

**ABOUT "THE RUSSIANS" AND ABOUT US:  
The Question of Rape and Soviet-German Relations in the  
Soviet Zone of Occupation**

Norman M. Naimark  
Stanford University



The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research  
910 17<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20006

TITLE VIII PROGRAM

### Project Information\*

**Contractor:** Boston University  
**Principal Investigator:** Norman Naimark  
**Council Contract Number:** 802-14  
**Date:** May 1991

### Copyright Information

Individual researchers retain the copyright on their work products derived from research funded through a contract or grant from the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER). However, the NCEEER and the United States Government have the right to duplicate and disseminate, in written and electronic form, reports submitted to NCEEER to fulfill Contract or Grant Agreements either (a) for NCEEER's own internal use, or (b) for use by the United States Government, and as follows: (1) for further dissemination to domestic, international, and foreign governments, entities and/or individuals to serve official United States Government purposes or (2) for dissemination in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act or other law or policy of the United States Government granting the public access to documents held by the United States Government. Neither NCEEER nor the United States Government nor any recipient of this Report may use it for commercial sale.

---

\* The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract or grant funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, funds which were made available by the U.S. Department of State under Title VIII (The Soviet-East European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained herein are those of the author.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE: "About 'the Russians' and About Us" --  
The Question of Rape and Soviet-German  
Relations in the Soviet Zone of Occupation

AUTHOR: Norman M. Naimark  
Stanford University

CONTRACTOR: Boston University

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Norman Naimark

COUNCIL CONTRACT NUMBER: 802-14

DATE: May 1991

The work leading to this report was supported by funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research. The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author.

## Executive Summary

The study of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany -- SVAG in Russian, SMAD in German -- raises a number of important questions regarding the interaction of Soviets and Germans in the Soviet Zone of Occupation (SBZ), 1945-49. Policy and organizational issues have a lot to do with this work. But even more central to understanding the eventual development of "East Germany" were the shifting attitudes and social orientations of the German people as they reflected the ongoing meeting of Germans and Soviets in the zone.

No examination of the social history of the zone can escape the problem of rape, and it is the purpose of this paper to tackle the issue head on. First of all, one has to establish the fact that rape was indeed a serious and unique problem in the Soviet zone. Of course, the problem is covered over by layers of rumor, prejudice, guilt and avoidance. Nowhere in the historiography of the Soviet zone and Eastern Germany is the question given serious consideration. Neither historians in the East (the Soviet Union and the GDR) or in the West (the FRG, Great Britain and the U.S.) are willing to engage rape as a critical part of the wartime or postwar world. Yet, the problem of rape is ubiquitous in the archives and documents of the period.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the first third of the paper attempts to

---

<sup>1</sup> Intelligence and diplomatic reports from the national archives are critical to this work. Also the archives of the SPD's Ostbuero contain valuable intelligence on the events in the zone. The Hoover Institution Archives contain remarkably diverse collections on postwar Germany. There are papers of the

establish the "facts" of rape, its extent and nature, its uniqueness and intensity.

The second part of the study explores the causes and ramifications of rape in the zone. In this connection, it is also illuminating to see how rape affects the relations between the sexes and between the German communists and the population as a whole. The final section of the paper, "About 'the Russians' and about Us," deals with the influence of rape on Soviet-East German relations by reexamining an important public discussion that was aired in the Soviet zone of occupation at the end of 1948 and beginning of 1949. Like the views of the instigators of the discussion itself, it is the conclusion of this work that "Soviet-East German relations" (and USSR-GDR relations) had less to do with the formal diplomatic ties between the two countries or the informal links between the two Soviet and German parties, than with internal cultural and political ties between the two peoples in the zone (and later GDR). It would be too much to say that rape prevented the "Sovietization" or "Bolshevization" of the SBZ. But the intense anger that exploded this past fall and

---

Allied Control Authority, collections of intelligence material, manuscripts of Germans and foreigners who experienced the occupation, Robert Murphy's papers, etc. The archives of the city of Berlin hold many original documents from the occupation: proclamations, circulars, letters, petitions and the like. Soviet and German newspapers are important for this study, as are the interview projects done with Soviet emigres in the late 1940s (the Harvard Interview Project located in Cambridge and the State Department Interview Project located in the Hoover Institution Archives). Interviews with veterans of the Soviet Military Administration conducted during the summer of 1989 in Moscow were also helpful.

winter in the GDR --against the government, against the party, against the police -- may well come from sources, like the history of rape (or the recently publicized killing of Germans in Soviet concentration camps in the zone), that go beyond the immediate frustrations of East Germans.

The following points summarize the major conclusions of this study:

1) In the context of German atrocities against the Soviets, the fierce Soviet hate propaganda against the Germans and Stalin's apparent indifference to the depredations against local populations in Eastern Europe, rape was a problem everywhere Soviet soldiers marched in, but was especially extensive and vicious in German lands. By all accounts the situation in East Prussia was catastrophic in this regard. In Silesia and Pomerania, German women were subject to similar, if not quite so systematic, violence and rape.

2) Attempts by the Soviet political and ideological institutions to win over Germans in the Soviet Zone of Occupation did not lift the burden of the fear and reality of rape from the shoulders of Germans in the zone. The taking of Berlin was accompanied by severe violence against women. The formal surrender on May 8, 1945, and the setting up of the Soviet Military Administration on June 9, 1945 significantly ameliorated the situation in many districts. But not until Soviet troops were confined to camps

during the winter of 1947-48 were German women freed from the persistent threat of rape. Up until this time, rape was often accompanied by drunkenness and generalized violence, affecting -- by some estimates -- up to 50 percent of women in the zone.

3) The behavior of Soviet soldiers and officers in the zone was very uneven. There are many reports about the ease with which Soviets mixed with the local population, lived with families and cohabited with German women. Unlike the Western zones, there was no initial ban on fraternization. Soviet administrative practice changed during the summer of 1947; in part, this was caused by the continuing problems of rape and the spread of venereal disease, as well as by the influence of the Cold War and the reassertion of a hard line inside the Soviet Union. Desertions by Soviet soldiers, often inspired by German girlfriends, also influenced the change in policy. Just as the ban on fraternization was lifted in the West, it was imposed in the East.

4) The German and Soviet press in the Zone attempted to deal with the accusations of rape by blaming the incidents on German "bandits" posing as Soviet soldiers. Public trials of the "bandits" and the repeated professions of superb discipline <sup>in</sup> /the the ranks of the occupation army did not alter public perceptions of the Soviet responsibility for rape.

5) The causes of rape were many and complex. The way Russians

drink was significant to the problem as was the widespread Soviet desire for revenge and hatred of Germans. The fears and prejudices of the German population did not help the situation, nor did the fierce anti-German propagands in the Soviet press during the war. At the same time, it should be clear that we are also dealing with a form of violence ultimately connected with the soldiers' psychology in war and occupation. As a social act -- that is, in its "social construction" -- rape had a meaning particular to the nature of both Russian and German societies as they experienced World War II in relation to each other. It is not unreasonable to suggest that rape in the Soviet zone became the final repayment for the German invasion and mauling of the Soviet Union. The Russian soldier's desire for revenge was fed by his desire to restore his honor and manhood, to erase doubts about inferiority that were exacerbated by German well-being and self-satisfaction in the zone.

6) German villages and towns were sometimes able to organize themselves to resist rape. Both SPD (Social Democrat) and KPD (Communist) activists also sometimes tried to intervene with Soviet military authorities to do something about the problem. But the responsiveness of the Soviet authorities was minimal. As a result, socialists and especially communists lost considerable support among the population.

7) There is good reason to assert that East German family and

sexual mores were severely affected by the problems of rape. The labor burdens on German women in the postwar period were compounded by the psychological and familial ones deriving from rape.

8) The critical role of rape in the political development of the Soviet zone is attested to by the articles and public discussion devoted to the problem, titled "About 'the Russians' and about Us", carried on in the zone during the winter of 1948-49. The discussion of why the German population resisted the superior model of Soviet society, posed initially by Neues Deutschland, turned into a public discussion about remembering and forgetting rape. Representatives of the Soviet Military Administration formally intervened in the discussion in January 1949 and ended the public debate. Since that time the subject has been taboo.

and "the world of restaurants, wine, gypsy violins, rich clothes and miraculous shops" described by one veteran of the Romanian campaign may well have intensified the Soviet soldiers proclivities to take what they could not buy and rape local women in the anger of incomplete victory.<sup>1</sup> J. Glenn Gray emphasizes that the "impersonal violence of war itself" breeds rape, where the conquest of females complements or, in some cases, substitutes for the defeat of an enemy.<sup>2</sup> It is instructive in this instance to compare the problems of rape and pillage in Romania and later in Hungary with the generally exemplary behavior of Marshal F. I. Tolbukhin's troops in Bulgaria. The differences may well have to do with superior leadership and discipline in the Bulgarian campaign.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, a century of friendly relations, similar cultures and languages, and a genuinely open welcome for Soviet troops from the Bulgarian population explains, at least in part, the relative absence of rape. On all counts, the Hungarian case was different. There was an alien language and culture and a much higher standard of living, which was a source of much resentment in the victorious Soviet Army. Also, many Hungarians continued to contribute to the Germans' defense. There can be little question as well that

---

<sup>1</sup> Boris Shorin, Manuscript, Hoover Institution Archives (hereafter HIA), Volkov collection, Box 7, Chapter VII, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> J. Glenn Gray, The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle, with a new forward by the author, intro. by Hannah Arendt (New York, 1970), pp. 66-67.

<sup>3</sup> Joerg K. Hoensch, Sowjetische Osteuropa-Politik 1945-1975 (Kronberg Ts., 1977), p. 39, n. 7.

the bloody siege of Budapest, which cost tens of thousands of Soviet casualties, inflamed the situation and led to the beserk behavior of Soviet soldiers in the defeated city. A terrible rampage of rape and pillage followed the Soviet seizure of the city in February 1945. "It was impossible," wrote Julius Hay, "to spend a day or even an hour in Budapest without hearing of brutalities committed by [Russian] soldiers."<sup>4</sup> Hungarian girls were locked in Soviet quarters on the Buda side, where they were repeatedly raped and sometimes killed.<sup>5</sup> Even the Swedish legation was attacked by rampaging Red Army soldiers, who raped women, regardless of nationality, and stole possessions. The Swedish newspaper Ny Dag (May 17, 1945) suggested that the Soviet units might have believed they were attacking a Nazi stronghold, since part of the legation had indeed been occupied by Germans.<sup>6</sup> In any case, in this atmosphere of fighting, pillage and rape, one can understand how Raoul Wallenberg -- the Swedish angel of mercy for Hungarian Jews -- could be seized by Soviet troops and taken away without any explanation why he was taken nor where he was going.

---

<sup>4</sup> Julius Hay, Born 1900: Memoirs, trans. J. A. Underwood (Lasalle, Ill., 1975), p. 273.

<sup>5</sup> Lars G: Son Berg, Boken Som Foersvann: Vad haende i Budapest, second edition (Textab foerlag, 1983), pp. 161-163. I am grateful to Elena Danielson of the Hoover Institution Archive who informed me of this source and helped with the translation.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 126-131, which disputes the Ny Dag version. For Swedish descriptions of events, see "Office of War Information, Weekly Propaganda Directive," May 25, 1945, p. 3, HIA, Lerner collection, Box 50, folder 5.

Acknowledgements

The following work is part of a planned book-length study of the Soviet military occupation of Germany and the origins of the East German society, 1945-49. The bulk of the research for this project was carried out at the National Archives in Washington and the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford under contract from the National Council for Soviet and East European Research during the academic year 1987-88. A short-term grant from the Kennan Institute (Wilson Center) also supported research during that period. A grant from the Volkswagen Fund aided research at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Bonn and at the Landesarchiv of the city of Berlin during the fall of 1988. Further research during the summer of 1989 in library collections in Moscow and in East Berlin was supported by the Hewlett Foundation through the Institute of International Studies at Stanford.

In an earlier draft, this work was presented in January 1990 as a paper at a University of Southern California Conference on the two Germanys. I benefitted greatly from discussions there, as well as from the comments on the draft by students and colleagues -- Estelle Freedman, Robert Moeller, Jenny Schmitz and Nancy Carlston.

## Introduction

In early March 1944, the Soviet spring offensive drove the Germans out of the Ukraine and liberated Khar'kov and Kiev. By the end of April, the Red Army was fighting Germans in the foreign territory of northern Romania. The Soviet offensive in Belorussia began in late June; Minsk, Kovno and Vilnius were liberated in July. By September 1944, the Soviet armies had seized Bucharest and were poised to enter Warsaw on the banks of the Vistula. Some soldiers thought the war was over, or at least that the fighting would slow down. As a result, the Red Army political officers felt compelled to intensify their campaign dedicated to rousting "the fascist beasts from their lair" -- "On to Berlin!", "Destroy the Hitlerites in their Den" were some of the slogans posted in the Romanian countryside.

Soviet soldiers also ignored the warnings of their newspapers and commissars not to be diverted by the seeming riches of the West. In fact, both officers and regular soldiers seemed anxious to explore the strange and delicious world of bourgeois decadence. However, fierce German resistance and periodic counterattacks by the still resourceful fascist enemy convinced the soldiers that the war was far from over, that Berlin was indeed the object of their efforts. Some of the deadliest battles -- Budapest, Breslau and, of course, the struggle for Berlin itself, lay before the exhausted Soviet troops.

The combination of the grim realities of continued warfare

Milovan Djilas and the Yugoslav partisans also had to deal with the issue of rape when Soviet units crossed into northeastern Yugoslavia in the fall of 1944 to spearhead the liberation of Belgrade. It was particularly traumatic for the Partisans to be faced with the evidence that their heroes, the soldiers of the Red Army, could engage in such actions. The partisans also worried that the widespread tales of rape of Serbian women by Soviet soldiers would sully their own reputations and weaken their political standing among the Serbs. But their remonstrations with the chief of the Soviet mission, General Korneev, led only to bitter protests against the "insults" directed at the glorious Red Army. Later investigations by the Yugoslav authorities, based on complaints by individual citizens, documented 121 cases of rape, all but ten of which involved rape and murder. In addition, there were 1,204 cases of looting with assault, figures, as Djilas tells us, "that are hardly insignificant if it is borne in mind that the Red Army crossed only the northeastern corner of Yugoslavia."<sup>7</sup> The Yugoslav protests also got nowhere with Stalin, who took umbrage at Djilas's interference: "Can't he understand it if a soldier who has crossed thousands of kilometers through blood and fire and death has fun with a woman or takes some trifle?" Stalin also kissed Djilas's wife and joked, writes Djilas, "that he made this loving gesture at the risk of being charge with rape." Stalin's

---

<sup>7</sup> Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin, trans. Michael Petrovich (New York, 1962), pp. 88-89.

lack of sensitivity to this issue, Djilas adds, was also apparent in his attitude towards complaints during the East Prussian campaign. "We lecture our soldiers too much," Djilas reports Stalin as saying, "let them have some initiative."<sup>8</sup>

Stalin's response to Djilas foreshadowed his apparent indifference to similar complaints from Communist leaders throughout Soviet-occupied Europe. The behavior of Soviet troops in Slovakia, for example, prompted the Czech Communist leader Vlado Klementis to complain to Marshal I. S. Konev in Vienna. Konev reportedly responded that the main culprits were gangs of Soviet deserters.<sup>9</sup> Even at that, Marshal Konev's army was known to be relatively disciplined when compared to Marshal Malinovskii's troops, which were reputed to have large numbers of released criminals who left a trail of rape and murder from Budapest to Pilsen.<sup>10</sup> Wolfgang Leonhard recalls that there were several discussions between SED (Socialist Unity Party) members and Soviet leaders in Moscow about the issue of rape and plunder in Germany. Stalin answered the concerns of the Germans with a Russian proverb: "In every family there is a black sheep." When a member of the SED delegation tried to give the question a more serious tone and hinted at the profound political consequences for German socialism, he was interrupted by Stalin: "I will not

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 95, 101.

<sup>9</sup> National Archives (hereafter NA), Record Group (hereafter RG) 226, 88, Box 152, 22 October 1945, B 903.

<sup>10</sup> Jan Stransky, East Wind over Prague (New York, 1950), p. 38.

allow anyone to drag the reputation of the Red Army in the mud."<sup>11</sup>

### East Prussia and Silesia

The serious problem of rape by Soviet soldiers in Eastern Europe turned out to be a pale foreshadowing of what was to face the German population when Soviet armies initially marched into Germany territory. The Soviet hate propaganda could lead one to believe that it was as important to humiliate the German population for what had been done to the Soviet Union as it was to defeat the German Army. Ilya Ehrenburg's chants of ritual hatred for the Germans were so often printed and repeated that they became national slogans. "We shall not speak any more. We shall not get excited. We shall kill. If you have not killed at least one German a day, you have wasted that day... If you kill one German, kill another -- there is nothing funnier for us than a pile of German corpses." Hang them and watch them struggle in their nooses. Burn their homes to the ground and enjoy the flames. Such was the message that permeated the last years of the war.<sup>12</sup> Marshal Zhukov's orders to the 1st Belorussian Front on the eve of the January 1945 offensive into Poland did little to dampen the Soviet soldier's lust for revenge: "Woe to the land of the murderers," "We will get our terrible revenge for

---

<sup>11</sup> Wolfgang Leonhard, Child of the Revolution, (Chicago, 1958), p. 365.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Ilya Ehrenburg, The War: 1941-1945, trans. Tatiana Shebunina (Cleveland and New York, 1967), pp. 26-32. The Ehrenburg passage is cited in Nikolai Tolstoy, Stalin's Secret War (New York, 1981), pp. 267-268.

everything."<sup>13</sup> A veteran of the East Prussian campaign described the national hatred that fed the Soviet march. "As the front drew closer to the borders of Germany, the propaganda of hate not only of the Germany army, not only of the German people, but even of the German land itself took on a more and more monstrous character." The final directive from the Main Political Administration of the Army on the eve of crossing the borders of East Prussia said "that on German soil there is only one master - - the Soviet soldier, that he is both the judge and the punisher for the torments of his fathers and mothers, for the destroyed cities and villages.... 'Remember your friends are not there, there is the next of the killers and oppressors'."<sup>14</sup>

There is little evidence that Soviet commanders purposely used violence in East Prussia as an example for the rest of Germany in the hopes of inducing an early Germany surrender. They surely would have been aware that the Wehrmacht could use the East Prussian case to bolster the determination of their own troops. In fact, there seems to be good reason to believe that Soviet officers were surprised by the intensity of the terror that followed the invasion. Despite Nazi propaganda, the German

---

<sup>13</sup> Alfred de Zayas, Zeugnisse der Vertreibung (Krefeld, 1983), pp. 64-67.

