

# Heidi and the Wall

by John Borneman

*L'auteure analyse l'impact de la disparition du mur de Berlin dans la vie d'une femme est-allemande et de ses trois filles.*

*The promise of a better standard of living enticed large numbers of skilled East German men to the capitalist markets of the West with the result that the GDR's future was increasingly tied to its women.*

Heidi, who will turn 50 next year, is beginning a new life, in a reunited Germany, in a "Europe without borders." Born in 1944, in Cottbus, Eastern Germany, she is an unplanned child of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), one of those women on whose labour the socialist state had staked its future. Already in 1949, the year of the founding of the East German state, GDR leaders concluded that it was in the state's interest to take seriously the socialist ideology of *Gleichberechtigung*, equal rights for men and women. They included an equal rights guarantee in the constitution. They opened the educational system to women a generation before the West German regime did. They engaged in a kind of affirmative action for women, not only encouraging them to take part in *Aufbau*, the rebuilding of the economy and society, but also making it difficult for women to remain, in the language of the time, "only housewives." The regime suspected that there would be much resistance from older women like Heidi's mother, who had never worked outside the home before the war, as well as from adult men, who were unaccustomed to treating women as equals. Indeed, throughout the 1950s, the promise of higher pay, a better standard of living, and more freedoms enticed large numbers of skilled East German men (and some women) to the capitalist markets of the West, which, at that time, favoured labour by men (and housework by women)—with the result that the GDR's future was increasingly tied to its women.

Under these circumstances, Heidi and her mother and her brother stayed in the East. Heidi would be educated in the new schools. She and her brother would benefit from being children of proletarian parents, members of the class that, according to official propaganda, was to take over leadership—sometime in the future. This would make them loyal to the state, so the new state thought. And,

indeed, her brother remained loyal to the state, making a stellar career as a member of the socialist party and manager of a state-owned Kombinat, a trust company. But soon after completion of her studies, Heidi began despising this state, and her hatred grew over the years. Her status as a "chosen" person, and her ambivalence about it, distinguished her from all West German women of her generation, who were not "chosen" but had to contend with the officially sanctioned reassertion of patriarchal social conventions and a phallic state ideology after the war, who had to organize a social movement to fight against this state for a personal stake in the future (see Geibler).

When Heidi was 18 month's old her father died. Eleven years later, she left her mother to live in a boarding school and to study mathematics, a "male" discipline. Heidi says that her experience in the boarding school was formative. It replaced the nuclear family romance, already impaired by her father's early death, with a peculiar Oedipal triangle of state, mommy, me. In this triangulation, the state differed from all prior forms of phallic authority in that it foregrounded its visibility and struggled to establish its legitimacy not in private, behind closed doors, but in public, on a world stage. Heidi knew exactly where her support and where the "Law" was coming from, but she experienced no sense of awe or lack with respect to the state.

West German feminists criticize East German women for lacking a critique of patriarchy, for allowing men to "exploit" them by not demanding of men an equal contribution to child care, for unselfconsciously becoming mothers. But because the East German state initiated the critique of patriarchy, women were not forced to develop their own movement to oppose it. And even though an extremely large percentage of East German women became "mothers," they were never forced into marriage in order to support their children. As for the state, Heidi took for granted her significance to it and to the new order.

The GDR was, after all, a revolutionary state that invoked as the condition of its legitimacy not traditional authority, but a future communist order, with Heidi an integral part of the imagined new center. Marx and Engels may have been iconic fathers of the new state, but this was to be no normal nation-state. In contrast to the legitimization strategy of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), *Rechtsstaatlichkeit*, rule of law, was never a fundamental principle of the GDR's authority, the conditions of rule were neither fixed nor firm. The GDR represented itself as an historical alternative to patriarchy, specifically to the patriarchal authority of West Germany, which in turn represented itself as the successor state of the Third

Reich—with the accompanying benefits and burdens. The GDR constantly drew attention to the contingent and constructed nature of its own powers, emphasizing its newness, denying any continuity with prior German states, rewriting both its civil and criminal code several times, revoking laws within days after passing them, undermining the power of all mythical origins and all fathers. This improvisation and continuous redrawing of borders and boundaries in the effort to create new forms of authority endowed the state with an aura of provisionality. Since its dissolution in October 1990, the

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GDR has been dubbed, both colloquially and in formal legal discourse, a *Grenzregime*, border regime.

