

Brechtian Theatre of Contradictions

Brechtian Theatre of Contradictions:
Providing Moral Strength under Conditions
of Dictatorship:
A Festschrift for Heinz-Uwe Haus

Edited by

Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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FOREWORD

SIGMAR SCHOLLAK

Sigmar Schollak was born in 1920 in Berlin. After an apprenticeship in the clothing industry he took music lessons, attended a conservatory and the Hochschule für Musik Berlin-West. In the 1950s he was member in a number of orchestras and worked for magazines and in the cultural section of the radio station Berliner Rundfunk, for which he also wrote radio plays both for adults and for children. By the early 1960s, his writing had taken over fully from his career in music. Schollak was not admitted to study in East Berlin because his parents had escaped to West Berlin. After the Wall was built, he resigned from his work for the magazines and the radio. From 1967 to 1979 he was a freelance novelist for the Jugendbuchverlag. In the wake of the expatriation of Wolf Biermann and the exclusion of several colleagues from the GDR writers confederation (1979) he applied for an exit permit, which was granted in 1982 after several years of bullying. Once in West Berlin, Schollak continued his writing, opening up to satire and aphorisms. He also wrote again for radio.

Talking about Heinz-Uwe Haus—or writing about him, in this case—means reporting about someone, whom I, from afar, consider as a perseverant person, both as a university lecturer and as a theatre director. It is much advisable to draw conclusions from the fact that this does not apply merely to the doctor and professor. If it were not like this, Haus would have remained in the former East Berlin—where he was master disciple of directing at the Academy of Arts under Wolfgang Heinz, then for years director at the tradition-rich Deutsches Theater and finally founding member and head of the directing section of the Institut für Schauspielregie—then Heinz-Uwe Haus’s existence would have been easier but it would not have fitted the characterisation above. He longed for a different kind of politics in his State, for a different kind of cultural politics. Two things that were not possible and not foreseeable in the GDR. All that was left for Haus was to look for a way out for himself that,

under the conditions of dictatorship, endangered neither himself nor his family. That was, if at all, conceivable almost exclusively in artistic professions. But even there lurked—for someone not conforming—risks: repudiation from the profession, disadvantages for the family. Here Heinz-Uwe Haus demonstrated both: diplomatic deftness and that kind of perseverance that characterises him in his artistic work.

Haus makes use of the opportunity of a „cultural exchange“ with Cyprus to place the foundation for his international impact through productions, workshops and lectures. The GDR regime, which likes to act the partner of block-free countries, among them the divided island state of Cyprus, gives in, with gritted teeth, to the request of arch bishop Makarios's government. The echo of Haus's artistic work also in Greece (through guest performances there of all his productions in Nicosia), his success on the stages of Athens with productions from Schiller to Brecht are picked up upon by the international media, by US-American universities and in Western European theatres. A consortium of three universities in Philadelphia—Villanova, Temple and Penn—achieves for Haus to be permitted to take up an invitation to the USA. In this case it is the split state courting recognition from the American administration. At the same time Haus is increasingly subjected to the Stasi's machinations. After an application for an exit permit for himself and his family was rejected, it is due to the protection through his high profile outside of East Berlin and in particular through the help given to him, in the background, by Western diplomats and artists, that lead the GDR bureaucracy to give in at least half-way and permit Haus to travel to the Greece and to the USA for productions and teaching assignments, within limits and again without his family.

A successful coup? A victory of perseverance to transform one's own desire in an artistic manner. Haus had become a wanderer between the worlds, between the places where he worked and the family at home who were not permitted to visit him at his workplaces. Until today, with his by now sixty-five years, this Heinz-Uwe Haus has been captivated by his work, has remained a restless person and as perseveringly creative. And he has remained the honest agent in the mediation of the art of the theatre and of play contents, a man without the kind of vanities in directing that increasingly fill the boards that should in effect signify the world. He has remained this, too, this sixty-five-year-old: a reliable combatant of all those who do not want homo sapiens—devoured by their own spirit of invention—to become an appendix of technical gadgets so that his existence peters out in a design devoid of meaning. Heinz-Uwe Haus is someone who restlessly oscillates, a creative man, who does not allow

himself to release himself into his homeland or into quiescence. A man who must be congratulated not only on the occasion of his birthday, but on the path once adopted, on his insights and successes.

INTRODUCTION

At the 5th International Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas (ISSEI), held at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, in August 1996, and attended by 1,500 delegates from all over the world, I first met Heinz-Uwe Haus: he also attended the conference, and we both stayed at a quaint small bed and breakfast owned by a Dutch lady who had once run a beauty salon. The conference structure was very flexible, and over very long breakfasts Haus told me and other delegates staying at this hotel, stories of his life as a director under the GDR regime. I had been born and had grown up in what had been, until 1990, West Germany; I remember that at school we had spent a whole year in history lessons discussing Germany's Third Reich past, preceded by half a year on the Weimar Republic. The gist of all that teaching was that such events must never happen again. We all knew that the GDR existed, and the school I attended was very progressive in assembling all students in the great hall when important political events were discussed on television, such as the 1974 government crisis resulting from the controversial Ostpolitik. We also discussed at school when federal Chancellor Willy Brandt decided to resign after it emerged that one of the people working most closely for him, Günter Guillaume, was a spy for the GDR. But never was there any explicit (or even implicit) suggestion that what was happening in the GDR, at the same time as we lived in West Germany, and very close to West Germany, to *us*, geographically, was precisely, in substance, even if with different terminology, what had been happening in the Third Reich under the Nazis and what was happening, a bit further away, in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries. The only and lonely (known) voice in West Germany that was critical of the GDR, was the presenter of the weekly ZDF Magazin, Gerhard Löwenthal; my immediate peers and I only ridiculed him for his idiosyncrasies, his message did not get through to us.

