

Beer Country

Anatomy of a Cultural Commodity in Postwar Central Europe

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Introduction: Beginning at the End

Beer	<i>Bier</i>	<i>Pivo</i>
People's Drink	<i>Volksgetränk</i>	<i>Lidové nápoj</i>
National Drink	<i>Nationalgetränk</i>	<i>Národní nápoj</i>
Liquid bread	<i>Flüssiges brot</i>	<i>Tekutý chléb</i>

- Common Beer Terms in English, German, and Czech

In 2016, Dr. Norbert Lammer, president of the German Bundestag, received a new title. Taking on an honorary distinction that had been held over the previous fourteen years by a panoply of ministers, minister-presidents, party chiefs and other powerful figures including Green Party chief Cem Özdemir, Chancellor's Chief of Staff and later Minister of Economics Peter Altmaier, and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Lammer became the official "Ambassador of Beer" by a vote of the German Brewers' Association. Lammer had the good luck of taking on his new role in the year that marked the 500th anniversary of the much-famed Bavarian *Reinheitsgebot*, a food safety law specific to beer that most German brewers, politicians, and (according to opinion polls) ordinary Germans credited with the exceptional quality and sterling reputation of the country's beer.¹ The 500th anniversary was, therefore, a moment of great significance, commemorated with special new branding, events held around the Federal Republic, parties, festivals, and not a few stump speeches for the German national beverage from leading figures such as Lammer. The parliamentary President did not hold back in his praise of beer. He spoke of beer as a "national basic foodstuff" and praised the Bavarian State

¹ The *Reinheitsgebot* forms an important part of the history through much of this dissertation. Debates about its history are discussed at relevant points throughout the text, but certain key facts are not disputed. The term refers to a Bavarian ducal decree from 1516 which set a number of regulations for the production and sale of beer in Bavaria. Most important to its later supporters and opponents, the decree banned the use of any ingredients in making beer except for barley malt (which gives beer its sweetness and its fermentable sugars to turn into alcohol), hops (which provide bitterness and aroma), water, and (after its scientific discovery) yeast. See <https://beerandbrewing.com/dictionary/7SMpZlapQI/>.

Parliament as the place where the *Reinheitsgebot* originally got its modern-day name (in 1918 during fights over the new Weimar Constitution).² Of most pressing interest, Lammer proclaimed German beer to be a “*Kulturgut*.”³ Translating to English, the president of the German parliament affirmed beer as a “cultural asset,” a “cultural good,” or, perhaps, a “cultural commodity.”

A few years earlier, across the southeastern border in the Czech Republic, a Czech Television producer set out to tell the story of what beer meant in his society. In the opening sequence of *O pivu a u piva* (*On Beer and With Beer*) the producer/narrator makes his understanding of the beverage’s role in Czech life very clear. “Beer in Czechia is more than life, more than a word, more than a political conviction... Everyone drinks beer in Czechia: right-wingers, left-wingers, punk rockers, monarchists, Nazis, allotment gardeners, anarchists - most likely even Muslims.”⁴ The film crew captured Czechs of all walks of life talking about beer, drinking beer, celebrating beer. Middle aged men questioned whether life was really better under democracy than socialism, pondering if democracy had improved the everyday life of the beer-drinker. A publican named Evžen complained bitterly of foreign companies buying Czech breweries, when the Czechs really know better than anyone how to make good beer. Young people discussed their resignation from politics, but their total commitment to spending time with friends drinking beer. The narrator added his own flair for the dramatic from time to time, claiming “beer is a metaphor for everything,” “without beer Smetana wouldn’t have composed *Vltava*,” “without beer there would be no nation.” At the heart of each hyperbole lies a core of

² <https://www.about-drinks.com/deutsche-brauer-ernennen-bundestagspraesident-norbert-lammert-zum-neuen-botschafter-des-bieres/>.

³ Robert Terrell, “The People’s Drink: Beer, Bavaria, and the Remaking of Germany, 1933-1987” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2018), 287.

⁴ *O pivu a u piva: Za doprovodu Slovanských tanců* (2012), ČT-A, IDEC: 312 294 34011, timestamp: 0:30.

fact. Not even a German “beer patriot” would, with some experience of Czech beer culture, deny that there, too, it serves as a *Kulturgut*. But it is another exaggerated statement from *O pivu a u piva* that contains a kernel of truth most striking in its implications. For Czechs, the film suggests, “there is no more political drink than beer. Beer is more powerful than [President Václav] Klaus and [President Miloš] Zeman. Beer reigns.”⁵

This dissertation seeks to explain these two ideas in the context of postwar German and Czech societies. What does it mean for beer to be a cultural commodity, and what does politics have to do with it? I argue that beer held tremendous power in postwar German and Czech societies owing to its hybrid cultural and economic importance.⁶ I use the shorthand term “cultural commodity” to describe this phenomenon. The elevated value that both powerful and ordinary individuals in this region placed on beer as more than “just” a fixture of culture or “just” a highly consequential good in the economy gave the beverage influence all of its own, separate and apart from any individual or group of producers, politicians, and media figures who regularly sought to use it to their own ends. That power appears at both the grassroots level and in the halls of power, helping to shape people’s sense of identity in ways most visible when challenged or placed in contrast to the “other.” As such, the chapters here deal with “us” vs. “them” dynamics emerging from military occupations, cultural and social revolutions, public health campaigns, and multinational legal conflicts – in short, politics. It was the economic and cultural value of beer that made it a cultural commodity. It was the reaction of political leaders and their constituents to that value that made it powerful. All these phenomena appear consistently throughout the postwar period, and I contend that they have their roots in the history

⁵ Ibid., 3:45.

⁶ This argument extends as well to beer’s constitutive ingredients, particularly barley malt and hops, which at times become almost as crucial to the this study as the finished product.

of the Czech and German lands well before 1945. Meaning that, even as political, economic, and social life in Central Europe experienced extreme ruptures, to put it mildly, across the course of the twentieth century, beer's role as a cultural commodity and its ability to warp political power to its benefit shows remarkable continuity.

