians and memorial

²² J. Landau, E. Heitzer, *Einleitung*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von idd., cit., p. 12.

²³ A. Hilger, *Counter-intelligence Soviet Style*, in «Journal of Intelligence History», n. 1, 2003, pp. 83-105, here pp. 85-86.

²⁴ J. Morr , *Sowjetische Speziallager in Deutschland-Eine Einf hrung*, in *Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung*, <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/dossiers/sowjetische-speziallager-der-sbzdrr/joerg-morre> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

²⁵ C. Ramsch, F. Waurig, “*Wo beginnt der Nazi und wo h rt er auf?*”, in *Transformation des Gedenkens. Lokales Erinnern an sowjetische Verhaftungen der Nachkriegszeit*, hrsg. von J. Ganzenm ller et al., Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, K ln 2024, p. 91; *Orte des Erinnerns*, hrsg. von A. Kaminsky, cit., p. 432.

²⁶ J. Landau, *Stalinistischer Umgang mit der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit in Altenburg 1945-1947. Die sowjetische Verhaftungs- und Internierungspraxis am lokalen Beispiel*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von J. Landau, E. Heitzer, cit., p. 102.

²⁷ Idd., *Einleitung*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von idd., cit., p. 9.

centre employees clearly see the Soviet special camps in the Soviet occupation zone as a consequence of Nazi Germany's historically unprecedented war of conquest and extermination²⁸. A good ten years earlier, Bettina Greiner lamented the practical «invisibility» of the Soviet special camps in the German public debate²⁹. Even today, the special camps in Germany are still an «empty place of remembrance», says Greiner³⁰. In contrast, Andrew Beattie argues that although criticism of the historiographical examination of the Soviet special camps is not unjustified, it is by no means a neglect of the topic³¹. The core of this complex history of coming to terms with the past since 1990 has basically been the question of «whether the special camps primarily served to destroy national socialism or to establish a new dictatorship»³².

The mixture of occupation policy, the necessary and extremely justified condemnation of Nazi crimes, for which Soviet justice in the form of military tribunals in East Germany was just as responsible as for so-called counter-revolutionary crimes, which were largely invented in analogy to the politically repressed within the USSR, make it difficult to find dividing lines. Above all, the practice of remembrance policy is made more difficult by the confusion that has taken place. Due to this ambiguity, the memory of the victims runs the risk of being politically instrumentalised from different, sometimes opposing directions.

Stone memories and their debates

According to Bernd Faulenbach, there is a lack of existential concernation in Western Europe as a result of the experience of terror, repression and injustice caused by communist rule as a precondition for dealing with this past in a culture of remembrance³³. The first materialised remembrance of the victims of Stalinism in the Bonn Republic began in 1951. On the initiative of the Association of Victims of Stalinism, which consisted mainly of former prisoners of the special camps Sachsenhausen, a memorial stone was erected on Charlottenburg's Steinplatz in

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ B. Greiner, *Speziallager? Was für Speziallager? Zum historischen Ort der stalinistischen Verfolgung in Deutschland*, in «Mittelweg 36», n. 3, 2009, pp. 93-112.

³⁰ B. Greiner, *Sowjetische Speziallager in Deutschland. Anmerkungen zu einer erinnerungskulturellen "Leerstelle"*, in *Erinnerung an Diktatur und Krieg. Brennpunkte des kulturellen Gedächtnisses zwischen Russland und Deutschland seit 1945*, hrsg. von A. Wirsching et al., De Gruyter Oldenbourg, Berlin 2015, p. 377.

³¹ A. Beattie, *Die Auseinandersetzung mit den sowjetischen Speziallagern in Deutschland. Eine wechselvolle Geschichte mit beharrlichen Tendenzen*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von J. Landau, E. Heitzer, cit., p. 268.

³² Ivi, p. 269.

³³ B. Faulenbach, *Stalinistische Verbrechen als Problem gegenwärtiger Erinnerungskultur(en) in Europa*, in «Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung», 2013, pp. 299-314, <https://www.kommunismusgeschichte.de/jhk/article/detail/stalinistische-verbrechen-als-problem-gegenwaertiger-erinnerungskulturen-in-europa> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

Berlin. Two years later, the Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime had a stone erected on the opposite side of the square with the inscription «To the Victims of national socialism». The memorial of 1953 can be seen as a response to the memorial for the Stalinist victims. A rivalry of remembrance that made its first physical appearance in West Germany. In this way, the debate on totalitarianism which began with Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in 1951 received an interpretation in stone in the Federal Republic. The composition of this West Berlin memorial ensemble provides information about the comparative confrontation between Stalinist or communist crimes of violence and national socialism. This interpretation was fuelled by a not insignificant anti-communist mood in the West German public. West Berlin's Steinplatz in the 1950s could thus be seen as a place of remembrance, «where the prioritisation of the crimes of communism over national socialism [...] was visualised in West Berlin's public space»³⁴. The former Sachsenhausen prisoners in particular were able to gain recognition from the German public as the first «victims of the Cold War»³⁵.

The current – thoroughly complex – German culture of remembrance is fed by a divided process since the end of the second world war, in which the developments in East and West Germany not only took place in different phases but were also highly contradictory and only merged after 1989³⁶.

In East Germany, the first public discourses on remembrance were established in a parallel process with developments in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s. In the USSR, in the midst of glasnost and perestroika, the NGO Memorial was formed and archival openings brought the issue of political repression to the attention of a wider public. On 30 October 1990, the Solovkiy Stone in front of the headquarters of the former Soviet secret police on Lubyanka Square in Moscow was unveiled by Memorial – the date was henceforth celebrated as a day of remembrance for the victims of political repression. Under these circumstances, East Germany also began to deal with the taboo subject for the first time. In November 1989, a working group “Victims of Stalinism” was founded, initially focussing on the German victims of the 1930s. The idea of another memorial stone for the Stalinist victims in Berlin – now on the East Berlin side – was soon formulated³⁷.