Against that background, which I would like to suggest may well have been characteristic of my entire generation in West Germany, the stories Heinz-Uwe Haus told us over those long breakfasts in August 1996 were eye-openers to our immediate common past. They remained mere stories for a very brief time only, followed by the shock that this was not just a story but a real life, lived in conditions that I should have known about,

and could have known about if initially the generation of my teachers, and later my own generation, had bothered. They and we did not bother, of if they or we did, it was too briefly, or too privately.

Over the years I met Heinz-Uwe Haus at further ISSEI conferences, in Haifa (1998), Bergen (2000) and at the 1992 conference at the University of Wales Aberystwyth that I had been invited by ISSEI to organise on their behalf. We also met on the occasions when I happened to be able to travel to Berlin for various research projects. In 2005 I invited Haus to Aberystwyth for a series of workshops, seminars and lectures for colleagues and students. On each occasion Haus, who in due course became Heinz-Uwe, told more “stories” (as I had encountered them initially), and we discussed theatre in general and in the political context of the former GDR in particular. With every conversation, the picture became more complete and more nuanced, leading, in 2006, to the idea for this *Festschrift*.

It appears on the occasion of Haus’s 65th birthday on 6 November 2007. The first part of the book provides an account of Haus’s biography, based on written material he provided me with, and several interviews I conducted with him in November 2006. That biography focuses on the professional and political side of Haus’s life and career. The personal side, his family, feature later in the book, in chapter fourteen, contributed by Haus’s long-term close friend and esteemed scholar of German studies, Guy Stern. Part II collects three texts which give the reader an impression of the concepts and attitudes that inform Haus’s theatre work. Part III offers three examples of how Haus regards the art of theatre in the context of the political situation he worked under for the majority of his life—the totalitarian regime of that characterised the GDR. From reading these texts we get further insights (already outlined in the biography in Part I) into the ways the regime influenced the daily life of the artist, and how Haus in particular faced those challenges and what role the theatre in general, and the theatre as lived by Haus in particular, played in resisting the daily wear and tear exerted by the regime. Part IV shifts the focus further towards politics, offering three long statements on developments in re-united Germany, Germany after liberation, the challenges is faced and faces, and the extent to which Germany is coping with those challenges or not. Part V takes us back to Haus’s creative work: while the majority of his work is that of the director (and, initially, the actor), Haus’s output includes writing for the theatre. Chapter Eleven is the translation back into English of Haus’s version of Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* based on the translation into German by Johann Joachim Eschenburg (1743-1820). Chapter Twelve is the text of *Attempt from the Ashes*, a play Haus wrote

together with his son while still living under the GDR regime. It was an exercise of putting into dramatic context, experiences of the regime's absurdity. The beauty of the work lies in its ability of disguise: words, names and situations are used in such a way that the insider will understand the allusions, but the outsider, i.e., anyone who might come across the script by accident, and who was faithful to the regime and thus potentially hostile to apparent criticism of the regime, would never be able to understand or interpret as potentially offensive. *The Brave Little Tailor*, the final chapter in this part of the book, is the text of a version of the Brothers Grimm fairy tale that Haus had written for the traditional Christmas fairy tale show at the municipal theatre in Brandenburg. The production was stopped by the GDR authorities a few days before the opening night because of a "cosmopolitan concept of folklore, considered foreign to our theatre for children, and because of its lack of psychological depth". The reader is invited to judge that party statement against the actual play text. The party assessment is on the same level as a statement in Haus's Stasi file: a Stasi IM (informeller Mitarbeiter) instructed to report on Haus marked as suspicious that Haus was changing the people he worked with too often (as a director he indeed worked with different casts for different productions...).

Part VI opens the perspective on Haus's work further by adding the views of three friends and colleagues. Guy Stern combines personal memories with his interpretation of Haus's work as director. David Lovell places Haus's political work and thinking in a wider context of the discourse of political science, while Christakis Georgiou comments on Haus's work in Cyprus, which began in 1975, constituting Haus's first work abroad, and continues to this day.

The appendix provides detailed, but even in that detail not complete, information about Haus's employment, productions and publications.

