



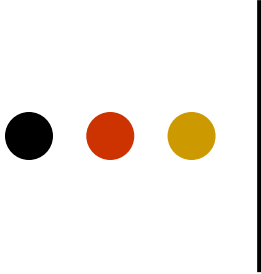
## Preserving historical Memory – how to deal with dark pasts

Remembrance/memory needs places, faces, voices, stories

Dr. Anna Kaminsky, Director Federal Foundation for the study of communist dictatorships

International Conference Taiwan, 9-10 december 2025





# What is Transitional Justice? What does „dealing with the past“ mean?

- Examination of the causes, history and consequences of dictatorships and violent regimes and pasts
  - Legal investigation and prosecution
    - Victims (rehabilitation and compensation) and perpetrators (clearing responsibilities and
  - Preservation of evidencies
    - Documents, archives, places of repression
  - Social dealing with the past
    - education, outreach, research, remembrance



## Balance of legal processes after 1989/1990 in Germany regarding communist dictatorship

- 250.000 political prisoners; hundres thousands of so called administrative repressed people
- Balance:
  - 100.000 proceedings and investigations
  - 1.000 processes and tribunals
  - 70 senteneces
  - 14 people condemned to detention
- Problems how State of law can deal with injustice and crimes of former regimes (statute of limitations, burden of proof etc.)



## Forms of dealing with the past/ TJ

Every country/society has to find its own way:

Aiming for: transparency, education, research, public awareness, sometimes: reconciliation

- Truth-commissions (Chile, South-Africa)
- Reconciliation(-Commissions) (South Africa) to avoid further hostility in society
- Inquiry-commission (Germany)
- Tribunals (Nuremberg Germany after Nazi-Regime 1946; Cambodia)
- „Silencing the past“ (Silence-pacts) Spain, Argentina

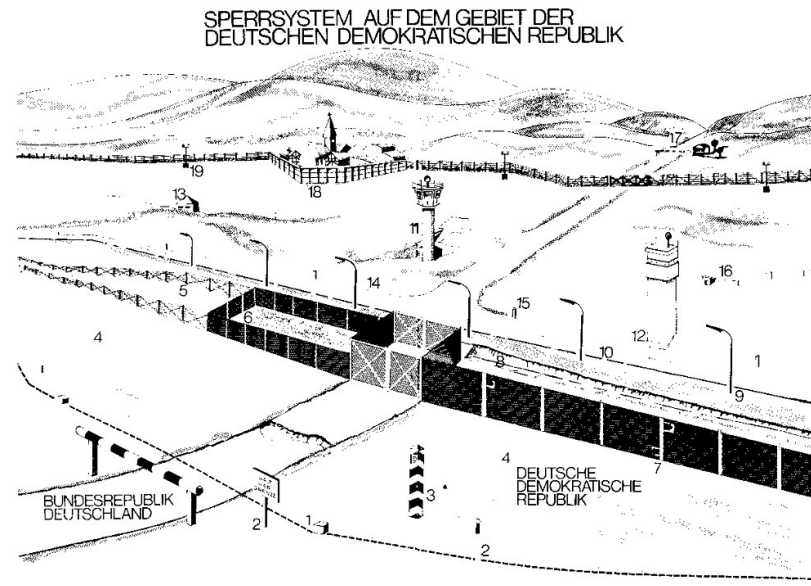


# Instruments

- Legal processes
- Opening files and archives to public access (especially files of secret police)
  - To enable and initiate and stimulate research and education
  - Preserve and open former places of repression like prisons, camps, centrals of repressive institutions a.s.o. and transform them into memorials
- 5 ● Open debates and ceremonial acts

# Germany: Divided Past, common present

1933 – 1945 Nazi- Germany with crimes against humanity; 1945 – 1990 German division as one result of Nazi-crimes and World War II; communist dictatorship only in the eastern part