<sup>14</sup> P. A. Pirogov, "Vospominanii o sluzhbe v armii i o begstve...." manuscript, p. 9, HIA, Nicolaevsky Collection, Box 249-9, Series 193.

population was also caught unaware.<sup>15</sup> It was not untypical for Soviet troops to rape every female over twelve or thirteen in a village, killing many in the process, pillaging the homes for food, alcohol and loot, and to leave the villages in flames. The reports of women subjected to gang rapes and ghastly nightly rapes are far too numerous to be considered isolated incidents.<sup>16</sup> Lev Kopelev, then a Captain in the Soviet Army, tried to stop a group of rampaging soldiers and was accused of having engaged in "bourgeois humanism."<sup>17</sup>

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who was also an officer in East Prussia, provides a fitting testimonial to what he witnessed in that region in "Prussian Nights," here in translation by Robert Conquest.

Zwei und zwanzig, Hoerlingstrasse  
 It's not been burned, just looted, rifled.  
 A moaning, by the walls half muffled.  
 The mother's wounded, still alive.  
 The little daughter's on the mattress,  
 Dead. How many have been on it  
 A platoon, a company perhaps?

---

<sup>15</sup> See Tolstoy, Stalin's Secret War, p. 269. See also Lew Kopelev, Aufbewahren fuer all Zeit! (Khranit vechno!) (Hamburg, 1976), p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> See de Zayas, Zeugnisse der Vertreibung, pp. 74-78, especially the testimony of Marie Neumann. See also Kopelev, Aufbewahren, pp. 90-91.

<sup>17</sup> Lev Kopelev, Ease my Sorrows: A Memoir (New York, 1983), pp. ix-x.

A girl's been turned into a woman.

A woman turned into a corpse....

No point in driving on - eh, fellows?

Unless we leave them some mementos?

Without orders, as it takes us,

Here, there, everywhere, look -- scores

Of smoky-red, dark-gleaming fires!

Well, now we're getting our revenge lads.

We've hit him good and hard, the foe!

Everything's aflame. -- ....

The whole district sees a dawn

The like of which its never known!

Our columns pour ahead like lava.

With wild cries, whistling, headlights glare

-- Klein Koslau -- Gross Koslau --

Every village -- is now a fire.

Everything flames....<sup>18</sup>

The beserkers in East Prussia hindered military efficiency and eventually Marshal K. K. Rokossovskii, in charge of the front, restored order. It also became increasingly apparent that the territory of East Prussia would fall to the Soviets and to the Poles. Political and economic officers realized how much was lost to the Soviet Union through the burning of farms and the

---

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Prussian Nights, trans. Robert Conquest (New York, 1977), pp. 37-39.

pillaging of estates. At the very least, food supplies and material goods could be sent home to the impoverished Soviet cities.<sup>19</sup> As a result, in some cases, Soviet supply officers promised protection to German villagers (and even landowners) if they would continue to work the land and supply food for the home front.

Yet these promises were often broken, and protection proved illusory. Even after German troops were thoroughly defeated and East Prussia was under occupation, the threat of rape continued to plague German women. Hermann Matzkowski, a KPD veteran and a newly appointed local mayor in a district of Koenigsberg, reported that one of the only sources of food in town after its fall in early April 1945 was horsemeat from the veterinary hospital on the outskirts of the city. Of those women who fetched the meat, barely a half returned unscathed. Many were raped; some did not return home at all. The only Germans in Koenigsberg who are well fed, Mayor Matzkowski continues, "are women who have become pregnant by Russian soldiers." On November 6 and 7 (1945), Red Army Day, the mayor writes, Russian soldiers actually seemed to have permission for every kind of transgression against the Germans. "Men were beaten, most women were raped, including my 71 year old mother, who died by Christmas."<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Kopelew, Aufbewahren fuer alle Zeit, p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> HIA, Sander, Box 1, folder 2. "Bericht ueber die Zustaende und Vorkommnisse in Koenigsberg/ Pr. seit der Einnahme durch die Sowjet-Russen in April 1945."

The dreadful disorder resulting from the East Prussian campaign did not make enough of an impact on the Red Army hierarchy to institute the kinds of punishment that might prevent further rape as Soviet armies pushed beyond the Vistula into Silesia and Pomerania, what was to become Western Poland. The German Social Democrat, August Sander, collected eyewitness accounts of the Soviet takeover of this region that document the fate of countless German women.<sup>21</sup> Soviet soldiers again took out their revenge on helpless German women and girls, often -- like in East Prussia -- under the influence of alcohol. One German village captured on February 26, 1945, was systematically plundered and virtually all of the women were raped. "The screams of help from the tortured could be heard day and night." Twenty-five to thirty were left pregnant; some one hundred females contracted some form of sexual disease.<sup>22</sup> Polish women were not spared the horrors of the Silesian campaign. Sometimes Soviet soldiers did not believe their protestations that they were Poles and not Germans; sometimes it didn't matter to the rampaging soldiers.<sup>23</sup>

Typically, one reads reports of the most brutal rapes interspersed with examples of the kindness of Soviet soldiers. In one case, a family prepared to commit suicide after the mass rape

---

<sup>21</sup> See especially HIA, Sander, Box 1, Folder 3.

<sup>22</sup> HIA, Sander, "Letters from Dresden," Abschrift: Bericht 1, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> See the extraordinary "Polish Women Appeal to the World" in HIA, Poland, Ambasadă U.S., no. 82, folder 1.

of their neighbors and friends, but were stopped by a sympathetic Soviet officer whom promised them protection. In another case, two Soviet soldiers risked their own lives to prevent the attack by a group of Soviet marauders on a young girl in the presence of her father.<sup>24</sup> A local mayor (Bezirksbuergermeister) from Breslau (Wroclaw) writes:

One has to have experienced how a Russian soldier could give his last piece of bread to German children, or how a Russian truck driver on the road could voluntarily give an old mother with her broken-down wagon a ride home. One also has to have experienced how these same people could lie in ambush, perhaps in a cemetery waiting to attack unaccompanied women or girls to rob them and to rape them.<sup>25</sup>

The desperate situation for German women in Silesia was exacerbated by the Poles, whose "desire for retribution" was often as intense -- for very understandable reasons -- as among Russians.<sup>26</sup> More often than not, the incoming Polish authorities were even less concerned about the safety of German women than the Russian officers, to whom the German population turned for protection. After all, the Silesian territories had been turned over by the Allies to Polish occupation, but not yet to incorporation into the new Poland. Orders went out from the Polish Communists to expel Germans by whatever means necessary in

---

<sup>24</sup> HIA, Sander, "Letters from Dresden," Bericht 2, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> HIA, Sander, Box 1, folder 3, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Bialek, The Bialek Affair (London, 1955), p. 57.

order to insure incorporation, as well as occupation.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the Polish administration of the new territories made little effort to protect local Germans from the depredations of Polish or Russian rapists and thieves.<sup>28</sup>

Into the Soviet Occupied Zone (SBZ)

The fierce fighting in the Ardennes in January 1945 and the conclusion of the Yalta conference in February convinced Stalin and the Soviets that there would be no separate peace between the Western Allies and the Germans. It became apparent that the occupation of Germany would proceed as called for in the Allied meetings in 1943 and 1944. Now Soviet priorities shifted from the short-term question of the morale of their soldiers and civilian population to long-term Soviet objectives in Central Europe, from a war of elimination against the Germans to an attempt to establish ties with German antifascists and other elements in German society willing to break with the Hitlerites. As a result, there was also a sharp break in Soviet official attitudes towards Germans. This was clearly reflected in the April 14, 1945 "Pravda" article by G. F. Aleksandrov, head of the propaganda section of the Central Committee. Apparently speaking for the

---

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Wladyslaw Gomulka's speech to the Plenum of the PPR Central Committee, 20-21 May 1945, in which he notes: "We must expel all the Germans because countries are built on national lines and not on multi-national ones." The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland, edit. by Antony Polonsky and Boleslaw Drukier (London, 1980), p. 425.

<sup>28</sup> See the short history of the German expulsion from Silesia, including some striking photographs, in HIA, Sander, Box 2, folder 4.0

Communist Party and for Stalin, Aleksandrov attacked Il'ia Ehrenburg's well-known views about the war as a struggle of extermination against the Germans. "If one would agree with Ehrenburg's views," Aleksandrov wrote, then "one would have to conclude that the entire population of Germany must share the fate of the Hitlerite clique." Aleksandrov concluded by restating Stalin's order of the day of February 23, 1942, which became the slogan of slogans in Soviet occupied Germany: "It would be laughable to identify Hitler's cliques with the German people, with the German state. Historical experience shows that Hitlers come and go; the German people, the German state, remain."<sup>29</sup>

The Soviet government's attitude that it had allies in the German people and German state was never far from the surface of Soviet foreign policy during the war, even during the periods of the most bitter anti-German rhetoric. The creation and maintenance of the National Committee for Free Germany since the summer of 1943 and the periodic initiatives of the Soviet government to conclude a separate peace attest to this fact.<sup>30</sup> Aleksandrov's article was published and broadcast to the front two days before the last great Soviet offensive that would carry

---

<sup>29</sup> Pravda, April 14, 1945.

<sup>30</sup> See Vojtech Mastny, Russia's Road to Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945 (New York, 1979).

the Soviet army from the Oder to Berlin. Stalin's command to his troops reinforced the Soviet desire to find supporters among the German population. In conquering the capital of Germany, Stalin ordered, Soviet soldiers should demonstrate the highest discipline, proving the high level of Soviet morale to the world as a whole. According to Stalin's order, the soldiers were to carry with them the great idea of Communism, which was not to be compromised by the least indiscipline.<sup>31</sup>

In typically self-contradictory fashion, Stalin insisted that undisciplined behavior was not the fault of the troops; at the same time he provided them reasons for engaging yet again in violence and pillage. In his message to the Oder Front, Stalin wrote that the rampaging and marauding had been caused by penal battalions, enemy agents and pure malcontents, who had been relieved of duty. Passing over his own role in encouraging the earlier depredations, Stalin then stated that "the cruel treatment of the German population is not useful for us, because it increases the resistance of the German army."<sup>32</sup> In other words, the Germans deserve the worst, but their mistreatment does not serve Soviet interests. At the same time, Marshal Zhukov warned his troops to pay attention to their military duties during the offensive and occupation: "Soldiers, make sure that in

---

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Ernst Lemmer, Manches war doch anders: Erinnerungen eines deutschen Demokraten (Frankfurt/M., 1968) p. 258.

<sup>32</sup> HIA, Nicolaevsky, Series no. 177, 231-1. B. N. Ol'shanskii, "My prihodili s vostoka," Manuscript, p. 35.

looking at the hemlines of German girls you don't look past the reasons the homeland sent you here."<sup>33</sup>

The admonitions of Zhukov, Aleksandrov and Stalin about violence against the Germans were easier to publish than to enforce. Even a number of Soviet memoirists write that it was far from simple to get the troops to think of Germans as human beings deserving of respect. "Was it so surprising that they [the soldiers] wanted to exact revenge?" writes Lieutenant General F. I. Bokov, chief of the Military Council of the Soviet Military Administration. "It was a long way from the slogan 'Death to the German Occupiers' to a differentiated attitude towards each individual of the German population."<sup>34</sup> The great Soviet military hero, later Commander of the Soviet Army in Germany, V. I. Chuikov, also noted that when his armies crossed into Germany it was still impossible for the Soviet soldier "to distinguish the [German] people from fascism and its leader, Hitler."<sup>35</sup> Besides, many of the slogans posted by Soviet soldiers countered the official message emanating from Moscow. "Here it is, accursed Germania," read the Soviet signs on the border of Poland and Pomerania.<sup>36</sup> "Here it is, the fascist lair --

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> F. J. Bokov, Fruehjahr des Sieges und der Befreiung (Berlin, DDR, 1979), p. 187.

<sup>35</sup> V. I. Chuikov, Konets tret'ego reikha (Moscow, 1973), p. 43.

<sup>36</sup> Krasnaia zvezda, March 10, 1945.

Berlin!"<sup>37</sup>

In fact, the wartime Soviet propaganda had been very effective in exposing Russian soldiers to the worst crimes of the Nazi occupiers. Vivid pictures of Majdanek published in the press and the horrors of the concentration camps discussed in agitational meetings were very much on the minds of Soviet soldiers as they marched into Germany. (Only rarely were these mass killings associated with Jews; usually, the victims were identified as Soviet citizens.)<sup>38</sup> Even without the press, Soviet soldiers learned plenty about German atrocities in their march through territory decimated by the Nazis. This is not to mention the intense personal losses they themselves often had suffered. Despite the best efforts of the political section of the Red Army, GLAVPURRKA, there was simply not enough time to convince Soviet soldiers that a brutal war of elimination between Germans and Russians had turned into a class war. The political instructors themselves had difficulty absorbing the new lesson that fascism was an alliance of Junkers, big industrialists and bourgeois politicians rather than the clearest expression of German national traits. Instead, the words of Ehrenburg continued to ring in the ears of Soviet soldiers: "don't count days, don't count versts, count only the number of Germans you have

---

<sup>37</sup> Poslednii shturm, ed. K. F. Telegin (Moscow, 1965), p.

<sup>38</sup> On the Soviet attention to Majdanek, see Werth, Russia at War, pp. 884-899.

killed."<sup>39</sup>

Hatred of the Germans was fed by anger and resentment about their wealth. One Russian sentry spoke to the American journalist, Alexander Werth, in Berlin. "They lived well, the parasites. Great big farms in East Prussia, and pretty posh houses in the towns that hadn't been burned out or bombed to hell. And look at these datchas here! Why did these people who were living so well have to invade us?"<sup>40</sup> This anger about German wealth is reflected as well in the diaries of Dmitrii Shchegolev, an officer and Military Council representative on the first Belorussian Front:

April 28, 1945. [in the village of Jansfeld, outside of Berlin] We are now billeted in a small block of flats previously occupied by railway clerks. Each small flat is comfortably furnished. The larders are stocked with home-cured meat, preserved fruit, strawberry jam.

The deeper we penetrate into Germany the more we are disgusted by the plenty we find everywhere.... I'd just love to smash my fist into all those neat rows of tins and bottles.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Tolstoy, Stalin's Secret War, pp. 267-268.

<sup>40</sup> Werth, Russia at War, p. 983.

<sup>41</sup> Dmitrii Shchegolev, "Military Council Representative (An Officer's Notes)," in How Wars End: Eyewitness Accounts of the Fall of Berlin, compiled by V. Sevruck (Moscow, 1974), p. 299.

### The Taking of Berlin

On April 16, 1945 -- at 5:00 A.M. Moscow time, soon to become Berlin time as well -- the Red Army launched the last great offensive of World War II from its staging area on the Oder. More than two and a half million soldiers took part in the attack. The Soviets used 42,000 guns and mortars, 6,200 tanks and armored personal carriers and 7,500 fighter planes.<sup>42</sup> The largest salient of the offensive was occupied by the First Belorussian Front, commanded by Marshal G. K. Zhukov. His troops drove straight to Berlin, entering the northeastern parts of the city by nightfall of April 21. The Second Belorussian Front, commanded by Colonel General V. I. Chuikov, headed north to Schwerin, Rostock and the Baltic Sea. The first Ukrainian Front, commanded by Zhukov's archrival, Marshal I. S. Konev, seized Leipzig and Dresden, and, on April 25, met up with advanced units of the American First Army at Torgau on the Elbe, effectively splitting the German armies into northern and southern sectors. By May 1, Hitler and his entourage had committed suicide in their Berlin bunker and Soviet soldiers raised the red flag over the Reichstag. But victory was enormously costly. The Soviets suffered huge casualties: 300,000 men killed, wounded or missing. Altogether in the Battle for Berlin, a half million

---

<sup>42</sup> Na boevom postu: Kniga o voynakh Gruppy sovetskikh voisk v Germanii (Moscow, 1975), pp. 10, 59. Osvoboditel'naya missiia sovetskikh vooruzhennykh sil v evrope vo vtoroi mirovoi voine: Dokumenty i materialy (Moscow, 1985), pp. 512-517.

people lost their lives.<sup>43</sup>

On the third of May -- the first day of the peace -- some Berliners made their way out of the bunkers onto the streets. The scene, described by Soviet veterans, was one of people wandering and stumbling about, of machines, tanks and jeeps, and of burned out, smoldering buildings. Public transportation was not functioning, so the Germans made their way by foot, sometimes with families loaded in wagons or carts, trying to find a roof over their heads.<sup>44</sup> As for the Soviet soldiers, writes Roman Karmen, a veteran of the taking of Berlin, they all made an obligatory visit to the Reichstag, celebrating briefly before their tanks and jeeps kept rolling, through Berlin and on to the suburbs.<sup>45</sup>

The problem of rape in the period of the taking of Berlin until the formal surrender on May 8 and the creation of the Soviet Military Administration on June 9 was every bit as severe as it had been in Silesia. "Of course... a lot of nasty things have happened," commented Lieutenant General, later Marshal, V. D. Sokolovskii to Alexander Werth in a June 5 interview. "But what do you expect? ...In the first flush of victory our fellows no doubt derived a certain satisfaction from making it hot for those Herrenvolk women. However, that stage is over.... Our main

---

<sup>43</sup> John Erickson, The Road to Berlin (Boulder, Colo., 1983), p. 622.

<sup>44</sup> See Poslednii shturm, p. 255.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

worry," he grinned, "is the awful spread of clap among out troops."<sup>46</sup> But Sokolovskii was wrong to leave the impression that rape ceased after the establishment of the military government. At least until the end of June, beginning of July, when many military and civilian administrations were removed from the hands of battle-worn officers, hundreds of local kommandants, each with their own policies and preferences, set the tone for the treatment of the German population. Rape and pillage were sometimes severely punished, by shooting or severe whipping. But too often local kommandants sympathized with their soldiers' anger and frustration and ignored their nightly rampages, now almost always exacerbated by the influence of alcohol. Not until Soviet troops were confined to camps during the winter of 1947-48 were German women freed from the persistent threat of rape.