Altogether, the material collected in this book, Haus's own work, as well as commentaries by others from a range of perspectives, should serve not only as a documentation of the work of one major German theatre artist: it should support efforts to alert the present about aspects of the past that are all too easily and conveniently (both for all the wrong reasons), misrepresented, covered or hushed up, brushed aside and in due course forgotten. Theatre for Haus, during GDR times, was a means to survive, not only metaphorically. After liberation, post 1989, post GDR, theatre has lost nothing of its importance, quite the contrary. The book hopes to help understand both.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

BIOGRAPHY

DANIEL MEYER-DINKGRÄFE

Chronological Survey

Heinz-Uwe Haus was born on 6 November 1942. His father had been drafted by the Nazi Luftwaffe as a spotter; shortly before Haus's birth, his mother received official notification that her husband was missing in action—he had not returned from a flight over the Caucasus. He never returned from the war. Haus was brought up by his mother. They lived in a small town on the outskirts of Berlin. Haus's first memory of anything to do with theatre was the filming, in 1948, of *The Bridge*, directed by Arthur Pohl¹, and starring Ilse Steppat², Steffie Spira³, Arno Paulsen⁴, and Karl Hellmer⁵. The film by DEFA⁶ was about the escape of refugees from the East and their arrival in a small town. After initial scepticism and rejection a major fire leads to cooperation between locals and the displaced. Pohl used many people from the town in which Haus lived as extras and gave Haus, who had curly blond hair and blue eyes, several parts that involved running across the bridge—in the film that was escaping from the fire.

From his early teens onwards, Haus wanted to be two things in his adult life: a Romance scholar and an actor. The desire to be a Romance scholar disappeared—the interest in the theatre remained. Haus recalls that he started theatre work at the age of twelve: he worked with a group of other boys; they wrote little scenes and performed in a local pub, documenting most of their work with photos. Haus' grandmother supported their work, sewing the costumes. Such activity was characteristic for Haus, who would always want to contribute to public events at school, first by reciting poetry, later by putting together, acting in and directing sketches. At some stage he felt that adults should get involved, so he wrote further sketches in which adults participated, for example the wife of the town's Kriminalkommissar⁷, who happened to live in their three-family house.

At high school, Haus joined the literary circle and took over the school's amateur theatre company. His first work with that company was a Brecht evening—it was promptly forbidden, triggered by its references to *Baal*. Haus' main years of avid reading were when he was between fourteen and sixteen years old. He spent all his money on buying the collected works of Ibsen; he read Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Benn, Rilke, Hebbel, Chamisso, Büchner, Nietzsche, Fichte, Freud, Strindberg, Hamsun, and all the Greek classics of drama that he could get his hands on. He also tried to get hold of every book about painting. This was successful to a certain extent for the Renaissance to Menzel. Modern art was on the index, also all art that had been ostracised before as “decadent”. Art postcards were handed around illegally.

Communism was new to Haus and his generation. Haus was the last one in his form to join the pioneers, and did so only as a favour for a teacher for whom he had developed much affection. For his generation, communism did not mean much, yet. In their primary school form there was not a single child of communist parents. Later, one such child joined, whom the rest of the form considered as very exotic. Nobody talked to her, also because she spoke in very strong dialect—this was the time when state and party leader Ulbricht⁸ sent workers from Saxony further north so that they should become chair people of the LPGs (Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft). In his years in high school Haus sat next to a girl whose parents were West German communists. They would send their children to school in East Berlin; her father was training to eventually take over a part of the West German city of Essen. Haus remembers her as very starry-eyed—she believed in her parents' cause, but she returned to her parents in the West all the time. This was before the Berlin Wall. Haus noted the discrepancy of people who would be busy indoctrinating the pupils on a daily basis and then suddenly they had moved to the West. For Haus, it seemed as though responsibility, moral judgment or solidarity did not play any role at all.

From early on in his childhood, Haus saw and sought to develop, theatre as a chosen niche to escape from reality. As a young man, he recalls, he was, naturally, animated by a transcendental ideal, not just by the desire to outlast the despised regime ducked away in hiding. At the same time he had the hope to serve the spectators and the colleagues working with him, to give them strength by appealing to the possibility of change. It was clear to him from very early on in his life that the division of Germany was artificial. Fear of, and aversion against the regime led him to believe that theatre provided the space in which it was possible to resist the regime's attempts at educating the citizens of the GDR in conscious

denial of inconsistencies. In his first year in high school, the teacher who ran their literature club—where Haus and the others read Rilke and George—gave him a copy of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. They then had to write an essay and Haus quoted from *Zarathustra*. He was immediately summoned to the teacher's assembly to tell them who had given him that text. It was on the index, it was forbidden. The teacher who had given it to him was among the teachers who interrogated him. It was no question for Haus not to give that teacher away.

In his 2nd year in high school (year 10 in the high school years 9-12) Haus had to go into hospital for a year, to be in a plaster bed for a bone condition, Scheuermann's disease. That year was a major burden for him—on his ward he was surrounded by people who were really ill, with major congenital deformations. After that year he was allowed to return to school, quite normally, but he was excused from sports lessons; only at nighttimes he had to be in the plaster bed again. After he had completed high school he wanted to study at the Theaterhochschule Leipzig but they rejected him because he was not considered physically sufficiently fit. That theatre school would have trained him in the most conventional, worthy, or unsophisticated manner in Stanislavskian acting. So instead he was accepted at the Filmhochschule—in a way odd, because that training involved much more physical work, including fencing and riding. They accepted his doctor's notes, however.