When the Wall was erected, in the early morning hours of August 13, 1961, Heidi was still in boarding school, still filled with a youthful enthusiasm about postwar reconstruction. It took six weeks to complete the Wall, and, while Heidi watched with concern the political events and controversy surrounding it, she did not experience them as a delimitation on her freedom. As part of a generation designated heirs to the "idea of communism," Heidi fully identified with the perceived need to secure the border and protect the nascent state. At first she agreed with her vulnerable state that the border and its effect of containment was a precondition for her further growth. Yet, for the next 27 years, she had to endure the 12 kilometers of 1.25 meter high concrete slabs along with 137 kilometers of barbed wire that encircled West Berlin, with an equally well-policed barricade constructed to separate East from West Germany. As Heidi grew into adulthood, her experience of this encirclement changed.

On November 11, 1989, two days after the opening of the border with West Germany, Heidi moved to Rosenheim, a large but sleepy Bavarian village nestled in the mountains midway between Munich and Salzburg. She refers to this radical move simply as *das Wechsel*, the change. Three years later, she decided to separate from her second husband, Sieghard, a medical doctor with whom she lived for 16 years. I arrived at their home two days after Christmas 1993, on the evening that Sieghard moved out.

Sieghard has never had any close friends—one of Heidi's strongest criticisms of him—and therefore, he relied on "the family," meaning Heidi's two oldest daughters, Peggy and Greta, along with Greta's boyfriend, to help him move the heavy furniture. The youngest daughter, Franzi,

who is 12 and Sieghard's only daughter-by-blood, has such a strong aversion to her father that she refused to help in the move. On that evening, Sieghard ran into Franzi in the hallway and asked if she wanted to take a vacation with him sometime the next year. Offended that he would pose this question at this parting moment, as if he had taken no note of the years of coldness on his part and avoidance on hers, Franzi silently turned away and withdrew to her bedroom. The other two daughters remained amiable with Sieghard throughout the move, only too pleased, they told me, to get him out of the house as well as the family, something they had encouraged Heidi to do for years. Without complaint, they lifted furniture twice their own weight the entire evening. I offered to help, but Peggy said that Sieghard would have problems accepting the help of a male stranger visiting her mother. The oldest daughter, Peggy, is 27 and works as a midwife in Hamburg. The middle daughter, Greta, is 22 and in an apprenticeship program to become a potter.

I hid in the kitchen during that part of the evening, reading a book that Heidi had just given me, about the *Treuhand*, the agency set up to administer and privatize state-owned property in the former gdr estimated in early 1990 to be worth 650 billion deutschmarks. Heidi was impressed by the book's documentation of how this valuable property, instead of being sold and the profits distributed (in 1990, estimated at around 40,000 D-Mark (\$25,000) per East German citizen), was either undervalued and sold or given away to western firms by the *Treuhand*. Rather than distribute any money to former citizens of the GDR, the *Treuhand* single-mindedly pursued privatization, which entailed eliminating around 30 per cent of all jobs in eastern Germany. This outcome seems obvious and predictable to me, the outsider with no personal investment in the outcomes of unification. Though Heidi was now an enthusiastic resident of the western part of Germany, she had not become a complete insider, a full *Wessi*. At some very basic level, she still identified with the fate of the former citizens of the former GDR.

