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## The Dis-membered Border

Werner Schmidt, one of the few “really reds” in Kella, once told me, “If you want to conquer a [political] system, and conquer it quickly, then you have to portray this system in the ugliest colors possible. That’s how it is. And that can be dirty work.” Werner was commenting on the West German media’s frequent comparisons of the GDR with the Third Reich, a portrayal that was part of a general and rapid devaluation of the East German past by dominant West German discourses. As we saw in chapter 2, Werner himself felt victimized by these attempts to “overcome the past.” Not only did they unjustly connect him, as a devout former party member, to crimes committed by the Stasi and Communist Party leaders, he felt, but the characterization of the East German past as an obstacle—an implicit assumption in the notion of “overcoming the past”—also undermined some of the very foundations of his identity and personhood.

I begin with Werner’s perceptive insight because it suggests several related themes I explore in this chapter: the way in which memory is an interactive, malleable, and highly contested phenomenon, the asymmetrical nature of remembering in united Germany, and the role of the past in the present.

My focus here is on the construction, production, and negotiation of memory since the fall of the Wall. I concentrate on several arenas in which this production and negotiation take place, including performative ceremonies, national and local discourses of memory, and struggles over the commemoration of the past. More specifically, I analyze two events in the community’s recent past that reflect a dialectic of remembering and forgetting that is still occurring throughout united Germany: a parade in honor of German re-unification in October 1990 and the unsuccessful attempt by village leaders to preserve, as a memorial, sections of the three-meter fence that had surrounded and enclosed Kella between 1952 and 1989. My aim here is to examine an interplay between local and extralocal processes of remembering; I argue that memory and its representations both structure and are structured by representations of the past at a broader, often national, level.<sup>1</sup> I am interested here in commemorations as well as silences, in the role of the past in negotiating, contesting, and rebuilding the present.

## SELF-RE-PRESENTATIONS

Like many of the re-unification festivities held throughout Germany on October 3, 1990, the community’s unity celebration was in many ways a carefully orchestrated media event.<sup>2</sup> It was broadcast on a regional television network that had reported on Kella during the summer of 1990 and subsequently opted to base its coverage of re-unification events in the former Schutzstreifengemeinde. Under the glare of media lights, television cameras, and film crews, villagers performed, improvised, and invented a variety of rituals in honor of the historic occasion. The church-related observances, including a candlelight procession to the chapel on the eve of re-unification and a traditional mass the next morning, had been planned far in advance. But when the television net-

work notified Kella's mayor, Karl Hartmann, two weeks before October 3 of its intention to cover the village's celebration that day, the community was galvanized. "If television is coming," Karl told me, "I thought we'd better really celebrate!"

The resulting parade, organized by an informal committee headed by the village mayor, was an elaborate commemoration and display of the village's past, present, and anticipated future, a "definitional ceremony" in which individuals as well as a collectivity told stories about themselves and itself to themselves as well as to others.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the parade these stories were linked to national histories—a way of connecting personal and community biographies to a nationally shared past and also, it seemed, a way to put Kella back on the map.

The procession, which began at the border crossing and circled through the village, contained numerous depictions of events and institutions in the community's history. All contributions to the parade by village residents were conceived, funded, and constructed by the participants themselves. Several women who had worked in the local factory dressed in smocks and carried trays of cigars to depict an earlier phase of the factory's history; a few carried signs bearing socialist slogans that had once hung on the walls of their workplace ("My Hand for My Product") (Figure 21). Another group of women, also dressed in smocks, carried baskets and farming tools to represent "LPG Women." Others wore the Eichsfeld traditional dress of cape and hat to portray women from a much earlier period. Men carrying farming tools and a sign "LPG Silberklippe" depicted the collective farm that had been located in Kella for several years before being merged with other LPGs in the region. An old wagon loaded with furniture bore the sign "In 1952 We Had to Leave," representing those who were deported during the forced evacuations in the spring of that year (Figure 22); and on top of a Trabant was a sign that read "Ordered 1964. Received 1990," referring to the long wait involved in obtaining an automobile in the GDR.