The economic side of a cultural commodity may, at first glance, appear obvious and simple. A commodity's economic value can be expressed in statistics and easily tracked over time. Still, how business actors choose to express and utilize their financial power varies a great deal depending on the circumstances and the industry in question. The pages below make it abundantly clear that brewers advocated for themselves and their trade using every tool available to them at a given time. But they had a particular sense of two unique and historically-determined roles for beer in the economy, its special contribution to state coffers, and the fact that many ordinary Germans and Czechs considered beer to be a basic foodstuff. These two points helped give beer makers an aura of untouchability that they sought to exploit for all it was worth. Indeed, one of the recurring leitmotifs of this study is expressed already in the words of Dr. Lammer. The idea that beer, an alcoholic beverage, counted far more as a *Nahrungsmittel* (foodstuff) than a *Genussmittel* (luxury good or stimulant) carried on and remained a widely accepted popular belief to a shocking degree through the latter half of the twentieth century.⁷ For Germans and Czechs, both prone to refer to the beverage as "liquid bread," this notion robbed the subject of beer of much of the frivolity that might surround it in other parts of the world. This is just one initial example of how blurred the lines quickly become when one seeks to speak of economic value and cultural meaning as totally separate subjects. Works such as Bernhard

⁷ Because of this dynamic, *Genussmittel* is a critical term in this dissertation. Common translations include the not quite satisfactory, "stimulant," or "semi-luxury consumable." The most direct translation into English would be "pleasure-stuff," an awkward neologism. For this reason, I use the German throughout the text anywhere this term appears.

Rieger's *The People's Car* have demonstrated the enlightening potential of studies that take the effort to tease out the ways that so-called "hard" economic forces (those that can be easily represented statistically or graphically) interact with softer social and cultural dynamics to produce a complex process that determines the "real" value of things in a market. As Rieger points out, the mysterious disconnect between the raw physical materials that make up a good and its final value in an economy so "baffled" Marx that he simply labeled the conundrum as "fetishes" and left it at that, but his identification of the social/material interplay that ultimately gives commodities their worth left a challenge for future scholars to dig deeper.⁸

Demonstrating the cultural power of a commodity such as beer apart from prices and capital valuations is, if anything, an even steeper challenge. There are real, demonstrable historical developments based in material realities that made beer a crucial part of dietary and social life in many parts of the world, including Germany and the Bohemian Crown Lands. The challenge comes in separating these facts from the imagined collective memories of past beer cultures, which fed into myths of the beverage's ancient roots in Central Europe and the primordial nature of German and Czech beer culture. This sense of beer's deep roots in the region, along with the supremely-social nature of its consumption for much of history made it especially attractive as an anchor for certain group identities such as gender, nationality, and class, whose members could look back in time and, legitimately, see gathering around beer as a central expression of social belonging for people like them. Less legitimately, they could see in that history a sense of the "natural order of things." Of course, source materials themselves almost never approached these topics with a critical lens, requiring broad analysis of a wide range of evidence to uncover the narratives and show their contours. Thankfully, the sheer

⁸ Bernhard Rieger, *The People's Car: A Global History of the Volkswagen Beetle* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 5–6.

volume of writing, depictions, advertisements, documentation, and other material relating to beer allows for such an analysis to find recurring themes that appear consistently across different media. This effort to find “patterns in a downpour” as David Ciarlo calls it, reveals which acts and expressions of self-understanding beer played into most often, and for which groups it did so.⁹

This dissertation argues that beer had power. While economic value and cultural prevalence might make a commodity important, power is not power unless it is exercised. For that reason many of the pages below seek to gauge the impact of beer’s economic and cultural capital on society by examining the rhetoric and policies of political leaders. I have attempted to provide a strong balance of providing both written and spoken words that state representatives and media creators used to describe and discuss beer alongside the actual legislative and regulatory systems that their governments put into place to control its production, sale, and consumption. The absence of certain messages and rules for beer can be equally strong indicators of its exceptional treatment, especially in a case such as public health laws designed to address alcoholism and alcohol abuse. Showing what the people who had the power to shape public opinion and (to some degree) control the populations’ actions felt that they could and could not say or do with beer throws sharp relief on the often-unspoken boundaries around this cultural commodity.

Structure, Historiography, and Setting: The Magic of Three

The dissertation has six chapters divided into three parts, each of which approaches this cultural commodity from a slightly different angle. The parts are thematic, though they do

⁹ David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 16.

proceed in rough chronological order, and each part corresponds with a particular scale of analysis, moving from a micro-historical level in Part I, to the national scale in Part II, and finally to case studies involving multinational organizations in Part III. Finally, while all chapters contribute to the historiographical debates at hand, each of the three parts contributes most directly to one major theme from scholarly inquiry.

Part I shows the economic development of the beer industries in these three countries before and after World War Two, focusing on the immediate postwar days when they were reduced as far as possible to mere physical resources for Germans and Czechs. Chapter One provides an overview of the sector's growth and relations between governments and brewing industries in Central Europe from the nineteenth century to 1945. Chapter Two concerns itself with the postwar years up to the early 1950s, when industry leaders wrestled with highly interventionist governments, and one another, over the fate of the region's brewing infrastructure. Brewers had no hope of legitimizing their arguments to political leaders with the cultural and social capital of beer in their societies, not in a time when an annihilatory war and political paradigm changes had caused and were causing such tremendous disruption. Instead, a close look at the power struggles within the beer industry and its regulatory state organs proves how successful brewers and their advocates could be in marshalling the economic and political value of their product to make purely utilitarian appeals for their importance and justify their requests for support. When the cultural aspect of beer was stripped almost entirely away, the commodity remained a force to be reckoned with, one that government leaders could afford to neglect entirely, even if they tried. In other ways, the chapter shows business figures and government officials of the time using the entirely unique circumstances of the moment to push agendas and carry on rivalries and competition that had long existed. The particular tactics of the

actors in Chapter Two thus show a remarkable degree of continuity to the years of the Third Reich and even earlier. That continuity had a direct impact on the outcomes of those power struggles, which determined who (in a national and political sense) ended up in control of the beer industry. A brief intermission between Parts I and II provides important context for the remainder of the dissertation by showing the development of beer production in all three countries from the 1950s to 1989.

Part I speaks most directly to debates over continuity and rupture in postwar Central Europe. Continuity is a theme throughout, but it is in these two chapters that we see in the most minute detail what it actually looks like for historical actors to take and adapt social, cultural, and economic resources of an earlier time to meet the exigencies of the moment, even when the circumstances have radically changed. In debates over whether there was or was not a “zero hour” in 1945 for Germans (and, I contend, Czechs), the most nuanced and compelling historical voices are those that suggest “it depends.”¹⁰ Different inquiries focused on different aspects of society have and will return a wide variety of answers.¹¹ A cultural commodity such as beer demonstrates a remarkable ability to survive even extreme historical transformations by dint of its combined economic and cultural power and thus carry forward much of its meaning and symbolic capital intact.¹² As such, I suggest that scholars such as Andrew Port and Pamela Swett

¹⁰ Robert Moeller is particularly good at circling back to Theodor Adorno’s original point about Germans “forgetting” the past and suggesting, instead, that they remembered very well, but chose to remember only particular parts; see Robert G. Moeller, “Chapter Three: Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1948-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): 83-109.