At the same time, the Buchenwald Memorial, which remained silent about the existence of Soviet special camp no. 2 during its existence as a memorial in the GDR, began to come to terms with its history. The collective graves of the dead – the most visible sign of its existence – were discovered in the mid-1990s and

³⁴ Steinplatz, in *Flucht-Exil-Verfolgung*, <https://flucht-exil-verfolgung.de/de/ort/steinplatz> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

³⁵ B. Greiner, *Verdrängter Terror: Geschichte und Wahrnehmung sowjetischer Speziallager in Deutschland*, Hamburger, Hamburg 2010, p. 39.

³⁶ B. Faulenbach, *Diktaturerfahrungen und demokratische Erinnerungskultur in Deutschland*, in *Orte des Erinnerns*, hrsg. von A. Kaminsky, cit., p. 16.

³⁷ C. Tischler, “Den Opfern des Stalinismus”. *Debatten um einen Berliner Gedenkstein*, in *Erinnerung an Diktatur und Krieg. Brennpunkte des kulturellen Gedächtnisses zwischen Russland und Deutschland seit 1945*, hrsg. von A. Wirsching et al., De Gruyter Oldenbourg, Berlin 2015, p. 260.

converted into a forest cemetery as a place of mourning³⁸. At no other memorial site do the experiences of two repressive regimes overlap as much as at the former nazi concentration camps, which were reused by the Soviets as special camps. The complicated topic of the special camps is exposed to the danger of revisionism from two directions in the German public: The first one uses the issue to equate the injustice of the special camps with the nazi crimes in the concentration camps. The second one justifies and trivialises the suffering and human rights violations in the special camps by referring to the crimes committed in the concentration camps, according to Wolfram von Scheliha³⁹.

The dissolution of the working group Victims of Stalinism⁴⁰ in 1992 is emblematic of the lack of consensus in the practice of remembrance. The idea of a public memorial to the victims of Stalinism in Germany was only taken up again in the 2000s by the Förderkreis Erinnerungsstätte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung Berlin-Friedrichsfelde e.V.⁴¹. A memorial stone made of red porphyry with the inscription «To the victims of Stalinism» was finally installed in December 2006 at the edge of the socialist memorial at the Friedrichsfelde cemetery in Berlin. During the laying of the memorial, there were protests from supporters of the PDS⁴² and the DKP⁴³. The initiative to erect the memorial came from the PDS itself, although the stone and its future inscription were the subject of controversial debate within the support group. The engraving «to the victims of Stalinism» was an expression of the lowest common denominator. In particular, the ambiguity of the term Stalinism proved to be problematic in the debates surrounding the memorial stone. According to the historian Carola Tischler, the term “Stalinism” was used more as a political rather than a historical term in the Left party, which is why its use played a significant role in the political debate⁴⁴. Examples of disputes can be seen in letters to the editor in «Neues Deutschland» on the installing of the memorial stone in 2006, including the following:

Since the term ‘Victims of Stalinism’ is predominantly used in today’s Germany to refer to the nazis and war criminals convicted by the organs of the USSR, as well as the spies and saboteurs brought to justice in the GDR, in the same way as the people who were victims of a criminal security policy of the USSR, some of which was ex-

³⁸ *Trauerplatz Speziallager Nr. 2*, in *Gedenkstätte Buchenwald*, <https://www.buchenwald.de/geschichte/historischer-ort/gedenkstaette/trauerplatz-speziallager> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

³⁹ W. von Scheliha, *Missbrauchte Geschichte. Die sowjetischen Speziallager als Thema des Geschichtsrevisionismus*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von J. Landau, E. Heitzer, cit., p. 276.

⁴⁰ C. Tischler, “*Den Opfern des Stalinismus*”, in *Erinnerung an Diktatur und Krieg*, hrsg. von A. Wirsching et al., cit., p. 263.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* In addition to numerous individual personalities, he was a member of the state and federal executive boards of both the SPD and the Left Party.

⁴² Party of Democratic Socialism since 1989. Merged into the Left party (die Linke) in 2007.

⁴³ *Orte des Erinnerns*, hrsg. von A. Kaminsky, cit., p. 72.

⁴⁴ C. Tischler, “*Den Opfern des Stalinismus*”, in *Erinnerung an Diktatur und Krieg*, hrsg. von A. Wirsching et al., cit., pp. 263-266.

cessive, this terminology is conceivably unsuitable for a commemorative policy of the Left party⁴⁵.

The commemoration became more concrete with the memorial plaque installed at the Karl Liebknecht House in Berlin as the headquarters of the Left party and former headquarters of the KPD in the Weimar Republic in 2013, which commemorates «anti-fascists and communists who fell victim to the Great Terror in the Soviet Union»⁴⁶. However, this decision was also preceded by a lengthy discussion within the Left party and the public⁴⁷. Following Carola Tischler, the difficult commemoration of German communists who were victims of Stalinist terror in the Soviet Union is the result of a basic anti-communist consensus on the part of conservatives and social democrats as well as a firmly entrenched camp mentality on the part of some on the left. «They were and are not really wanted by either side, and they still have no lobby today»⁴⁸.

The controversy surrounding the opening of the new permanent exhibition at the Leistikowstraße memorial and meeting centre in Potsdam in April 2012 shows that the discourse surrounding the public remembrance of the Soviet occupation zone/GDR past had not yet reached an end even in the 2010s. Victims' associations called the new exhibition a «whitewashed KGB museum»⁴⁹ that did not clearly portray the prisoners of the former prison as «victims of Soviet despotism» and criticised the exclusion of contemporary witnesses by the memorial director Ines Reich when planning the permanent exhibition⁵⁰.