The most popular and loudest exhibit of the village's past during the parade was a float containing a reconstruction of the border itself (Figure 23). Across the back of a large, open truck bed, parade participants replicated the Grenze by mounting several feet of the former border



Figure 21. Women in Kella's unity parade recall the old cigar factory ("My Hand for My Product"), 1990. (Photograph in the collection of the author)

fence, complete with authentic warning signs and barbed wire. On one side of the fence were three young men dressed as border guards; on the other stood several young villagers shouting angrily "We want out! We want out!" while pounding the ground with sticks, pitchforks, and signs reading "We want our freedom." A photograph of the communist party leader Erich Honecker that had once adorned the walls of all public buildings hung on the side of the truck with a caption containing his well-known pledge, "Everything for the good of the people." An adjacent caption contained several villagers' interpretation of the meaning of this slogan after widespread revelations of party leaders' excesses: "I was the people." On the truck's other side hung a banner recalling the Wende: "When freedom draws near, not even barbed wire inspires fear!"

In the context of the parade, such representations of the past were affirmations of the present. Following the float of the reconstructed border, for example, was a group of participants from East and West sym-



Figure 22. The 1990 unity parade included a portrayal of deportations from Kella ("In 1952 We Had to Leave"). (Photograph in the collection of the author)

bolically linked by carrying garland arches adorned with red, gold, and black ribbons. Another group of villagers followed displaying a sign that read "Hurrah! The people from Hesse can come again!" Similarly, the wagon of those expelled in 1952 was followed by an automobile bearing the sign: "Now we can come back again"; behind the East German Trabi was a West German Ford. These juxtapositions served to illustrate not only positive changes since the Wende but also the hardships these changes had overcome.

Other representations of the present, referred to as "the new period," included a small basket of East German products next to a large and nearly overflowing shopping cart filled with western goods; children from the village kindergarten with signs bearing the crossed-out abbreviations FRG and GDR were followed by children carrying a large placard with the word "Germany" in bold letters. One woman from Kella

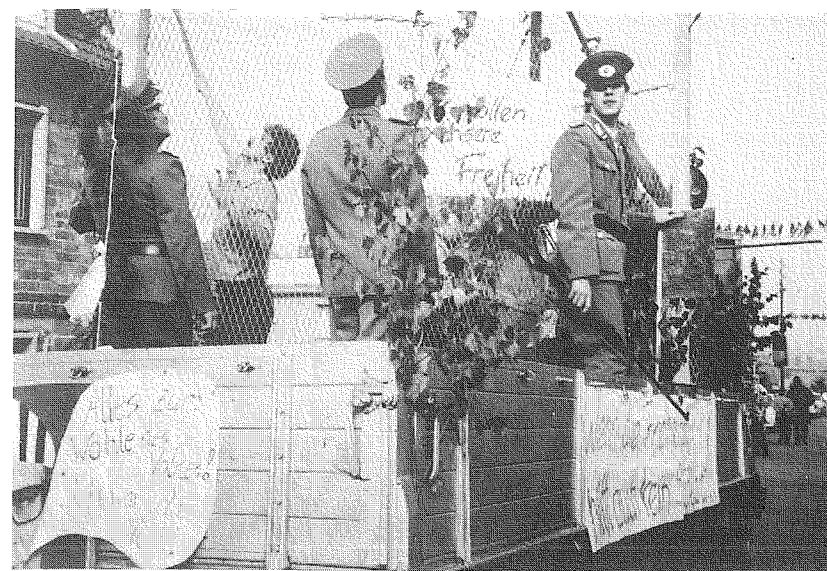


Figure 23. A float made of reconstructed border materials enlivened the re-unification celebrations, 1990. (Photograph in the collection of the author)

had constructed a large doll wearing a *Tarnkappe* (pointed cone hat), which, according to legend, makes those who wear it invisible. "For the people who must disappear in the new period," she explained, referring to former Stasi informants and powerful party members. Her husband's contribution to the parade made a similar critical reference. He carried several spades and a sign that read, "For sale: spades to dig up western relatives," referring to former party members who had denied having western relatives (often because they were prohibited from contact with the West) but who had sought them out after the fall of the Wall.<sup>4</sup> Members of the Eschwege volunteer fire department and a group representing a women's club in the nearby village of Grebendorf were among the western German participants.