That was in 1961. The Filmhochschule was in the film suburb of Babelsberg. Immediately after the Wall had been built, the students were working in a building close to the Wall; day in and day out they were confronted with the Wall, with the dogs, and the dog kennels, just across the narrow road. In the mornings the GDR border patrol would occasionally poke around in the waterway by the border with long sticks and drag bodies ashore, of people who had drowned while trying to escape. They dumped huge amounts of barbed wire into that water. Haus and his fellow-students saw all that brutality, but Haus' world-view did not develop further as a result, it had already fully formed. He had been confronted, at an early age and for a long time, with post-war conditions and had always been keen to see this part of history completed in a humane fashion, which in turn had fostered his ability to critique existing conditions. He did not accept West German Chancellor Adenauer's view that freedom as he described it should only apply to the three Western sectors of Germany. Haus was aware that as a child or an adolescent you make mistakes in your judgment, but he preferred the nationalistic rhetoric of Kurt Schumacher—the last anti-communist leader of the Social Democrat Party in Germany, who unmasked both Nazis and Communists.

In addition, in those days the GDR tried, not as explicitly as later, to present itself as the better Germany, with reference to German national heritage, and in the name of Germany's unification.

One of the reasons they had accepted Haus for the Filmhochschule was that he was not the conventional beauty. The selection of girls was predominantly for looks. The training was geared towards Stanislavski, but Haus was strongly influenced by a voice and speaking instructor who had been working already before the Nazi regime; she was originally from Leipzig. The leader of Filmhochschule's acting department was also an actor, one of the old school who was still formed to the extent that post-war Moscow Stanislavski could not confuse him. Haus and his cohort also had the translator of Stanislavski as a permanent acting teacher. From him Haus learnt about Stanislavski's ethics, especially the importance of learning in a context of discipline, and learning to serve the art. This teacher demonstrated in his own daily work what Stanislavski was talking about. He showed his students what kind of place the stage is, how to deal with one's costumes, all those things that make the profession important and valuable and that enable the development of the actor's self esteem. He gave his students the vital insight that the actor's expressions on stage are not only the actor's own business, but that they need to be regarded in context. In addition to his training as an actor Haus also studied film dramaturgy.

After completing his training, in 1964, Haus was sent into his first employment (as state-guaranteed to every graduate) in Senftenberg. The theatre in Senftenberg was meant to provide entertainment for the workers in the local coal mines. It was a major culture shock for Haus. He had to sign a two-year contract, all workplaces were socially secure. After only three months Haus knew for certain that he had to get out of there at all costs, because he would not have been able to endure two years. Leaving before the end of the state-enforced contract was not in line with the state intentions for work. The problems were not related to the theatre itself. There were wonderful colleagues and Haus learnt a lot, especially how to work with texts. It was a question of the social conditions. The coal dust in the town was such that a new shirt was black with dirt by lunchtime. However, Haus could not take it off because there was no chance to wash himself—he did not have a water pipe in his accommodation, the toilet was across the courtyard, and he had to get water in a bowl. The theatre operated a touring system, where the places they toured to were at times very far way and their conditions even worse: in one place the bed was placed on slatted frames because the ground water came up to the floor level.

Already at that stage Haus was interested in directing for the theatre and sought to get work as an assistant director. He did get that work; it was on a production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. And that was a culture shock as well. Haus had been used to directing in amateur contexts, and had served as assistant director at the Deutsches Theater (as part of a placement while training at the Filmhochschule) but here, in the provincial professional context, his role as assistant director was reduced to a kind of serving that he did not like. Haus recalls that he was happy and willing to serve Goethe, and Schiller and the technicians, he could serve the development of a production, but he was not happy with having to serve the narrow-minded power games of such a small theatre apparatus.

Haus managed to get away from Senftenberg after one year. The Filmhochschule had intended for him to go to the Filmhochschule in Moscow, which would of course have been the most desirable honour for most artists of the world. Haus, though, could not have imagined anything worse than having to set foot in the Soviet Union. This offer, however, allowed him to resign from his contract with the theatre in Senftenberg. Instead of going to Moscow, however, he joined the Stadttheater Brandenburg for a very rewarding time, 1965-68. Here he enjoyed everything a provincial theatre can offer. The stage was not too large, he played a good range of different parts, the townspeople loved their theatre, the actors were local stars who were treated preferentially at the local butchers or bakers; his landlady had rented out to the theatre for many years. Haus was not too far away from Berlin, and the theatre did not tour. Here he had his first opportunity of directing, a Christmas fairy tale, *Frau Holle*, based on Brothers Grimm. On the side he directed some work elsewhere and organised recitations of literature.

From Brandenburg, Haus moved to Berlin and joined the Deutsches Theater. He had hoped that the dramaturg of Besson⁹ who had been one of his teachers, and who had seen him in a number of productions, would see to it that he move on to Besson's company. Instead, they wanted him as Besson's assistant, as a master disciple. At the same time Haus had an offer from the Volksbühne to join them as an assistant. This was not so much on the basis of the directing work he had done already. It came about perhaps through the interest that Besson had in having Haus work with him. Haus decided to join Besson at the Deutsches Theater. When he joined Besson, in 1968, with his position as Meisterschüler, which was funded under the auspices of the Akademie der Künste, for the duration of three years, Besson had to leave; he had to move from the Deutsches Theater to the Volksbühne. Haus' position now was that he was at the Deutsches Theater, with his Meisterschüler position, but without a Meister

(master). In this situation it was helpful that he knew the Intendant, Wolfgang Heinz¹⁰, from two assistantships with him (among others with *Hamlet*) during his years as a student. From the time of those assistantships onwards, Heinz supported the independence of the young director und appreciated his intuition for the processes involved in acting.