The taking of Berlin was accompanied by an unrestrained explosion of sexual violence by Soviet soldiers. Ambassador Robert Murphy concluded in a memorandum of July 19, 1945, that "according to trustworthy estimates... the majority of the eligible female population" was reported to have been violated.<sup>47</sup> Murphy's estimate is probably exaggerated; some intelligence reports indicate, for example, that although rape was quite common in those days, "it was not as widespread as some

---

<sup>46</sup> Werth, Russia at War, p. 984.

<sup>47</sup> NA, RG 84, CGC, Box 1. (Berlin Report, July 19, 1945).

sources would have made it."<sup>48</sup> In any case, there are so many reports that indicate a systematic carrying out of violence against Berlin's women that it is hard to dismiss the seriousness of the problem. Even as they entered bunkers and cellars where Germans hid from the fierce fighting, Soviet soldiers brandished weapons and raped women in the presence of children and men. In some cases, soldiers divided up women according to their tastes. In others, women were gang-raped.<sup>49</sup> Generally, the soldiers raped indiscriminately, not excluding old women in their seventies or young girls. The first anti-fascist mayor of Charlottenburg wrote: "In the beginning, the Russians looted on a grand scale; they stole from individuals, warehouses, stores, homes. Innumerable cases of rape occurred daily. A woman could not escape being raped unless she kept in hiding.... It is difficult to grasp the full extent to which rape is practiced."<sup>50</sup>

Rape in the bunkers was followed by restless pillaging and rape in apartments and homes throughout Berlin. Countless reports were filed by Germans complaining to their local governments. Typical was the following police report sent to Rathaus Spandau and passed on to the Soviet kommandant of

---

<sup>48</sup> HIA, Lerner, Box 70, folder 13, "Notes on General Situation in Berlin."

<sup>49</sup> HIA, Lerner, Box 70, folder 13, 6871st District Information Services Control Command, U.S. Army, 13 July 1945 ("Interview with a man from Berlin.")

<sup>50</sup> NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 7-1445 "Digest of interview with a German [Walter Killian] who had acted as Burgomeister of Charlottenburg."

Spandau. (The names were blackened out in the archive files.)

On the night of May 6, 1945, at 2:30 in the morning, three Russian soldiers broke through the window in the hallway. A tenant was hauled out to open the door. At this point, all of the apartments of the house were to be searched by soldiers, supposedly on the orders of the kommandantura, and the three soldiers searched the house. They got as far as the second floor when they returned to where two young women were sleeping with a baby. The two soldiers then sat down on the bed with Frau [A] and Frau [B], both twenty-four years old, with a child of six months on the bed, smoking cigarettes and demanding then that they should sleep with them. At the moment the two women wanted to scream [the soldiers] threatened them with a pistol. Frau [A] called her mother, and the third soldier stood guard when she came and forced her into another room where he held her back with a machine gun. There he went through all the suitcases, from which he took just a pen holder. In the meanwhile, the other two soldiers raped the two young women. Shortly after a quarter to four in the morning, they left the apartment. In addition they took an accordion from the apartment of family [C]. (Signed by the petitioner and four

witnesses).<sup>51</sup>

Sometimes, the cases were more violent, as in a June 28, 1945, petition from Berlin-Reinickendorf.

In the night of the 4th to 5th of May of this year, the married couple [A] and Frau [B] were attacked by two drunken Russians in our apartment. During this [attack], I -- a 62 year old wife -- was violated by both [soldiers] and my husband, 66 years old was shot [to death] without reason. Then in a half an hour a third Russian also came, after the others were gone, and I was abused again, and this act in the apartment of a renter who had in the meantime taken me in.... As a note: my husband belonged to no Nazi organizations and I ask the Herr Kommandant for a hearing. (Signed by petitioner and four witnesses).<sup>52</sup>

Monsignor G. B. Montini, the Vatican representative in Berlin, also reported the ubiquitous nature of rape, though one suspects -- as in the case of Robert Murphy -- that he may be exaggerating the extent of the terror. Still, his report of October 1945 is chilling:

Women from 10 to 70 and 75 years of age have been ravished; consequently, there have been pregnancies,

---

<sup>51</sup> Landesarchiv Stadt Berlin [Hereafter LAB], Zeitg. Sammlung, 2819, "Rathaus Spandau, 6 May 1945." At the bottom of the document it is noted that the case was discussed with the kommandant and that he promised to help.

<sup>52</sup> LAB, Zeitg. Sammlung, 2015, "Abschrift. Berlin-Reinickendorf, (28 June 1945)."

abortions, and 80% of the women have become infected by venereal disease.... The worst crimes have been committed in the district of the Kurfuerstendamm in the presence of their parties (husbands, fathers, mothers, brothers). Nuns were raped in the Franziskus Sanatorium, even though they were wearing their religious habits. ...Professor Schueler of the Rutberg-Krankenhaus in Lichterfelde killed his wife and daughters and then himself not to have to bear the anguish [of their rape]. Many women lived on rooftops for weeks to escape Russian violence.<sup>53</sup>

The Swiss journalist, Max Schnetzer, notes in his diaries that one cannot condemn all the Russian soldiers for rape; still, in his collection of eyewitness accounts of the first days of the Russian occupation of Berlin, he makes clear the extent of the violence. How did the Russians behave, Schnetzer asked a journalist colleague, who described the fighting in Wannsee: "In part like pigs, in part like angels.... In single apartments it often came to wild scenes with women and girls. One woman died from being misused by the soldiers. In other houses, the Russians acted more like friends.... They are like a hailstorm that only destroys part of the harvest." The situation in Dahlem seemed, from Schnetzer's reports, to have been more serious.

In one case, a father tries to protect his child, a

---

<sup>53</sup> NA, RG 59, 740.0019 Control (Germany) 10-1545, "Enclosure to despatch No. 451, October 15, 1945, from Vatican City to Department of State."

young girl. The Mongols [the generic term for Soviet Central Asians] stick a three-edged bayonet in his gut. The Russians stand in lines of dozens in front of lone women. In their eagerness, they don't even notice that they [the women] are dying, perhaps because they swallowed poison or from internal bleeding of the organs. Many women bite and scratch to defend themselves, but they are hit over the head with gun butts. Men throw themselves at the soldiers but are dispatched in no time with a shot. Women and girls are chased in gardens and through the streets, followed on top of roofs and the pursued jump [for their lives.] The women are herded together into rooms. Soldiers pry open their mouths and force them to drink....<sup>54</sup>

Ellen Graefin Poninski kept a diary of the first weeks and months of the Russian occupation from her family home in Potsdam. Like Schnetzer, she emphasizes the extremes in the behavior of Russian soldiers to the defeated Germans, from the most brutal and inhuman to the unbelievably generous and kind. Still, she writes:

Almost no evening went by, no night, in which we did not hear the pitiful cries of help from women who were attacked on the streets or in the always open houses.

---

<sup>54</sup> HIA, Max Schnetzer, "Tagebuch der Abenteuer: Endkampf um Berlin, Reise durch Russland" (corrected manuscript), pp. 154-157.

All of these abominations are well-known. Perhaps in the more lucky zones [of occupation] one thought that the descriptions were exaggerated. But unfortunately the reality was actually even much worse, and I don't have to repeat here the tortures that women and girls, from 10 to 80 years of age, were forced to endure.<sup>55</sup>

Like a number of other diarists and memoirists of the period, Poninski compares the behavior of Soviet soldiers to that of primitive children, who could be extremely kind, especially to children, but also viciously brutal. Peter Bloch, who lived through the first weeks of the occupation in Kleinmachnow, outside Berlin, writes about the Russians: "They were unpredictable, brutal as Huns and innocent as children. One never knew where one stood. They could calmly shoot down people and rape women; [they could] give children chocolate, and stand before a stall of young rabbits and carry on laughingly and wonderingly.<sup>56</sup> Even American intelligence officers had trouble reconciling the stories of "raping, looting and assault" with the numerous reports of kind and correct behavior.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> HIA, Ellen Graefin Poninski, "Aufzeichnungen nach taeglichen Notizen ueber die Jahre in Potsdam 1945-1949," Ms DD 901 P8P79, p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Bloch, Zwischen Hoffnung und Resignation: Als CDU-Politiker in Brandenburg, 1945-1950 (Cologne, 1986), p. 31. Kleinmachnow had very serious problems with the Russians; see also Ernst Lemmer, Manches war doch anders, p. 226.

<sup>57</sup> NA, RG 59, Control (Germany) 740.00119, 13-246 "Information Control Intelligence Summary (ICIS) no. 32, February 23, 1946, pp. 4-5."

Rape in the Zone

Although Greater Berlin seems to have absorbed the brunt of rape and pillage by Soviet soldiers, the rest of the zone occupied by Soviet troops did not avoid similar horrors. One local report from Rostock notes that for the first two or three days of the occupation, Soviet soldiers were too busy chasing after the retreating German troops to cause much damage among the civilian population. In fact, the civilians took few precautions as they looted food storage centers and foraged for fuel. "But from the fourth day this was interrupted. After the entry of new troops, an unbroken chain of plunder and rape began. Men, like Prof. Buechsel, who wanted to protect their women were murdered; women and girls were raped in the presence of their children and parents." Even after the normal work of the occupation began, continued the Rostock report, rape and pillage went on unabated.<sup>58</sup> Despite complaints from the German authorities in Rostock to the Mecklenburg SVAG headquarters in Schwerin, incidents of Soviet criminal violence in Rostock continued to be reported in great numbers, at least through the summer of 1946. This was due in good measure to the indiscipline of Soviet naval units stationed close by in Warnemuende.<sup>59</sup>

The Russian kommandant in Magdeburg was known to be very

---

<sup>58</sup> HIA, Sander, Box 1, folder 7. "Bericht ueber die Ereignisse in Mecklenburg speziell in Rostock, May 1945- November 1946."

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, "Gniffke," Report of 12 June 1946, pp. 2-3.

hard on soldiers who raped, sometimes executing those caught in the act. In the Magdeburg district, rape was most often attributed to recently released Russian POWs or those who were in forced labor.<sup>60</sup> Small towns sometimes suffered the worst problems from Soviet troops. An SPD informant in one such town outside of Dresden writes: "To be sure, I found my home town on the surface completely untouched, but I noticed how the Soviet troops had plundered everything that came into their hands. I saw how German women and girls, sometimes just children, were raped."<sup>61</sup> In Gernerode, the German police chief could not control marauding drunken soldiers and had to ask for help from the local kommandant two or three times every night.<sup>62</sup> In Bitterfeld, the incidence of rape reached shocking proportions.<sup>63</sup>

Even in those areas initially occupied by the American and British troops and turned over to the Soviets in late June, early July 1945 -- in exchange, according to Allied agreements, for the Western zones of Berlin -- rape continued to be a severe problem for the German population. The later mayor of Zerbst, a Communist since 1926, waited with high expectations, he reported, for the Americans to leave and the Soviets to march in, a feeling shared

---

<sup>60</sup> HIA, Lerner, Box 38, folder 7. "G-2 Bulletin no. 87, 7 November 1945 -- Headquarters Seventh Army Western Military District," p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero 0414, Betr. A 204/82. 19 July 1949.

<sup>62</sup> Dietrich Guestraw, In jenem Jahren: Aufzeichnungen eines "befreiten" Deutschen (Berlin, West, 1983), p. 110-111.

<sup>63</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0410a, B 90.

by a large number of leftists in Thuringia and parts of Saxon-Anhalt in late June 1945. He and his comrades had heard rumors of rape in the east, but considered them typical Nazi propaganda. But after the arrival of the Russians,

the first women came to us who had been raped and raised a great fuss. We yelled at each other. I was affected the worst.... Rapes, assaults, murders, one after the other. Over a hundred raped women were cared for just in the local school. These women had been manhandled by the Russians in the most horrible, animal-like manner.<sup>64</sup>

Reports from Halle and Weimar also emphasized the lack of discipline among the Soviet troops pulling into former American occupied territory.<sup>65</sup> A description of an incident in Weimar is not untypical of an aspect of daily life in the newly acquired territories of the Soviet zone.

In Weimar on the Marktstrasse, a Russian first lieutenant came into a barbershop at the beginning of October [1945]. He was drunk and although the waiting room next to the salon was full of people, he grabbed the good-looking 21-year-old cashier and raped her on the sales table. None of the men present dared to interfere with the officer. Only when the proprietress of the store asked help from two Russian officers on

---

<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero 0414, Betr. 895/6.

<sup>65</sup> See Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0414 and 0410b.

the street, could this animal be overpowered.<sup>66</sup> In this case, as in many others, "a great number of highly educated and cultivated Russian officers were terribly ashamed of the behavior of their compatriots."<sup>67</sup> Yet today, when interviewing veterans of the Soviet Military Administration and veterans of the East Prussian campaign, one gets the overwhelming sense that former Soviet officers are anxious to forget the behavior of their fellow soldiers (and their own indifference to it at that time). Neither in memoirs nor in histories of the period is the issue of rape treated as a proper subject of discussion.

The attempt by Soviet authorities to push along the social revolution in the zone was also accompanied by rape and pillage. Especially junkers and large-scale farmers became the object of retribution by Soviet soldiers, partly in response to the ideological presuppositions and campaigns about the role of the junkers (portrayed as pomeshchiki and kulaks) in Nazism, partly as a result of the intense land reform program carried out by the Soviet Military Administration and its German allies. The entire process of dispossessing large landowners was not infrequently accompanied by rampages by Soviet soldiers, first when they entered the local agricultural regions in April and May 1945 and then again in September 1945, when the Soviets took the

---

<sup>66</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0406, I, "Bericht Lemble, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

initiative -- along with the German authorities -- in carrying out far-reaching land reforms. More than 8,000 families were affected by the expropriation of landholdings over 100 hectares. In addition, approximately 4,000 other farms were expropriated as part of the campaign against alleged former Nazis and war criminals.

In Vorpommern, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg, areas of larger landholding, German junkers and farmers sometimes fled for their lives to the West. Those unlucky enough to have been caught on their estates during the initial Soviet advance received some of the harshest treatment from the invading soldiers. Rape, death, destruction, and pillage are characteristic of the fate of German "Junkertum." Suicides were also not uncommon, as families faced the invading army and the threat of rape and humiliation. But even after "order" was established, the families of large landowners had little or no protection from German or Soviet authorities against the whims of local soldiers. In a recent collection of some one-hundred fifty cases describing the situation of landowners in the east, few of the reporters are anxious to talk about the problem of rape; like many memoirists, it is hard for them to recall the traumas and sense of shame of that period. Still, dozens of these cases explicitly describe terrible instances of rape and violence, and even more imply the same.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> See the Weissbuch ueber die "Demokratische Bodenreform" in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands: Dokumente und Berichte, (new and expanded edition) (Munchen, 1988). The cases

According to records kept at the German refugee camp in Hof/Moschendorf and translated by American military intelligence, incidents of rape continued to plague the lives of German women in the Soviet zone at least until the beginning of 1947. It is probably inevitable that refugees from the Soviet zone exaggerated the harshness of conditions they left behind. Still, a brief digest of a small section of these reports provides shocking evidence that the problem of rape continued long after the initial occupation and the setting up of the military administration.

--8 June '46. Mistreatment, rape of a 14-year-old child, pregnant and with VD.

Shooting, even of a Frenchman who stood up for a German. Rape and impregnation of the daughter of the man who had been shot. ...Daughter died 19 Sept. '46 from the consequences of mistreatment.

--14 June '46. ...Rapes, one woman 5 times within 2 hours.

--15 June '46. Rapes up to 80 years, escape of women; jumps out of windows, breaking feet and legs. Raping in presence of husbands. Looting.

Mistreatments, shootings, looting, rapes, mistreatment of women (on bare behind, in spite of

---

of rape in Brandenburg and Vorpommern alone include: Nr. 6, p. 25; nr. 15, p. 29; nr. 18, p. 30; nr. 19, p. 31; nr. 20, p. 31; nr. 21, p. 32, nr. 23, p. 33; nr. 30, p. 37; nr. 31, p. 38; nr. 34, p. 39; nr. 37, p. 41; n4. 40, pr. 42; nr. 41, p. 43.

being sick) with whips....

--22 June '46. Attempt of rape with threat. Spared because of pollution [menstruation]...

--22 June '46. Looting, rapes; herself raped three times in succession; once more the same day. The next day raped three times...

--25 June '46. Rapes; herself raped twice, once, and four times; age 16 years. March to [from?] East Prussia. Mistreatments. Mother presumably shot.<sup>69</sup>

Other evidence also indicates that despite the improvement in administration and law enforcement by the fall of 1945, ill-discipline of Russian troops continued to create problems for an otherwise generally competent administration in the Soviet zone. In fact, American military intelligence noticed that more and more German letters from the Soviet zone (perlustrated by American authorities) contrasted "favorably conditions in the Soviet Zone with conditions in the American and British Zones." But if food rations were superior in the East and de-Nazification less chaotic and inconsistent, the letters continued to complain about rape.<sup>70</sup> In terms of the personal security for women in the Soviet Zone, matters seemed to get worse again during the fall of 1946, but improved by the beginning of 1947, at least according

---

<sup>69</sup> NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 6-2647. "Headquarters 7707 Military Intelligence Service Center. OI Special Report no. 42," p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> HIA, Lochner, Box 4, no. 5. Office of Milit. Gov't for Great Hesse. Information control Branch. U.S. Army, 13 April 1946. "Letters from the Russian Zone."

to SPD observers in the West.<sup>71</sup> Still, according to the same sources, garrison towns, like Frankfurt/Oder, remained severe trouble spots long into 1947. After dark, German women in Frankfurt were forced to barricade themselves in their homes. Even the Soviet kommandant was hesitant to discipline the large contingents of Soviet troops gathered to return to the Soviet Union. Periodically in Frankfurt, when the rape and pillaging threatened to turn into drunken riots, the Soviet authorities called in tanks and reinforcements from nearby Fuerstenwalde.<sup>72</sup>

### The Soviet Response

It was not until the replacement of pure military commanders with more experienced administrators in late June 1945 that a concerted effort was made to stop the waves of rape and pillage in the zone. Some German and Soviet observers noted that front-line troops tended to be more disciplined than those who followed.<sup>73</sup> But what became apparent as the occupation progressed was that each successive set of replacements began their encounter with Germany by rape and plunder, whether it was the very first troops into Berlin, or those who came in 1946 and

---

<sup>71</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0400, 22 January 1947.