¹¹ Of great relevance to Part II is Volker Berghahn’s arguments regarding the continuity of business personnel in the ranks of upper management and ownership, see Volker R. Berghahn, “Chapter Fourteen: Recasting Bourgeois Germany,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1948-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): 326-340.

¹² As such, focusing on a cultural commodity with long historical roots in Central Europe actually gives us a notably different case study than something like Rieger’s study of the Volkswagen Beetle, which did not have the same kind of pre-war history.

who have proffered terms to replace “zero hour” are correct, but incomplete. To speak of a “fresh start” or “new beginnings” rather than a clean break is accurate, but only with the additional premise that much of the material and cultural basis for the societies that emerged into the later twentieth century bore direct links and a striking resemblance to what had come before.¹³ As Parts II and III prove, that continuity made a real, substantial difference in the way that postwar society evolved for ordinary Germans and Czechs.

Part II shifts to consider the cultural and social power of beer and how state authorities tried, or avoided trying, to rein it in across the latter half of the twentieth century. Chapter Three pauses the chronological progression of the study to offer a synchronic analysis of the most important identity formations that German and Czech beer culture helped to ground. Namely, it closely examines the relationship of beer to notions of gender and nationality, while also suggesting, surprisingly, that the links between class identity and beer consumption in the second half of the twentieth century are more ephemeral and harder to pin down. Beer culture served as a powerful anchor for traditional notions of masculinity and national identity in the decades after World War Two, which will shock no one. What is notable, however, is the consistency with which that same messaging and those same popular attitudes remained prevalent in these three countries even as the wider social structures of gender relations and political nationalism transformed. Chapter Four demonstrates the persistence of these discourses. Not only does it show how public health efforts to combat alcohol abuse and alcoholism faced challenges, in part, because of the exceptional treatment given to beer by officials wary of the beverage’s grassroots popularity, it also presents clear evidence that the nature of that deep attachment to beer culture

¹³ Pamela E. Swett, *Selling under the Swastika: Advertising and Commercial Culture in Nazi Germany* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013), 253; Andrew I. Port, "Democracy and Dictatorship in the Cold War: The Two Germanies, 1949-1961," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 615-616.

remained tightly bound with those same gendered and national formations up to and beyond the end of this study in 1989.

Identity studies form the key scholarly backdrop to Part II, and particularly those works that have sought to examine the relationship between the way that self-understanding and group belonging can be rooted in objects or consumption. As Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper suggest, studies of “identity” often suffer from a lack of precision and clarity in their use of the term.¹⁴ While I do not eschew speaking of “identity,” I do seek to avoid the problem of overgeneralization by focusing on beer, a single commodity, and the many ways that the culture surrounding it reinforced certain perceptions of what masculinity, femininity, “Czechness,” and “Germanness” meant, what they looked like, what was acceptable and unacceptable in the act of performing them. For this, I take inspiration from other studies of consumption and commodities, which range widely in focus and theme, but generally tend to explore how individuals and groups “seek [their] identity in the variety of goods [they] consumed.”¹⁵ In turn, many such studies show efforts by political or cultural elites to assert themselves into the seemingly private sphere of consumer choice in order to appropriate or challenge those value systems in pursuit of political agendas.¹⁶ Studies of coffee and plastics in East Germany, Volkswagen Beetles and cookbooks in West Germany, and consumer durables in Czechoslovakia have all shown how both citizens and governments grounded political identities such as “socialist,” “dissident,” or “irridentist” in their ability to provide or acquire certain goods.¹⁷

¹⁴ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1-47.

¹⁵ Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marche: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 53.

¹⁶ Non-German or Czech examples: Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014);

¹⁷ Katherine, Pence. “Grounds for Discontent? Coffee from the Black Market to the *Kafeeklatsch* in the GDR,” in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, eds. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuberger

Questions of consumption and identity extend beyond politics, however, to seemingly every area of social life. Gender has been a highly fruitful category of analysis for studies of consumer issues especially under state socialist systems such as East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Consumption, in turn, has been a useful category of analysis for studies that explore women's and LGBTQ+ experiences.¹⁸ Works that explore the emergence and hardening of national identities in German and Czech history show how objects could embody nationalism and present “buying national” as a frequent refrain from all sides in ethnic conflicts.¹⁹ If there is one weakness that this body of literature contains, it is in its propensity to focus on periods or moments of rupture in the production, availability, consumption, or meaning of commodities. The bulk of commodity and consumer studies produced to date focus, understandably, on moments of sudden change or acceleration in patterns of production or consumption. Their broad conclusions about cultural interchange and adaptability apply only partially to cases of long-

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 197-225; Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Bernhard Rieger, *The People's Car: A Global History of the Volkswagen Beetle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Alice Weinreb, "The Tastes of Home: Cooking the Lost Heimat in West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s," *German Studies Review* 34, no. 2 (May 2011), 345-364; Bradley Abrams, "Buying Time: Consumption and Political Legitimization in Late Communist Czechoslovakia," in *The End and the Beginning: The Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob (Central European University Press, 2012), 399-422.

¹⁸ Katherine Pence, "'Women on the Verge': Consumers between Private Desires and Public Crisis," in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* ed. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008); Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), ch. 7; Alice Weinreb, *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), ch. 5.

¹⁹ Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 5; Helmut Walser Smith, *Germany, a Nation in Its Time: Before, during, and after Nationalism, 1500-2000* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2020), 338; Corinna Treitel, *Eating Nature in Modern Germany: Food, Agriculture and Environment, 1870 - 2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3; Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 15; Weinreb, *Modern Hungers*, ch. 5.

established patterns in the material life and culture of a society.²⁰ Beer not only has a genuine centuries-old legacy in the material lives of Germans and Czechs, but both that real history and the myths about the beverage's primordial links to manly life in Central Europe played a central role in the everyday discourse about it. Part II adds a unique new example to this body of literature. On the one hand, despite recent trends toward transnational studies, most of these works remain grounded in a single national context, if not a single state. By blending international comparison and transnational connections between divided Germany and the Czech lands, I show the surprisingly limited impact of political boundaries on the parallel and interconnected development of postwar central European beer culture in its historical strongholds. I also reveal how much those historical roots continued to matter in the late twentieth century in ways both real and imagined by their populations.