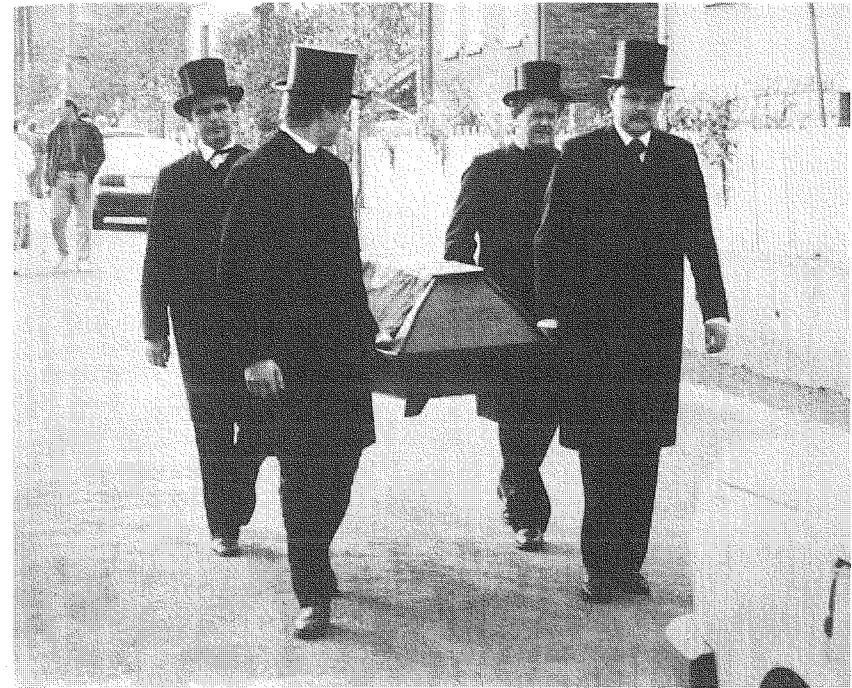
Accompanied by a marching band and a trumpet choir from Eschwege, the parade, along with hundreds of spectators, made its way to the village soccer field, where the GDR flag was lowered for the last time and



*Figure 24.* Lowering the GDR flag for the last time on October 3, 1990. (Photograph in the collection of the author)

replaced with the West German one (Figure 24). After brief remarks from the mayors of Kella and adjacent western communities, villagers attempted (largely in vain) to sing along with the West German national anthem. Together with local politicians from the West, Kella's mayor planted a "Tree of Unity" as a symbol of renewal and a growing together of the two Germanies.

In the tongue-in-cheek ceremony that followed, the GDR flag was placed over a small black casket built especially for the occasion (Figure 25). It was then carried by four pallbearers in mourning dress to its



*Figure 25.* Carrying the GDR to its grave (in the unity parade, 1990). (Photograph in the collection of the author)

final resting place near the soccer field, where the flag and casket were ceremoniously burned. "They carried the GDR to its grave," one woman later explained, smiling.

The party that followed lasted for days, in part because it coincided with Kirmes. The time is fondly remembered as a high point in the community's recent past. "The weather was so beautiful—like high summer—and everything was so joyful," one woman recalled, "and so many people! We hadn't had that many people here in forty years. It was the best day of my life!" She smiled sheepishly: "Even better than my wedding day!"

In addition to demonstrating how quickly the past may be remade into and reshaped by memory, the festivities and many of its perfor-



mances also reflected an emerging discourse of victimization in relation to the community's, and nation's, socialist past. The reconstructed border, for example, imposed a meaning and memory on the village's experience as a Schutzstreifengemeinde by depicting its residents as prisoners fighting for their freedom, using language that would have been unthinkable under socialism, rather than as the relatively complacent citizens that most villagers had actually been. The priest's sermon during that morning's mass reflected a similar use of language: "For forty years we lived in bondage. Let us pray that we don't fall into bondage again." Locals interviewed by the omnipresent television reporters seemed to be telling them what they wanted to hear: "This wasn't a democratic but rather a dictatorial regime," one villager said, "and I never want to hear of it again!" Another elderly woman, visibly nervous in front of a microphone and television camera, lamented: "They [the Communists] took forty years of our lives!"