<sup>72</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0410a.

<sup>73</sup> Frank Keating writes, on the other hand, that the troops who moved into Berlin after its fall behaved much better than those who took the city. General-Major Frank Keating, "Das Verhalten der Roten Armee im Sieg und waehrend der Besatzungszeit," in B. H. Liddell Hart, ed., Die Rote Armee (Bonn, 1972), p. 201.

1947.<sup>74</sup> In other words, the problem was not a particular cohort of troops or another, but rather the ignitable combination of aggressiveness and defensiveness associated with first-time occupation duty.

Also, a serious set-back to discipline in the ranks was caused by the demobilization order of June 23, 1945, which released from duty older soldiers among the enlisted men and non-commissioned officers.<sup>75</sup> Those demobilized also included soldiers with a higher or secondary agricultural education, former teachers and professors, soldiers who had been wounded three or more times or who had been in the army seven or more years. Soldiers who had started their higher education before the war could return to finish. It was probably also important to the new wave of rapes that all women who had been sergeants or in regular formations -- except for those specialists who wanted to stay in the army -- were immediately demobilized by the June 23 order.<sup>76</sup> Younger soldiers from the Ukraine and Belorussia, areas that had experienced the brunt of Nazi occupation, were known to have been more prone to rape than the older soldiers who were

---

<sup>74</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, Bericht no. 745/5; see also Ostbuero, 0410a (August 1947), and Ostbuero, 0406 (3 August 1948).

<sup>75</sup> Na boevom postu, p. 57

<sup>76</sup> 50 let vooruzhennykh sil' SSSR, chief ed., K. F. Skorobogatkin (Moscow, 1968), p. 475.

demobilized.<sup>77</sup> In a recent interview, I. S. Drabkin suggested that it was not the soldiers who caused most of the problems with rape in the occupation administration, but former Soviet POWs and Soviet citizens working for SVAG, who often wore uniforms like any other Soviet soldiers. They harbored the deepest resentments against the Germans, Drabkin noted, which periodically erupted in rape and looting.<sup>78</sup>

After the summer of 1945, Soviet soldiers caught in the act of rape were almost always punished, though the harshness of punishment often varied. Still, it was difficult if not impossible for a German women to bring a Soviet soldier to justice.<sup>79</sup> After a period of great laxness about relations between Russians and Germans, the Soviet authorities tried to deal with a variety of problems -- rape included -- that strained Soviet-German relations by increasingly isolating their troops from the German population. Unlike the Americans or British, the Soviets initially had no rules against fraternization with Germans, something which worried American analysts as an

---

<sup>77</sup> Col. Gen. M. Kalashnik, "Politicheskaia rabota v Berlinskoi operatsii (Iz opyta raboty politorgany," Voенно-istoricheskii Zhurnal, no. 5 (May 1960), p. 100. Kalashnik writes nothing about rape here, but does note that these troops "hated" more deeply because of what they had seen at home.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with I. S. Drabkin, Moscow, July 1989. Drabkin, an historian of Germany, was formerly a political officer in the Information Department of SVAG.

<sup>79</sup> See Werner Knop, Prowling Russia's Forbidden Zone: A Secret Journey into Soviet Germany (New York, 1949), p. 38.

advantage for the Soviets with the German population.<sup>80</sup> (Not a little jealousy about the successes of Soviet soldiers with German women was also at play here.)

Soviet officers were often billeted with German families, usually with excellent results. As Alexander Werth observed, "there was more mateyness between the Russians and Germans than one would have expected."<sup>81</sup> "In many German families," writes an SPD observer, "single Russians have acclimated well and act like sons in the house."<sup>82</sup> Much as in the other zones of Germany once the non-fraternization rules were abandoned, liaisons were formed between German women, whose husbands had died or were still in POW camps -- and Soviet soldiers, especially Soviet officers, large numbers of whom had "occupation wives."<sup>83</sup> The

---

<sup>80</sup> See NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany) 5-2845 (Telegram, May 28, 1945), where American officers worry that "Russian officers and men openly go about with German women, and NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany) 6-455, "SHAEP Political Intelligence Report (June 4, 1945)," which notes that "relations between Russian soldiers and German civilians are said to be friendly and fraternization is in full swing." General Lucius Clay, an opponent of the American fraternization order, wrote to Secretary of War Stimson with some relief (August 18, 1945): "Association with Germans in public places is now permitted in American and British zones, as it always was in the Soviet zone." The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay: Germany, 1945-1949, ed. Jean Edward Smith, vol. I (Bloomington and London, 1974), p. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Werth, Russia at War, p. 989.

<sup>82</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0406, I, "Bericht Lemble," p. 36.

<sup>83</sup> There was no little resentment of these German wives from the Soviet wives at home. Interview with Dr. and Mrs. M. Rokhlin, Moscow, July 1989. Rokhlin, an chemist at the Academy of Sciences, was in charge of removing chemical industry targets from the Soviet Zone.

Soviets had the same advantages as their Western counterparts; they could supply decent food, fuel in the winter, and something to drink and smoke.<sup>84</sup> The fate of these "families" varied; a few escaped to the West, others fell apart when the Soviet officers were recalled home, and still others were broken up by jealous wives who intervened with superiors in Moscow.<sup>85</sup>

A number of issues contributed to the first sporadic orders banning fraternization in the Soviet zone during the summer of 1946. Certainly the spread of venereal disease was a factor, as was the continuing indiscipline of Soviet troops and the growing number of mixed German-Russian households. Increasing manifestations of the Cold War also made Soviet-German contacts more suspect. In Magdeburg in July 1946 an order was issued requiring Soviets to obtain written authorization from the city kommandant to visit German apartments; Germans and Soviets who did not comply with the orders were to be "severely punished."<sup>86</sup> By June 1947, the Soviets had adopted a State Secrets Act that assessed harsh punishment for passing on almost any kind of

---

<sup>84</sup> See Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0406, I, "Bericht Lemble," p. 36.

<sup>85</sup> Materials for the Project on the Soviet Social System. (Soviet Refugee Interview and Questionnaire Data 1950-1953, for Air Force Contract No. 33 (038)-12909), Russian Research Center, Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass. (Hereafter Harvard Interview Project). See, for example, cases #342, #346, #446, #527. HIA, State Department Interview Reports, Box 1, no. 14 (August 1955), no. 11 (May 1955), no. 10 (1955). It is interesting to note that a large number of those interviewees who had deserted from the Soviet military government and from the Red Army in Germany and Austria did so primarily because of their German girlfriends.

<sup>86</sup> Amtliches Mitteilungsblatt, 27 July 1946

information to foreigners, and in January 1948 unofficial contact with foreigners was outlawed altogether.<sup>87</sup> These laws had an immediate effect on the still relatively loose relations of Soviets with Germans in the zone. During the summer of 1947, Soviet soldiers were commanded to move out of entire villages and city sections, and to have as little to do with Germans as possible. According to one Soviet officer, "The order to consolidate all Russian soldiers and civilians in one confined living area came directly from Marshal Sokolovskii."<sup>88</sup>

This order caused great hardships for the Germans as well. Large apartment houses were sequestered by the Soviet authorities for their personnel, and whole streets of large cities were taken over by Soviets and their German residents expelled. "In the cities, barbed wire was erected around these 'Military Districts.' In the countryside, whole villages were transformed into Russian settlements."<sup>89</sup>

The motivations behind these actions are made clearer in the text of a comparable top secret Order no. 009 (May 23, 1947) of the Soviet forces in Austria, signed by General Major Kurasov and published by an emigre newspaper.

Recently it has been noticed that many Soviet

---

<sup>87</sup> Hannes Adomeit, Soviet Risk-Taking and Crisis Behavior: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis (London, 1982), p. 120.

<sup>88</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 400, no. 294. Sopade Informationsdienst (October 6, 1947).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

officers have been yielding to bourgeois ideology thanks to their relations with the local population. This produces in them an anti-Soviet disposition and [even can turn them into] actual traitors to their country.

Russians were supposed to defend the peace and "demonstrate the superiority of Soviet life through conduct befitting the Soviet soldier." Sometimes, however, Soviet officers too easily forgot that they were "raised in the highest intellectual culture on earth -- Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism." Too many lived among the civilian population and with German women. Kurasov's order brought an end to all of this. "Not a single officer is allowed to carry on a relationship with the local population under threat of the strictest punishment." All Soviet officers and soldiers were ordered to reside in their barracks and quarters, a strict system of special passes for non-official travel was instituted, and the absolute ban on relations with the local population was reiterated. The order also was intended to eliminate indiscipline among the troops. It called for the severe punishment of drunkenness and made officers responsible for their soldiers' behavior day or night.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the apparent strictness of the orders, the initial attempts in the summer of 1947 to eliminate contacts between Soviet soldiers and German civilians were often subverted by

---

<sup>90</sup> "Glavnyi shtab tsentral'noi gruppy sil , May 25, 1947, Prikaz no. 009," Za svobodu Rossii, no. 10, 1948, pp. 47-49.

illegal fraternization. As one of the Harvard Project interviewees reports, officers "hid German girls in their room. One chief of command hid his girlfriend in a safe." Those who were sent to check on the illegal presence of German girls in officers' billets were sometimes beaten and even murdered by the suspected offenders.<sup>91</sup> Still, many officers were caught and punished, and others were sent home. But the Soviets were not yet ready to admit a non-fraternization policy. At a public forum in January 1949, a German Communist Helene Berner claimed that there was no formal ban on fraternization. "Of course, members of the Red Army and Soviet citizens in general can discuss with Germans, can invite them as guests and can visit them."<sup>92</sup> Even these kinds of "visits" were made impossible in the summer of 1949, when stricter rules were introduced that totally isolated Russian troops from German citizens. Under no circumstances could Soviet army officers be permitted "to have their own apartments, or to employ German servants or to live in dwellings where Germans lived," all of which were used to avoid the non-fraternization rules.<sup>93</sup> An SPD reporter observed the strict rules in Scharfheide in July 1949; the Russians, he writes, "were not allowed to visit any locales nor could they speak with any

---

<sup>91</sup> Harvard Interview Project, #342, p. 47.

<sup>92</sup> "Ueber 'die Russen' und ueber uns." Diskussion ueber ein Brennendes Thema (Berlin 1949), December 10 meeting, pp. 56-57.

<sup>93</sup> HIA, State Department Interview Report, no. 10 (1955), Box 1, p. 2; see also no. 14 (August 1955), p. 2.

Germans, and were completely cut off from the world."<sup>94</sup>

### Venereal Disease

The primary reason for separating Russian soldiers from the German population was political and ideological. But certainly the persistence and spread of venereal disease in the ranks provided another motivating factor for the new strictness about relations with Germans. At the outbreak of the war, in both the Soviet Union and Germany, the incidence of venereal disease had been remarkably low. The war accelerated the spread of the affliction, but the occupation of Germany turned venereal disease into a plague on the population ("Volksseuchen").<sup>95</sup> Part of the problem was that syphilis was initially branded by Soviet authorities as a "bourgeois" disease, as symbolic for the moral inferiority of the West, to be treated by punishment and isolation rather than with medicine.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, until late 1945 and early 1946, there was almost no penicillin available to Soviet military doctors, and earlier, more primitive methods of combatting venereal disease took a long time and were much less effective. The German press in the East complained that the West purposely withheld the technology for the mass production of penicillin from the Soviets.<sup>97</sup> In fact, most of what the Soviets

---

<sup>94</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0406 (July 27, 1949).

<sup>95</sup> Abendblatt für Mitteldeutschland, 19 October 1946; 20 December 1946.

<sup>96</sup> Taegliche Rundschau, 24 November 1946.

<sup>97</sup> "Penicillin fuer alle," Berliner Nacht-Express, 10 December 1945.

knew about penicillin they learned from German health industry's laboratories and technicians they seized in the Eastern zone.<sup>98</sup> Even after Soviets and Germans in the zone began producing penicillin, there was still a severe shortage, and it was available only in the most extreme cases.<sup>99</sup>

Soviet soldiers who committed rape were a major cause of the rapid spread of the disease in the zone. Especially in the more isolated villages in Silesia or Mecklenburg, far from any medical help, rape victims of all ages were dying of venereal disease.<sup>100</sup> In the Soviet Third Attack Army in Magdeburg, it was reported that a special battalion had been formed of troops infected by venereal disease. They were kept isolated from the German population, as well as from other Soviet military units.<sup>101</sup> Of course, the prevalence of prostitution or semi-prostitution, including the exchange of sex for a meal or cigarettes, also contributed to the rapid spread of venereal disease. During a series of raids on bars in Saxony in 1946, it was found that some sixty percent of the women carried some form

---

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Dr. Max Rokhlin, Moscow, July 1989.

<sup>99</sup> See Romanov in Im Dienst der Menschen: Erinnerungen an der Aufbau der neuen Gesundheitswesens 1945-1949 (Berlin, DDR, 1985), p. 222.

<sup>100</sup> HIA, Sander, folder 6, box 1 (Lubeck, 1 May 1946). See also HIA, Philp, Box 4, Item 34.

<sup>101</sup> Za svobodu Rossii, no. 10, 1948, p. 44. This report on the condition of Soviet troops comes from a Russian "samizdat" newspaper published in the Soviet zone, Nabat.

of sexual disease.<sup>102</sup>

Like many of the other problems that plagued Soviet occupied Germany in the first days after the peace, the spread of venereal disease was the responsibility of local kommandants, some of whom reacted immediately, others of whom ignored it. The Soviet kommandant in Tempelhof (Berlin) released Russian doctors from their normal rounds and hired German assistants to examine German rape victims who feared they had been infected by sexual diseases.<sup>103</sup> Already on June 1, 1945, the kommandant and local mayor of Reinickendorf (Berlin) agreed that "immediately all women who have been visited several times by soldiers of the Red Army should register themselves at the local mayor's offices. Due to the fact that many of these women will not register of their own free will, all neighbors are obligated to get them to register." Both the women and the neighbors could be punished by lack of compliance.<sup>104</sup> However, many kommandants did little to attack the problem, especially until August 1945, when the Soviet Military Government finally issued a formal edict, Order No. 25 of the Supreme Command, "On Measures to Combat Sexual Diseases in the Soviet Occupied Zone in Germany."

Order no. 25 provided medical personnel for newly funded clinics devoted to stemming the spread of venereal disease. The

---

<sup>102</sup> HIA, Sander, folder 6, box 1, K., "Berichte aus der russischen Besatzungszone."

<sup>103</sup> LAB, Zeitg. Sammlung, no. 2773. "Untersuchung von Frauen auf Geschlechtskrankheiten," Rathaus Tempelhof, 15 May 1945.

<sup>104</sup> LAB, Zeitg. Sammlung, 2014. "Bekanntmachung."

order also mandated that women working in all food industries, as well as in hotels, restaurants, bakeries, canteens, grocery stores or similar institutions have a monthly medical examination. While measures against prostitution and semi-prostitution remained erratic and inconsequential, the order did insist in a general sense that "One must carry on a determined struggle against prostitution. Those women who have been prostitutes and have venereal disease must be taken care of, even if by force. Those women who have no means to live must be given work in industry and or in agriculture."<sup>105</sup>

That Order no. 25 did little to stem the serious spread of venereal disease is apparent from the language accompanying Order no. 030 of February 12, 1946. According to 030, civilians suffering from venereal disease were not being treated in hospitals and clinics. "The battle against prostitution, the main cause of [the spread] of venereal diseases is not being carried out." Although the new order made little progress in establishing methods for controlling prostitution, it did specify guidelines for treating sick women to the German health administration and responsible Soviet medical officers. It also made available a specific sum of money to pay for medicines, provided some raw materials to make them, and laid out a plan to increase the

---

<sup>105</sup> LAB, Zeitg. Sammlung, 7297, Befehl no. 25, 7 August 1945, Berlin (Copy).

manufacture of penicillin in the zone. Unfortunately, the attitude of Soviet authorities to the disease in their own ranks was not very enlightened. Even though Soviet soldiers obviously feared retribution if they were diagnosed with venereal disease by their own doctors, Order no. 030 forbade German doctors, under the threat of severe penalties, to treat Soviet soldiers suffering from the disease.<sup>106</sup>

The medical authorities of the German administration in the zone tried to respond to the Soviet orders by instituting a series of measures against the spread of venereal disease. The city government of Berlin, for example, called for all waiters, waitresses, cooks, musicians, as well as all personnel in dance halls, bars and the like to be examined by medical doctors. The German authorities were also much stricter regarding prostitutes, first of all insisting that they be examined weekly and secondly, defining prostitution broadly enough to include semi-prostitutes and dance-hall girls.<sup>107</sup> The German authorities also followed up Order no. 030 by establishing a widespread educational program that included films, travelling exhibitions and lectures.<sup>108</sup> Other useful measures included the founding of "homes for wayward girls" and the institution of a number of "night clinics" that

---

<sup>106</sup> LASB, Zeit. Sammlung, 7297, Befehl no. 030, February 12, 1946 (Copy).

<sup>107</sup> LAB, Zeitg. Sammlung, 7217, "Betr: Bekaempfung der Geschlechtskrankheiten," 25 April 1946, Magistrat der Stadt Berlin.

<sup>108</sup> Abendblatt für Mittel Deutschland, 19 October 1946.

would be available for diagnoses and treatment of venereal disease twenty-four hours of the day.<sup>109</sup> The Coordinating Committee of the Allied Control Council itself finally got involved in May 1947 in the attempt to contain venereal disease by instituting a number of measures intended to share information about each zone's problems with prostitution and venereal disease.<sup>110</sup>

#### Soviet Soldiers and "Bandits"

The march into Germany was accompanied by an elaborate education program directed at Soviet occupation troops. In military newspapers, in the local "Lenin Corners," and in schools for officers and soldiers, Soviet political officers repeatedly pointed to the superior discipline and behavior of Soviet troops in the hope that the ideal would become reality. In a typical campaign of this sort, Krasnaia zvezda (Red Star) wrote in June 1945 about a heroic guards regiment that had been instrumental in the taking of Berlin: "In their quarters -- there was ideal cleanliness. Everywhere was exceptionally good order.... Everyone is engaged in study, from the oldest officers to the last regular soldier." According to the article, the soldiers carried out tactical exercises, practiced sharpshooting, and listened attentively as veterans described the great campaigns of the war. In the evening, in order to raise the level of "vigilance" local

---

<sup>109</sup> See LAB, Zeitg. Sammlung, 8501/44, "Magistratssitzung vom 17 April 1946," p. 3.