Like many of her compatriots, Heidi experienced the final years of the GDR as a social death. Her professional life was blocked, and worse, for her, she was asked to teach lies—teaching mathematics at a local college—about the market, the economy, the health of the state. She clearly saw the state going bankrupt, the economy getting worse, but material wealth had never been that important to Heidi. She wanted something else. Although the state had propagated a "unity of career and motherhood," Heidi had never been able to realize that unity to her satisfaction in her own life. The state's pronatal and pro-women policies had produced mixed results. To be sure, Heidi had been able to give birth to and raise three daughters without consistent support from any particular man and without giving up her career. For that she was thankful. And many women, unlike their male counterparts, stayed in the GDR, unwilling to leave their mothers behind and appreciative

of the training and education they could not have obtained in the West. Yet the demands of raising three girls, a task of which Heidi is proud to have taken up and in no way regrets, consistently placed restrictions on her occupational advancement, leading her ultimately to settle for a minor teaching post. By the mid 1980s her marriage had become merely a habit and stymied her personal development, though Heidi admitted this to me and to her daughters, and perhaps to herself, only recently. Her daughters had not experienced the enthusiasm and intensity that Heidi had had in the boarding school in the *Aufbau* years; they lacked any sense of attachment to Cottbus or to their friends.

By 1988, Heidi had made up her mind to leave, it was only a matter of when and how. Sieghard went along with the decision, but, disturbed by the specter of unemployment and financial insecurity in West Germany, he would have preferred to stay. The obvious way to leave was to obtain approval to visit a relative in the West: *Familienangelegenheiten* (family occasions) were one of the priority grounds listed by the state for travel. Heidi selected her aunt's 80th birthday in 1989. The date for the planned trip was November 11. After about a year of paper-shuffling through the labyrinth of bureaucracies, both she and Sieghard obtained permission, first from their employers, then from the state and the state's security apparatus, to travel with the entire family to Rosenheim. Heidi told

only one person, an old friend from the boarding school, that she did not intend on returning. She and her family told none of their neighbours, nor any of their colleagues at work or school. Silently, working conspiratively as a family unit, they discretely sold a few large items of furniture, the automobile, and planned to leave all the rest behind—photo albums, clothes, china, their entire material history—for fear that the approval to travel would be denied if it appeared that they were leaving for good.

From the time of the building of the Wall in 1964, travel of East Germans to the West was restricted to prominent persons or to *Reisekader*, those officially approved as trustworthy. An agreement reached in 1964 allowed retired persons to visit West Berlin or West Germany once a year. Not until the late 1960s, when former Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt initiated *Ostpolitik* did the GDR begin expanding the limited opportunities available for some of its citizens to travel to the West. His strategy of *Annäherung durch Wandel*, Change through Rapprochement, contrasted sharply with the prior Christian Democratic strategy of *Abgrenzungspolitik*, Politics of Demarcation. The category of visits regulated by an agreement between West Berlin and the GDR, signed on December 20, 1971, referred to *dringende Familienangelegenheiten*, pressing family events. Possible grounds for visits included baptisms, marriages, life-threatening illnesses, death of parents, siblings, and children, wedding anniversaries, and birthdays. These familial categories created an entirely new dynamic between citizens and the state, as well as constituting a form in which the desire to cross the Wall was legal.

In the following decade, however, pressure to travel, or alternately, to leave, grew so intense that the GDR expanded its system of selling disgruntled citizens to the Federal Republic. In 1974, for example, it doubled the number of ransomed political prisoners to 1,100 from the 630 ransomed the year before. By 1984, it again came up with a new strategy, not only doubling the number of ransomed political prisoners (from 1,105 in 1983 to 2,236 in 1984) but also authorizing a mass release of would-be migrants (from 7,729 in 1983 to 37,323 in 1984) (Wendt). This emigration (including isolated cases of coerced exile) did not, however, function as the state intended, as a so-called "social safety valve." Ridding itself of its most unhappy citizens did not relieve the state of the pressure to make its borders more permeable. Instead, each successive exodus created visible absences in friendship circles and work units within the gdr, and thus generated dissatisfaction among those who remained. This pressure for expanded movement was also not relieved by increasing the number of permissible visits per year, nor by enlarging the category of people permitted to travel to the West and to return. These permissible visits did not exceed 60,000 until 1986, when, in the liberalization coinciding with Erich Honecker's first visit to the West, 573,000 visits were allowed. The number of visits