Haus got the invitation to become first assistant to Manfred Wekwerth¹¹. He accepted. This initial invitation became the stepping stone for Haus's further work with Wekwerth: Wekwerth had been ill and did not return to the Berliner Ensemble (BE); he founded, and Haus joined, the "Working Group Wekwerth" at the Deutsches Theater. This Working Group was established to function as the centre for preparations to take over the BE after the expected retirement of Helene Weigel from her post as Intendant. The Working Group was allowed to be active for less than a year, though, because after Weigel's death the polibureau decided for Ruth Berghaus as Intendant.

Following his three-year funded tenure as Meisterschüler in 1971, Haus became the youngest director ever to work with the Deutsches Theater. It was also a time of political pressure. Haus had started a night program at the DT; before this, there was no theatre in East Berlin that started later than 8 pm, apart from late night Jazz performances. Haus did a Tucholsky evening, for example, or an evening of poetry and scenes, such as *From the lives of the Kosaks during the Russian Civil War* and *From Scholochow to Koltshak*—all in all a new form of literary revue. The DT night program was very successful indeed. It became successful, among other things, because they, for example, managed to have 150 roses thrown into the auditorium every night. These were quite difficult to get hold of in East Berlin. Haus also had a music group, which became quite influential later, with Günter Fischer. It was the first time that jazz or pop musicians worked with theatre. Conservative voices came up already then, whether such work was suitable on the stage of the DT. Another evening was with Stanislaw Lem, the Polish science fiction writer. Then, in 1970, Haus got the major request to put together a large-scale revue, together with a TV program to be based on it, which he was asked to direct as well. The piece in question was *Vive la Commune*, which Haus co-wrote with two other authors. It was written on the occasion of the 100th jubilee of the Paris Commune. The Stasi and party were suspicious from the beginning. The DT got a new Intendant in the meantime, Hans-Anselm Perten¹², a strict SED party follower from Rostock—before he developed his career in the GDR, he was a member of the propaganda department of the imperial broadcasting setup under the Nazis. He held a special status with the party, and as a result he had been allowed, at Rostock, occasionally, to put

productions of West German authors on this stage, which had been earmarked by the party as venue for world premieres of theatre from the West. However, his appointment to the DT meant that political pressure at the theatre increased considerably. Up to that point artists were secure, to a large extent, under a charming Vienna communist like Heinz Perten wanted to demonstrate his power, and censorship was rife. The revue opened to critical acclaim, but it had been reduced by some thirty-five minutes of rehearsed material. Party and trade union together launched a court action for slander, requested self-criticism of Haus, for the TV production Haus was allocated a co-director who was a party stirrer. Cuts and changes were enforced that were to deal with material allegedly not appropriate to the topic, such as grand guignols, jazz, poetry and lightness. What the party wanted was coarse consecration. For the guest performance of the production in West Germany, which provided Haus with the opportunity of his first visit to the West Germany since the Wall had been built in 1961, the party expressly allowed the original version to be performed, which had been censored and changed for performances in the GDR: they wanted to sell Haus's unconventional work as an indication of the GDR's liberal ways.

It became even worse for Haus when Perten was replaced by Gerhard Wolfram¹³, who came from Halle. Behind the mask of obligingness he took the next opportunity—a revue of soviet texts “Better to have a crane in the sky than a tit in the hand”, to tighten the thumbscrews and ended Haus' career with the DT (1975). On this occasion the state machinery made a decisive, and unusual mistake: they gave the political reasons for his dismissal to him in writing: he did not meet the requirements of social realism and was thus unacceptable for the DT. The letter also suggested he prove his worth on a job in the manufacturing industry (a euphemism for standing all day long at a factory conveyor belt), and if successful, could possibly be given work in small theatres in the provinces at some point in the future. With the help of the prominent GDR lawyer Friedrich-Karl Kaul (1906-1981), who had some old account to settle with Wolfram, a compromise was arranged. Haus returned the letter to the theatre and a mutually agreed dissolution contract was negotiated, to take effect a year later. It was pure coincidence that Haus did not end up in no-man's land, but that Kaul happened to have the better trump cards on his hands and was thus able to withdraw Haus from circulation coldly but less painfully.

Manfred Wekwerth invited Haus to join him at the Regieinstitut, where Haus worked from 1975-1982. Initially, he worked as assistant of Wekwerth, who served as the institute's director. Haus developed the section for directing, which he eventually led. When Wekwerth returned to

the Berliner Ensemble, where he became artistic director, Haus became his official authorised representative at the Regieinstitut. Haus was not a party member and was at odds with the new director of the Regieinstitut, appointed by the party. That new director was an assistant at the University in Leipzig, who saw himself as a trustworthy party soldier and was promoted to a professorship. In this political context, Wekwerth exploited mainly Haus's artistic renown in his development of a professional concept of training for the theatre and the theatre itself. Haus had cooperated with other theatres in some of his productions, such as the theatre in Bautzen for a production of *Hecuba* and with the Teatro Lautaro, made up of exiled Chileans, with whom he directed, in Spanish, *Der Untergang der Zentauren*, the only non-Brecht production for the festivities in the Brecht year of 1978.