Considering the importance and popularity of beer as laid out in Parts I and II, the fact that state leaders sought to “ride the tiger” and rally to defense of the people’s drink when it faced a perceived threat seems eminently understandable.²¹ Part III provides a capstone on the preceding forty years of beer history with two parallel multinational disputes over the beverage that broke out both East and West of the Iron Curtain in the 1980s. Chapter Five examines the successful lawsuit brought by the European Commission against the Federal Republic of Germany seeking to eliminate the West German import ban on beers not conforming to the *Reinheitsgebot*. More importantly, it investigates the German defense, both legal and in the public sphere, against what many brewers, politicians, and citizens considered to be a kind of

²⁰ For a great many examples see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992); Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger eds., *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); David F Crew ed., *Consuming Germany in the Cold War* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003).

²¹ A nod to the note about right-wing demagoguery made by David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 25.

attack on their national identity and sovereignty. Chapter Six then presents the buildup and climax of a dispute between East Germany and Czechoslovakia over the use of the word “Pilsner” to label beers brewed outside the city of Plzeň. The conflict, with roots running back more than a century through the darkest days of violent confrontation between Germans and Czechs, came to a head just before the collapse of Communist rule when the Czechoslovak government enforced a blockade of East German beer attempting to cross their borders. The case studies show, in a final, most concrete manner, just how deeply intertwined and powerful the cultural and economic aspects of beer culture were, and how much history played into the political, symbolic, and legal-business claims by Germans and Czechs for control over “their beer.”

Historiographically, Part III addresses the nature of what Michaela DeSoucey has wonderfully dubbed “gastro-nationalism.” That is, it examines questions of modern statehood, and specifically the triangular relationship between the administrative state of the later twentieth century, its role in stewarding economy prosperity, and its responsibility to ensure the survival of popular expectations for national culture. Studies of cultural commodities have a great deal to offer to our existing knowledge and theories about the nature of the modern nation-state, and this one is particularly full of insights as a result of the close connection between the product and perceptions of national identity, and the way that international politics in Europe developed after World War II. In the years immediately before and after this study, overt chauvinistic nationalism circulated in German and Czech societies to a much greater degree than in the intervening four decades.²² These “bookends” of aggressive nationalism sandwiched a period in

²² Though, of course, much more so in the period before. See, Bernhard Rieger, *The People’s Car: A Global History of the Volkswagen Beetle* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 116; Norbert Frei, *Adenauer’s Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), xv; Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 118, 248, 250; Smith, *Germany: A Nation in its Time*, Kindle e-book pg. 534; Thomas Lillig, *Rechtsextremismus in den neuen Bundesländern: Erklärungsansätze, Einstellungspotentiale und organisatorische Strukturen* (Mainz: Forschungsgruppe Deutschland am Institut für Politikwissenschaft der

which national identity appeared to take on an increasingly secondary importance to other political identities (socialism, anti-Communism, Europeanism, etc.). What degree of continuity existed between the “old” and “new” nationalisms? Many scholars hold that nationalism faded in Central Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, though the nuances differ for the three states involved in this study.²³ This would suggest that the nationalist and xenophobic outbursts during and after the 1990s really do constitute what Helmut Walser Smith refers to as a “new nationalism,” which he sees first emerging in the West German case in the late 1970s and early 1980s.²⁴ Such new nationalism would be qualitatively different from the old, though emulating it in some respects, leading Smith to conclude that we can speak of an “after nationalism” for Germany, with the “proviso that one should not confuse twenty-first-century patriotism, national identity, or a genuine love of one's country with the kind of toxic nationalism that defined Germany's nationalist age.”²⁵ Certainly, scholarship written just before the events of

Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, 1994), 3, 9; Britta Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher in der DDR und in den neuen Bundesländern von 1982-1998* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002), 206; Martin Dangerfield, Review of *The New Right in the New Europe: Czech Transformation and Right Wing Politics, 1986-2006* by Seán Hanley, *Slavic Review* 67, no. 3 (Fall, 2008), 751-752; Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 322.

²³ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 659-661; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, ch. 6; Smith, *Germany: A Nation in its Time*, Part V; Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), ch. 12; Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993); Thomas Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 254-255, 258; Klaus von Beyme, "5. The Power Structure in the Federal Republic of Germany," in *Contemporary Germany: Politics and Culture*, eds. Charles Burdick, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Winfried Kudszus (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984): 77 – 102; 91-93; Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, "7. The Role of the Federal Republic of Germany in the World, 1949-1982," in *Contemporary Germany: Politics and Culture*, eds. Charles Burdick, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Winfried Kudszus (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984): 128 – 176; Rüdiger Thomas, "9. The Other German System: A Look at the German Democratic Republic," in *Contemporary Germany: Politics and Culture*, eds. Charles Burdick, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Winfried Kudszus (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 232; Karin Thomas, "17. Art in Germany, 1945-1982," in *Contemporary Germany: Politics and Culture*, eds. Charles Burdick, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Winfried Kudszus (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 398.

²⁴ Smith, *Germany: A Nation in its Time*, ch. 14, Kindle ebook pgs. 518-532.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 549.

the 1990s indicate a belief that German nationalism of the *völkisch* variety had lost any significant appeal.²⁶

But there is another way of looking at nationalism that posits aggressive, chauvinistic, and racist nationalism as only one extreme example of a larger political framework in which states wield their power to promote the interests of a national identity group. Far more common and pervasive are the ubiquitous cases of governmental authority (through financial support, regulatory legislation, state media, etc.) protecting or laying claim to the cultural capital of the nation, reinforcing the intimate links between identity and political might. Though it does not present itself as obviously as toxic nationalism, scholars such as Michael Billig argue that mundane national objects carry powerful “ideological habits” that reinscribe the nation daily and form a kind of “banal nationalism,” which is another side of the same coin.²⁷ Part III suggests that DeSoucey’s gastronationalism and Billig’s banal nationalism share close links with one another. It is the constant, pervasive messaging associating commodities such as French foie gras (from DeSoucey’s study) or beer with a national identity that recasts any perceived threat to challenge to them as an attack on the nation itself. This is nationalism, albeit of a less violent and less overtly threatening nature than territorial revanchism or irredentism. Moreover, while serious minds will differ on this point, I would argue that even in these relatively mild cases, the underlying logic reinforces and normalizes the notion that political leaders should and must rush to support the cultural preferences of their nation with the (ultimately violent) power of the state,

²⁶ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 191; Klaus von Beyme, “5. The Power Structure in the Federal Republic of Germany,” in *Contemporary Germany: Politics and Culture*, eds. Charles Burdick, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Winfried Kudszus (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984): 77 – 102; 91-93; Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, “7. The Role of the Federal Republic of Germany in the World, 1949-1982,” in *Contemporary Germany: Politics and Culture*, eds. Charles Burdick, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Winfried Kudszus (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984): 128 – 176.