<sup>110</sup> HIA, Germany (Territory under Allied Occupation, 1945) Control Council, Box 2, "Combatting Venereal Disease," Allied Control Authority Coordinating Committee, Directive no. 52, May 7, 1947.

agitators from the ranks led political discussions on a wide variety of subjects.<sup>111</sup> Like this article, scores of others in Soviet military newspapers emphasized the exactness of Soviet discipline and the high level of political and military preparedness. Nowhere was there any indication of incorrect behavior of soldiers regarding the German population.

Even if the Red Army was not dominated by the depraved and thuggish creatures pictured in the emigre newspapers Za svobodu Rossii (For the Freedom of Russia) and Rossia i emigratsiia (Russia and the Emigration), it was also certainly not the disciplined, highly principalled formation depicted by Soviet military newspapers. In fact, the lack of open recognition by Soviet authorities of the problem of rape unquestionably contributed to its persistence. Certainly, attempts were made to convince Soviet soldiers that not all Germans were fascist beasts. The Seventh Section of the Red Army, which had been in charge of propaganda among Nazi troops during the war, turned its resources in occupied Germany to promoting the attributes of progressive Germany. On the entrance of Humboldt University in Berlin, the Seventh Section raised a banner in Russian: "At this University studied the founder of scientific communism, Karl Marx." On the earlier royal Prussian library, the Seventh Section put up a sign, again in Russian -- for Soviet troops -- "Here, in 1895, worked the leader of the Great October Revolution and the

---

<sup>111</sup> Krasnaia zvezda, 13 June 1945. See also the same newspaper for 8 June 1945, which carries an article of almost identical content.

Founder of the CPSU(b), Vladimir Il'ich Lenin."<sup>112</sup> In Russian language newspapers and lectures, Soviet troops were likewise told of the martyrdom of Ernst Thaelmann and the close ties between the Bolsheviks and German Communism.<sup>113</sup>

The growing insistence in the Soviet press during the summer of 1945 on the terrifically good behavior of Soviet troops indicates the extent to which Soviet authorities were actually worried about indiscipline and acts of revenge. Foreign reports about Soviet brutality during the war and after were denounced as "idle chatter," "ignorant slander," and "baseless lies." The following explanation of depredations, yet total denial of their having taken place, is not untypical of the military press's approach to the problem.

After everything we've suffered at the hands of the Germans, the desire to pay them back for the tears

---

<sup>112</sup> Guenter Benser, "Der friedliche, demokratische Weg zum Sozialismus in der DDR," DDR Geschichte in der Uebergangsperiode (1945-1961) (Berlin, DDR, 1987), p. 128. See also Bokow, Fruehjahr des Sieges, pp. 381-382, 339.

<sup>113</sup> There are literally hundreds of articles in Sovetskoe slovo (Soviet Word), the Russian-language newspaper of the Soviet occupation administration -- 1946-1949 -- on the ties between the German and Soviet left. On Thaelmann, see, for example, Sovetskoe slovo, 16 April 1948; on the German left in general see the series of articles by the political officer (later historian) Ia. Drabkin, Sovetskoe slovo, 5, 6, 7 June 1947, 18 March 1948, and 14 November 1948. See the history of the newspaper in Horst Bednarek, "'Sovetskoe slovo', die Tageszeitung der Sowjetischen Militaeradministration in Deutschland," in Die Entwicklung freundschaftlicher Beziehungen zwischen der DDR und der UdSSR. Referate und Diskussionsbeitraege. XXII. Tagung der Kommission der Historiker der DDR und der UdSSR 4./5. June 1974 (Berlin, 1977).

of suffering of the Soviet people is a genuine human emotion. But the soldiers of the Red Army are better and more noble than [to allow] the blind feeling of revenge.

We occupied Germany as victors.... Soldiers of the Red Army take pride in our great victory, in the power and glory of the Soviet fatherland and would not for anything undermine their authority as victors. The most thoroughgoing execution of all the laws and codes, iron discipline, high organization, the strictest order -- this is the unbreakable law for all Soviet soldiers, and especially for those abroad. They are distinguished by their irreproachable correctness, collectivity, and by their smart appearance, both individually and as a group, inspiring the respect of those around them.

There were those who would try to undermine the morale of Soviet soldiers abroad, the article continued. But proper vigilance would help Soviet soldiers persevere in their duties in Germany. In all of his activities, the Soviet soldier "over and over again confirms the honor and dignity of his socialist fatherland."<sup>114</sup>

Only these excessively positive articles about the behavior of Soviet troops in the occupation give one any sense of problems between the Soviet soldiers and German civilians. By the beginning of 1947, critical articles do appear in Krasnaia zvezda

---

<sup>114</sup> Krasnaia zvezda, September 9, 1945.

about Soviet troops in Germany, but they condemn the poor political work carried on the army as a part of the reassertion of authority of the Communist Party versus the Red Army.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Sovetskoe slovo, the newspaper of the Soviet occupation administration in Germany, gives a great deal of attention to the problems of political education, focussing especially on the shortcomings of Komsomol instruction.<sup>116</sup> But in these cases, too, criticisms are couched in the language of effusive praise for new Komsomol agitators and methods of political indoctrination.

In addition, the Soviets try to convince the Germans that Russian occupation, in any case, was much more lenient on them than the American. Especially in late 1947 and early 1948, when Allied cooperation broke down on a number of levels, Taegliche Rundschau, the Soviet occupation newspaper for Germans, carried a series of articles describing the sad condition of Germans in the Western zones. What is more, the Americans were described in much the terms that Germans thought of the Russians, as marauders and brutes. Exposés from those areas of Germany occupied by the Americans before turning them over to the Russians served as especially poignant material for comparing the brutal Americans with the cultured and magnanimous Russian occupiers. For example,

---

<sup>115</sup> See, for example, "S kazhdym dnev vyshé podnimat' uroven' politicheskii raboty," Krasnaia zvezda, 2 July 1947.

<sup>116</sup> See, for examples, Sovetskoe slovo, 23 May 1947, 11 June 1947, 29 October 1947, 18 April 1948, 3 June 1949.

Taegliche Rundschau reprinted portions of a diary written during the occupation of Magdeburg, which described the plunder of the city by the Americans. Nazis were allegedly reinstated in important posts and the people were treated maliciously by the occupying GIs. Naturally, the newspaper concluded, when the Soviets came, the city breathed a collective sigh of relief. The diary ended, "We could be human again."<sup>117</sup>

The primary public response to the problem of rape was left to the German authorities in the East. The Soviets tended to stay out of the polemics carried on between the Western radio and newspapers and the East German media, which created a counter-propaganda campaign designed to blame rape, murder and looting on German bandits in Soviet uniform. Gordon Schaffer, an English journalist sympathetic to the Soviet administration in Germany, reported that Walter Jarich, the Police President of Leipzig, told him:

It is only necessary for a bandit to put on a fur hat and speak broken German for the word to go around that there has been a crime committed by the Russians. Girls who want to explain an awkward pregnancy always find it easy to blame a Russian.<sup>118</sup>

The German press in the Eastern zone was filled with reports of

---

<sup>117</sup> "Aus einem Tagebuch: Erinnerungen eines Magdeburgers," Taegliche Rundschau, 1 July 1948. See, also, the examples in Taegliche Rundschau, 19 October 1946, 2 November 1946, or 10 November 1946.

<sup>118</sup> Gordon Schaffer, Russian Zone (London, 1947), p. 13.

German criminals in Russian uniform carrying out crimes with a modus apparandi associated in the public mind with Soviet soldiers. The bandits would dress in Soviet uniform and pound on doors demanding entrance in broken German (or using a few Russian words.) They would rob and murder, kill with unusual brutality and rape old women and young girls. Some of the criminals were former Hitler-Jugend members (the so-called "Werewolves"), who purposely schemed to undermine Soviet authority among Germans; others were simply bandits.<sup>119</sup>

The Communist party's Deutsche Volkszeitung wrote about one group of "bandits" in Eberswalde:

In criminal fashion, they tried to create the impression that these misdeeds [robbery, rape] were committed by soldiers of the Red Army. They even used Russian words to strengthen the impression among the victims that they were faced by Russians. The accused have in this fashion not just severely branded the German people, but in the most mean way they have tried to undermine the prestige of the Red Army.<sup>120</sup>

The Eberswalde "bandits" served an important propaganda function throughout the zone. In fact, the German authorities decided to

---

<sup>119</sup> See, for example, Zeit im Bild, 10 February 1947, 25 February 1947; Abendblatt fuer Mitteldeutschland, 11 June 1946, 12 June 1946, 4 March 1947; and Der Demokrat, 12 January 1946, 10 February 1946, 18 April 1947.

<sup>120</sup> "Der Prozess in Eberswalde," Deutsche Volkszeitung, 8 January 1946.

conduct a major public trial of the group in January of 1946. Some six hundred onlookers were invited into a huge theater to observe the proceedings. Over and over again, the reporting emphasized the fact that over a long period of time these Germans had successfully masked themselves as Russians in committing rape.<sup>121</sup>

It is of course impossible to know just how much of the violent crime attributed to Russians can be explained by the activities of these alleged German "bandits." At the same time, given their lack of motives, it is unlikely that they were responsible for any but the smallest percentage of rapes in the Soviet zone. On the other hand, the German and Soviet newspapers do not mention that there were other sources of "Russian crimes" in the zone except for the German "bandits" and Soviet troops. First of all, there were reports that gangs of Russian occupation youth -- sons of officers and officials -- sometimes armed themselves and engaged in robbery and mayhem in the region around their Karlshorst headquarters.<sup>122</sup>

More serious were the gangs of Soviet deserters, displaced persons, liberated POWs, or Russians who had served as forced labor. Out of a variety of motivations, these "bandits" feared service in the Soviet occupation army and were disinclined to return home. Some tried to get to the Western zones; others joined huge illegal armies in the Carpathian mountains,

---

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, Nacht-Express, 7 January 1946.

<sup>122</sup> Gregory Klimov, Berliner Kreml (Cologne, 1951), p. 282.

especially in Eastern Slovakia, and carried out guerilla warfare against Soviet occupation troops. With nearly two million Russian deserters and former POWs at large in Soviet-occupied Europe, it is no wonder that banditry on their part became a serious problem of the occupation.<sup>123</sup> Banditry and rape by these kinds of groups in the Soviet zone is a distinct possibility, though there is simply not enough data to know much about it. There are reports as late as 1947 and 1948 of the activity of Russian "bandits," presumably deserters, in the woods outside of Berlin.<sup>124</sup>

#### Causes of Rape

One of the most difficult questions involving the rape of German women by Soviet soldiers has to do with its causes. Earlier sections of this discussion have tried to demonstrate that the rape of German women was different in quantity and in the level of violence than similar Soviet activities in the taking of Budapest or the occupation of northeastern Yugoslavia. Similarly, even the surprisingly high incidence of rape and violent crime committed by American soldiers can be compared only superficially with the Soviet case.<sup>125</sup> The ill discipline and

---

<sup>123</sup> NA 226, 88, Box 152, 22 October 1945, B 903.

<sup>124</sup> See, for example, NA, OBWPI, no. 23, 21-15 May 1947, Control (Germany), 740.00119, 5-1947, p. 16.

<sup>125</sup> See, for example, NA, RG 260, OMGUS (Office of Military Government, U.S.), ISD, Box 97, folder 18. Daily Intelligence Digest, no. 109, 7 May 1945. NA, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 6-1347, Headquarters European Command, Daily Information and Intelligence Summary, no. 9, 9 June 1947. HIA, Lerner, Box 39, folder 2, Headquarters 7th Army, Western Milit. District, G-2, 7 December 1945.

rapacity of Soviet soldiers was matched in the Western zones only by French Moroccan troops; especially during the occupation of Stuttgart, German women were subject to the same indiscriminate rampaging that faced them in the Eastern zone.

Despite these caveats, however, rape became a part of the social history of the Soviet zone in ways unknown to the Western zones. (One could not say the same about prostitution and semi-prostitution, which seemed to effect all the zones, though the Western zones more than the East.) In any case, it is important to establish the fact that women in the Eastern zone -- both refugees from further East and inhabitants of the towns, villages and cities of the Soviet zone -- shared an experience for the most part unknown in the West, the ubiquitous threat, as well as the reality, of rape over a prolonged period of time.

Why did Soviet soldiers commit rape against German women in such large numbers? The reasons are many and complex, reaching beyond the patriarchal, eternal threat of rape that recent studies claim is an integral part of male domination of females.<sup>126</sup> At the same time, these same historians are correct to emphasize that rape is not fundamentally motivated by sexual needs, as is suggested in some studies, but rather is a crime of

---

<sup>126</sup> See the studies by Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York, 1986), especially pp. 115-117, and Susan Brownmiller, Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape (New York, 1975).

violence.<sup>127</sup> The literature on rape is dominated by studies of the legal ramifications of rape, which provide us little help given the extra-legal nature of war and occupation, at least in its initial stages. But it is not enough to say that war breeds rape. Of course, war artificially separates the sexes. It also has "an uprooting character," disturbing, as it does, normal social and communal instruments of control. J. Glenn Gray makes the important observation that "the impersonal violence of war" that comes from routinely killing strangers carries with it the ability to make "copulation an act of aggression." "The girl is the victim and her conquest," in Gray's scheme, is "the victor's triumph."<sup>128</sup> Susan Brownmiller, who wrote a pioneering study of rape, and provided an overview of the problem of rape by Soviet soldiers in eastern Germany, notes that armies of liberation tend to have a different attitude and subsequently demonstrate more respect for local women than armies of conquest and subjugation.<sup>129</sup> This observation helps us understand why, for example, Soviet soldiers sporadically engaged in rape against Polish women, while German women were prime targets. In general, it is also the case that Slavic women (Poles, Czechs, Slovaks,

---

<sup>127</sup> On the refutation of rape as a product of pent-up sexuality, see Rape: An Historical and Cultural Enquiry, ed. by Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (London, 1986), pp. 11, 229-230. For a discussion of rape as a crime of violence, see Anna Clark, Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845 (London and New York, 1987), p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> J. Glenn Gray, The Warriors, pp. 62, 66.

<sup>129</sup> Brownmiller, Against Our Will, p. 64.

Bulgarians, Serbs) were not subject to the same depredations by Soviets as non-Slavs -- Germans and Hungarians.

Brownmiller also aptly notes that as the Allies drove deeper into Germany, "retaliation and revenge" increasingly motivated their soldiers and rape became a convenient outlet for those emotions. Indeed, the reprehensible behavior of Nazi troops on Soviet soil -- including extensive rape and pillage -- was often used to explain the behavior of Soviet troops. The famous Soviet kommandant of Berlin in the first days after the fall of the German capital, General N. E. Berzarin, indirectly excused the "excesses" of Soviet troops in the following fashion: "During my whole life I have seen nothing like the bestial way German officers and soldiers pursued the peaceful population [of Russia]. All of the destruction you have here in Germany is nothing in comparison."<sup>130</sup>

The Soviets, then, attempted (and in personal interviews still attempt) to explain the extent and intensity of rape incidents compared to the other zones by the straightforward fact that there was a great deal more to retaliate for and more reason for revenge. The journalist Iurii Zhukov writes, for example, that the celebrated Soviet war correspondents Konstantin Simonov (in Krasnaia zvezda) and Boris Gorbатов (in Pravda) purposely used the graphic horrors of Majdanek near Lublin to motivate Soviet soldiers once out of Soviet territory. Gory pictures of Nazi atrocities -- Jews were very rarely mentioned as the

---

<sup>130</sup> Taegliche Rundschau, 22 May 1945.

specific victims -- accompanied the Soviet armies into Poland and across the Oder. Zhukov writes: "Who could have doubted at that time that the people who were responsible for these grizzly deeds would soon pay."<sup>131</sup>

The image of German women in the Soviet media certainly did not hinder notions that they should be the objects of Soviet revenge. The caricaturists in the humor magazine Krokodil' quite justifiably portrayed German women as equally avid supporters of Nazism as the men. But they tended to misrepresent reality by showing fat and spoiled German wives living the good life behind the front. In fact, the war had already taken a severe toll on German women even before the occupation by the Soviets. In one caricature, a prosperous looking woman, her daughter and maid, surrounded by all manner of goods stolen from the Russians, desperately look for materials to hang out the window as a white flag.<sup>132</sup> In another cartoon, a plump bourgeois German Hausfrau is confronted by a strong, lean Russian woman who had worked for her as forced labor. "Now you'll see Frau," she says sternly, "I've come to collect."<sup>133</sup> When the occupation took place, German women are shown to change colors too quickly. Leonid Leonov writes:

Our patrols now stride through Berlin and German

---

<sup>131</sup> Iu. Zhukov, Liudi 40-kh godov: Zapiski voennogo korrespondenta (Moscow, 1969), p. 554.

<sup>132</sup> Krokodil', no. 8, 1945.

<sup>133</sup> Krokodil', no. 9, 1945.

ladies gaze in their eyes invitingly, ready to begin payment of "reparations" at once. It won't work!<sup>134</sup>

With the combination of hate propaganda, personal experiences with suffering at home and a fully demeaning picture of German women in the press, not to mention among the soldiers themselves, Soviet officers and men easily turned on the "Frau" as their victims. The anger of Soviet soldiers seemed to grow as German resistance became more fierce, first in the campaign to reach the Oder, and then in the door to door battles to take Berlin.<sup>135</sup> During the battle for Berlin, Soviet forces suffered huge casualties, fueling even more the desire for retribution. But it is apparent that even the seizure of Berlin and the defeat of Nazi Germany did not carry with it a cathartic sense of revenge exacted. It was hard to rejoice over the victory, recalled the journalist and writer Vsevolod Vishnevskii in his diary:

How simple it all is.... Such a strange feeling that the war is all over and done with. There is none of that special atmosphere of triumph that we expected from the capture of Berlin, from victory. The war was too long and hard.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup> Pravda, 7 May 1945.