Wekwerth arranged for Haus to be allowed to do one production per year outside of the GDR, starting with a production in Cyprus in 1975 (See Chapter Sixteen in Part VI of this book for an evaluation of Haus' work in Cyprus). The Stasi intended this permission as a kind of carrot in the carrot and stick approach. For Haus it had the effect, thanks to artistic success and international response, of strengthening even further his political-historical rejection of the second German dictatorship. The ideological and strategic implications after the overthrow of the military regime in Athens of 1974 played in his favour. Archbishop Makarios, the president of Cyprus, wooed by Moscow as figure-head of the states not bound by any pact, insisted, with the GDR administration, in Haus being granted continued exit permits, as did the conservative Greek government under Rallis, and later the socialist minister for culture, Melina Mercouri. The SED authorities accepted those requests grudgingly for foreign policy considerations. At the same time the surveillance apparatus at home fastened the snare even more tightly, always searching for "hostile-negative actions" on Haus's side. The aim was to "disintegrate and compromise" him, in terms of Stasi jargon, through specious disciplinary measures. Thus, after one guest production in the USA, Haus was prohibited from teaching for a year and sued for "achieving his exit permit by dishonest means", which ended with a fine. At the next opportunity he lost his permission to teach altogether, which made any further academic promotion impossible. Step by step the bureaucratic apparatus of injustice completed his ban from working. In the summer of 1982, finally, Haus resigned from the *Regieinstitut* and submitted an (almost Schweykian) exit permit application for three years in the first instance, and expressly not for travel to the Federal Republic of Germany.

His application to leave the country together with his wife and their son, for purposes of travelling to direct outside of the GDR, was rejected. However, because of the degree of his fame abroad, and his contacts in Greece and the USA, a compromise was reached: Haus would get work visa for Greece and the USA and his income would be dealt with by the GDR state agency for artists—they benefited from this arrangement by withholding a substantial percentage of Haus's earnings. Haus has no doubt that his ability to travel was enhanced considerably by the protection offered by the politicians of those countries in their East Berlin embassies and their home institutions.

Since 1982 Haus has been working freelance as a director, initially under the restrictions of the GDR regime, and since the fall of the Wall in 1989 under the new political conditions of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Since 1997 Haus has held a professorship at the University of Delaware, Department of Theatre, Professional Theatre Training Program, Newark, DE, USA, spending one half of each year in the USA to teach and direct.

Conditions of Dictatorship

Life in the GDR was life under a totalitarian regime, was life under conditions of state and party dictatorship. For the majority of people who have not experienced such life directly, it is difficult to recreate and even more difficult to imagine. There were plenty of rules and regulations pertaining to every aspect of life, many of those arbitrary even by the most generous standards, and prone to change literally any day. The state was suspicious of every subject's thought and action and sought to control these, most notoriously through the activities of the so-called Stasi (Staatssicherheitsdienst, state security service), which covered the entire GDR with an elaborate network of operatives who spied on others and produced reports. While the state of the GDR was inspired by Soviet Russia, many of the characteristics, in different guises and with different names, are extraordinarily similar to the German past under the national socialist totalitarian regime. The range of responses to the regime was comparable, as well: the majority of people who just do not realise what is happening even if it happens right in front of them; those who leave the oppressive situation while it is still physically possible (i.e., while the borders are still open or before they are too demoralised to mobilise the energy it takes to leave familiar ground behind—to emigrate); those who do not care as long as it does not affect them too much personally; those

who stay on and go underground to fight the regime; those who see and use the regime as a means of climbing the career ladder: they associate themselves with the regime from opportunism; and those who develop a deep understanding of, and hatred for the regime, both often to the detriment of their mental and physical health, and use their abilities to the best of their efforts in such ways that gives strength to their fellow-oppressed (whether they are aware of their status as oppressed or not) and to themselves. It was Gustaf Gründgens who withstood the Nazi regime at that regime's epicentre as general manager and artistic director of the Berlin state theatres during the duration of the 2nd World War, and it was Heinz-Uwe Haus who used Brecht to gain the moral support he so desperately needed, and passed it on to those he worked with, and those who came to see his productions in the theatre.

The daily reality of the regime was always juxtaposed with the experiences, truths and preconceptions of history, in general, and of Haus' family in particular. In his case, for his Huguenot grandmother it was quite clear that she told him her prejudices about Catholics. His best friend at school, who is still a friend today, is a Catholic. People grew up with these aspects of history and could thus consider all the things that happened in East Germany as a particularly dismal development of a post-war situation, without the possibility of questioning re-unification. All those phrases that Haus had repeated at him on a daily basis, such as "we are the other", "we are better", "we are anti-fascists", "this person is coming back, another one is coming back to us"—were not so interesting. Indoctrination was there, the party tried hard, but Haus was not caught up by those phrases. In all of his school years he remembers two form mates whom he classed as communist because their fathers were operatives. With them Haus and fellow-pupils were careful what they said—school in general taught first and foremost duplicity. Later they also found out that one of his classmates was working for the Stasi—he was not a communist, his parents weren't either, but the Stasi seduced him with his interest in technology, offering him the opportunity of working with them on a jamming transmitter.

Later, when Haus moved to Berlin, there was a Swiss communist in the flat above, and he was a nice man. What Haus did not understand was how one could, as a Spain veteran, be a fatuous follower of Marxism-Leninism after so many years, and blandish the reality of the GDR. DT Intendant Wolfgang Heinz was a trickster communist, the kind who tries to sell their dogmatism quite obtrusively, but then all is settled over a glass of wine. These people were also formed by their different life experiences, and

were thus able to see, appreciate and support the talents of those who were not communists.