The current debate about the Stalinist victims in Germany is primarily taking place in the established field of GDR research and reappraisal. The inconspicuous Last Address plaque penetrated this conglomerate of different memorial sites and the associated divergent, politicised interpretations of the memory of Stalinist victims in Germany.

The 26th of May 2023

On a sunny May day in 2023, a group of people gathered at Brüderstraße 14/16 in Zeitz. They met in front of Arthur Jubelt's former business and residential building. The gathering was solemn, accompanied by music from the orchestra of the local

⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 265.

⁴⁶ *Gedenktafel für die Opfer des Stalinismus, Karl-Liebknecht-Haus, Berlin*, in *kommunismusgeschichte.de*, <https://www.kommunismusgeschichte.de/lernen/gedenken/article/detail/gedenktafel-fuer-die-opfer-des-stalinismus-karl-liebknecht-haus-berlin> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁴⁷ C. Tischler, «*Den Opfern des Stalinismus*», in *Erinnerung an Diktatur und Krieg*, hrsg. von A. Wirsching et al., cit., p. 268.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ C. Wüllenkemper, *Opferverbände kritisieren Ausstellung in Leistikowstraße*, in *Deutschlandfunk*, 19 April 2012, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/opferverbaende-kritisieren-ausstellung-in-leistikowstrasse-100.html> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁵⁰ *Ein Kampf um Deutungshoheit*, hrsg. von W. Benz, cit.

music school. Several people took the floor that Friday. These included the board of the German branch of the NGO Memorial, a member of the Last Address' initiative group, the State Commissioner for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship in Saxony-Anhalt, a local historian, an employee of the Union of victims' associations of communist repression and Arthur Jubelt's great-nephew. In their speeches, they all focussed on Jubelt's life and fate in particular and the significance of remembering Soviet repression in general.

The preservation of the memory of the innocent victims of the Soviet regime is not only a task in the post-Soviet countries, but also in the entire former Soviet sphere of influence in Europe, stated Anke Giesen, head of the German memorial organisation. This was also the case in East Germany, where many people were arrested, interned and sentenced to imprisonment, special camps or Gulag camps or to death by firing squad by military tribunals during the period of Soviet occupation and the former GDR. Arthur Jubelt would be the first person to die in a special camp to be honoured with a plaque on this day. Since its foundation in 1993, Memorial Germany has set itself the goal of shedding light on the Soviet crime complex. The Last Address initiative supports the Moscow Posledny adres Foundation's endeavour to place memorial plaques at the last residential addresses of the victims of the Soviet occupying power in Germany. A difficult legacy, as the umbrella organisation of Memorial International was dissolved by the Russian state in 2022 on the basis of absurd accusations.

The former Saxony-Anhalt State Commissioner for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship then took the floor. They had gathered to commemorate Arthur Jubelt as an important citizen of this city in Zeitz, said Birgit Neumann-Becker. According to what had been handed down about him, he had resisted being appropriated by the national socialists. As the owner of a publishing house, this is said to have been a difficult task. After 1945, Jubelt had to justify himself against the accusations that he had been involved in the nazi system. However, Arthur Jubelt was not charged and not convicted because there were no charges against him. Rather, it was only thanks to the «painstaking work of Hans Joachim Richter» that Jubelt was able to return to the memory of the city of Zeitz.

The initiator of the plaque, local historian Aaron Guttstein, then stressed that Arthur Jubelt had never been a member of the Nsdap or any of its organisations. Arthur Jubelt had been denounced by Herbert Feiner, who succeeded him as mayor, according to Guttstein, Feiner himself had not had a clean record, but had demonstrably employed at least 75 forced labourers in his own company, he said.

The grand-nephew of the deceased Jubelt had some final words. His father had decided to leave the Soviet occupation zone with his family after Jubelt's death. The family's assets, including the large business and residential building, had been unlawfully expropriated and partially looted. He was very grateful that committed citizens of the town were interested in researching the history of Arthur Jubelt, the grand-nephew stressed ⁵¹.

⁵¹ Notes by the author from 26 May 2023.

The ceremony lasted around an hour and culminated in the small steel plaque being screwed onto the façade by the hands of the descendants. Engraved on it: «Arthur Jubelt lived here. Art historian, publisher. Born in 1894, arrested on 5 September 1945, died in the Buchenwald special camp on 6 December 1947». The small rectangular sign to the right of the staircase to the former business premises was installed halfway up. Two wreaths were laid to mark the new memorial site. «In memory of Arthur Jubelt – victim of Stalinist injustice», donated by the Saxony-Anhalt Commissioner for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship, was written on the sashes. In May 2023, Jubelt's life and his death from starvation in the Buchenwald special camp were commemorated in a broader public context. The commemorative event was not without consequences.



Photograph by the author taken on 26 May 2023.



Photograph by the author taken on 26 May 2023.

The travelling of a plaque

On 28 May 2023, two days after the plaque installation in Zeitz, three new *Posledny adres* signs were unveiled in Moscow. One of them was dedicated to Aleksandr Lukichev, born in 1906. As an alleged counter-revolutionary⁵², he was arrested in February 1937 at the height of the Stalinist purges by a troika of the Nkvd and sentenced to death. He was rehabilitated by the Soviet Military Collegium in 1958. The accusations against him – being a member of a fascist terrorist organisation of the German secret service – were declared false and null and void. The two other victims who were commemorated on 28 May 2023 were also rehabilitated. Their memorial plaques bear the date of their rehabilitation in the last line.