<sup>135</sup> Marshal V. I. Kazakov, Artilleria, Ogon'! (Moscow, 1972), p. 212.

<sup>136</sup> Vsevolod Vishnevskii, "Berlin Surrenders (From a Wartime Diary)," in How Wars End, p. 193.

Psychologically, the Soviet occupation of Germany was a continuation of the war. Major General Sergei Tiul'panov, one of the leading figures in the political administration of the Soviet occupation forces, noted that many officers simply hated the Germans too much to carry out the regular duties of occupation officers. These were relieved of duty, he adds, and the staff "granted their wishes to return home."<sup>137</sup> Colonel General V. I. Chuikov, one of the great heroes of the final drive into Germany, also writes about the deep hatred towards the Germans, though like Tiul'panov, he denies any wrongdoing by Soviet soldiers. At the opening of Jena University, Chuikov -- then commander in chief of Soviet troops in Thuringia -- gave the welcoming address:

I should admit, Ladies and Gentlemen, that back then at Stalingrad I had such a strong antipathy towards Germany and the German people precisely because the German army carried on its banner only contempt, hatred and barbarism. After the winning of victory... our hatred evaporated.... One does not beat the vanquished.<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> S. I. Tulpanow, "Befreiung des Menschen," Sonntag (Wochenzeitung), no. 19 (1965), cited in Artur Kleine, "Die Hilfe der Sowjetunion fuer die demokratische Erneuerung der deutschen Kultur in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone von 1945-1949," 2 vols, Ph.D. Dissertation, Martin-Luther University (Halle-Wittenberg, 1969), vol. I, p. 73.

<sup>138</sup> See Chuikov's speech in Za antifashistskuiu demokraticeskuiu Germaniiu: Sbornik dokumentov, 1945-1949 gg. (Moscow, 1969), pp. 169-170. See also Chuikov, Konets tret'ego reikha, pp. 143-144.

Clearly not all the Soviet soldiers who bitterly hated the Germans were sent home, or -- like Chuikov -- changed their minds. Many took out their hatred on innocent German women and girls. Indeed, to restate Chuikov's phrase (and the Russian proverb) the vanquished were beaten and beaten again. Ernst Lemmer, the important liberal politician, who otherwise tries to play down the importance of rape in his memoirs, reports a horrible scene during the occupation in the house of the great actor, Friedrich Kayssler. The actor himself was shot and killed, while two young actresses had been raped and slit open by Russian marauders.<sup>139</sup> The hatred that produced such crimes was ubiquitous, not just of Germans by Russians, but of Russians by Germans. Soviet soldiers could read the hatred and fear in the faces of their victims, and that made it easier, noted Frank Keating, for them to carry out their vicious attacks.<sup>140</sup>

Nazi "Gruelpropaganda" -- stories of Soviet atrocities with rape as the centerpiece -- was intended to bolster the fighting morale of Germans on the Eastern front. The stories of Soviet barbarism became more grisly as the front came closer and closer to Berlin. A captured Nazi document from the propaganda department (16 February 1945) reads: "Everyone must throw themselves into the last defense with the conviction of what will happen to wife, child and family members if they fall into the

---

<sup>139</sup> Ernst Lemmer, Manches war doch anders, p. 226.

<sup>140</sup> Keating, in Die Rote Armee, ed. by Liddell Hart, p. 201.

hands of the Bolsheviks."<sup>141</sup> While German Wehrmacht officers and even Nazi propagandists raised serious questions about the effectiveness of such propaganda on military and civilian morale, there can be little question that most Germans -- with the rare exception of the left -- had an uncommon fear and hatred of the Soviets.<sup>142</sup>

For the Germans, too, more than a decade of anti-Soviet racial propaganda and even longer of racial stereotypes had created an irrational fear especially of "Asiatic Russians," not just Uzbeks, Kalmyks or Tadzhiks, but of Russians as a mixed Asian and European stock. Just as race is never far from the surface when discussing the history of rape in the United States, race plays a major role in the German images of the Soviet invader.<sup>143</sup> It took little more than the appearance of Asiatic troops to send the local population into paroxysms of fear. The Swiss journalist Max Schnetzer notes one of many such cases in his diaries. Three Russians force their way into a cellar

---

<sup>141</sup> HIA, Lerner, Box 2, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Psychological War Division Intelligence Section, 2 March 1945, "Politische Kurznachrichten," no. 6, 16 February 1945 (German extracts).

<sup>142</sup> See *ibid.*, also "Politische Kurznachrichten, no. 5, 11 February 1945" in *ibid.* Some Wehrmacht documents recommend an "enlightened" policy toward Russians. "Der deutsche Soldat und seine politischen Aufgaben in Osten," 21 May 1943, in HIA, Lerner, Box 7, "Document report for PWD, 18 October 1944, pp. 1-4. See also HIA, Lerner, OSS, Research and Analysis, "European Political Report," 26 January 1945, vol. II, no. 4, "The German Attitude Toward Russia," pp. 13-15.

<sup>143</sup> On race issues in the history of rape in the U.S., see Estelle Freedman, "Rape in History," Stanford University, 17 May 1989.

occupied by a half dozen men and three very frightened women. "One sits with her mouth wide open, another holds tight with both hands onto the handgrips of the couch, with her knuckles white and pointed. The youngest instinctively grabs her knees which are firmly pressed together. So they sit almost without movement and barely allow themselves a breath."

After a half an hour a new troop arrived. It's the Mongols, and now the women let out a scream. The simple look of these yellow mugs brought shudders of fear. They shivered and shook out of unrestrained fright. "My God," whispered one, "what terrible faces!" The mother of the doctor glanced at the soldiers and murmured: "Can it be that something like that exists. They must really have come from far away." She looks now at her daughter, who apparently cold-bloodedly looks at the stranger, though she shakes inside and thinks: "No dear God, not that -- please, only not that!".... The Mongols can easily see that the others had already been here. They don't spend much time with their searches. They scarcely pay attention to the old men. One steps up to the couch and grabs a girl. The other follows his example, and now everything goes very quickly.... One grabs the doctor by her elbow, shoves her chin up and looks at her with yellow, pointed teeth. The old pensioner turns bright red out of anger at the reprehensible scene, and his wife, who fears he

may jump up in anger, holds him around the arm and whispers emphatically: "Leave it, leave it, what would that help?" The Mongol forces the doctor into a corner and she feels limp. "Now it's come." But then a thought comes to her.... "He smells like an animal, this fellow, sharp and also a little rancid."

This particular case ended well. A well-intentioned young officer with a machine gun happened into the cellar and drove off the soldiers.<sup>144</sup> But one can see where a scene like this could well end differently, given the mutual hate and fear built into the situation.

Of course, it would be absurd to blame rape on the fear of the victims. Still, the behavior of women could sometimes rescue them from threatening situations. There is something to the report by an elderly couple in Dahlem, who said that they owed their lives to Russian help: "A Russian is kind and generous. But you have to know how to handle them. Most Germans are afraid."<sup>145</sup> Though not always, knowing Russian helped, as did being firm, dignified and unafraid.<sup>146</sup> During the occupation, notes an

---

<sup>144</sup> HIA, Max Schnetzer, Tagebuch, pp. 156-157.

<sup>145</sup> HIA, Lerner, Box 38, folder 7. Headquarters, Seventh Army Western Milit. District, G-2 Bulletin no. 87 (7 November 1945), p. 5.

<sup>146</sup> Markus Wolf describes a case in which knowing Russian helped some schoolgirls find their way unscathed through the Russian zone to Berlin. Wolf, *Die Troika* (Duesseldorf, 1989), third ed., p. 44. See also Ellen Graefin Poninski's diary on how she was able to deal with the Russian troops in Potsdam. HIA, Poninski, "Aufzeichnungen" (Manuscript).

American intelligence report from Berlin, Russian soldiers, simple peasant lads, would "stop unescorted German girls on the street, and when they are unable to express their wishes in German, sometimes turn violent."<sup>147</sup>

Among many observers, Schnetzer notes that on the whole the morale and discipline of the officers of the Red Army were higher than among the soldiers, who tended to be the worst rampagers. In fact, the most cultivated and educated officers also exhibited considerable embarrassment over the behavior of their compatriots.<sup>148</sup> Still, especially at the start of the occupation, Soviet officers only sporadically interfered in the activities of their soldiers, especially staying aloof of problems when the latter were intoxicated. The chaotic organization of the Soviet Military Administration in the first days and months after the peace did little to hinder the continuing inclination of Soviet soldiers to avenge themselves on German women. Moreover, the generally high level of brutality among the Soviet forces --

---

<sup>147</sup> The report adds that "once the Russians have signified their intentions, however, most German girls go voluntarily...." NA, RG 59, 740.0019 Control (Germany), "OMGUS Information Control: Intelligence Summary (ICIS)," no. 34 (9 March 1946), "Behavior of the Russian Soldiers," p. 8. Another source cites a Russian soldier to the effect that it is better that the German girls know no Russian; "then one doesn't have to convince them -- simply pull out a pistol and command 'lie down!' finish one's business and go on." de Zayas, Zeugnisse der Vertreibung, p. 68.

<sup>148</sup> NA, RG 59, 740.0119 Control (Germany) 10-1145: Naval Intelligence Report No. 1100 (Oct. 11, 1945), "Notes from a German Source on Conditions in Russia, Poland and in Russian-Occupied Poland." See also Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0406, I: "Bericht Lemble," (Soviet Troops in Thuringia), p. 16.

public beatings with the nagaika was still a common form of punishment in the ranks -- reinforced a violent atmosphere that spread to treatment of the civil population.<sup>149</sup>

Schnetzer also underlines the general observation that the influence of alcohol played an extremely important role in the tendency of Soviet soldiers to rape. He writes (as do many others): "The drunken Russian is a wholly different person than the sober one. He loses all perspective, falls into a fully wild mood, is covetous, brutal, bloodthirsty."<sup>150</sup> Especially the frequently reported rape-murders seemed often to be the work of drunken soldiers. In some cases, the drunken melees would get so out of control Russian soldiers would end up shooting each other. As late as 1946, in some cities, like Weimar, periodic drunken rampages by Russian soldiers left the local populations "with a feeling of deep uncertainty."<sup>151</sup> One Russian pilot recalled later in emigration that he decided to return to Breslau (Wroclaw) after the taking of Berlin to see what was left of the city:

It would have been better not to go. The city had been burned and appeared to have nothing left of it but ruins. On the streets, filled with our soldiers, something indescribable was going on. Shooting and general drunkenness. Somewhere from beneath the ruins

---

<sup>149</sup> See HIA, Kurt Grabe, Box 1, "Vier Stationen in Rot."

<sup>150</sup> HIA, Schnetzer, "Tagebuch" (manuscript), p. 157.

<sup>151</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0410a. See especially Bericht no. 745/5.

were pulled out kegs of wine, beer. They were rolled out in the street. Pistols were fired and [alcohol] flowed in pots and pails. At every step there was the staggering body of a drunk.

Later in the same day, the Soviet officer and his compatriot experienced the worst of the outrages when a drunken Soviet tank officer grabbed a German child and threw him into a burning building, instantly killing the boy.

--Why did you do that? Of what was the child guilty?"

[his friend asked]

--You just shut up captain!! Do you have children?

--Yes...

--Well, they killed mine... -- he turned around and continued his drunken roaming.<sup>152</sup>

It would not be an exaggeration to say that German women of any age who found themselves in the proximity of these drunken melees would have been hard-pressed to escape harrassment and rape.

Allied soldiers in occupied Germany drank to excess in every zone. But it was not the amount that Soviet soldiers drank that proved so disastrous for German women, in comparison, for example, to American soldiers, but rather the way they drank. As scholars of Russian drinking habits have repeatedly noted, Russians drink in binges, reaching a stage of intense intoxication over a period of several days, and then are sober

---

<sup>152</sup> HIA, Nicolaevsky Collection, Series 193, Box 249-9. P. A. Pirogov, "Rukopis' -- Vospominanii o sluzhbe v armii i o begstve..."

for a period before the next binge.<sup>153</sup> The availability and high quality of alcohol in Germany did not help the situation. One SPD informant recorded a hard and fast rule of dealing with the Soviet troops. "As long as he [the Russian soldier] is sober, one has almost never anything to fear. Only under the influence of alcohol and also when several are drunk together do the excesses begin."<sup>154</sup>

The problem of rape in the Soviet zone, then, was influenced by a series of factors unique to the Russian occupation of German territory. The way Russians drink was significant to the problem of rape, as was the widespread Soviet desire for revenge and hatred of Germans. The fears and prejudices of the German population did not help the situation, nor did the fierce anti-German propaganda that accompanied the Soviet counteroffensive which drove the Nazis out of the Soviet Union into German territory. At the same time, it should be clear that we are also dealing with a form of violence intimately connected with the soldier's psychology in war and occupation. Moreover, as a social act, rape in the Soviet zone has a meaning particular to the nature of both Russian and German societies as they experienced World War II in relation to each other. Gerda Lerner helps us

---

<sup>153</sup> See David E. Powell, "Alcohol Abuse in the Soviet Union," Manuscript, Russian Research Center, Harvard (1983). Vlad Treml, Alcohol in the USSR: A Statistical Study (Durham, N.C., 1982), pp. 69-70.

<sup>154</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, "Bericht Lemble," 0406, I, p. 25.

understand this phenomenon in a general way by insisting that in traditional society rape is directed against the males of a society as much as against the females:

The impact on the conquered of the rape of conquered women was two-fold: it dishonored the women and by implication served as a symbolic castration of their men. Men in patriarchal societies who cannot protect the purity of their wives, sisters, and children are truly impotent and dishonored.<sup>155</sup>

Russian culture -- and many of the Asian ones associated with it in the Soviet Union -- still carried with it many of the characteristics of patriarchal society characterized by Lerner. Rape, especially, has played an important role in the concepts of honor and dishonor that permeate Russian culture. Eve Levin writes, for example, that it was customary in medieval Russia to carry out "vengeance against an enemy by raping his womenfolk." Secular society, Levin adds, understood rape as a crime of violence, "the ultimate insult against a woman and her family in a society which valued honor highly."<sup>156</sup> In her studies of legal penalties for sexual crimes in late Imperial Russia, Laura Engelstein notes that in nineteenth-century Russian law codes, rape was included in a special section on "crimes against female

---

<sup>155</sup> Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy, p. 450.

<sup>156</sup> Eve Levin, Sex and Society in the World of Orthodox Slavs (Ithaca, NY, 1989), pp. 227 ff. See also her manuscript chapter, "Rape" pp. 421, 450.

honor and chastity." It was the males' obligation to defend the chastity of their women; rape, then, constituted a personal insult to the man, as well as violence against the woman's honor.<sup>157</sup>

Combining the ideas of Lerner, Levin and Engelstein with the vast array of data available on the rape of German women by Soviet soldiers, it is not unreasonable to suggest that rape in the Soviet zone became the final repayment for the German invasion and the mauling of the Soviet Union. Russians themselves had been dishonored by a nation so arrogant that it not only invaded, occupied, destroyed the land and defiled the inhabitants, but it relegated to itself superior racial attributes. Soviets -- the Untermenschen -- were humiliated by defeat and retreat, and even more so by exploitation and rape. The Germans had turned their attack on the Soviet Union into a race war, as well as a war between rival nations. Defeat of Nazi Germany by the Soviet Union did not restore the honor of Soviet men. Only by the complete humiliation of the enemy, one might hypothesize, in this case his complete dishonoring by the rape of his women, could the deeply dishonored Russian nation win the war by what Lerner calls "the final act of male domination."<sup>158</sup>

Not only German claims of superiority during the war drove

---

<sup>157</sup> Laura Engelstein, "Gender and the Juridical Subject: Prostitution and Rape in Nineteenth-Century Russian Criminal Codes," Journal of Modern History, no. 60 (September 1988), pp. 469, 471-473.

<sup>158</sup> Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy, p. 78.

the Russians to rape, but continued German arrogance -- despite their fear of the occupiers -- made the need to dishonor Germans all the greater. In some sense, the attitude of Germans was less important than the realities of German life. As so many interviewed Soviet deserters after the war made clear, Russian soldiers were stunned by the wealth and prosperity of the Germans. Germans were well-dressed and lived in well-built homes and apartments. Everything was clean and orderly. Despite the destruction in German cities, few victorious Soviet soldiers could compare their own home towns or villages favorably with the German, even those that might have survived Wehrmacht shelling or the Nazi torch.<sup>159</sup> The German occupation of the Soviet Union may well have contributed to a national inferiority complex among Russians, and -- as Krasnaia zvezda wrote in its famous September 9, 1945 piece -- the men of the Red Army were not "above the blind emotion of revenge."<sup>160</sup> The combination of an inferiority complex, desire for revenge and the occupation of Germany was humiliating if not deadly for German women. The Russian soldier's desire for revenge was fed by his desire to

---

<sup>159</sup> See among the many examples the Department of State Interview Project [HIA, Department of State Interview Report, no. 4, box 1 (August 1, 1952), pp. 6-7; Department of State Interview Report, no. 5, box 1 (September 2, 1952), pp. 1-11; Department of State Interview Report, no. 12 (June 1955), p. 1]. See also the many examples in the Harvard Interview Project: for example, #517, p. 6; #521, pp. 70-74; #532, pp. 94-95; #536, pp. 17-19.

<sup>160</sup> Krasnaia zvezda, 9 September 1945.

restore his honor and manhood, to erase doubts about inferiority that were exacerbated by German well-being and self-satisfaction. Perhaps this is the reason why there were so many cases where a German woman was purposely raped in front of her husband, after which both husband and wife were killed.<sup>161</sup>

The often inchoate intent of the rapists can perhaps best be understood in the laments of their victims, like the poem "Thoughts of a Mother" by Erika Trackehnen.

At home and still not at home,  
 The Russians come every night --  
 Dear God I beg you  
 Let me sleep and forget  
 Forget...  
 Shamed, humiliated and besmirched  
 I get up again with new wounds --  
 Forget...  
 Is a woman there only to be stepped on -- enslaved?  
 Doesn't anyone ask about simple rights?  
 Forget...  
 ....  
 I beg you God, let me sleep and forget  
 And don't measure my life by what happens here.<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>161</sup> One village outside of Luebben suffered serial rapes and murders of this sort. HIA, Nikolaevsky, P. A. Pirogov, "Vospominanii o sluzhbe v armii i o begstve...."