²⁷ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 6.

and thus affirms a nationalist mindset. When one considers how easily economic rationales can be used to cloak the underlying cultural and identitarian reasons for nationalist rhetoric and policies on behalf of cultural commodities, it is not hard to see how powerful a force those goods can be in the hands of those persuaded by Ernest Gellner's eloquent definition of nationalism, "a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent."²⁸

The above summary shows the primary, though certainly not the only fields of scholarship that I engage with. Throughout the text I am, of course, in close conversation with existing works on beer, alcohol, and consumer culture more generally. There is also an implicit critique (implicit because it is somewhat nebulous) of the habit among both historic actors and contemporary scholars to assign beer and beer culture a lower order of importance than I would argue its status as a cultural commodity warrants. For example, Chad Bryant's recent (and outstanding) dive into the history of Prague as a modern city lists crucial social spaces through the decades including "paths and parks," "cafes and nightclubs," "work," and "theaters." Pubs do not get a mention, despite the fact that chapters two and three of the book make clear their absolute centrality in the social lives of working-class communities.²⁹ Nevertheless, these are relatively side issues to the core debates listed above.

The ability to examine these same dynamics in three states, two operating under state socialism and one under liberal capitalism, makes my setting of Central Europe during the postwar period extremely beneficial. West Germany, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia offer a perfect laboratory to examine questions of identity, continuity, and politics with a cultural commodity such as beer. Their historically high consumption levels, which all reached relative

²⁸ <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199670840.001.0001/acref-9780199670840-e-866>

²⁹ Chad Bryant, *Prague: Belonging in the Modern City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021), 7.

peaks in the 1980s in a remarkable convergence, along with their domestic and international reputations for beer making and quality production lead me to label this region of Central Europe as the “Greater Beer Zone.” However, not only did these three states have strong national cultural connections to beer, but they contained substantial regional variations as well. Bavaria in West Germany, Saxony in East Germany, and Bohemia in Czechoslovakia all shared characteristics as brewing powerhouses in their countries, with the highest rates of consumption and the strongest concentration of world-famous brands such as Munich’s “Big Six” breweries, Pilsner Urquell from Bohemia, and Radeberger Pilsner in Saxony. These three contiguous regions stand apart, then, as a “Lesser Beer Zone.” Also at play are the international politics that emerges with the progressive integration of West Germany into the European Economic Community and the enforced cooperation of COMECON in the East. Ultimately, having the local, national, and international scales of analysis to move between and compare gives me the ability to both transgress national boundaries, showing where developments correlated with wider interregional or global patterns, and to compare how different political and economic systems responded to similar trends and challenges over the decades.



Figure 1 The Greater Beer Zone. West Germany, East Germany, the Czech lands



Figure 2 The Lesser Beer Zone. Bohemia, Bavaria, Saxony

A final note on style is warranted. The history of beer and beer culture in German and Czech societies has been my primary research focus for more than seven years now. My reading

and consumption of historic media during that time has ranged widely as I pursued coursework, comprehensive exams, teaching duties, and simple curiosity. Through it all, any mention or depiction of beer in these cultures, however small, caught my attention and usually ended up recorded in a notebook, stored away just in case it could somehow illuminate an aspect of my work at a future date. What it has all added up to for me is something extremely hard to reproduce in the standard prose style of history writing, something like the “texture” of German and Czech beer cultures. The ubiquity, normalcy, and routineness of beer in the daily lives of so many people in Central Europe brings with it a particular emotional flavor and sentimental rhythm to the culture of this commodity that must be communicated in these pages if what I am arguing is to be fully understood. I have struggled to figure out how to do that. What I have settled on is a kind of parallel narrative running through this text, told at chapter and section breaks through the quotes and vignettes that I have collected. My hope is that this steady stream of snapshots into the everydayness of my subject matter serves as a kind of slow-moving panorama into the government offices, board rooms, breweries, and pubs where historic actors created and consumed both the physical and cultural substance of beer. I chose content for these vignettes that cover the widest range of realities that beer existed in during this period and in these places. In some cases, they show how it reinforced a sense of idyllic peace, tranquility, and sociality. But I have also included snapshots that show the role of this cultural commodity in some of the most horrid moments and crimes of the twentieth century. The point is not at any point to say that any of these narratives constitute *the* true nature of German or Czech beer culture. They are all parts of the truth. They are all true simultaneously.

The Basics of Beer

These are the bare minimum technical facts about beer necessary to understand the evidence in this dissertation. Beer is most widely defined as any alcoholic beverage fermented from cereal grains. Thus, it is distinguished from alcoholic drinks fermented from fruit (wine or cider) and any beverage that has been distilled (spirits). For Germans and Czechs, beer is almost always made from four ingredients: malted barley, hops, yeast, and water, sometimes in combination with other grains and flavoring agents or sugar. Malt, which can also be made from other grains such as wheat, provides the sweetness to beer and the sugar that is then fermented by the yeast to produce carbon dioxide (carbonation) and alcohol. Hops grow on long vines called “bines” and provide bitterness to the beer. They are a temperamental crop and only grow well in certain climates.

In North America the strength of beer is usually described in terms of its alcohol content, with an average for a standard lager beer being four to five percent alcohol. In central Europe, the strength of beer is described by its “original gravity,” meaning how much sugar was available in the beer for the yeast to ferment before fermentation began. Original gravity corresponds directly to alcohol content through a technical process that brewers use to calculate the results of fermentation, but the numbers look very different. Thus, a beer with twelve percent gravity, written as “12° beer” roughly corresponds to that standard range of a four to five percent alcohol beer.

Part I: The People's Drink – But Which People?

“Thirty-one-year-old Joachim Lochbihler from the 10th Company had been a brewery engineer in Nürnberg before he was called up. Because of his experience, he was assigned in August 1941 to manage and run the two local breweries in Lida (Belarus)... Lochbihler risked deceiving [his antisemitic commanding officer]. As he recalled ‘at the request of the Jews and also for technical reasons, I called on Stabsleiter Windisch and requested that the Jews be allowed to live in the brewery.’ ... [Lochbihler] arranged safe refuge in his establishment not only for his workers but their families, including nonworkers such as the elderly and children, who were given cover jobs within the operation.”

