

historians such as Felix Römer (*Comrades* [2019]) and Jeff Rutherford (*Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front* [2014]). These scholars emphasize the primacy of military necessity over ideology in the war of annihilation in the Soviet Union. In this interpretation, the Wehrmacht engaged in genocidal practices in the East, even though the acceptance of genocidal ideology by the officers and men was far from universal. One striking example Willems offers is that the Army Group Center, which eventually retreated into East Prussia, had “transported” (although “enslaved” would be a more accurate term) more than half a million Soviet civilians to the Third Reich by October 1943 (86). They did so in order to deny potential manpower to the Red Army and to increase German manpower in factories. As Willems rightfully argues, the Wehrmacht could not completely unlearn its conduct and how it viewed civilians when the army crossed the border into East Prussia.

Willems’ insights are original and helpful in thinking about how the Wehrmacht waged war on German soil. However, in my view he takes the concept of necessity too far in trying to explain the Wehrmacht’s conduct. Willems demonstrates that the German army was brutal to perceived malingerers and defeatists and that it displayed criminal indifference to German civilians seeking to flee further west, as it always prioritized the interests of the military, while characterizing commanders’ approach to German civilians as “criminally negligent” (241). As examples of continuity in genocidal practices from the Soviet Union to East Prussia, Willems also cites the presence of 600,000 Hiwis (Soviet auxiliaries) in the Wehrmacht, the flooding of urban areas to slow down the Red Army, the deployment of Jewish and Polish prisoners to build defensive positions, and the looting and destruction of property. All of these are valid points, but none indicate that the Wehrmacht targeted Germans in the war of annihilation. There were no mass shootings of German civilians or systematic burnings of German villages. Clearly, the trail of physical and human destruction the Wehrmacht left in the Soviet Union was greater than in Germany, even based on evidence Willems offers. Thus, military necessity can only go so far to explain the German army’s treatment of civilians.

Overall, *Violence in Defeat* is a vital contribution to our understanding of how the war ended in the East, and anybody interested in the Eastern Front and the Third Reich’s downfall should read it.

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At the Edge of the Wall: Public and Private Spheres in Divided Berlin

By Hanno Hochmuth. Translated by David Burnett. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2021. Pp. xiii + 350. Cloth \$145.00. ISBN: 978-1789208740.

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Contrary to expectations, this is less a book about the Berlin Wall (or “antifascist protection barrier”) than about the urban cultures and identities immediately on either side of it. Hanno Hochmuth’s focus on the neighbouring boroughs of Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg is more apparent in his German title: *Kiezgeschichte*. The term “Kiez” conveys the unique sense of identity and belonging that the streets and bars of a particular neighbourhood can engender, even to less deeply embedded tourists and outsiders. In exploring how the

systemic divide (between communism and capitalism) impacted on adjacent, predominantly working-class districts, Hochmuth focuses particularly on housing, Protestant community engagement, and popular forms of leisure/entertainment. Chronologically, the book spans from the 1860s, when the tenements were first built, to 2017, when the key threat to both districts came from unrelenting gentrification.

The book is part solid (sometimes overly stolid) social history, focused on infrastructure like housing blocks, pubs, and churches, and part a vivid and dynamic history of changing communities. Here, Hochmuth is alive to the suggestion that Prenzlauer Berg might have offered a better comparison than Friedrichshain. He nevertheless skilfully shows how, in Kreuzberg, the fabric of the community radically altered in the aftermath of the border hardening in August 1961. The now-impassable border “encased” (51) the once-central district, robbing the one-time “economic powerhouse” (54) of its *raison d’être*. Important industries left, taking their skilled labour with them. The borough’s low-rent marginality attracted a transient population of low-income migrant families and students, many escaping the West German draft. Hochmuth rates Paul Betts’ study of private life in the GDR as ground-breaking but only partially emulates its approach.

From the late 1960s, neglect and atrophy merged with sporadic slum clearance, altering the face and character of Kreuzberg. If, as Hochmuth suggests, the squatter movement was partly spawned by pastor Klaus Duntze’s pursuit of constructive disruption, it rapidly developed into a Frankenstein-style monster, with its own logic and destructive power, geared up for bitter urban conflict.