Like other representations of the past, however, such discourses of victimization have been questioned and contested. While watching a videotape of the television report from Kella, for example, one woman became outraged at her fellow villager's comments. "He never experienced so much hate here! How can he say that? In fact, he earned most of his money from the reds! I simply can't stand to hear such things." Her friend agreed: "How can they say they took forty years of our lives? We had our life here, our Heimat, and we did a lot in those forty years."

A conversation between a mother and son reflected similar contestations over interpretations of the past. The forty-year-old son, Thomas Spiegel, cautioned against accepting people's judgment of the past from today's perspective. "People have a different judgment today than they used to," he explained:

For example, the case of Martin Schneider [the young man who was sentenced to prison after his aborted escape in 1983]. When that happened and he went to prison, people thought it was bad, but the rules were known. The horror and agitation that people display today is new.

We used to sit and work in our garden in Kella, but we never really took note of the fence. It is wrong to say that the population felt oppressed.

His mother vehemently objected: "I always felt unfree, and always had misgivings about the fence. We were always afraid!" But her son reiterated: "It's only after the fact that people feel oppressed. Almost everyone participated passively. Eighty to ninety percent of the population kept the GDR going. The further we come away [from the socialist past], the more we scrub ourselves clean."

#### FROM VICTIMIZATION TO NOSTALGIA

Such discussions at the local, even familial, level take place in the context of national debates and discourses about the East German past. Referred to broadly as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, a term originally used in West Germany in relation to the Nazi period, these debates have been largely dominated by the West German press, politicians, and intellectuals. They have focused on a range of issues, including calls for a reevaluation of Germany's Nazi past;<sup>5</sup> debates over what to do with and about East Germany's Stasi heritage, which have often compared the GDR to the Third Reich; criminal trials of former border guards and other representatives of the GDR state, which for many eastern Germans represented a kind of victor's justice; and the controversy surrounding the famous East German author Christa Wolf,<sup>6</sup> the "second historians' debate," which called into question the value of GDR culture as well as the nature and apportioning of guilt (Huyssen 1995: 51). As one of Wolf's critics wrote, echoing an argument made by Michael Stürmer during the 1986 Historians' Debate, "This is no academic question. He who determines what was also determines what will be" (Ulrich Greiner, cited in Huyssen 1995: 51).

At issue were not only questions of history and memory but also a reopening and reevaluation of the German national question itself. The need to move beyond a burdened past and create a common history, a central assumption of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, was perceived in these debates as being critical to a new understanding of German nationhood and national identity. Implicit in this notion is the assumption that the past is something that must and can be overcome in order to "construct an alternative agenda for the future" (Huyssen 1995: 52),

rather than viewing historical memory as an ongoing process of understanding, negotiation, and contestation.

My aim here, however, is not to analyze the complex and extensive postunification debates surrounding history and memory, the German nation, or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.<sup>7</sup> Instead, I seek to illuminate and contextualize an interplay between local and extralocal processes of remembering. The national debates surrounding Stasi revelations, guilt and responsibility, and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, for example, produced a "rhetoric of accusation and self-righteousness" in which former GDR citizens were either victims or perpetrators, with few gray areas in between (Huyssen 1995: 37). Furthermore, as Claudia Koonz has pointed out, the emergence of new forms of memory and historical representation at concentration-camps like Buchenwald or Sachsenhausen recast eastern Germans as victims of Soviet occupation forces; this new form of "GDR memory" not only expanded the categories of victimhood "beyond the anti-Fascists memorialized in the East and the victims of the Holocaust mourned in the West" but reflected a more general discourse of victimization in relation to the GDR past (1994: 275). These various discourses of victimization provided the context for representations and expressions like the Tarnkappe, spades, and border reconstruction during Kella's re-unification festivities.