- Waitman Beorn, *Marching into Darkness*¹

Hans Mertens walks, zombie-like, through the ruined streets of Berlin. Piled into mountains all around him and crunching under his feet the shattered brick and concrete that had been homes, shops, and restaurants serves as an inescapable reminder of the devastation. Mertens arrives at his destination, a “modern cabaret.” Inside, he does his best to drown his memories of the war and that village in the East in a flood of cheap liquor and beer.

- *The Murderers are Among Us* [author’s scene description] (1946)

“In the protectorate only beer with a strength of 7° – 7.4° was permitted after January 16, 1941. On January 1, 1942 that fell to 6° ... In 1943 only 4° beer was available... One year later only 3° beer was sold... Select breweries were able to produce one-off batches of normal 10° and 12° beer. Those, however, were designated exclusively for the Wehrmacht and SS.”

- Petr Joza, *The History of Bottled Beer in Bohemia*²

Even at the nadir, there was still beer. It is now a grim convention to list the statistics of catastrophe that World War Two brought to Central Europe. Tens of millions were dead, millions more on the move trying to get back to their homes or find new ones. Cities were shattered, communities obliterated, and almost all the Jews of Germany, Bohemia, and Moravia murdered. Allied bombing and invasion destroyed much of Germany. The Czech lands saw less destruction, but six years of occupation took its toll. The liberating/occupying forces had many

¹ Waitman Wade Beorn, *Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 178–79.

² Petr Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách : Pivovarnictví a Obchod*, Vydání první (Praha: Knižní klub, 2019), 209.

plans for revenge and justice but fewer for recovery and the future. Suspicions already festered between East and West. Amid all this lay the Czech and German brewing industries in conditions ranging from untouched to obliterated. The professionals and laborers who operated those facilities did what they could to carry on making beer and advocating for their continued ability to do so. It was against this backdrop that a massive rearrangement in ownership, control, oversight, and flows of people and goods within this important economic sector was set to take place.

Exactly how deeply that rearrangement pervaded and transformed the relationship between the state and beer is interrogated in the chapters below. Part I of this dissertation deals with continuity and rupture in the politics and control of the German and Czech beer industries. As David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley have written of an earlier era of German history, “the question of continuity is not *whether*, but *what kind?*”³ With that in mind, these chapters explore two different “kinds,” addressing a pair of questions about the relationship between government and industry in terms of ownership and oversight. First, what does the longer history of state involvement in the Central European beer market reveal about the degree of rupture that occurred after 1945? I show the ways in which power dynamics and competition between diverging interests (“the game”) changed, but also how they stayed the same. Second, I show who ended up in positions of power and leadership in the years after the Third Reich collapsed (“the players”), and how they made it through the processes of denazification, de-Germanization, and Cold War polarization. What strategies did they have for advancing the interests of themselves and their profession?

³ Blackbourn and Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*, 22.

I argue that exploring the relationship between governments and the brewing industry shows how radical ruptures in power relations between the late war and postwar years could occur in parallel with a surprising degree of continuity in the professional and political practice of individuals on the ground. A profound power shift took place in the transition from fascism to socialism and democracy. The playing field transformed and the positions of the players looked quite different. Still, the rules of the game stayed similar, especially in the early years.⁴ A closer look at specific cases from this industry shows the range of different pressures and motivations working on professionals at the time. The authoritarian structures put into place by the postwar governing bodies and their drive for ideological conformity (to Marxism-Leninism or Western democratic values) drew out similar reactions and tactics on the part of the economic actors who were trying to survive and take advantage of the system. Those individuals developed similar rhetorical toolboxes to try to get what they wanted from those in power. They advanced utilitarian economic rationales, leveraged their expertise, tacked to the shifting political winds, and played different centers of authority off one another. Similar tactics appeared with notable consistency across the region and show continuity with the Nazi era.

While the divergences really began to multiply at the end of the 1940s, the Communist revolution in Czechoslovakia (1948) and the founding of a socialist East Germany next to a democratic, capitalist West Germany (1949) did not suddenly eradicate all parallels between the brewing industries East and West of the “Iron Curtain.” All three governments remained heavily involved in day-to-day administration. Even in the West, where the state began to step back, industry representatives in some cases actually asked for an extension of official control. In all

⁴ Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Germany Is No More: Defeat, Occupation, and the Postwar Order,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Germany History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 593–614.

cases, the powers of the state wove more tightly together with beer culture in the years after the war. Only in West Germany did those bonds loosen again with time as a resurgent private industry reclaimed more autonomy. But the connections never completely faded and show their persistent strength in Parts II and III.

By juxtaposing continuities in the dynamic between governments and the brewing industry (the game) with a radical shift in influence and power between different groups (the players) from the late Nazi years to the early 1950s, Chapters One and Two offer a new take on the idea of a new beginning, or “zero hour,” in 1945. This debate asks to what degree there was a thorough break with the Third Reich in postwar Germany, or if there is more evidence of continuity in the occupation zones and the new West and East German states. Most scholars seem to agree that it was a combination of both depending on the subject and area in question, but they still dispute which state saw more change, how long the process took, and how limited that shift was.⁵ Historians focusing on politics, whether domestic or international, tend to emphasize rupture more, though even here many studies have qualified that narrative by showing how in thrall the incoming leaders were to wartime narratives that emphasized German suffering and “antifascism” rather than perpetration and complicity.⁶ As Fritz Stern wrote in a foreword to Norbert Frei’s book on the subject, “the ‘brown past’ was more than a smudge on the new landscape; there was no *tabula rasa* for Bonn, no *Stunde null*, no total break with elements of the

⁵ Hoffmann, 593–95; Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918 - 2014: The Divided Nation*, 4th ed. (West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015); Norbert Frei, *Adenauer’s Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

⁶ Karl Hardach, Hans-Joachim Landmesser, and Ulrich Nocken, “4. Germany Under Western Occupation, 1945-1949,” in *Contemporary Germany Politics and Culture*, ed. Charles Burdick, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Winfried Kudsus (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984); Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Catherine Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and Their Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

previous regime.”⁷ Still, in politics the shift from fascism to democracy or socialism presents a clear break to hold on to, all caveats included. Though the term itself does not get used, a concept similar to the German “zero hour” is detectable in Czech historiography, with the decisive moments being the German expulsion and the 1948 Communist takeover.⁸ Once again the focus is often on politics and its visible changes. Indeed, much of the scholarship on the Czech lands to emerge in the last two decades implicitly reinforces this notion, as it either covers a span of centuries or focuses closely on the national conflicts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, ending in the years immediately after World War Two.⁹

Studies of culture further complicate these clean breaks. As just one example, Pamela Swett’s excellent 2013 monograph *Selling under the Swastika* shows strong evidence of continuity in advertising practices between the Nazi years and postwar era. Still, she writes that “scholarship has shifted in recent years, reinforcing the significance of 1945,” and argues for placing the emphasis on “new beginnings” rather than continuity or carryover from the past. “The phrase,” she continues “recognizes change but does not rule out the possibility that Germans used their pasts to chart their future. In other words, the language of continuity versus discontinuity presents a false choice.”¹⁰ Swett’s words correctly identify the complexity at play in the changes to Central European life in the postwar years. But her work also suggests that parsing out the reality of “new beginnings” requires taking seriously the past social structures

⁷ Fritz Stern, “Foreword,” in *Adenauer’s Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration*, Norbert Frei (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), ix.