Haus learnt much from Wekwerth and he valued him as an artist. Although Haus knows today about Wekwerth's role in the Stasi, he experienced him as more of an agent of security than the opposite. With hindsight, commenting on this statement about his attitude towards Wekwerth, Haus realises that this is a bending of facts, just as it is known from prisoners who do not want to reproach their kidnappers. Wekwerth was no stirrer; he was an appeaser. It is quite clear that through him the Stasi was able to comply with its operative concerns and that at the same time the regime did not suffer any damage. When Haus did things that were against the expected norms of behaviour, for example while travelling to the US, he was punished. Wekwerth did not do anything against that, of course, but the punishment was meaningless, in so far as Haus still remained Wekwerth's representative. Brecht's master disciple at least had his goal before his eyes. Perhaps, however, in some instances the teacher of mathematics and physics came through, which he had been before he moved to the BE.

For the GDR regime there is, at no corner or any phase of Haus' heart, even the slightest justification or excuse. All the regime's big talk about the anti-fascist movement was empty. Apart from the SED party followers, the majority of the population had problems not only with the way politics was made, but also with the very justification of the regime's existence. The horrors of war formed Haus' generation. Their senselessness as well as its crimes became clear to that generation through its consequences. They had to think through themselves what their soldiers had done and how terrible the displacement was. But these were not the stories they heard: when the Russians came, they arrested the social democrats as well, not just Nazis. Haus argues that whoever had a halfway functional capacity of judgment could only keep their distance from collaboration with the communists and to the Russian occupation power.

Haus' substantial distance to the protestant church came about despite his initial aim as far as profession was concerned: he wanted to become church leader. As a small child he saw Niemöller¹⁴ and admired him. He also admired a soldier's virtues, which he knew from literature. He then learnt, again and again, how the GDR regime was not his, that in it was no space there for him. The protestant church in due course began to align itself with the regime.

This natural belief that the GDR regime was only a temporary state of affairs was characteristic for many people of Haus's generation, born in the early 1940s. They experienced the attempted escape, they all wanted to

get to the American zone. The SS people gave Haus shelter, when he was three years old, while the Russians were not very nice to him—they took his bike away from him—they couldn't ride it properly, tried to use it as a scooter and it broke. Then his mother and relatives told him all the things that happened while escaping—why did all the women have to hide in the cellars? He heard all this as a small child. He collected all those contradictions and that is why he hated these contradictions so much. Against that background he could never believe that it was God's will that the Soviet-occupied zone should develop into the alternative Germany and that the other three zones should hurry to join it. When he got older he was of course able to realise that all the later distortions about the cold war and socialist world union were only politics of the day, because they kept changing from one SED plenary meeting to the next. He also noticed that a book that was referred to in one plenary was forbidden by the next one.

The fact alone that people are not allowed to read something is ground for major concern. Why? As far as TV was concerned, Haus saw GDR TV only occasionally, when he had participated in the program. He started reading *Neues Deutschland* from the age of twelve, and so did his son. They read together, and then discussed what they read, and both he and his son were able quite early on to read between the lines, what had been left out.

Three times in his years in Brandenburg, and twice in Berlin Haus was set upon to become a member of the party, to further his career. Such moves at conversion happened, interestingly, after problematic events. He always managed to argue very philosophically and abstractly, saying that he was no good at discipline, and used the problematic events as confirmation. Maybe he was just lucky with the people whose task it was to get him into the party. Some of them still hold high offices.

Later, Haus read his Stasi files. One operative set to spy on him commented that Haus changed the people he worked with too often. Of course, Haus had to work with different casts in different productions—the Stasi operative was so totally ignorant of this most basic aspect of theatre that he considered such change worth much concern. Several times in his life, persecution from the Stasi and the party led to breakdowns and longer periods of illness.

Just for fun, after the fall of the Wall Haus reclaimed his former post at the Regieinstitut. The Institute had been made part of the Ernst Busch Hochschule in Berlin, after having been independent and only nominally affiliated to the Filmhochschule. The panel set up to evaluate his application to get his post back was made up of four people. All four were from the former East Germany, and the chairperson from the former West

Germany. The colleagues from the former GDR included the person who held his former position at that time, and another colleague who had, in a different context, initiated politically motivated disciplinary proceedings against Haus, had made sure that he had his permission to teach at university level withdrawn and had him banned from any contact with students for a year. As if in mockery Haus was later invited to attend the 65th birthday celebrations of that former colleague. The Stasi was only *one* of the party's means of suppression. Haus maintains that when we talk about the Stasi today, we must not ignore their employers. Later Haus applied for a professorship in acting, but only former party members were even considered for the shortlist. These events confirm how enduringly disastrous the training, for years, of many West German intellectuals to conjure away from their horizon terror and misanthropy, has burdened, since the revolution in autumn 1989, the process of reunification.