The official legal revocation of the previous judgement in the course of the rehabilitation waves of the “thaw” in the 1950s and during and after perestroika in the 1980s and 1990s is a basic prerequisite for commemoration within the framework of the *Posledny adres* initiative. Fuelled by the spirit of the human rights movement since the end of the Soviet Union and linked to the dissident milieu of the Russian Memorial Society, the *Posledny adres* project has been demonstrating since 2014 that every life is important. Activists in Russia see the project’s form of commemoration as neutral remembrance without honouring the victims. This corresponds with the fact that the memorial plaques have a low-threshold legal status in Russia and other countries. The supposedly neutral commemoration secures the project’s scope for action (in Russia), as the consent of house owners is required, but not that of the Russian official authorities. The form of commemoration pragmatically stems from Russian circumstances and everyday realities. At the same time, the way it works has also spread to other countries in post-communist Europe: in Czechia, Georgia and also in Germany, the signs are also put up in agreement with the house owners. If an agreement is reached, the *Posledny adres* plaque, usually requested by the descendants of the repressed, is installed as part of an installation ceremony and thus handed over to the public. These semi-public events play an outstanding role for the descendants⁵³.

The author of this transnational memorial practice, Sergey Parkhomenko, was inspired by the German and European *Stumbling Stones* (*Stolpersteine*) Initiative. He sought to implement a similar project for Russia together with Memorial International. However, it is not only in the practice of remembrance that the orientation towards the *Stolpersteine* dedicated to the victims of nazism is evident. In fact, the dissident Memorial *milieu* sought similar public and cross-border recognition by comparing the nazi regime with Stalinism and its repression. In the activists’ public statements concerning the project, there is often a conceptual link between

⁵² Due to his connections to Germany, where Lukichev had studied at the end of the 1920s, he was targeted by the Soviet security authorities during the purges like thousands of others. See *Fond posledny adres*, <https://www.poslednyadres.ru/news/news1363.htm> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁵³ M. Hussinger, *Russlands Letzte Adressen. Gesellschaftliches Erinnern an die Opfer des Stalinismus*, Peter Lang, Berlin 2022.

the political repressions in the Soviet Union and the Holocaust. According to the dissident tenor, too little public attention was paid to the repressions in comparison to the genocide of the Jewish population of Europe. «We had our own Holocaust, the political repressions»⁵⁴, postulated initiator Sergei Parchomenko in 2015.

Nikolai Ivanov, who had affixed numerous *Posledny adres* plaques in St. Petersburg, brought this form of remembrance to Germany as an activist in 2018. Together with a filmmaker and the German branch of the Memorial Society, he launched the Last Address Project volunteer collective in Germany. As a «carrier of memory»⁵⁵, the remembrance travelled physically and ideally from Moscow via Prague to Kiev and Tbilisi to Germany. The plaque for Arthur Jubelt is the sixth that the initiative has placed in Germany. Three more plaques were installed in the course of 2023. To date, nine signs have been installed in Germany. The plaque installations are accompanied by widespread public interest⁵⁶.

While remembrance has become politicised in the Russian Federation since the beginning of the war against Ukraine in February 2022 at the latest, and memorials are increasingly being destroyed, the first theft of a memorial sign took place in Berlin. The memorial sign for Wolfgang Waterstraat, who was sentenced to death by a Soviet military tribunal in 1952 for alleged espionage, sabotage and anti-Soviet propaganda and shot in Moscow, was stolen the night after it was installed on 18 August 2023. The chairman of the Workuta/GULag Soviet Union camp community, Stefan Krikowski, who had attended the opening ceremony on 18 August, filed a criminal complaint the very next day «for theft and desecration of the honour of the dead»⁵⁷. The reasons for the theft of the plaque together with the memorial wreaths of the Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung (Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Germany) and Memorial are uncertain. However, it can be assumed that it was less about the person of Wolfgang Waterstraat or the questioning of his status as a victim of Stalinism than the mere expression of politically discharged vandalism on the highly frequented Karl-Marx-Straße in Berlin.

The specificity of the *Posledny adres* initiative in the seven post-Soviet and post-socialist countries in which it is active lies in the promotion of broader social participation in remembrance. It achieves this not only through its application practice, but also through the direct intrusion of «carriers of memory» into the public space. Even the vandalism can thus be understood as a social interaction with the memorial project, albeit a negative one.

⁵⁴ *U nas svoj cholokost, političeskie repressii*, in *Radio Svoboda*, 22 March 2015, <https://www.svoboda.org/a/26914044.html> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁵⁵ A. Erll, *Travelling Memory*, in «Parallax», n. 4, 2011, pp. 4-18.

⁵⁶ M. Haarbach, *Erinnerung an Opfer des Stalinismus in Berlin: Gedenktafel innerhalb weniger Stunden entwendet*, in *Tagesspiegel*, 6 September 2023, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/erinnerung-an-opfer-des-stalinismus-in-berlin-gedenktafel-innerhalb-weniger-stunden-entwendet-10426978.html> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁵⁷ S. Krikowski, *LETZTE ADRESSE für Wolfgang Waterstraat*, in *Workuta*, 22 August 2023, https://gedenkbibliothek.de/download/Stephan_Krikowski_-_Anbringung_LETZTE_ADRESSE_f_r_Wolfgang_Waterstraat_und_deren_Diebstahl_-_vom_August_2023.pdf [consulted on 14 July 2024].

Based on the Russian “mother project”, Anke Giesen and Nikolai Ivanov emphasised in 2020: «The project does not morally evaluate the life of the repressed person, but merely indicates the last place where the person lived before they were arrested»⁵⁸. A footnote in the quoted text continues:

This means that the project also commemorates people who have committed criminal offences when the charges on which their arrest and conviction are based are either unrelated to these offences or the punishment was completely disproportionate, such as the long-term camp sentences for stealing food from the collective farm (‘Ährengesetz’). As far as the German branch of the ‘Last Address’ is concerned, however, the decision was made that people who bear responsibility for crimes against humanity committed under nazism should not be commemorated with a plaque⁵⁹.