⁸ Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 13–14; John Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁹ Hugh Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004); Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*; Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹⁰ Swett, *Selling under the Swastika*, 253.

and cultural references from which they were constructed. Her book illuminates the underlying concerns that motivated economic actors under the Third Reich and remained largely stable afterward, namely the need to increase sales by a targeted appeal to consumer mentalities.

Though government administration is a key object here, this is not a top-down history. Industry operatives fought at every stage to increase their room for independent maneuver and get a leg up on the competition under diverse and drastic circumstances. Looking from the bottom up shows how the dynamic between government and business in these years strengthened the relationship between beer culture and national state power with effects that culminate most dramatically in the events of Chapter Four and Part III, though that does not appear to have been the intention of either officials or professionals at this time. Indeed, explicit references to beer's cultural or social value during this period remained largely absent from the discourse, with certain exceptions. The deepening connections between German and Czech beer culture and national politics in the early postwar years resulted, instead, almost accidentally from the realities of the wartime economy and occupation. Authorities either demanded or were forced to take a more active role in the industry and weigh in on matters usually relegated to managers and private owners. Foreign military governments made themselves perfect foils against which to rally in defense of "our" beer because they consistently attacked the industry as wasteful; unless, of course, the beer was for their soldiers. Residents of the region responded by advocating at the business level and using whatever administrative powers were relegated to them to keep breweries afloat, but this was hardly a united front. Accusations of collaboration, political unreliability, and dirty dealing flew in all directions. It was a power struggle, by all and against all, to see who would emerge on the other side. But all the sound and fury produced a similar

effect. It elevated (or kept elevated) the importance of beer as more than a mere luxury commodity produced by private companies, but rather a matter of public interest.

Chapter 1. Beer before “Zero Hour”

Governments and Ownership Structures in the Beer Industry before 1933

“The fact that the cafes and the Kneipen remained open [during the unrest in Berlin in Winter 1919]... is doubtless a tribute to the stubbornness of normal routine and a reminder that most people do not bother to participate in the events that determine the political circumstances of their lives.”

Gordon Alexander Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*¹

“Nowadays, it’s as much as your life’s worth to get mixed up in [politics]. I’ve got my business to see to. When a customer comes in and orders beer, why I just serve him his drink. But Sarajevo or politics or a dead archduke, that’s not for the likes of us.”

- Jaroslav Hašek, *The Good Soldier Schweik*

To understand how much the postwar period carried on or departed from previous patterns of government ownership and oversight in the beer industry, one must first see those older eras in all their complexity and how they changed from the start of World War One to the end of World War Two. From 1914 to 1945, a long-standing and relatively diverse system of ownership in Central Europe’s beer industries shattered. The First World War saw a blanket increase in state intervention in the private sector by Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire to direct resources and energy to the war effort.² Such wartime measures foreshadowed the watershed changes of the 1930s and 1940s in Germany and Czechoslovakia, when the legal status of ownership became largely subject to the interests of national, racial, and class supremacy.

Beer making looked very different before the “Guns of August.” In 1913, the then-record-breaking production in Germany and Czech lands was an achievement of some “big

¹ Gordon Alexander Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 404.

² Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, chap. Lahvové pivo ve světové válce; Avner Offer, *The First World War, an Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford [England: Clarendon Press, 1989), 54.

capitalists” operating beer factories.³ It was also the work of thousands of small and medium-sized local or regional breweries, owned and operated by middle class families, hybrid government/private initiatives, citizens’ cooperatives, religious organizations, and aristocratic estates.⁴ Owners worshipped in synagogues and churches both Catholic and Protestant, if they worshipped at all.⁵ Indeed, while comprehensive statistics on the matter have not come to my attention, anecdotal evidence from famous cases such as Pilsner Urquell, the Radeberger Export Beer Brewery, the Žatec hop trade, and the Burghers’ Brewery in České Budějovice suggests a substantial presence for Jewish owners and employees in the beer trade of Germany and the Czech lands before the implementation of Nazi racial laws.⁶ The diversity in business models and personnel matched the variety in style and method. Traditional producers made beer much as it had been made for centuries.⁷ Entrepreneurial managers embraced every new invention and cost-saving technique presented in the abundant professional journals circulating since the nineteenth century.⁸ In the Bohemian Crown Lands, they read those journals in German or

³ *Statistisches Jahrbuch des Deutschen Reiches 1931*, 134; <https://www.private-prague-guide.com/article/czech-beer-breweries-and-beerhalls/>.

⁴ Matthias Fieder, "Industrialisierung und Brauereisterben in Schwaben während des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Flüssiges Brot: Bier, Brauereien und Wirtshäuser in Schwaben*, ed. Matthias Fieder (Schwäbischen Volkskundemuseum Oberschönenfeld, 2010), 22-31; Jeffrey Pilcher, "National Beer in a Global Age: Technology, Taste, and Mobility, 1880-1914," *Quaderni storici*, Nuova Serie 51, No. 151 (1) (April 2016): 54; Jarmila Pechová, *O Pívu: Historie Pivovarnictví, Zejména pak na Moravě* (Moravské Zemské Muzeum Etnografický Ústav, 1995).

⁵ Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, 151.