These discourses have also produced many images of suffering that emerged after the *Wende*. The exchange between Thomas Spiegel and his mother, as well as the reconstructed boundary and other references to the border during Kella's unity parade, for example, illustrate how the fence, or the *Grenze* as a whole, quickly came to be a powerful image of suffering after the *Wende*, a metonym for the GDR itself.<sup>8</sup> This was evident not only in the widespread media representations of the fall of the Wall but also in the local merging of the fence's image with the religious symbolism of the cross, as with the Seventh Station and other crosses made of fencing and barbed wire described in chapter 3. As powerful images of suffering, these "new memory symbols" (Jones 1994: 161) stand for all that is now regarded as having been wrong with the socialist regime.

Such images and discourses have carried with them the potential to be internalized, reproduced, and expressed in the form of personal memo-

ries, often with multiple intentions. I was occasionally told, for example, of the mines and trip-wire shooting devices that surrounded Kella, even though such fortifications were never actually installed in the area. "We lived here as if we were in jail," said one woman, whose son, I later learned, had been an active *Grenzhelfer* and suspected Stasi informant. Her comment seemed to lend credence to Thomas Spiegel's warning about judging the past from the perspective of the present, about the simultaneous solidification of boundaries and blurring of distinctions between victims and perpetrators.

As we saw in chapter 2, this boundary between victim and perpetrator is constantly shifting as it is negotiated, constructed, and contested in everyday practices and discourses. According to some villagers, "everyone somehow participated." Others measure complicity according to definitive categories such as party member, *Grenzhelfer*, or village-council representative. For some residents, these categories carry equal weight; for others, party members or Stasi informants were the only true perpetrators. Several villagers have self-righteously accused those who sent their children to the *Jugendweihe* ceremony of being guilty of complicity. Others use church attendance as an important measure of resistance.

Indeed, the Catholic church has played an important role in mediating and constituting such discourses of guilt and victimization. While preaching the Christian doctrine of forgiveness, it has also been quick to claim its own institutional as well as its members' victim status. In March 1990, for example, several thousand residents of the Catholic Eichsfeld gathered on the symbolic ground of the Hülfsenberg pilgrimage site to dedicate a plaque in honor of the "victims of the past," as the presiding priest explained. The inscription on the plaque, at the base of the Konrad Martin Cross, reads:

Pilgrims from East and West  
Pray for the victims  
Of fascist and  
Stalinist dictatorships!

Lord, let their suffering  
Be a blessing to our land!

In the language of this commemoration, the entire GDR past was labeled as "Stalinism," ignoring the fact that Stalinist rule—characterized by deportations, mass arrests, and internment camps—had largely ended in East Germany by the mid-1950s; its crimes were equated with those of the Nazi regime that had preceded it. The experience of Eichsfeld Catholics under socialism was similarly compared with that of the Kulturkampf victim, Konrad Martin. "Bishop Konrad Martin was made to suffer because of his beliefs," said the priest conducting the ceremony, "and through his memory the Catholic population of the GDR was brought to action. . . . I don't know of any other group that maintained its protest against the regime more than the Catholic church. We mustn't forget this resistance. Especially those who suffered in the Sperrgebiet. . . . We mustn't forget the victims of the past, of Stalinism and National Socialism."

Similar messages were conveyed by other church officials, including the local priest in Kella. Voices like those of Thomas Spiegel, who warned against the church's self-glorifying post-Wende claims to resistance and leadership during the 1989 demonstrations, were rare. "The church was guilty of the same kind of opportunism as were most of the people," he argued. For many villagers, however, loyal church membership and participation were sufficient evidence of victim status: the practice of religion under socialism as an expression of and reason for resistance was thus reappropriated in defining gradations of complicity, as well as in constructing a memory of the socialist past.

Thus as the old official histories are discredited—in the toppling of socialist monuments, renaming of streets and rewriting of history books—new histories are constructed, produced, and contested in a variety of ways (Watson 1994). The devaluing of the socialist past has been challenged, for example, by a retreat to the forms of nostalgia described in chapter 5. In an ongoing dialectic of remembering and forgetting, discourses of victimization have given way to, and continue to oscillate between, discourses of nostalgia and mourning—demonstrating the shifting, multiple, and infinitely malleable nature of memory. At times one discourse may be compelling, at other times not.