<sup>162</sup> Cited in de Zayas, Anmerkungen zur Vertreibung, p. 93.

Germans and Rape

As many of the cases of rape discussed above indicate, there was not a great deal Germans could do to prevent the violence against women. On the other hand, it would be inaccurate to leave the impression that there was no resistance. Women themselves, as we know from the documents, often fought their attackers and sometimes were brutally beaten and died as a result. In most cases, onlookers stood by out of fear of getting shot; in the rare case -- especially if the attacker was alone -- Germans dared to intervene, with violence if necessary. (In one such instance, a group of young people who beat up a Russian soldier attempting to rape a German girl were arrested by the police as "Werewolves" -- groups of alleged Nazi bandits.)<sup>163</sup>

Other Germans found more inventive ways to deal with rapists, since violent resistance by men was extremely dangerous. One town managed to hide most of its women in attics, conceal the ladders, and convince the Russians that all the women had fled.<sup>164</sup> Peter Bloch reports the following technique for protecting girls in his town:

The approach of the Russian marauders was usually easy to notice. If someone saw any Russian approaching, they would open a window to the street, grab two ready kettle tops and bang them together. Everyone who heard

---

<sup>163</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, Betr. 517/4.

<sup>164</sup> Ernst Lemmer, Manches war doch anders, p. 33

this signal would open a window themselves and commence with the kettle-top alarm. The noise would continue its way up the street; in all the windows stood inhabitants banging kettle tops. It was a hellish show (Hoellenspektakel). And nothing bothered the Russians more during their raids than noise. At this point, then, most of them quickly left town.<sup>165</sup>

The West German scholar of the Soviet Union, Gerhard Simon, also recalls from his youth a similar technique used by the townspeople in a village in Brandenburg. A lookout with a trumpet would keep watch for Russian lorries. At the blowing of the trumpet, all the townspeople would gather in the central square of town and create a great commotion. With so many witnesses and so great commotion, the soldiers showed little inclination to engage in mayhem.<sup>166</sup> In a situation of the breakdown of society and fragmentation of the German sense of community and even of family, the threat of rape paradoxically provided an important impetus to rebuild village and town organization and maintain community unity.

In both towns described by Bloch and Simon the appearance of a kommandantura and formal Soviet administrative offices dramatically cut back the number of problems with Russian soldiers. In some cases, the kommandantura helped the local

---

<sup>165</sup> Bloch, Zwischen Hoffnung und Resignation, p. 34.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Dr. Gerhard Simon, Bundesinstitut, Cologne, 6 October 1988.

civilians organize resistance against rapists. Frustrated by the persistent of rape under his command in Gernerode, the Russian kommandant Velisov distributed inkwells to the women of the town and promised swift action against soldiers with ink-stained uniforms. Since the Soviet soldiers had only one uniform, a number were marked in this fashion; Velisov had them sent back to the Soviet Union.<sup>167</sup>

Many Germans tried to find protection from Russian soldiers through the intercession of local Communists or Social Democrats who worked with the Soviets. To be sure, in East Prussia or in Silesia, the party affiliation or underground status of a German helped little if anything at all in preventing rape.<sup>168</sup> In the Soviet zone of occupation, a sign of privilege among the German population was to have one's house or apartment protected by sentries from rampaging Russian soldiers. Determined anti-fascist organizers increasingly found themselves on the defensive. They had tried to dispel the Nazi "myths" of atrocities committed by Soviet troops only to find themselves under attack as deceivers and apologists for rape.<sup>169</sup> Not only that, but in the last days of the war and the beginning of the

---

<sup>167</sup> Guestrow, In jenen Jahren, p. 115

<sup>168</sup> See Kopelew, Aufbewahren fuer alle Zeit, pp. 100-102, 110.

<sup>169</sup> NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 7-1445, U.S. Political Adviser for Germany, "Conditions in Soviet Occupied Berlin," July 14, 1945, Digest of Interview with Walter Killian, p. 3.

peace, Heinz Brandt writes, members of the antifascist committees sometimes had to conceal their own wives, daughters and even mothers from those same Soviet officers and men with whom they worked.<sup>170</sup>

As long-time Communist resistance fighters, the members of Robert Bialek's family -- Bialek was later police chief of Dresden -- were not spared from the Soviet marauders. Bialek's wife was raped, and his sister was subject to attempted rape. Later, when Bialek's credentials were established and his worth to SVAG fully proven, his wife was able to make a special arrangement with the Soviet military police, especially since Bialek was frequently out of town on SVAG business.

So that whenever a drunken intruder appeared, one shout was enough to summon the Military Police. Their method of dealing with the unwelcome guest was unorthodox but effective. They would stop at the cellar door, fire two volleys from their tommy guns into the ceiling and bellow something in Russian. The offender then emerged with his hands up and allowed himself to be marched off without protest. On only one or two occasions did the culprit attempt to put up any resistance or to escape. He was immediately shot.<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>170</sup> Heinz Brandt, Ein Traum, der nicht entfuehrbar ist: Mein Weg zwischen Ost und West (Muenchen, 1967), p. 171.

<sup>171</sup> Bialek, The Bialek Affair, pp. 31, 45.

Only slowly in the Soviet Zone of Occupation did party or underground status confer the privilege of having one's house or apartment guarded by Soviet sentries against rampaging soldiers. As a close co-worker with SVAG, Erich Gniffke had his house guarded by Soviet troops ostensibly to protect his family against "Werewolves." In fact, many local women took refuge from Soviet soldiers in his house. His place, he wrote, became a kind of neighborhood "safe-house."<sup>172</sup>

Even if Walter Ulbricht and the leading "Moscow" KPD members did not want to bring up the question of rape out of deference to their Soviet "friends" in general and Stalin in specific, some SPD leaders and Communists were ready to speak out on the issue.<sup>173</sup> Wolfgang Leonhard recalls a meeting of Berlin Communists in Charlottenburg where one comrade in particular spoke out about the terrible things he had witnessed and about the damage that German Communism had suffered as a result of the behavior of Soviet troops. "And I tell you," Leonhard reports him saying, "we've got to establish socialism in Germany without the Red Army and, if necessary, even against the Red Army."<sup>174</sup> In general, however, Communist activists turned their backs on the problem of rape. The SPD was less shy than the KPD in bringing up the issue of rape, though there were also differences in the

---

<sup>172</sup> Erich W. Gniffke, Jahre mit Ulbricht (Cologne, 1966), p. 16.

<sup>173</sup> See Leonhard, Child of the Revolution, p. 311.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., pp. 417-418.

Central Secretariat about just how emphatically one could protest to the Soviets. Erich Gniffke claims that rape was a standing issue for the SPD, and that "already at the first reception given by Marshal Zhukov in June 1945, we spoke out thoroughly about [the issue]." Gniffke's papers also make clear that especially Otto Meier was active in approaching the Soviets about the question of rape.<sup>175</sup> But the SPD did not make rape a point of contention with the Soviets, and as a result, the problem continued to plague German women.

There can be little question that the Communists suffered an almost immediate loss of prestige and popularity as a result of the behavior of the Red Army before and after the capitulation. Bernt von Kuegelgen, a National Committee of Free Germany member who returned to Berlin from Moscow in August 1945, noted that it would have been better for the German Communist Party "if the war had ended before Red Army troops had entered Germany." (Von Kuegelgen, an editorial writer with the Communist dominated Berliner Zeitung, perspicaciously added that it would also have been better for the Soviets, given the deleterious effects on Soviet soldiers of the shockingly higher living standards of German peasants and workers.) "The behavior of Soviet troops has had an adverse effect upon the Communist cause in Germany," Kuegelgen admitted, and if elections were held in the fall of

---

<sup>175</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Gniffke Nachlass, no. 9/3 (27). Erich W. Gniffke "Erfahrungen vor und nach der Verschmelzung," p. 12.

1945, the KPD would suffer seriously.<sup>176</sup> The American observer Gabriel Almond wrote from Berlin in October 1945 that any number of socialists agreed that if there could have been elections in April 1945, before the occupation by the Soviets, "the Communists of Berlin would have won by an overwhelming majority."<sup>177</sup> In an interview with American intelligence officers, Walter Killian -- another left-wing journalist -- also noted that the Soviets undermined their own position in Germany by not controlling their troops better. "In the coming elections," he said, "the German Communist Party would have achieved great success if the Russian soldier had behaved differently." Killian added that he doubted seriously whether very many women could be convinced to join the Communist party given the problems with Soviet troops.<sup>178</sup> In those local elections where we have reasonably good data, it is quite clear that German women gave a consistently higher percentage of their vote to non-Communist parties than did the men.<sup>179</sup> In short, Germans resisted rape by turning it back again

---

<sup>176</sup> HIA, Lerner, Box 42, no. 9, Information Services Control Section. U.S. Headquarters Berlin. Weekly Political Summary, 12 November 1945. "Opinions of 'Berliner Zeitung' Editorial Writer," pp. 5-6.

<sup>177</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Gniffke Nachlass, Gabriel A. Almond, "Ein Brief aus der amerikanischen Zone," (October 11, 1945), 7/3 (22).

<sup>178</sup> NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 7-1445. United States Political Adviser for Germany. "Conditions in Soviet Occupied Berlin" July 14, 1945. "Digest of Interview."

<sup>179</sup> Hermann Weber, Geschichte der DDR (Muenchen, 1985), p. 142.

against the Soviets. As long as Russians ruled in Germany, there could be no legitimacy for the German Communist Party, which initially might have been counted on as one of the most promising in Europe.

German Men and German Women

The victims of rape in the Soviet zone in particular and German women under occupation in general reacted to their situation in somewhat paradoxical fashion. On the one hand, they suffered extensive demoralization, but on the other, they increasingly found ways to express their independence. The demoralization of German women was a process that spread throughout occupied Germany but was more intense in the Soviet zone because of the history of rape. In October 1945, Gabriel Almond observed the problems of women in the American zone, which can be explained, he wrote:

by the complete lack of entertainment, the hunger for chocolate, cigarettes, and so on, the lack of sexual satisfaction as a result of the absence of so many German men and the complete demoralization that the defeat as such brought with it. It seems to be the same everywhere and goes further than the half-compulsory prostitution -- in order to have something to eat -- and in the coming winter will certainly spread.<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Gniffke Nachlass, 7/3 (22), 11 October 1945, Almond, "Ein Brief aus der amerikanischen Zone."

The East Berlin press was full of cartoons, spoofs and bitter criticisms of these women. One illustrated newspaper scoffed at these "Frauleins" who "look for parties and amusements" and lead such an apparently "effortless life." They are not interested in "genuine feelings and lasting happiness": they ignore German boyfriends "who have nothing to 'offer' them."<sup>181</sup>

In other words, German women sought support and comfort wherever they could find it, and that sometimes meant crossing established lines of social behavior and cultural norms. They were forced to work in cleaning up the debris (the famous Trummerfrauen), rebuilding the cities, getting factories going again, and even digging and hauling in the mines. Those who became infected by venereal disease were forced to endure humiliating examinations and undergo primitive treatments. The Catholic Church, the Soviet Military Government and even the German Communist Party adamantly opposed abortion, even for those women who had been raped. The attempt by a number of German Communists to make the case for abortion was successfully squelched by Ulbricht and the Soviet authorities.<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, women still sought out illegal abortion. Others had the children and took the babies to relatives, orphan homes, or Catholic charities, like that in Wilmersdorf (Berlin), that welcomed "occupation babies" as they were called. There were many cases, however, where the victims of rape became especially

---

<sup>181</sup> Neue Berliner Illustrierte, no. 4 (1948).

<sup>182</sup> Leonhard, Child of the Revolution, p. 311.

attached to their babies and raised them themselves, despite the hardships of the early postwar years.<sup>183</sup>

There is no data available on the number of "occupation children" born in the Soviet Zone. Certainly, in 1945 and 1946, the number is much higher than in the Western zones, where in 1946 approximately one-sixth of births outside of wedlock have been estimated to have been occupation babies.<sup>184</sup> In all likelihood, the situation reversed itself in 1947 and 1948, when rape gradually ceased to be a problem in the Eastern Zone and Soviet military authorities made it increasingly difficult for Russian soldiers to have liaisons with German women. As we have seen, Soviet troops were forced into compounds and isolated from the German population. In the Western zones, on the other hand, the initial strict non-fraternization rules of 1945 and 1946 eased markedly in 1947 and 1948, when it became quite common for Western soldiers to appear in public with German girlfriends.

Data about divorce from the Western zones and Berlin demonstrate that the experiences of women throughout Germany led to a short-term restructuring of German family life.<sup>185</sup> The

---

<sup>183</sup> See Bloch, Zwischen Hoffnung und Resignation, p. 61.

<sup>184</sup> Barbara Willenbacher, "Zerruettung und Bewaehrung der Nachkriegs-Familie," in Von Stalingrad zur Waehrungsreform: Zur Sozialgeschichte des Umbruchs in Deutschland, eds. Martin Broszat, Klaus-Dietmar Henke und Hans Woller (Muenchen, 1988), p. 600. Despite the better data for the Western zones, Willenbacher notes that there are still no accurate studies of what happened to occupation children. (p. 602)

<sup>185</sup> The source for many of the observations in this paragraph is the pathbreaking research of Barbara Willenbacher. See her "Zerruettung und Bewaehrung der Nachkriegs-Familie," in

divorce rate doubled in the postwar period compared with before the war, the greatest cause being the long period of separation of husbands and wives. Especially wartime marriages, in which men and women knew each other for only a short period of time before they got married, were susceptible to divorce.

Particularly in the Soviet Zone, the working lives of women also became a source for marriage strains. Women became more independent as their work became more central to rebuilding towns, factories and administrations. Their social status also grew, especially since ration cards in the East were allocated according to categories of work, as well as to political criteria. Rules in the Soviet zone about equal pay for men and women in the same jobs also raised the status of women in society.<sup>186</sup> Especially those marriages suffered where the husband's status had depended on his military rank or involvement in Nazi party activities and professional organizations. Now, more often than not, the husband was humiliated by the loss of the war, unable to find work in his former capacity and dependent on his wife for survival.<sup>187</sup> German men are often described in this period as "fawning and insecure" when faced with Soviet

---

Von Stalingrad zur Waehrungsreform, p. 599.

<sup>186</sup> See Hermann Weber, Geschichte der DDR, p. 94. Rations were distributed according to categories of work and were therefore "gender-blind."

<sup>187</sup> See NA, RG 59, 740.0019 Control (Germany) 7-345. Telegram MC-741, Moscow. July 3, 1948. (Summary of speech by Mikhail Dolgoplov on "Prostrate Berlin.")

authority, as hunched and "servile."<sup>188</sup> For German men, the occupation by the Russians was a marital as well as national catastrophe.

Freer sexual practices among German women in the war-time and postwar periods also put strains on traditional marriages, especially those subject to the double-standards of the returning German soldiers. Rape in the Soviet zone unquestionably played an important role in this process. In some cases, the women themselves became disoriented sexually by the experience of rape. That husbands were often unable to prevent the rape of their wives; that returning soldiers had difficulty empathizing with the trauma suffered by their loved ones; that pregnant women or those who bore children from the experience of rape were rejected by returning husbands; that the experiences of mass rape was seen by men "as reducing all [the women] to whores" -- exacerbated the stresses on marriage in the Soviet zone.<sup>189</sup>

During the prewar period (and after 1955) approximately two-thirds of divorce petitions in Germany came from women and half of the men were judged to be fully responsible for the divorce. In the immediate postwar period, on the other hand, half the petitions for divorce came from the men, and only a third of the men were judged fully responsible. In other words, women were taking more initiative outside of marriage and providing more

---

<sup>188</sup> See Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero, 0406, I "Bericht Lemble," Soviet Troops in Thuringia, p. 15.

<sup>189</sup> See HIA, Sander, folder 5, box 1 ("Bericht aus Schlesian.")

"reasons" for men to sue for divorce. Of course, the high ratios of women to men in the postwar period also made German men less hesitant about petitioning for divorce. Especially in 1945 and early 1946, before the return of prisoners-of-war, ratios of women to men in the large cities of Germany contributed to altered social and sexual practices. In the fall of 1945, Berlin was 37% men, 63% women; Dresden 39% men and 61% women. Even at that, in the age group 15-50 there were often twice or three times as many women as men.<sup>190</sup> In these circumstances, "getting a man" became a common theme for cartoonists and story writers in the Soviet zone's popular press. Rape seems to have been completely forgotten, censored and self-censored, or at the least repressed, in the frequently jocular portrayals of flirtatious German girls on the hunt for a man, German or Allied.<sup>191</sup>

For those women who had the courage to protest against their rape in the postwar period, there was little solace or sympathy either from their men or from their occupiers. According to Allied Control Authority guidelines, if bodily harm could be proven, German women who were victims of rape could press charges only after 20 September 1945 and then only for

---

<sup>190</sup> Nachtextpress, 9 February 1946.

<sup>191</sup> Says one girl in a cartoon to another, "If I knew languages, then maybe I'd have some chances." Her friend responds: "But Inge, with your figure you'd be understood anywhere." Nachtextpress, 8 June 1947. Especially the popular Nachtextpress is filled with similar cartoons; see, for example, those of 2 June 1947 and 4 June 1947, also portraying German girls plotting to hook up with Allied soldiers or a German with a heated apartment.

"maltreatment" and "force applied outside the scope of official duties." German women had no right to support payments for "occupation children" nor were there specific provisions in Allied law for prosecuting rapists. This meant that each case was treated separately and claims could "be admitted or rejected on the instructions of the Zone commander."<sup>192</sup>

Victims of rape could also expect little solace from the return of the POWs. In one of the few serious articles on the problem of the sexes published in the Soviet zone, Helmut Voegt writes that German men appeared "at a loss" (ratlos) in face of the reality of their transformed women, "helpless before the flood of divorces." Many women had forgotten how to laugh after enduring the various hells to which German men had condemned them, and only "patience and forbearance" could produce a cure for all that bitterness. The men could hardly provide consumer goods, much less luxuries. But they could provide "perspective" and support for their women by aiding them in their work and helping to heal the emotional wounds of the war. Of course, Voegt admits, it seemed much easier for the men to find a young mistress with an undestroyed apartment than to rebuild a broken family life.<sup>193</sup> There was no mention of the word rape in Voegt's article, nor would it have gotten past the censors. But the piece

---

<sup>192</sup> HIA, Germany -- Territory Under Allied Occupation, Box 12, Allied Control Authority, Finance Directorate, 5 July 1947, "Principles involved in the Consideration and Reimbursement of Claims by Germans against Occupation Forces.)"