The last sentence is particularly important for the context presented. The project is openly against remembering people who bear responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism. However, it remains open as to what this means in specific individual cases. This interpretative freedom gives rise to criticism. At the same time, Memorial Germany consistently refers in its activities to the so-called Faulenbach formula («nazi crimes must not be relativised by referring to Stalinist injustice, but conversely, this injustice must not be trivialised in the face of nazi crimes»⁶⁰), to which the organisation feels committed⁶¹. And indeed, at the latest after Faulenbach’s formula at the end of the 1990s, a view of dealing with public remembrance of Stalinism prevailed «that recognised the dominance of the confrontation with national socialism as a reason of state in the Berlin Republic, without ignoring Stalinism and GDR injustice»⁶², according to Jens-Christian Wagner, Director of the Buchenwald Memorial.

The Last Address initiative officially distances itself from any moral judgement. Nevertheless, it establishes a person’s status as a victim of political repression and takes this as the starting point for its framework of action. This form of remembrance practised “from below” can thus be understood as a first, albeit unintentional, step towards an agonistic culture of remembrance. In this sense, the reactions to the civil society memorial action can be seen as an expression of a living culture of remembrance. «Focusing exclusively on the victims can also preclude the pos-

⁵⁸ N. Ivanov, A. Giesen, *Die erste “Letzte Adresse” in Sachsen-Anhalt*, in «Erinnern! Aufgabe, Chance, Herausforderung», n. 2, 2020, pp. 58-65, here p. 58.

⁵⁹ Ivi p. 64.

⁶⁰ B. Faulenbach, *Konkurrenz der Vergangenheiten? Die Aufarbeitung des SED-Systems im Kontext der Debatte über die jüngste deutsche Geschichte, in 1945 bis 2000. Ansichten zur deutschen Geschichte*, hrsg. von A. Stephan, Leske u. Budrich, Opladen 2002, p. 25.

⁶¹ Notes by the author from 26 May 2023.

⁶² J.-C. Wagner, *HISTORIKERSTREIT 2.0? Zur Debatte um das Wechselverhältnis zwischen Shoah- und Kolonialismus-Erinnerung*, in «Reflexionen», 2022, <https://www.stiftung-gedenkstaetten.de/reflexionen/reflexionen-2022/historikerstreit-20-> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

sibility of remembering and understanding the historical context»⁶³, as Anna Cento Bull and Hans Lauge Hansen noted in their reflections on agonistic memory. This can be understood as a response to the antagonistic and the cosmopolitan modes of remembering, as both «tend to simplify past historical events, hampering a critical understanding of their complexity»⁶⁴. When considering agonistic memory, the aim is to include the multi-layered perspectives of historical experiences by not excluding the perspectives of «both perpetrators and victims, as well as witnesses, bystanders, spies and traitors».

The opening ceremony and subsequent reactions show that the initiative's claim does not correlate with the public reception of the commemoration. A differentiated accentuation of the historical context in each individual case commemorated is essential.

*The municipal code does not permit the appointment of honorary citizens after death*⁶⁵

The last address plaque is not the first sign commemorating Arthur Jubelt at his former place of work. A large marble plaque on the front of the building's façade identifies the «art historian and publisher as well as the city's first provisional mayor after 1945» as an honorary citizen. A publication by the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship describes this memorial plaque for Arthur Jubelt, which was installed in 2000, as a place to remember the experience of dictatorship in the Soviet occupation zone and the GDR: «In the period after Jubelt's death until the end of the GDR in 1989, local historians made use of his research findings, but Jubelt himself was tabooed»⁶⁶.

One of these Zeitz local historians is Hans-Joachim Richter. A commentary by the local historian in the «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung» from October 1999 reflects «the not uncontroversial project» of appointing Arthur Jubelt as an honorary citizen. According to this, the PDS in the Zeitz city council in particular spoke out against the posthumous appointment. A «fighting vote» by the city council was therefore unavoidable, according to Richter. The question of Jubelt's Nsdap membership was particularly contentious:

Although all councillors had the indisputable proof from the Federal Archives that A. Jubelt was not a member of the Nsdap, they almost willingly followed the PDS presentation that the research at the Federal Archives had not yet been completed or that A. Jubelt's membership in the Nsdap was still questionable. [...]

Even A. Jubelt's tenacity and, within the possible limits, resistant behaviour towards the nazi authorities, the PDS is not afraid to interpret against Jubelt. He had been in

⁶³ A.C. Bull, H.L. Hansen, *On agonistic memory*, in «Memory Studies», n. 4, 2016, pp. 390-404, here p. 395.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *Tote Ehrenbürger lässt Gemeindeordnung nicht zu/Gedenktafel brachte Thema in Bildungsausschuss*, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 28 march 2000.

⁶⁶ *Orte des Erinnerns*, hrsg. von A. Kaminsky, cit., pp. 431-432.

possession of his publishing house for a suspiciously long time (discontinuation on 31 March 1943). On this point, too, it was not possible to stand up effectively for Jubelt. If A. Jubelt was not exceptional as a personality and in his steadfast and selfless work for Zeitz, he would certainly not be up for consideration as an honorary citizen. Obviously, the PDS finds it difficult to understand that even non-communists can save face in difficult times⁶⁷.