The reason for this, it seems to me, lies in the way in which historical memory is interactively constructed. In the previous chapter I described

how village women have reappropriated a socialist identity as worker-mothers as a means of distinguishing themselves from West German women. Similarly, many villagers have pointed to the lost advantages of the socialist system. At first voiced in a cautious statement that "Socialism wasn't all that bad," early defenses of the former GDR focused on the economic and social security of the socialist system. Gradually, however, these defenses frequently came to be expressed as nostalgia and mourning for an East Germany that had never existed. In this discourse of nostalgia, metaphors of community and kinship have become increasingly prevalent. "We used to live like one big family here," I was often told, "now no one has time for any one else."

Rather than focusing on guilt or victimization, these nostalgic discourses of the past may also entail a novel form of willful forgetting, or silence: the choice *not* to know.<sup>9</sup> In the midst of Stasi revelations and "witch-hunts" waged largely in the West German press, villagers' initial enthusiasm for obtaining access to the mysteries of the Stasi files quickly dissipated. With very few exceptions, residents of Kella have decided not to file for access to their own Stasi files, at least for the moment. Although guided by an awareness of the potential risks involved in gaining access to one's personal file (including the possibility that a Stasi informant could be a friend or family member, a revelation that could be particularly disruptive in such a small community), the decision not to know is not merely a pragmatic one. It is also a reaction, I believe, to the discrediting of the GDR past, a critical resistance to partaking in the construction of new histories and memories. These pockets of subversive silences are an important element of an ongoing and interactive negotiation and contestation of historical memory.

Not only can every act of remembering be an act of forgetting; it can also work the other way around.

#### "THIS FENCE SHALL REMAIN STANDING"

In contrast to many postsocialist societies, in which new histories are being created out of formerly unsanctioned memories of the past (Watson 1994: 4), the discrediting of old official histories in the for-

mer GDR has been almost instantaneously replaced with the imposition of new ones. The production of historical memory is deeply imbedded in the dynamics of East and West German power relations; like other sites of cultural confrontation, remembering in the new Germany has been largely asymmetrical.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in local and national contestations over representations and commemorations of the socialist past. As socially constructed and negotiated events involving struggles over the control and appropriation of historical knowledge (Cohen 1994: 246), commemorations may be quite revelatory. In united Germany, they have often entailed the construction, reconfiguration, or dismantling of the institutions, symbols, memorials, monuments, and other public-memory sites of the former GDR. The removal of the Lenin statue in East Berlin, the renaming of streets and public buildings formerly dedicated to prominent communist figures throughout eastern Germany, and the nearly complete dismantling of the Berlin Wall are but a few examples of such inverted commemorations. Occasionally these inverted commemorations have been accompanied by a public ceremony; usually, they are not. The rush to avoid the kind of collective forgetting that characterized post-Nazi Germany by uncovering, confronting, and hence "overcoming" East Germany's burdened past has paradoxically been accompanied by a kind of "organized forgetting" (Connerton 1989: 14), an erasure of certain memory symbols and the creation and contestation of new ones.

A struggle in Kella between locals and the German federal government over the preservation of the former border fence highlights several of these issues; it also demonstrates the tremendous importance of the materiality of memory. Even before plans to dismantle the entire inter-German border were announced, village political leaders had submitted applications to Kreis officials hoping to maintain the border fencing near Kella as a memorial and potential tourist attraction. Two years after the fall of the Wall, when the responsibility for the former border structure was assigned to the newly founded Association for the Dismantling and Use of Old [former border] Installations, Ltd., it became clear that community leaders' plans were threatened. The corporation was contracted



Figure 26. Removal of the border fence near Kella, 1992. (Photograph by the author)

by the Federal Defense Ministry to dismantle the fencing, guard towers, service roads, and all other structures that had been part of the former border. As with the Berlin Wall, whose concrete slabs were crushed into gravel for eastern German roads, many of the materials (especially metal fencing and concrete slabs) were resold to individuals and local businesses—further testimony for many locals that "the new regime only cares about money."