When Haus had his first request to do work in the USA denied, he asked the Greek trade attaché to bring him, from West Berlin, as much literature as possible. Haus happened to know him because he was a native Cypriot, he had met him in Cyprus when he directed a production there. When visiting Haus, the attaché would park his car three roads away from Haus' flat and come over disguised as a gardener or something like that. What Haus needed, at that time, was information as to how many Soviet theatre artists had worked at which universities in the USA. Haus also used the Helsinki treaty to support his requests to get the USA travel permit, combining all his findings into a 14-page letter to the minister of culture—Haus tried, as far as possible, to deal with the highest levels of the administration, even if that meant circumventing official channels. A year later, the permission to travel to the USA finally came, with the universities Temple, Pennsylvania and Villanova uniting in their support of the request. The American cultural attaché visited Haus, he came over with a camera and some money.

The use of Brecht as a weapon for survival was what formed Haus right from the beginning. Learning from and working with Wekwerth and working in the institute even under observation by the Stasi became possible only with Brecht—no other system of thinking or argument would have assisted as much to help saving one's neck, again and again. Day-to-day life had other sides to it as well, also under GDR conditions: if a production was successful, some people breathed a sigh of relief that a production was a little bit different, a little more refreshing than what was otherwise on offer.

Wekwerth and his kind of colleagues, who considered themselves, within the system of the GDR, as the critical forces of the system, would

even have been satisfied if people had developed a certain artistic way of dealing with the regime that would have allowed them to secretly create their free spaces. One day the party secretary in charge of the Regieinstitut had the nasty idea of introducing a new subject: political behaviour, meant to enable directors to both sell their work better and also to serve as a safety measure for themselves. They all tended to read the occasional book that was not available in the state library. As far as the party elite was concerned, there was a group of SED members who thought they could be so clever as to provide the awkward, brutal party machine with more sophisticated tools, a kind of humane inquisition. As long as things were not directly expressed they were tolerated in the 1980s. The times of the 11th SED Plenary, where they ideologically discussed the acceptable colour of mocha cups (black mocha cups were considered inappropriate by some), were over. What was essential then was for the regime to cling on to power—they had realised that quite clearly. In addition, they tried to enlist people to grab hold of the majority of the population that had nothing to do with the regime. Those who worked as grabbers was allowed (to use a metaphor from the Nazi regime) to be a Jew.

The implemented terror of socialism found powerfully eloquent apologists in the free world. How else could Haus take Ernst Bloch's *Principle Hope* seriously, when he philosophises that in the Soviet Union Christ had for the first time come to power as Emperor; what perversion of his intelligence that Bloch redefines the Moscow court cases as pacemakers for a more beautiful future. What is to be thought of Georg Lucacs, who, too, justifies the red terror as bridging towards a non-violent future? Neruda, Rolland, Aragon, Shaw and so on—the prostitution of philosophers and poets of the 20th century makes Haus nauseous. And nobody can make excuses with regard to ignorance that allegedly reduced their guilt. In *Archipel Gulag* (p. 172, Munich, 1974), Alexander Solschenizyn provides the simple answer: "Ideology. It is this that provides the evil deed with the sought-for justification, and the evil-doer with the necessary hardness. That social theory helps him to whitewash his deeds before himself and others, not to hear reproaches, not oaths but homage and praise".

Theatre and Politics

[This section is based on interviews with Haus in November 2006]

Brecht is usually set up against Stanislavski, but Haus points out that they have hardly anything to do with each other. Brecht was a great director,

Stanislavski was not a director. Brecht was a great dramatist, Stanislavski was not a dramatist. Stanislavski was a teacher of acting, which Brecht never was. Stanislavski came from a tradition of theatre he wanted to maintain and develop further, while Brecht endeavoured to break traditions. The alleged antagonism is merely mechanistic and not accurate. There is no point setting them against each other. They are talking about different things, although at some stage Brecht, under pressure from the formalism debate, under the pressure from attacks his theatre was subjected to, produced a list of fourteen things he had in common with Stanislavski.

The discussion of realism, which is at the centre of the alleged conflict between Stanislavski and Brecht, was about which difficulties of writing the truth we were responsible for ourselves. The truth, in this context, had to concur with an ideological grid—a permanent attempt at rape. That is why, interestingly, no technique, no concept of theatre that made its way onto the stage in the revolutionary 20th century, was better suited than Stanislavski's. All the others had been killed, literally, and only Stanislavski existed on. Stalin had his reasons for keeping Stanislavski. He was the least problematic. All the books about directing that Stanislavski's disciples wrote about the work of their teacher deal with dreadful productions within an agenda of propaganda. Thus the system must have had aspects to it that allowed it to be put to the regime's service. For Haus it became clear quite early on in his career that it contains an element of lie. Even in his own training at the Filmhochschule, which he valued much, he wanted to approach reality or truth in the same way as the graph approaches the asymptote: never quite. He and his peers had to work with onions, backstage, so as to be able to cry at the appropriate moment. They were carried away by the momentum of any feeling without knowing what they were saying. All these errors in the system he noted as a student of acting, the somewhat sultry atmosphere of some rehearsals. Almost every student trained with Stanislavski has experienced, at least once, that enormous dependence that was allowed to develop between teacher and student. This is because the Stanislavski system is a system of justification. It justifies the action in an inward direction. It organises feelings from within an extremely limited range of experience. It completely excludes the telling of stories. This does not mean, Haus maintains, that you can be anecdotal. If you are a genius there is no harm. If you have a speech impediment and you get a good speech teacher, the system works as well. Where it finds its limitation it becomes tangible, usable, for a totalitarian regime. It is like glycerine for the tears of a film actress for the justification of behaviour. Reading a play such as to