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increased to 900,000 in 1987, with the category "family" often broadly and arbitrarily extended by officials to friends and acquaintances (Borneman 1992). Under the rubric "family," Heidi applied to visit her mother's only sister on her birthday. Although they had exchanged letters over the years, they had never met before. Not attaching any particular importance to blood ties, Heidi had no idea what to expect.

I held these visits and this travel policy to be cruel jokes. It was the ultimate absurdity that the GDR, a state founded on socialist principles of universal brotherhood, would

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attempt to "liberalize" policy in this way to meet both the rising expectations of its own citizens to travel as well as to comply with provisions of international agreements on "bringing families together" that it had signed in return for international recognition, culminating in the Helsinki Accords of 1975. This "liberalization" was not only a betrayal of its earlier principles of fairness and inclusion based on need and performance, but also an affirmation of the principle of *jus sanguinis*, blood-based descent, a racist categorization that had served the national socialist government particularly well in its extermination policies, and remained the legal principle of FRG citizenship. It was also the legal rationale behind West Germany's insistence that all GDR citizens had an automatic right to FRG citizenship, since they, too, were Germans by blood. Heidi knew all this, but, despite her moral reservations, she also knew that her blood-based membership as the only legal category available that might make it possible or her to leave.

Two weeks before the scheduled trip, Heidi's mother died:

*The trip to my aunt then took on added significance. I don't know how I made it through that week. I also had to do everything for Sieghard, I knew he wouldn't have the strength to organize the move himself. And I had to arrange for the funeral of my mother, her death hit me real hard, I'm still working through the loss. I swear I didn't sleep the whole last week before leaving. On the day after the Wall opened I was teaching. A few of the students took the day off to go to West Berlin, but most were still there. We had a marvellous, open discussion about the future. Suddenly all the barriers were gone. And my colleagues! Those who had been most ideological were suddenly very insecure, as if overnight they could see their futures change.*

Heidi's aunt lived alone, widowed and childless. Yet, she feared the visit of Heidi and her family, or at least that is what Heidi sensed. She feared that this visit would change something. "What do they want from us?" was the refrain that Heidi suspected played repeatedly in her aunt's mind. "We didn't accept a single thing from her," Heidi told me.

*And now I'm her best friend. She relies on me for everything—she has no one else. And it is so hard for her to accept help from me, from an East German relative. But I'll make her take it, she has no choice. She has no one else to turn to.*

For Heidi and her family, then, the opening of the Wall came unexpectedly and suddenly, in the very middle of an exodus that they had planned for over a year. It didn't however, make this planning superfluous.

*When we arrived in the West, I said we would do it all ourselves. We got 250 D-Mark from the state and that's it. We didn't stay in a camp. We didn't ask for anything. And things were tight. We barely got by. A friend gave us a small loan that we paid back as soon as we got work. I was so ashamed by the behaviour of the other East Germans, in the camps and before the authorities who were trying to assist us. They demanded, "Where are the cigarettes?" "I want some beer!" As if it was their right! They hadn't earned those things. They were gifts. It was Bavarian money, not theirs!*

*And then, how they would always insist they were Ossis—[the term used in daily speech to distinguish Easterners from Westerners (Wessis) as character type]—in order to get special privileges, or to explain away their ignorance! If they wanted to travel somewhere, they'd just get on the train; and when caught without a ticket, they'd say, "I'm from the East." I never said that, and nobody, not once, has ever suspected that I come from the East. The same holds true for my daughters. If someone asks me something and I don't know, I don't say, "I'm from the East." I just say, "I don't know."*

I asked Heidi if people assumed that Sieghard comes from the East.

