

## The GDR in the Ruhr ? Why and what for?

The best answer to this question comes from the introductory keynotes in the book by Hans Fricke „Davor – Dabei – Danach – Ein ehemaliger Kommandeur der Grenztruppen der DDR berichtet“: (Before-During-After- Reports from a former Commander of the GDR boarder guards)

A person can forget his past, repress it, glorify it, consider it hell, hide it  
OR talk about it openly.

He can be hypocritical or lie about it,  
OR tell the truth about it

He can denunciate other people to detract from himself and his past  
OR he can assume responsibility

He can deny years of his life  
OR admit to them

For all this he can be answerable to himself, his family and friends,  
OR to the general public

He can walk around hanging his head in shame  
OR stand upright as a citizen with equal rights of a united Germany, not only when reflecting on the past, but with a self confident standpoint for the present and the future.

Whatever he chooses, it must be chosen according to his own conscience and enable him to look his fellowmen in the eye

Because I can, I have opted for “OR”  
These thoughts are exemplary for many citizens of the German Democratic Republic, who, despite massive attacks and political slander from the media, stand by their biography.

Because we can testify to these statements, we decided to start the project DDR-Ministry-Bochum

With this project we would like to portray the history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), as comprehensively and as factually as possible.

In this way, history can be preserved for future generations in a tangible and unbiased manner.

We see it as a necessary contribution to provide an honest picture of the GDR, particularly when it is becoming prevalent to distort the history of the GDR and to draw into question the life-long achievements of its citizens.

We are therefore addressing schools and further education institutions in order to offer all interested parties a Living History.

The collection covers areas of everyday culture, the social organisations and political parties, the armed institutions, as well the civil institutions of the GDR.

The role of Berlin as "Frontstadt" (front-line) in the cold war is also depicted, as is the origin and role of the various sectors of the GDR.

A number of outstanding buildings, such as the television tower and the Republican Palace should be recognized for their value.

The Palace of the People is a prime example of how shamefully the heritage of the GDR has been handled.

At the moment, we have:

400 complete uniforms (from Forest Ranger to General Major of the NVA)

800 items of Uniform and equipment (from the state railway to the national airline Interflug)

500 certificates ( from the labour collective to the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ministry of the secret police)

150 decorations and awards (from the Karl-Marx-medal to the master of sports award)

800 badges (from the first FDJ badge to the CDU badge of honor)

150 flags and honour awards (from the forces flag to the SED honorary award)

250 pennants (from the Schalmeien orchestra "Ernst Thälmann" to the BFC Dynamo)

1.400 Newspapers, magazines, illustrated books and other books

450 official instructions and documents (from the flag regulation to the driving licence)

300 photographs, murals, posters and table work.

200 honorary plates, mugs and glasses

350 medals and coins

Various individual exhibits, such as official seals, border signs, printing plates, and gifts from visiting foreign delegations.

In addition to this, an assortment of daily items provides a good overview of everyday life in the GDR. Personal documents, schoolbooks, menu cards, clothes, food, electrical appliances and furniture show examples in the areas of school, education, work and leisure activities.

Over 6.000 exhibits have been collected over the years and a large amount will be on display from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010 at our premises in the Harkortstrasse 26, in Bochum-Wattenscheid. This is only the beginning. We are looking for further exhibition space in the region of 250sqm. As our project receives no government aid, we would like to establish a non-profit-making association in order to have a financial base.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us with advice and assistance, and in particular to Generaloberst a.D. Werner Großmann and Egon Krenz, who kindly provided us with the foreword to our project.