Despite or precisely because of the lack of legal rehabilitation by the Soviet or Russian General Prosecutor's Office, it is clear from the commentary that Jubelt's planned appointment as an honorary citizen at this time was tantamount to a public «rehabilitation». Jubelt had consistently distinguished himself «within the possible limits» through «resistant behaviour» towards the nazi authorities. An interpretation that was and still remains controversial.

Further insights into the «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung's» reporting show how controversial Jubelt's appointment as an honorary citizen in 1999 was. So how could a special camp inmate interned under Soviet criminal law principles become an honorary citizen of Zeitz? According to the municipal code of the state of Saxony-Anhalt, only living personalities may be appointed honorary citizens. Jubelt's appointment was therefore wrong, according to the former mayor of Zeitz, Volkmar Kunze. The city council had not been able to immediately reach a majority in favour of Jubelt's appointment. In addition to a possible Nsdap membership, the PDS had also asked «why the publishing house of the “Zeitzer Neueste Nachrichten” run by Jubelt had not been banned during the nazi era – like many others. Jubelt only gave up his publishing house on 31 March 1943»⁶⁸.

The discussion about honorary citizenship came up again in the 2010s. It was triggered by a city calendar, which was apparently published annually by the city of Zeitz and presented the city's well-known personalities to a wider audience. Jubelt was introduced in it with the reference to «connections to the national socialist s in keeping with the spirit of the times». This caused outrage in the city community. Local reporter Angelika Andräs summarised the situation in 2010:

For some, this is a desecration of an important citizen of Zeitz, for others it is an embarrassment for the city because he is an honorary citizen. Both are nonsense. The fact that Jubelt was said to have links to anti-Semitic authors, that his language was adapted to that of the regime, was already known in 1999 and was sufficiently discussed. Nevertheless, it was decided to make him an honorary citizen. Jubelt's personality is multi-layered, and it is obviously still not possible to see history – and above all people – in anything other than black and white⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ H.-J. Richter, *Wenn die einen einfach nicht wollen*, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 30 October 1999.

⁶⁸ A. Andräs, *Verleger kein Ehrenbürger/Zeitzer diskutieren das Novemberblatt zu Arthur Jubelt im neuen Kalender mit historischen Zeitzer Persönlichkeiten*, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 23 November 2010.

⁶⁹ Ead., *Nicht nur schwarz-weiß*, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 23 November 2010.

For a significant part of Zeitz's urban memory, Jubelt is an outstanding representative and guardian of the city's cultural heritage, despite the attested complexity of his person. However, a nuanced encounter with Arthur Jubelt's activities during the nazi regime seems to be of secondary importance. The fact of his proclaimed non-membership of the Nsdap is sufficient to prove Jubelt's alleged distance to nazism.

Another article in the «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung» in 2016 makes it clear that Jubelt's classification has not been finally clarified in the Zeitz public despite his appointment as an honorary citizen: «It is not enough that Jubelt, as a “posthumous honorary citizen of Zeitz” – a contentious issue in itself – dividing opinion on the question of how close or distant he was to national socialist ideology as a person, author and publisher; as a victim of the communist purge after 1945, he became a touchstone of the anti-fascist myth of the GDR»⁷⁰.

Hans-Joachim Richter, who according to Angelika Andräs shares a «kindred spirit»⁷¹ with Jubelt, published the first biography of the conservative publisher in 2013. *Passion Zeitz. Arthur Jubelt Vision und Wirklichkeit* is the title. The cover of the book is striking. It shows a collage consisting of a photo of Zeitzer Brüderstraße, impressions of the baroque Moritzburg castle and the faded camp gate inscription «Jedem das Seine» (To each his own) above the title of the book. The inscription of the nazi concentration camp in Buchenwald famously reversed the Roman maxim of justice into its absolute opposite.

As a «lexical nazi legacy»⁷², the heavily loaded phrase symbolises the concentration camps as such. On the cover of *Passion Zeitz*, the inclusion of the camp gate inscription serves as a reference to Jubelt's imprisonment and death in the Buchenwald special camp. The double history of the camp is thus visually blended into one. This is certainly not unproblematic. Similar conceptual conflations can also be seen in the reporting of the «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung» on the occasion of the unveiling of the memorial plaque at Jubelt's home in 2000. Arthur Jubelt died in 1947 in the «Concentration Camp Buchenwald II», it says⁷³.

In his two publications on Jubelt's life, Richter stringently emphasises that his «steadfast, right-wing appearance» made him «a person equally hated in both dictatorships»⁷⁴. A similar account can be found in Peter Mersburger, who describes

⁷⁰ G. Kowa, “*Passion Zeitz-Arthur Jubelt Vision und Wirklichkeit*”: Zwischen allen Fronten, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 19 January 2016, <https://www.mz.de/kultur/passion-zeitze-arthur-jubelt-vision-und-wirklichkeit-zwischen-allen-fronten-3090596> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁷¹ A. Andräs, *Neuerscheinung Regionalliteratur/Ein großer Anspruch, der sich nicht veränderte/Langjährige Seelenverwandtschaft führte zu Werk der Regionalgeschichte*, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 18 December 1999.

⁷² F. Brunssen, “*Jedem das Seine*”-zur Aufarbeitung des lexikalischen NS-Erbes, in *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 15 October 2010, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/parteien/sprache-und-politik/42761/jedem-das-seine-zur-aufarbeitung-des-lexikalischen-ns-erbes/> [consulted on 14 July 2024] and “*Jedem das Seine*”, in *Gedenkstätte Buchenwald*, <https://www.buchenwald.de/geschichte/themen/dossiers/jedem-das-seine> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁷³ H. Landes, *Stadtrat Zeitz/Arthur Jubelt erfährt ehrendes Gedenken/Enthüllung von Gedenktafel und Bronze-relief am Wohnhaus*, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 26 May 2000.