*He's a wonderful doctor, you cannot fault him there. But, oh yes, they know he's from the East. And he's not done with that history yet. It's very hard for him here. He emphasizes his East Germanness, his helplessness. I think he longs for the security he had in the East, but that's no real option for him, he won't return. He had no friends there either. I was everything for him: cook, bedpartner, maid, I bought his clothes. But he never knew me, and what he knew he didn't like. I waited until he received a secure job contract before asking him for a separation. And his reaction? Nothing. I gave him a chance to change. Nothing affects him. He's totally closed. Now*

*he's got a good job, a permanent one, and he's planning his retirement, waiting for death. He wanted to plan my retirement, too, but I want to live, finally, for myself, to find out what I really want.*

During breakfast on the morning after Sieghard left, Heidi said she wanted to say something. I thought it was private, and got up to leave, but she said, "Stay, you can use it for your research." Surprised and somewhat embarrassed, I sat back down. There we were, the three daughters, myself, Heidi, and Klaus, Heidi's West German

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business partner of the last several years and lover as of the last six months. She hadn't told Sieghard about him. "It would have been too much for him," she explained, "and if he'd known he would never have separated from me. Besides, I'd made up my mind long before Klaus and I got involved. It took me a long time to convince myself that Klaus was really interested in me." He is 17 years younger than she, married, and has two children.

What Heidi wanted to say that morning at breakfast was that there were problems with Sieghard's leaving that were not yet, in her words, *bewältigt* (reckoned with/come to terms with). She told us now, at this point in her life, she desired above all freedom for herself. She also wanted the girls to be independent of her, and, she said, she wanted to talk about the consequences of this divorce, its effects on the girls. She had new projects that she was pursuing, one of which is to help Russian and Ukrainian artists who write children's books and draw comics. The disintegration of the Soviet Union has resulted in the collapse of these particular state-supported industries. Rather than see them employed as street cleaners, Heidi is now employing some in her business, as well as subsidizing them in their free time. She is doing this out of conviction and does not expect to make any money from it. Her long soliloquy lasted about a half an hour. At the end, Franz got up and quietly walked out. Peggy, her oldest daughter, began crying. And Greta, the middle daughter, sat in the middle, mediating rather unsuccessfully between the fronts.

At that breakfast, Peggy complained that Heidi was admonishing her for not getting involved in the divorce and separation. She insisted that the divorce was Heidi's affair and not hers, that Heidi should have separated from Sieghard long ago. Peggy supported Heidi in whatever she did, but, she added, she would never have put up with 17 years of marriage to Sieghard. She also felt that [her

mother was too strong for her,] that Heidi's strength was overwhelming, and therefore she had to distance herself from Heidi's affairs. The same, she said was true of her birth-father, a doctor and former high official in the Socialist party, who insisted that Peggy's affairs were always of concern to him—and this, despite having dumped her and Greta on her mother after their divorce. For six years Peggy had had no contact with her father; yet, when Peggy turned 18 and suggested that she wanted to leave the GDR, her father told her not to go because it would endanger his career. "In early 1989," said Peggy bitterly, "he was the first one (of us) to go to the West when he obtained the privilege (as *Reisekader*)."

I have known Peggy since she began her education as a mid-wife. She is giving that career up to return to school to study ethnology. She explains her fascination with other cultures as partly due to her years of being unable to travel outside the former GDR, but also, she had always sought out international friends, whom she finds more interesting than fellow Germans. She does not plan on marrying, nor on making the same mistakes with men that her mother did, but instead likes to think of herself as open to experiments in life style. Upon resettling to the West at the same time as the rest of her family, Peggy initially found work in Heidelberg; but she found the city too small and provincial and has since moved to Hamburg. All of her friends are now people born and raised in the West, and Peggy never tells people that she was raised in the East. "Why tell them?" she explained to me. "It would only provide certain stereotypes for them to think about me. They never suspect that I come from the East, and I don't offer the information."