As the encroaching removal of the fence became visible from Kella, the village's mayor, Karl Hartmann, attempted to mobilize the community to combat the dismantling of this intensely symbolic structure (Figure 26). At a large gathering of the local Heimatverein, Karl announced that "the federal government has issued orders to remove the fence and service road. It is supposed to be returned to its original state." When the audience expressed its outrage at this development, he continued: "In the case of arable land [removing the fence] is certainly the right thing to do. But not like here, especially when the service road makes such a good



walking path. A part of the border structure should remain as a memorial. In the last few years, many things have been determined too quickly [for us]. And now we want to be the ones to decide about this." At Karl's suggestion, the group passed a resolution to preserve the service road and sections of the border fence near Kella.

The majority sentiment, although not unanimous, entailed more than a concern for memory, for the "symbolic importance" of the border, as one man stressed, or for "preserving the border structure for future generations because even the young children won't remember it years from now," as another woman explained. The desire to keep the fence was also an expedient one, based on the (misguided) anticipation of a burgeoning local tourist industry. The border as tourist attraction was especially stressed by community members working to promote tourism in the region.<sup>10</sup> "That is what really distinguishes our village," one of these men argued. "The border is the first thing visitors want to see when they come to Kella."<sup>11</sup>

Although a small minority, some residents did not share these sentiments. One man angrily claimed he felt like he was "living in Buchenwald" and demanded the immediate removal of the fence. Others simply explained, "We don't need to be reminded of that. We had to live with it for forty years, and now we don't want to see it anymore." For these opponents of the memorial effort, a museum was the proper place to memorialize the border.

Over a period of nearly two years, Kella's mayor appealed to county, state, and federal officials to preserve sections of the fence and service road. Together with other supporters of the memorial, he hung hand-painted signs on sections of the fence to mark them for preservation: "This fence shall remain standing." Karl supported his requests to state authorities with arguments about the importance of the former border structure as a memorial and tourist attraction as well as with references to resolutions passed by both the Heimatverein and village council. An early written communication, for example, argued: "As a village in the 500-meter Sperrgebiet, our experience of the harshness of the old regime was more than skin deep. The border installations represent a part of our community's history. . . . Our residents and our village council therefore

demand that these installations be maintained as monuments and memorials for posterity, as well as for a potential tourist attraction in the future."<sup>12</sup> Later, sensing the ineffectiveness of these arguments, Karl appealed on environmentalist grounds, pointing out the threat posed by the dismantling of the fence and service road to the unique vegetation and animal life that had developed along the border region. "The village administration in Kella will not tolerate a dismantling of these installations," he wrote, "for this would mean a massive destruction of flora and fauna."

Stressing orders to dismantle "completely" the former border installations as well as the "not insignificant dangers" the structures allegedly posed to local residents, authorities denied the community's requests.<sup>13</sup> In a move eerily reminiscent of the fenced enclosure of the village pilgrimage chapel in the 1950s—a symbolic and literal demonstration of the socialist state's authority—the border fence was removed from Kella in the summer of 1993.<sup>14</sup>

Local voices were thus ultimately and conclusively silenced in this clash between local and official memories. As David Cohen has noted, struggles over the production of history often entail a "pathology of ownership" (1994: 246). What was being contested here was not only ownership of the actual border fence (a real issue, for the land on which it stood had been returned to private ownership), but also ownership of the form, content, and manner of commemoration. It was, in a sense, a contest over the ownership, appropriation, and meaning of this *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1989), which for locals had been invested with additional meaning after the Wall as an image of suffering.