In June 1987, from a podium at the Brandenburg Gate, President Ronald Reagan famously called on his Soviet counterpart, Mikhail Gorbachev, to tear down the wall. Contrasting events that occurred a few weeks earlier, on May 1, 1987 in both East and West Berlin, Hochmuth demonstrates that, of the two districts he studies, it was Kreuzberg that appeared dysfunctional and out of control. The extremer end of the squatter/alternative culture spectrum marked Berlin’s 750th anniversary by engaging in twenty-four hours of vicious rioting, arson, and looting. This created an odd inversion: “The repressive system of rule in the East met with partial acceptance, whereas the democratically elected state authorities in West Berlin sometimes proved incapable of entering a fruitful, peaceful dialogue with the citizens of Kreuzberg” (5).

After the wall did come down in November 1989, appearing in retrospect to affirm Reagan’s prophetic vision, many of the Kreuzberg squatters moved to Friedrichshain. They were attracted by the unique petri dish for social experimentation and rapid change created by the East German government’s collapse. Unfamiliar with what was involved in dealing with such an intractable problem and weakened by the collapse of coherent government structures, the People’s Police were unsure what to do, creating a “legal vacuum” (281). Suddenly faced with a loud and extrovert alternative culture, including a “queer tower,” many local residents were outraged and aggrieved. Their East German culture/habitus of patiently waiting for housing and other resources in a queue clashed with the more immediate forms of gratification seized by the Western anarchists. Their new neighbours were not alone in seeing this chaotic, transplanted collective as despotic. The East German squatters initially welcomed their Western counterparts but quickly found the latter fatally prone to violence and utterly unwilling to compromise. An initial, euphoric sense of sympathy and solidarity gave way to a feeling that, not without success, an invasive culture was trying to colonize them. After the development of pitched battles with right-wing extremist counter-squatters in Lichtenberg, the left-wingers began fortifying their squats.

When responsibility for dealing with the violent squatters was returned to the West Berlin police, on October 3, 1990, the battle lines for an epic conflict between irreconcilable forces were formed. As police special forces stormed the buildings, the squatters hurled Molotov cocktails from the roofs. With trenches dug and trams on fire, the situation resembled a civil war. In retrospect, the severity of the clashes marked the end of the squatter movement’s ability to continue defying the state.

Overall, this is a fascinating but uneven book. The parts dealing with the two districts before and immediately after the wall are less weighty but more evocative. Hochmuth's local study problematizes and complexifies the simple binary of East and West, dictatorship vs. democracy. He diligently explores public and private spheres, but his sources for these make the discussion quite episodic, uneven and variable. In part, he was hampered by different collecting policies of the local museums and different rules on access to official sources in East and West. Using interviews and photographs as well as written documents, his microhistory can zero in on individual housing blocks, pubs, churches, and pastors but sometimes gets lost in the detail. He chose not to explore employment, welfare provision, migration, or media provision, each of which could have been an interesting object of comparison. Although mentioned, Turkish residents of Kreuzberg get relatively little attention. With "backhoes" and "streetcars," David Burnett translates some of Hochmuth's poignant and symbolically important details into a – further removed, and for my taste less vivid – American idiom (285). Nevertheless, the unique historical experiment created by separating these municipal twins is fascinating.

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“Polen geben wir nicht Preis”. Der Kampf der DDR-Führung gegen die Solidarność 1980/81

By Filip Gańczak. Translated from Polish by Saskia Herklotz. Leiden and Boston: Brill/Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020. Pp. xxvi + 380. Hardback €78.00. ISBN: 978-3506704283.

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When *Solidarność* (Solidarity) emerged on August 31, 1980 as the first non-communist trade union in Eastern Europe, it immediately made headlines worldwide. When martial law was introduced in December 1981, the same thing occurred. Polish scholarship has centered on *Solidarność* as an aspect of Polish history of protest and revolution, while scholars of communism have considered it within the context of the weakening and eventual fall of communist regimes. In recent years, however, there is also a growing scholarship considering its history within an international, even global, context. Scholars such as Idesbald Goddeeris have looked at the international connections of the Solidarity movement. Now Filip Gańczak contributes to this body of work with his close study and analysis of the decision-making process in the leadership circles in the German Democratic Republic during the critical time of the existence of *Solidarność* between 1980 and 1981. His analysis contributes to an understanding of the impact this perceived threat to the communist order in Eastern Europe had on its neighbors, thereby linking it to the larger discussion about the role *Solidarność* played in international politics and as a catalyst to crisis in the Eastern Block.

As Gańczak points out, the emergence of and the crisis surrounding *Solidarność* presented a very serious issue for the leadership of the GDR on multiple levels. Drawing on rational actor theories in political science and history by, among others, Ziemowit Jacek Pietraś, Graham Allison, and Philip Zelikow, Gańczak engages with concerns about decision-making processes, considering both the decisive inflow of information as well as the determining personalities involved in the decision making during this brief but tense time period.