Both Greta and Heidi accuse Peggy of thinking herself superior to them. Now completing an apprenticeship as a graphic artist, Greta has been involved with a man from Rosenheim several years older than her for the last three years. She broke off the relationship once, though, because she doubted his commitment to her. Within a couple of months he begged to get together again, insisting that she was the one for him. Greta admitted to me that she dominates the relationship, does all the initiating and planning, which, she said, is true of all women she knows well. She and her boyfriend plan on staying in Rosenheim. "It's not an exciting place," Greta explained, "but we're happy here. It's beautiful. There's work." Peggy accused Greta of remaining with this friend only because she really wanted to be with him. Greta responded by accusing Peggy of arrogance, and ultimately, said Greta, addressing Peggy's criticism, "that is why people get and remain together anyway."

I, along, with Klaus, sat in silence during the accusations and counter-accusations, the tears, the pain. At times we were asked to intervene, which we staunchly refused. Later, I tried to sort out the influence of division and unification on this family, the limitations and possibilities opened for them due to their peculiar positioning. Certainly, division initially worked to Heidi's benefit, in that

she had access to and support for education unavailable to most women in the West. But was Heidi's divorce a necessary consequence of not just the move, but of German unification? Did the dissolution of the two-state structure create the possibility for more diverse personal trajectories among the East Germans, including separate developments within and not merely between families? Should one view this divorce, therefore, not only as a loss for Sieghard, but also as a rare opportunity for a middle-aged woman? And what were the reasons, other than birth-order, behind Heidi's passions, Peggy's need for autonomy, Greta's accommodations, and Franz's oblivion?

The collapse of the Wall has perhaps permanently changed the terms in which the historical tension between liberty and security are perceived and experienced. While removal of the border has indeed created more liberty for nearly all East Germans, it has also introduced tremendous insecurity into the world of work and the personal lives of many, which in turn has exacerbated many of the divisions among former East Germans as well as spawned many new ones. These divisions go beyond the well-publicized stories of Stasi complicity and personal betrayals, of family spy scandals where the spy alternately protected someone and limited their advancement (Segert 1993). To "come to terms with history," as Heidi proposed to her daughters, would mean pausing and reflecting on ways in which complicity, betrayal, and opposition were lived as part of a hierarchical system of role allocation, to clarify the personal gains and losses incurred living in the Cold War system of national (in)security states. On the other hand, the new opportunities opened to Heidi and her daughters are available to the extent that they have distanced themselves from their histories and place in the former GDR, to the extent that others no longer identify them with their pasts. Given their own alienation from the East, this distancing was easier for Heidi and her daughters than for most others, like Sieghard, and it explains to some degree their success. Indeed, they have never returned to Cottbus for a visit, and even refuse to visit West Berlin. The adjustments are also made easier in that their yearning for liberty was never very cleanly mapped onto a desire to travel abroad, and their disdain for boundaries extended well beyond those of the territorial state. Also, their relative unconcern for security is in accord with the demands of the enlarged Federal Republic Germany, which, freed of the competitive pressure from the socialist East, is now limiting and even dismantling many of welfare state (re: internal national security) policies enacted during the Cold War (see Lemke and Marks 1992).

When I asked Franz, who is now sixteen, what she plans on doing after finishing school, she said, go to the university, perhaps in Bavaria, or maybe in Switzerland. She, too, is already looking away from her past, to the West and South instead of East and North. I asked her if she still had contact with any old friends in Cottbus. "No," she replied. Did she miss anyone or anything there, I asked. "No," she

said, with a kind of nonchalance that seemed to me unstrained.