#### Erläuterungen

- 1 Grenzverlauf mit Grenzsteinen
- 2 Warnschild bzw. Grenzhinweisfahle unmittelbar vor dem Grenzverlauf
- 3 DDR-Markierungssäule (etwa 1,80 m hoch, schwarz-rot-gold mit DDR-Emblem)
- 4 bis zu 100 m breiter Geländestreifen (abgeholzt und geräumt)
- 5 Zweireihiger Stacheldrahtzaun (Zwischenraum vermint)
- 6 Zweireihiger Metallgitterzaun (etwa 2,40 m hoch) (Zwischenraum vermint)
- 7 Einreihiger Metallgitterzaun (etwa 3,20 m hoch) mit Selbstschußanlagen
- 8 Kitz-Sperrgraben (mit Betonplatten befestigt)
- 9 6 m breiter Spuren-Sicherungsstreifen
- 10 Kolonnenweg
- 11 Beobachtungsturm
- 12 Beton-Beobachtungsturm mit Führungspunkt
- 13 Beton-Beobachtungsbunker
- 14 Lichtsperrle
- 15 Grenzmeldenetz
- 16 Hundelaufanlage
- 17 Kontrollpassierpunkt
- 18 Betonspermmauer/Sichtblende (etwa 5,30 m hoch)
- 19 Schutzstreifenzaun mit elektrischen und akustischen Signalanlagen



# West – East: Divided past but common memory and present

*Western Germany:  
Bundesrepublik  
Deutschland (West)*

Western allied occupation  
zon (USA, Great Britain,  
France); chance for  
democratic development;  
free elections, democratic  
rights, freedom,

*Eastern Germany: Deutsche  
Demokratische Republik  
(Proletarian Diktatorship)*

Occupied by  
communist/stalinist Soviet  
Union

New dictatorship following  
soviet model; one party ruled;  
lack of democratic rights and  
freedom, broad surveillance  
by secret police Stasi

● ● ●

# Removal – renaming - reframing: Former Lenin square – act. Square of United Nations in Berlin



Lenin Monument at the former Lenin Square

Source: Gemeinfrei,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1421138>



Square of the United Nations

Source:  
Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany

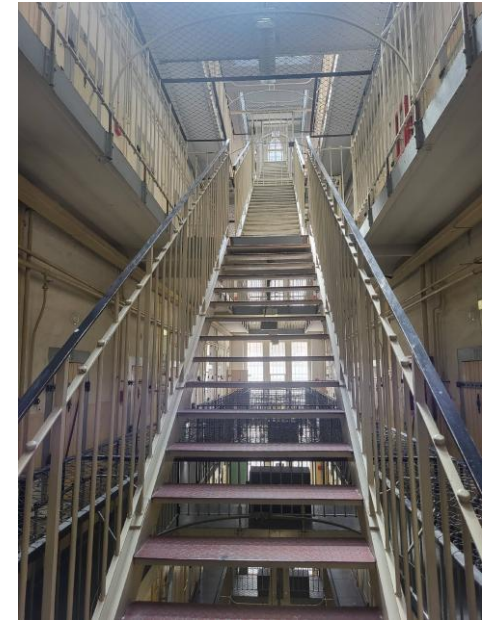
# ● ● ● | Memorials: Berlin Wall, borderline, prisons