⁷⁴H.-J. Richter, *Arthur Jubelt-ein Streiter gegen ideologische Zensur in zwei Diktaturen, in Erinnern als Verpflichtung*, ed. G. Wiemers, Leipzig 2011, pp. 163-180, here p. 163.

Jubelt as a national conservative «par excellence», but summarises: «But he was never a nazi or even a member of their party, he had far too much respect for the rule of law, which the nazis trampled underfoot. And as a nazi resister and opponent, he demonstrably helped persecuted people during the twelve nazi years and employed relatives of imprisoned left-wing nazi opponents and ‘half-Jews’ in his company, which required a great deal of courage at the time»⁷⁵.

Christina Ramsch and Franz Waurig, on the other hand, attest to Richter’s «portrayal of a victim, not without trivialising the repressive nazi dictatorship by resorting to Jubelt’s individual fate»⁷⁶. He would even attempt to inscribe Jubelt’s biography into the history of resistance against national socialism, they emphasise⁷⁷. Above all, however, according to the interpretations cited, the publisher is considered a victim of two dictatorships due to his imprisonment in a special camp.

This discourse in the small town of Zeitz, which has centred on the person of Jubelt since the 1990s, reflects in concrete terms the political controversy in dealing with victims of Stalinist violence and internment policy in Germany, which has basically existed in West Germany since 1945 and then in Germany as a whole since the 1990s.

Almost exactly 23 years to the day of Jubelt’s appointment as an honorary citizen of Zeitz, Jubelt’s fate as a victim of Stalinism was to be made visible and the sign of the Last Address Initiative was to be the public marker for this.

Arthur Jubelt (not) a victim of repression

An article published in the «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung» shortly after the installation of the memorial plaque, which reported on the installation of the «memorial plaque» under the title «Honour to a denounced person», shows that the immediate reception during and after the installation of the memorial plaque certainly goes beyond this neutral classification⁷⁸. The narratives produced in the process, which came to the surface during the opening ceremony, essentially utilised a persistent «tendency in the second history of the camps not to be content with exposing the actually devastating injustice, but to want to deny Soviet policy any legitimacy». The complexity of the first history is distorted by overemphasising individual aspects and neglecting others⁷⁹. The family and Zeitz interpretations, which are given a stage by the Last Address, also demonstrate such an interpretation.

The Buchenwald Memorial criticised the placement of the memorial marker before and after the ceremony. In an article on the event published in 2024, the curator

⁷⁵ P. Mersburger, *Aufbruch ins Ungewisse. Erinnerungen eines politischen Zeitgenossen*, DVA, München 2021, p. 41.

⁷⁶ C. Ramsch, F. Waurig, “*Wo beginnt der Nazi und wo hört er auf?*”, in *Transformation des Gedenkens*, hrsg. von J. Ganzenmüller et al., cit., p. 91.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ M. Walter, *Ehre einem Denunzierten*, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 27-28 May 2023.

⁷⁹ A. Beattie, *Die Auseinandersetzung mit den sowjetischen Speziallagern in Deutschland. Eine wechselvolle Geschichte mit beharrlichen Tendenzen*, in *Zwischen Entnazifizierung und Besatzungspolitik*, hrsg. von J. Landau, E. Heitzer, cit., p. 269.

of the Buchenwald special camp, Julia Landau, points out that the plaque honours a publisher who took part in the Hitler putsch in 1923 and reported on it approvingly in the local newspaper, and whose publishing programme can clearly be located in the nationalist-anti-Semitic milieu of the Weimar Republic. For example, due to the publication of the German nationalist, racist writings of Adolf Bartels, one of Hitler's ideological masterminds in Weimar. By publishing the local newspaper, he had also supported the nazi dictatorship, even though he himself was not a member of the Nsdap⁸⁰.

The criticism presented is based on further biographical research into the person of Arthur Jubelt. Other aspects of Jubelt's person came to light that had obviously not been (publicly) debated during the discussion about his appointment as an honorary citizen a good twenty years earlier. His participation in the Hitler putsch in 1923 appears to be a marker that underpins a shared responsibility for the nazi state and thus speaks against a public remembrance of Jubelt as a victim of Soviet repression in the form of the Last Address.

Arthur Jubelt was the first person chosen by the Memorial human rights organisation who was not convicted by a military tribunal and deported to the Soviet Union to be shot, emphasise Ramsch and Waurig⁸¹. Jubelt, who perished without a previous conviction, was never actually rehabilitated. As legal rehabilitation is generally a prerequisite for remembrance in the project in both Germany and Russia. The German Last Address submitted a special application to the Moscow Foundation, which also produces the material sign, due to the lack of rehabilitation of Jubelt, which was approved⁸². At the same time, however, Ramsch and Waurig overlook the fact that the application for the plaque installation came from the city community of Zeitz and that the social application – as with the model project of the Stolpersteine – represents a general premise in remembrance. The plaque was initiated by the Zeitz «local historian» Aaron Guttstein⁸³. In the local historian's interpretation, Jubelt was denounced by his successor in office, Herbert Feiner. He refers to an exchange of letters in which the “communist” Feiner called the Jubelt family as war criminals and demanded their removal from the family publishing house⁸⁴. Feiner should have even used language permeated with nazi vocabulary in

⁸⁰ «While studying in Munich, he took part in Hitler's failed coup d'état, the 'March on the Feldherrnhalle', on 9 November 1923 and reported on it in the *Zeitler Neueste Nachrichten*. He expressed his regret at its failure. As far as is known, he was not a member of the NSDAP, but was in favour of larger party events in Zeitz, such as the 'Marinegautag' in 1938, which was held with a large turnout from the local population». See J. Landau, *LETZTE ADRESSE. Tafeln für verstorbene Insassen des sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 2: Arthur Jubelt und Edmund Hunger*, in «Reflexionen», 2024, <https://www.stiftung-gedenkstaetten.de/en/reflexionen/reflexionen-2024/letzte-adresse> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁸¹ C. Ramsch, F. Waurig, “*Wo beginnt der Nazi und wo hört er auf?*”, in *Transformation des Gedenkens*, hrsg. von J. Ganzenmüller et al., cit., p. 92.