The dynamics of gender, sexuality and nation in former socialist countries, like East Germany, is frequently oversimplified by observers from West countries, who think that they recognize prior versions of themselves in the East. One popular version of these dynamics is that while time generally stood still in the East, women did change some, men not at all (see Borneman 1993a, b, c). The logic goes that while Western Europe promoted positive nation-building and cultural change during the Cold War, socialist regimes suppressed nationalist sentiment and all forms of social movements. Therefore, according to this version, the eruption of suppressed nationalist sentiment, or the re-assertion of traditional gender norms and behaviours, or the proliferation of sexualities, was to be expected once the Iron Curtain came up (for a refutation of this thesis as regards Romania, see Verdery 1991). We might begin correcting this version by taking into account the complex and changing nature of differentiation during the Cold War, the interplay of gender, sex, and nation as three loosely articulated systems of differences. This dynamics was by no means the same in each of the East European countries. Certainly, the socialist "bloc" existed at the state level, but within that bloc the dialectic between security and liberty was inflected by divergent lived histories. For example, socialist ideology did not impact alike on the radically different gender systems in the north (cf. Poland) and south (cf. Serbia); sexual practices changed significantly in East Germany but the whole subject remained relatively taboo in Romania; nationality was a very difficult and schizophrenic identity in East Germany but obtained added coherence in state policy in Poland and Bulgaria. In the case of the divided Germany, Cold War oppositions worked to exacerbate all three systems of difference.

The German-German border influenced men and women equally, neither was left standing still in time. Oppositional nation-building processes provided a meta-framework in which social identities unfolded. Arguably, with the death of Hitler and the "unconditional surrender of the nation" (or, the "collapse," as it is still frequently designated), the "law of the father" no longer held. But to lose this father-function did not necessarily harm "men." Many men also fought for women's rights, especially in the 1950s in certain social classes in the East, and in the 1970s as part of a generation conflict in the West. On the other hand, loss of the father-function did change "men," as it also changed the conditions under which "women," like Heidi, developed. Heidi's first husband tried to preserve his father-function and the power inherent in that position. Whatever gains this may have meant to his career were counterbalanced by his loss of a relationship not only with his wife but also with his daughters. Heidi's second husband, Sieghard, had a more ambivalent, if not passive, relationship to the "father;" but he, too, failed to construct a positive alternative for himself to pre-war notions of

German masculinity, and he, too, paid dearly for his lack of imagination.

For both men, notions of male (and female) sexuality seem to have changed even less than notions of gender. With respect to the relation of the loss/death of the "father" to the experiencing of alternative sexualities, East and West differed considerably. The intense generation conflict of West German men and women in the 1960s often revolved explicitly around a "reckoning with the past," meaning the death of the "father," and around sexual experimentation as social provocation (cf. Borneman 1992). Heidi's attraction to a young West German man who has benefitted from his sexual experimentation as part of a historical dynamic and who does not seek to assert traditional forms of "male" authority may largely be explained in these terms.

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LYN LIFSHIN

### Stefanya, A Polish Girl

I was 16 years old.  
My parents had been  
carried out to labor camps.  
We had little food.  
I'd seen a whole family  
hanged for hiding Jews,  
but I had to help—  
to share our few crumbs.  
People keep asking me  
why I could have risked  
hiding so many.  
My parents told me,  
*It doesn't matter,*  
*when it comes to people.*  
*If you can help,*  
*don't hesitate.*  
*it doesn't matter*  
*about money or religion.*  
*There is one God.*  
When I saw what  
the ss was doing,  
I knew it was terribly wrong.  
One man came,  
asked for one night of shelter.  
He had jumped from  
a running train that was  
on the way to a camp.  
Even after the Gestapo  
took over part of our rooms,  
my six year old sister  
and I had to help.  
Who else will teach humanity  
if they see only killing?  
Soon we were hiding  
thirteen people.  
After two years of terror  
we were liberated.  
We all survived.  
Then Joseph,  
one I helped,  
asked me to marry him.  
He didn't want to leave me

*Lyn Lifshin's poetry appears earlier in this volume.*