**Berliner Mauer in Großbeeren**

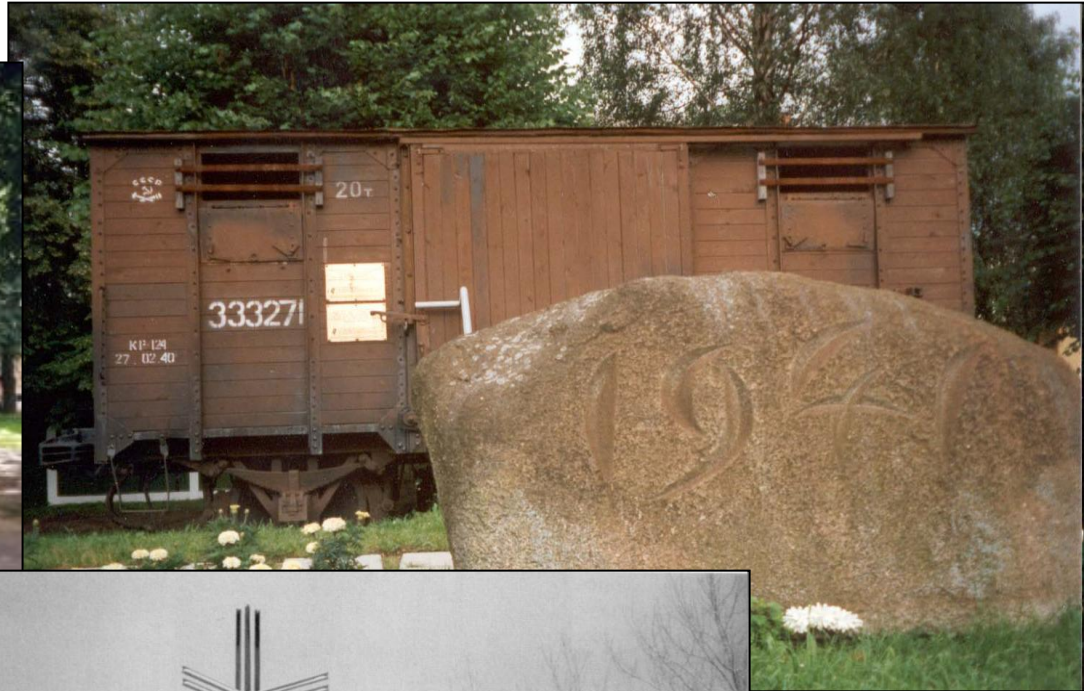
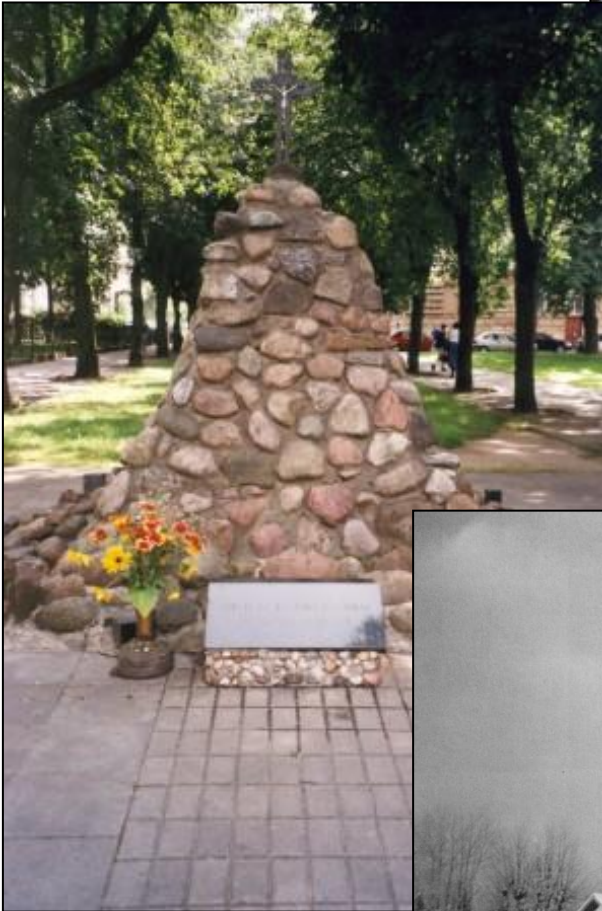


**Außengelände Grenzlandmuseum Eichsfeld**



**Innenansicht des Hafthauses von Bautzen II**

Establishing new monuments remembering formerly tabuised crimes and victims: Monuments of Mass-Deportations and killings after soviet occupation in 1940/1941 in Vilnius, Riga and Riisti



Memorials commemorating the victims of the deportations of 1940/41 in the Baltic States

Vilnius (Lithuania)