<sup>193</sup> Helmut Voegt, "Was wir den Frauen schuldig Blieben," Aufbau, 3 Jahrgang, Heft 7 (1947), pp. 40-62.

makes clear that unless the men exhibited emotional understanding of the pain of the women, unless they adjusted to their wives' new role in the working world, then a "pitiless and loveless" generation of selfish women would dominate society, one that "knows only mistrust."<sup>194</sup>

The Soviet Military Administration tended to be very unsympathetic about the problem of rape. In fact, German women were held responsible for the rapid spread of venereal disease among occupation troops. German women were also the focus of resentment of Russian women in the Zone and at home in the Soviet Union. Occupation "wives" were viewed with loathing and resentment; rape victims were seen as "asking for it." Returning German POW's and German men in general also showed very little understanding for the problems faced by German women. Many of the men were broken and inward-looking, unable to recover from the shock of total defeat. It was from the German administration that women in the Soviet Zone found the most support, and this was out of the recognition that German women would have to be counted on to rebuild the country and would shape the "democratic" future of Germany, if there was to be one. The quick formation of the anti-fascist women's committees in October 1945 and the "Frauenbund" (Women's Union) in 1947 were only a few of the many initiatives to keep women active the both the economy and in

---

194 Ibid.

child-rearing.<sup>195</sup> In the absence of men killed or missing at the front or waiting in POW camps for return, German women suppressed their physical and spiritual suffering and entered the labor market -- to provide support for their families, if for no other reason. In its cultural and propaganda activity, the German administration played on these motives to involve German women in the workforce. Though offering little solace to victims of rape, poems like "You Mothers," by Werner Stern, called on German women to forget their woes in the name of the next generation.

You Mothers

You have nothing yourselves that's left to take away  
from you,

Crimes, Fires and War have left you empty.

You are wounded and effected to the depths.

For you only hurt, quiet mourning and pain remains.

And yet the plea enters your heart

The Kindergarten mutely implores for hope

The silent accusation: "Help us and -- erase

From yourselves the guilt that burns in your Hearts!

Don't stand there whimpering, complaining, whining.

We are not interested in your feelings of blame.

We don't need your tears of atonement

---

<sup>195</sup> See Maria Rentmeister, "Beratung bei Generalmajor Kotikow, "In Zeichen des roten Sterns" Erinnerungen an die Traditionen der deutsch-sowjetischen Freundschaft, (Berlin, DDR, 1974), pp. 465-467, and M. M. Volov, "Iz istorii sozdaniia Demokraticheskogo zhenskogo soiuza Germanii (1945-1947 gg.) Novaia i noveishaia istoriia no. 2 (1974): 32-46.

Nor your damp eyes full of guilt.  
 We need deeds, they alone can touch us.  
 A firm grip of the hand carries more weight  
 Than any tears that cool the cheeks.  
 And everything you give us brings us closer.  
 You women who love your children,  
 Understand also the misery of other children! Give.<sup>196</sup>

"About 'the Russians' and About Us"

It is highly unlikely that historians will ever know even approximately how many German women were raped by Soviet soldiers in the months before and years after the capitulation. It may have been tens of thousands; more likely, hundreds of thousands of women and girls suffered this crime of violence, some while being uprooted from their homes in East Prussia, Silesia or the Sudetenland, others while living in the Soviet Zone of Occupation. The collective anguish was unbearable, just as each rape survivor carried the effects of the crime with her until the end of her life. The social psychology of women and men in the Soviet Zone of Occupation was marked by the crime of rape from the first days of the Russian occupation, through the founding of the GDR in the fall of 1949 until -- one could argue -- the present. One Weimar woman, writing her husband in the West zone (17 December 1945) speaks for a generation:

Dear Otto!

---

<sup>196</sup> Werner Stern, "You Mothers," Deutsche Volkszeitung, 24 July 1945.

Please come here as quickly as possible. I can't hold out much longer, because I have such terrible fear. Oh, Otto, I have no peaceful moments any more. If I only hear a Russian or see one, I get so nervous and my heart hurts me from extreme fear.... Can you imagine, Otto, on Saturday evening I was raped by a drunken Russian. [She was abused and manhandled for over two hours.] You can't imagine how broken I am -- inside and out -- and what bodily pains I suffer.... I am altogether amazed that after what I experienced on Saturday I am alive at all. But I can tell you, an experience such as that does not leave one unaffected....

Hildegard.<sup>197</sup>

This fear of Russians by German women and association of Soviet troops with rape and looting in German society became the central argument against closer ties of Germans with the Soviet Union. In the West, it became a propaganda argument against concessions to the Russians. In the Soviet zone itself, it became a severe handicap for the KPD and SED leadership's efforts to build support for a Communist future. The handicap was all the more severe because the issue of rape could not be discussed in public without offending the sensibilities of the Soviet authorities (and therefore of their German "friends"). Equally

---

<sup>197</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Ostbuero 1410b. "Weimar, 17 December 1945."

important were the social taboos on the subject of rape. The defensiveness of German men on the one hand and the sometimes repressed, though unjustifiable, sense of guilt among German women on the other magnified the social-psychological dimensions of rape, that is, the ways it affected the masses of people in their dealings with the Soviets and with each other. Sexual relations between Allied soldiers and German civilians in the Western zones sometimes led to illegal protests by Germans -- German girls heads would be shaved or threats would be posted at night against the offending Allied soldiers (especially those of color). But the fear of severe punishment by Soviet authorities muted even these dilatorious forms of German protest in the Eastern zone.

Despite the initial leftist upsurge at the end of the war in Germany, the events of the Soviet occupation -- not the least because of the problems of rape -- undermined the efforts of German Communists. No amount of positive propaganda about the Soviet Union and Soviet accomplishments seemed to be able to dent the deep, if sometimes inchoate and unarticulated, hatred and fear of the Russians. In fact, many German Communists began to complain about the negative impact of the Soviet occupation on the development of German socialism. According to the GDR historian, Wolfgang Schneider, the German party was especially upset about the "still passive attitude towards the Soviet Union" in the working class. As a result, by the end of 1948 the SED leadership decided to "take the offensive" against these "anti-

Soviet" attitudes by confronting them publicly.<sup>198</sup> The political motivations for this offensive must also be seen against the background of events in the Communist world as a whole: the condemnation of Tito in the Cominform (September 1947), the Czechoslovak coup (February 1948), the Cominform resolution against Tito (June 1948), and the simultaneous acceleration of Cold War tensions and of Stalinization in Eastern Europe.

The discussions were inaugurated on November 18, 1948 by the editor of Neues Deutschland, Rudolph Herrnsstadt, in the article, "About 'the Russians' and about Us." The main Soviet occupation newspaper, Taegliche Rundschau, reprinted the article "because it deals with the decisive questions of the fate of the German people."<sup>199</sup> The intense passions and debates aroused by Herrnsstadt's article led the Berlin "Society for the Study of the Culture of the Soviet Union" (later Soviet-German Friendship Society) to schedule an open discussion of the article on December 10, 1948 in the large hall in the society's House of Culture of the Soviet Union. An overflow crowd packed the auditorium. The discussions lasted over four hours in one of the most lively -- and, until very recently, the last -- open forums of its kind in the history of the Eastern zone. The intense interest in the subject led the society to schedule a second

---

<sup>198</sup> Wolfgang Schneider, "Der politisch-ideologische Reifeprozess der Freundschaft zur Sowjetunion," in Die Grosse Sozialistische Oktoberrevolution und Deutschland (Berlin, East, 1967), vol. II, pp. 261-262.

<sup>199</sup> Rudolf Herrnsstadt, "Ueber 'die Russen' und ueber Uns," Taegliche Rundschau, 19 November 1948, p. 5.

session in an even larger hall on January 7, 1949, and to publish stenographic reports of both sessions.<sup>200</sup>

Herrnstadt opened the first public discussion with a lengthy restatement of his argument in Neues Deutschland. Because of the influence of the class enemy inside the party of the working class, the SED, "a large portion of our party members" have an incorrect view of the Soviet Union as a "burden" on the development of the party program rather than its true role, "namely an inexhaustible source of strength to the workers movement at every level of its struggle." These party members, says Herrnstadt, do not understand that one cannot simply pick and chose from the various attributes of socialism and of the Soviet Union. One must "either confirm the process [of revolution] as a whole, or deny it as a whole, parts of it cannot be cut out." Of course, Herrnstadt writes, there are problems in the Soviet Union; nevertheless, "the person who accepts the Soviet Union can only do so as a totality." If a person is critical here or there, he essentially denies the Soviet Union, "whether he understands that or not."<sup>201</sup>

Herrnstadt complains about those comrades he encounters who

---

<sup>200</sup> The discussions were published in part in stenographic form by the "Society for the Study of the Culture of the Soviet Union." "Ueber 'die Russen' und ueber Uns." Diskussion ueber ein Brennendes Thema (Berlin 1949). A briefer version of the Dec. 10, 1948 meeting was also published in 1948 under the same title. I use here the 1949 version. Both discussions were also summarized in Taegliche Rundschau, 12 December 1948 and 9 January 1949.

<sup>201</sup> "Ueber 'die Russen' und ueber uns," (1948), p. 8.

say, "Yes, if the Russians had only behaved differently in 1945! Then they could have won the entire people for themselves." Rather than speaking about rape directly, Herrnstadt chooses instead to talk about the case of a German Communist who was hit over the head and had his bicycle stolen by a Russian, "and that determined his [negative] attitude towards the Communists for the rest of his life." According to Herrnstadt, this crime by a Soviet soldier, indeed all crimes, including, by implication, rape, must be seen in the context of the Soviet struggle against fascism. The German working class did nothing, not even at the end, to help the struggle against Nazism. German workers even carried the Hitlerites' bags to their cars as they fled! "How should the Soviet army have interpreted this attitude of the German people?... An active, capable working class did not exist." As far as the comrade is concerned who lost his bicycle (or, metaphorically, whose wife was raped, or was herself raped), he (or she) is no progressive at all. He or she interpreted their individual fates as a defeat, when in fact the victory of the Soviet army was "a world historical victory of the working class -- also of the German [working class], if they would only understand how to use it."<sup>202</sup>

Certainly, Herrnstadt admits, the Red Army that marched determinedly into Germany was inflamed and in part raw, "but war makes people raw." Still, Germans have no right to complain

---

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-10.

because they did nothing to prevent the war. "He [the comrade] saw nothing, he asked himself nothing, he saw only one thing: that his bicycle was taken." If only this man and tens of thousands like him had fought Hitler, everything would have been different. "The Soviet Army would have had a fundamentally different attitude towards the German people." There might have been some isolated assaults (Uebergriffe). One shouldn't make light of the problem. But "a four year long gigantic struggle does not ebb in a day."<sup>203</sup> The only answer for the Germans, Herrnsstadt concludes, is to throw themselves into the class struggle, see the two-year plan to fruition, and stop the incessant belly-aching about the Russians, which serves only the interests of the imperialists.

Prof. P. Steiniger picked up the discussion where Herrnsstadt left off, criticizing the Germans for complaining about the terrible behavior of the Soviet troops. (Again, it was clear that he was talking about rape, not about stolen bicycles or watches.) It was the German war that turned the good Soviet man into the wild soldier. Those people who forced the Soviets into the whirlwind of war cannot now say "shame on the wild ones." Besides, Steiniger emphasizes, whether the Russian soldiers' "boots are clean or not" (whether they raped or not), has nothing to do with the duties of Communists.<sup>204</sup> Steiniger repeats Herrnsstadt's admonition that a Communist is either for the

---

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

Russians or against, either for progress or against. But he concludes his statement with the first direct reference to rape; those who object to progress by carelessly repeating the stereotype of Russians demanding "Watches, watches" and "Woman, come!" (implicitly equating the two) cannot interfere with "the ongoing process, that one has to see... as a whole... One can only say yes or no to this process."<sup>205</sup>

Alexander Abusch, editor of the Marxist journal Aufbau, also took the podium, but added little to the discussion. Like the other Communist leaders, he publicly demanded that German men and women forget the rapes, which were again trivialized by equating them with stealing watches or bicycles, and get on with the class struggle, which meant the unadulterated, uncritical affirmation of the Soviet experience. Abusch explained the "rawness" of Soviet troops by the fact that the best Soviet socialists were lost in the first years of the fighting. (He might have added the effects of the purges!) Severe Russian losses in the first year of the war derived not only from the success of the German war machine, Abusch noted. The Soviets expected that their German class brothers either would change sides or overthrow Hitler. When neither happened, the bitterness of Soviet soldiers against the Germans only became more deeply engrained.<sup>206</sup>

At this point in the discussion, a young woman -- clearly a socialist and member of the SED -- rose from the audience to ask

---

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

a question. Although she did not speak directly about being raped, her question clearly and unpolemically stated the problem of East German women.

Many of us have experienced things which have made it personally difficult for our individual relations in a person-to-person meeting with members of the Soviet Army. My question is this: What can help us overcome this disturbed relationship of one person to another -- in my view peace begins only with the meeting of people with each other. What can help us [overcome] this disturbed relationship, that is, this fear and this mistrust that comes beyond our control -- from the emotions -- every time we come across a person in a certain uniform?<sup>207</sup>

That everyone understood precisely what she was saying was evident in the way the discussion shifted dramatically from the issue of stealing a bicycle to an attempt to explain away rape as a serious impediment to improved Soviet-German relations. W. Steinitz again tried to place the responsibility for rape on the Germans rather than the Russians. Whose fault was it that the Soviets marched into Germany? Didn't Germans themselves contribute to the problem by believing the horror stories of Nazi propagandists and therefore greeting the Russians with nothing but hatred and terror.<sup>208</sup> The philosopher Wolfgang Harich, who

---

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 23

became an important figure in the reform movement in the 1950s, showed at least some understanding of the woman's dilemma when he talked about finding ways to overcome "this trauma, this deeply penetrating psychological shock that many people suffered at that time." However, Harich indicated that the feeling of trauma was purposely kept alive by the enemies of socialism and that the sufferer could be rejuvenated by participating in the process of rebuilding the country.<sup>209</sup> Here and elsewhere, Harich demonstrated his insensitivity to the specific problems of the rape survivors.

Why is there only one kind of trauma in the world?

Didn't tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of women suffer trauma and a shock during all the terrible nights of fire as the American and English bombs fell on them and on their children?.... Why does one speak only of the trauma of the meeting with Russian soldiers?<sup>210</sup>

The answers to the woman's question never seemed quite satisfactory; as a result, the discussion focussed even more exclusively on the important issue she had broached. One speaker asserted that there had been no rape in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, though the war may have introduced a certain "rawness" in relations. A second expressed empathy for the woman, but pointed

---

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. This quote is also included in the shorter Taegliche Rundschau summary, 12 December 1945.

to the terrible actions of Germans in the Soviet Union, and talked about the depths of love and hatred in the "Slavic soul." With considerable irritation, a Herr Steidle pointed out that everyone had forgotten what the French colonial troops had done in southern Germany. (He was referring to the mass rapes in Stuttgart.) "One only emphasizes now the not particularly happy [nicht besonders erfreuliche] behavior [!] of some Russian soldiers." He added that he had spoken with a young woman who had had one of these "unhappy experiences." He lectured her (as he was lecturing the young woman in the crowd who brought up the issue in the first place) about refusing to forget what was done to her, but easily forgetting what was done to the Russians.<sup>211</sup> A different question from the young woman in the crowd -- why German women were not allowed to marry Soviet citizens -- provided Prof. Steiniger the opportunity to bring the discussion of rape to an end.

"It [the discussion] began with a young friend, who touched all of us the most, who wanted to know how she could put an end to fear and mistrust, and [it] ended with another question of a friend, who wants to know why she can't marry a Russian. To a certain extent, we have walked the path from trauma to dreams.<sup>212</sup>

The second, expanded meeting held on January 7, 1949 had

---

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-28.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 33

none of the spontaneous qualities of the first, and the issue of rape was totally submerged in a sea of rhetoric. Now the talk was of "the anti-Soviet agitation" that had insinuated itself into the discussion of "the Russians and us." This time, a speaker from the Soviet military administration, Captain Tregubov, took the podium. He refused to talk about rape, and returned to the trivializing examples of a stolen watch or bicycle.

Can one equate the great, historical, human and noble deeds of the Soviet Army with a watch taken or a bicycle stolen? (Shouts: No!) A watch taken away is nothing in comparison to the freedom that was brought. Today, one can easily say: Tell me how you relate to the Russians and I will tell you who you are. (Stormy applause.) There can be no honest democrats and freedom-loving people who are against the Soviet Union and go around telling anti-Soviet jokes or stories.<sup>213</sup>

Tregubov's remarks were followed by a chorus of affirmation by a variety of speakers who dutifully criticized those Germans who carried with them "the bacillus of anti-Bolshevism" and held a false sense of their superiority over the Russians.<sup>214</sup>

It was apparent from this second discussion that the

---

<sup>213</sup> The second summary, pp. 50-51. See also the summary of Tregubov's remarks in Taegliche Rundschau, 9 January 1949.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-57.

fleeting public consideration of the question of rape was finished. The Soviets wouldn't tolerate it, and leading German Communists could not have been happy about the public airing of the problem. But one of the participants at the second discussion made it clear that not talking about the problem would not make it go away. Leo Klinger reminded the audience that the battle of opinion would go on, but not in the large halls of the Society for the Study of the Culture of the Soviet Union. "Where does anti-Soviet agitation find its expression? -- In daily life, in the streetcars, especially from Potsdamer Platz to Buelowstrasse, at the workplace, in the family, in the doorways, everywhere, day after day...." Good democrats and socialists, he concludes from this, need to speak up more and counter the defamations against the Russians, the liberators of Germany.<sup>215</sup> But with complete power in the hands of "the good democrats and socialists," the issue of rape no longer could be discussed and dealt with. As a result, it only contributed to the deep-seated anti-Russian prejudices of the masses of East Germans.

---

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.