⁸² Notes by the author from 26 May 2023.

⁸³ M. Walter, *Ehre einem Denunzierten*, in «*Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*», 27-28 May 2023.

⁸⁴ Notes by the author from 26 May 2023.

his denunciations⁸⁵. Interestingly, Bettina Greiner uses the memoirs of inmates of the special camps to describe how the use of denunciation «as a means of biographical immunisation against the Nazi past» contributed to the accentuation of victim roles in public discourse: «Denunciation is proof of one's own innocence»⁸⁶.

However, Ramsch and Waurig finally summarise in their article that the project as a whole «falls into the problematic waters of a totalitarianism-theoretical levelling of both German dictatorships»⁸⁷, above all due to the «selection of biographies». Their references show that not only the commemoration of Jubelt was discussed controversially, but also previous sign installations. Helmut Sonnenschein, who was involved in the V-weapons project as a Wehrmacht officer, is mentioned⁸⁸. Sonnenschein, who was rehabilitated in 1994, was accused of being a spy in 1951 and shot in Moscow⁸⁹.

In general, it is clear that many of the West German memorials that were established in the post-war period are now controversial. This is revealed not least by the catalogue of memorials to SED and Soviet injustice of the Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung. The catalogue includes a memorial plaque at the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe from 1957, which is dedicated to 34 members of the Reich Court who were arrested by the Nkvd in August 1945 and died in the special camps Mühlberg and Buchenwald. In 1979, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Reichsgericht, the magazine «Stern» pointed out that among the arrested lawyers were 23 members of the Nsdap, several of whom had been involved as judges in the judgements for «racial defilement»⁹⁰.

A plaque and its meanings

At a time when the appropriation of historical memory by the right-wing political spectrum is no longer a rarity⁹¹, remembrance in the context of the small Last Address initiative is a delicate endeavour that raises the question of who is allowed

⁸⁵ Ibid and M. Walter, *Ehre einem Denunzierten*, in «Mitteldeutsche Zeitung», 27-28 May 2023.

⁸⁶ B. Greiner, *Verdrängter Terror*, cit., p. 158.

⁸⁷ C. Ramsch, F. Waurig, «*Wo beginnt der Nazi und wo hört er auf?*», in *Transformation des Gedenkens*, hrsg. von J. Ganzenmüller et al., cit., p. 92.

⁸⁸ Ivi, p. 99.

⁸⁹ *Letzte Adresse: Dr. Helmut Sonnenschein*, in *Letzte Adresse*, <https://www.letzteadresse.de/angebrachte-tafeln/helmut-sonnenschein/> [consulted on 14 July 2024].

⁹⁰ *Orte des Erinnerns*, hrsg. von A. Kaminsky, cit., p. 29.

⁹¹ At the time of writing this essay, the director of the Buchenwald Memorial, Jens-Christian Wagner, is receiving threats after sending letters to Thuringian citizens in the run-up to the state elections in which he warns against the AfD, which opposes the culture of remembrance and discredits the work of the memorial as a «cult of guilt». See *Warum die Stiftung einen Brief an die Wähler: innen in Thüringen geschrieben hat*, in *Gedenkstätte Buchenwald*, 19 August 2024, <https://www.buchenwald.de/newsroom/warum-die-stiftung-einen-brief-an-die-waehler-in-thueringen-geschrieben-hat> [consulted on 31 August 2024]; *Gedenkstättenleiter nach AfD-Kritik bedroht*, in *Tagesschau*, 20 August 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/buchenwald-gedenkstaette-drohungen-100.html> [consulted on 31 August 2024].

to shape the culture of remembrance and how. In its practice of remembrance based on the Posledny adres Foundation in Moscow, the German initiative meets the need of a very small section of German society to remember their repressed ancestors or former neighbours. Since the beginning of an all-German culture of remembrance, these people have felt neglected in their suffering caused by the disappearance of their relatives or acquaintances. The Last Address and the symbolic plaque see themselves as a tool to generate public recognition. The activists of the Last Address are not concerned with the specific individual fate, but rather with highlighting an experience of repression that extends beyond the Soviet Union. This seems all the more important given that the Russian Federation has been repressing dissidents again since 24 February 2022 at the latest and the renowned Memorial organisation, in whose name Memorial Germany also operates, has been shut down.

This raises the question of what happens to a civil memorial project developed in Russia the moment it arrives in Germany. Here, the project comes up against established institutions of remembrance culture such as the Buchenwald Memorial. In some cases, the memorial practice of the Last Address has been widely criticised. There are fears of a right-wing appropriation of historical remembrance and – in the worst case – a public relativisation of nazi crimes.

In concrete terms, Zeitzer Brüderstraße 14/16 has become a double memorial site thanks to the Last Address plaque. A memorial site that not only brought Arthur Jubelt's honorary citizenship by the city community to the surface once again, but also the complex discussions throughout Germany about when co-responsibility for the nazi past begins and who the Stalinist victims in Germany are. The concrete interpretation of Arthur Jubelt as a person is therefore not only controversial with his last address. Rather, the plaque brings this conflict to the surface as a «carrier of memory». Ideally, by raising the issue and discussing it widely, an agonistic remembrance can result that stands for a lively and not entrenched culture of remembrance.