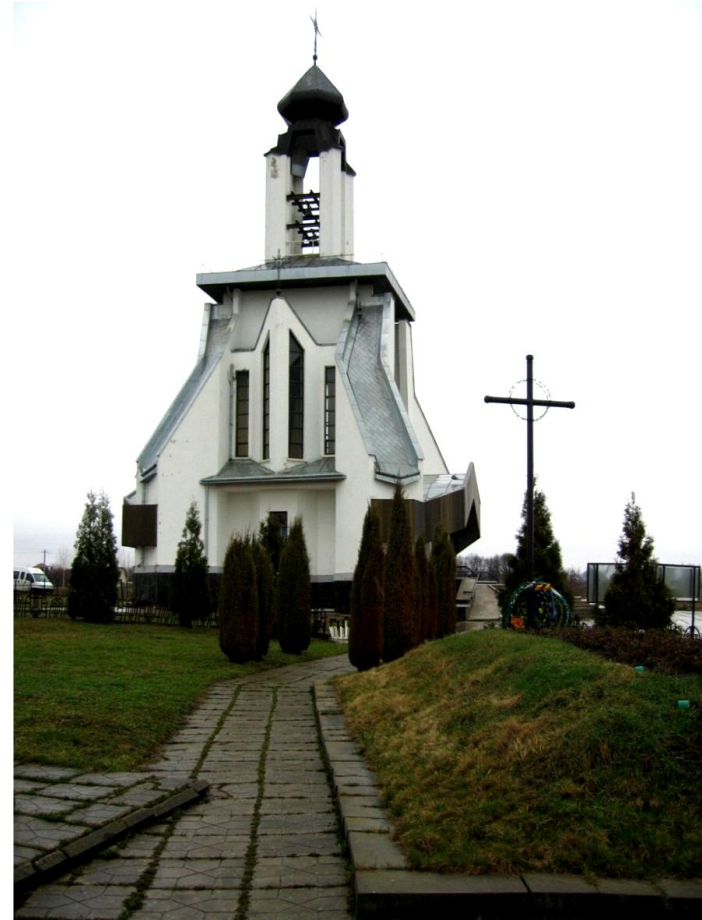
Riga (Latvia)

Riisti (Estonia)

● ● ●

# Belated remembrance of former tabuised and hidden crimes and memories: Renaissance of religious and cultural/national symbols and narratives

Memorial for the victims of the Suchanowka prison in Moscow



Dem'ianiv Laz at Ivano-Frankivsk



Mound in honor of Ukraine's independence in Horodenka

● ● ●

# Parallel Remembrance: Monuments still at place: Marx in Chemnitz, Thälmann in Berlin 2025; Lenin in Schwerin



Marx monument in Chemnitz



Lenin monument in Schwerin



Thälmann monument in Berlin

Source: Von Niteshift (talk) - Selbst fotografiert, CC BY 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2801809>

- ● ●

# How to deal? Chiang Kai-Chek in Taipei



● ● ●

# Art projects putting monuments and statues in a dialogue with their crimes: „Muzeon“ Park of Arts in Moscow & Daxi Sculpture Park in Taiwan



„Muzeon“ Park of Arts at New Tretjakow Gallery in Moscow



Daxi Sculpture Park in Taoyuan in Taiwan



Source: Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany

# Still: Parallel public memories: Soviet monuments: Vilnius, Wroclaw, Riga, Tallinn



f.r.t.l.:  
Memorial of Red Army soldiers at Antakalnis cemetery in Vilnius (removed 2022)

“Victory Monument“ at the Victory Park in Riga (removed 2022)

Maarjamäe Memorial in Tallinn

Soviet War Cemetery Wroclaw

Source: Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany

● ● ● | **How to deal? „Guerilla Art“: Sofia 2011 ff.  
Monument of soviet „liberators“ of Bulgaria**



● ● ●  
Harmonized past: Not all was bad  
Insatisfaction with life and missing perspectives during communist dictatorship got forgotten – problems of transformation dominating memories





# Competition of memories

According to the “Faulenbach Formula”, debates in Germany on confronting the communist dictatorship are often shaped by the concern that addressing communist rule might relativize Nazi regime — which, in turn, has led to the trivialization or downplaying of the communist dictatorship.

Now, there is a new form of memory competition. Between milder communist past by families often disappointed in their expectations of democracy so that there is a competition of family narratives vs. research.

# Youth competition: Times of transformation and We in East and West; understand communism

„Umbruchszeiten“ und „Wir in Ost und West“