#### WHAT REMAINS

The physical remains of the past in Kella consist of icons of faith and images of suffering—the wooden cross adorned with barbed wire, the renovated chapel, the crucifixes that mark community boundaries—set against a backdrop of the recent destruction of the landscape and memory through the removal of the former border fence. The gashes

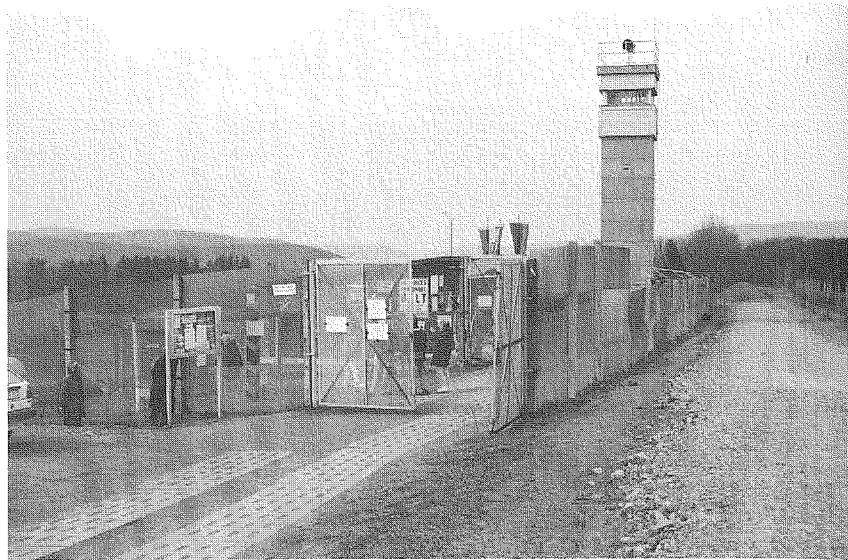


Figure 27. The border museum near the town of Bad Sooden-Allendorf includes a characteristic patrol road, border fencing, and watch tower. (Photograph by the author)

in the earth where the fence and service road were once located will heal, just as vegetation soon covered and nearly concealed the metal fencing once the political border became obsolete in 1989. As the landscape heals, however, evidence of the past will be increasingly effaced, relegated to museums, the officially sanctioned mode of memory and amnesia.

In the numerous border museums that are now scattered along the former border,<sup>15</sup> the past has been neatly arranged, displayed, and distilled (Figure 27). Containing decontextualized objects of the border, including towers, fencing, border-police jeeps, observation stands, signs, and deactivated trip-wire installations, the museums serve not merely to inform but to legitimate the new German nation-state by providing testimony to the necessity of overcoming Germany's division. Indeed, most border museums contain, or are themselves memorials to, "the victims of the division of Germany." One museum, for example, states its mission on a plaque near the entryway: "To overcome the scars of Germany's division

and to do justice to the countless victims of the border." A brochure describing this museum begins:

Although the metal grating, barbed wire, barricades, and trip wires have been dismantled, the land mines removed, [and] the watch towers blown up, . . . everyone who had to live with and suffer under this despicable border that divided Germany for forty years will not forget it. But what about future generations who, thank God, will not know the most perfect and gruesome fortification system in history? Who never saw it or were allowed to see it? This museum is to be maintained . . . as a memorial to a piece of German history.

Many border museums, including the one near Kella, are outgrowths of West German voluntary associations founded long before the fall of the Wall for the purpose of educating visitors about the "peculiarities" of the inter-German border.<sup>16</sup> Intended not only as memorials but also as efforts to fight a kind of "forgetting" that results from what another (eastern German) museum brochure describes as the "disappearance of the border from the landscape," the border museums are visited by Germans from both East and West,<sup>17</sup> including many school classes.

The re-membering of the border in this context—the product of its dis-membering in another—exemplifies certain uses of the past in affirming the present. Or, as Paul Connerton has written in an observation uncannily similar to Werner Schmidt's insight quoted at the beginning of this chapter: "To pass judgment on the practices of the old regime is the constitutive act of the new order" (1989: 7).

The various means and forms of remembering, however—including everyday negotiations of guilt and complicity, alternative memory symbols, and subversive silences—illustrate the inherently interactive, malleable, and contestable nature of memory. What remains of the past in Kella, therefore (as elsewhere in the former GDR), is this ongoing process of production and negotiation of memory, a dynamic that continues to shape and transform people's relationship to their past as it shapes the boundaries, and interstices, of remembering and forgetting.