⁶ Franz Fischer, interview by Dr. Daniel Weiss, Nov. 24, 1997, USC Shoah Foundation: Visual History Archive, <https://vha-usc-edu.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/quickSearch/resultList>, last modified Nov. 1, 2017, accessed Dec. 09, 2019; Gertruda Englová, interview by Eva Benešová, Jul. 18, 1996, USC Visual History Archive, <https://vha-usc-edu.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/quickSearch/resultList>, last modified Nov. 1, 2017, accessed Sept. 18, 2019; Pete Brown, *Miracle Brew: Hops, Barley, Water, Yeast and the Nature of Beer* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017), 120; for other cases, see: Peter Feistman, interview by Peter Ryan, March 20, 2002, The Jeff and Toby Herr Oral History Collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection (USHMM); Adda Gerstel, interview by the Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project, May 26 1999, USHMM, San Francisco, CA; other anecdotal cases from Poland and present-day Belarus show Jewish owners operating breweries in those areas, see Esther (Himmelfarb) Peterseil, interview by the Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project, March 20, 2022, USHMM; Beorn, *Marching into Darkness*, 178-179.

⁷ Fieder, "Industrialisierung und Brauereisterben in Schwaben," 28;

⁸ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier* (Nuremberg: Verlag Hans Carl, 1957), 14.

Czech, but frequently enough both. Their labor pools ranged from a few artisans to the kind of industrial proletariat that Marx envisioned. Over this period more women appeared on the payrolls, though still in small numbers, mostly doing the hard, monotonous, and dirty work of cleaning and bottling.⁹ In short, the owners and operators of the brewing industry in Central Europe comprised a broad range of individuals and groups.

State involvement in the industry always came on a sliding scale. Wars and radical political dictatorships after 1914 simply slid that scale to an extreme. Governments had involved themselves in the commercial brewing industry in unique ways since its emergence during the Renaissance and Middle Ages. Monarchs, local nobles, and town councils granted brewing privileges, regulated import/export duties, collected taxes, and in many cases operated their own brew houses.¹⁰ Certain royal and noble families expanded their court breweries to become commercial-scale operations, giving them a direct stake in the beer market. Some attained tremendous success, growing and modernizing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries even as they faced stiff competition from bourgeois entrepreneurs and joint-stock companies.¹¹ The Wittelsbach dynasty of Bavaria and the Austro-German/Czech House of Schwarzenberg represent two major examples in that category, as both built brewing empires.¹² The sharp delineation between government and business that later became a key marker of difference between (most of) the market system in West Germany and the state-run industries to

⁹ Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, 163; Adam Skála, *Dějiny Města Plzně, Vol. 3 1918 - 1990* (Plzeň: statutární město Plzeň, 2018), 526.

¹⁰ Richard W. Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); B. Ann Tlustý, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 34–36.

¹¹ Ernst-Otto Luthardt (Text) and Martin Siepmann (Photos), *Journey through Bavaria* (Würzburg: Verlagshaus Würzburg, 2010), 86-87; Pavel Průcha, "The first Pilsner on Earth in the past and nowadays," *Brewers' Guardian*, 12 December 2000, 62; <https://www.radeberger.de/geschichte/>.

¹² Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei und die Konstruktion des Nationalen: Brauindustrie im Spannungsfeld von Wirtschaftsnationalismus und Verdrängungswettbewerb* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2017), 56; Günter Albrecht, *Königliche Braukunst: Die Wittelsbacher und das Bier* (Rosenheim: Rosenheimer Verlagshaus, 2006).

its East does not accord with the earlier development of the brewing industry, before or during the major state interventions of World War One and the Nazi era.

Another clear pattern in the earlier history of this region that does show remarkable continuity from the pre- to postwar eras is the importance of a transnational beer market between Bavaria, Bohemia, and Saxony to the development of the region's beer cultures. The geographic contiguity in this Lesser Beer Zone, of course, brought major political and commercial connections between them that helped to facilitate a thriving exchange in beer and brewing knowledge. For example, after Vienna, the second major city connected to Prague by railroad in the nineteenth century was Saxony's capital city, Dresden.¹³ Brewers in the three territories remained constantly aware of one another and of any novel products or increase in exportability that might allow "foreign" beer to threaten their domestic markets. Governments, in turn, worried about money flowing out of their territory to pay for "exotic" goods that they reasoned could just as easily be produced locally. This pattern is apparent with Bavaria and Bohemia as early as the sixteenth century and may be responsible for the creation of a now-quintessentially Bavarian style, *Hefeweizen*.¹⁴ The connections proliferated most obviously starting in the nineteenth century. By 1900, an export brewery in a small Saxon town outside of Dresden had built a international brand based on a style of beer first created in Pilsen, Bohemia, which only happened because Pilsen's brewers faced fierce competition from imports coming from Munich in Bavaria and hired a Bavarian brewer to help them compete. The entire area fell under unified government administration after Nazi Germany invaded Czechoslovakia in Spring of 1939 and set up the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. After the war, the newly established political

¹³ Chad Bryant, *Prague: Belonging in the Modern City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 18-19.

¹⁴ Günter Albrecht, *Königliche Braukunst: Die Wittelsbacher und das Bier* (Rosenheim: Rosenheimer Verlagshaus, 2006), 121-125.

and trade boundaries between the three regions briefly paused this centuries-old dynamic, but not nearly as long as one might expect. Significant traffic in beer and its related commodities restarted within the Lesser Beer Zone in the 1950s, albeit under dramatically different business conditions. Developments between German and Czech brewers, as well as those operating under state socialism and liberal capitalism, not only showed remarkable parallels in the first decade after World War II, but very quickly reestablished impactful transnational links.

A brief glance at some of the most important breweries in the Lesser Beer Zone makes the interregional dynamic, the diversity of successful ownership models, and the historic role of government in the industry clear. The oldest continuously operating brewery in the world (according to its own claims), Weihenstephan, originally began as a monastic-brewery in the town of Freising about 40 km northeast of Munich. The organization claims as its founding year 1040 CE when the city of Freising granted it brewing rights.¹⁵ In 1803, the Bavarian crown dissolved the monastery and took control of its properties, reassigning it to serve as an educational and research facility for the kingdom's brewing industry.¹⁶ Though its primary purpose has remained educational and scientific since that time, the brewery continued to produce beer for commercial sale and achieved extensive domestic and international distribution under the ownership and management of the Free State of Bavaria. In a more straightforward fashion, the famous Hofbräuhaus München originated in 1589 by order of Duke Wilhelm V to help cut down on the costs of importing beer from distant locations such as Einbeck, Hamburg, and Bohemia.¹⁷ As with Weihenstephan, the brewery and its associated businesses were transferred from royal ownership to state ownership in 1918 with the dissolution of the Kingdom

¹⁵ Weihenstephan Bavarian State Brewery, "Ein Betrag zur Geshichte des Bieres," n.d., BayHStA, MK 67372, 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., 7; Ute Planert, "Chapter 5: International Conflict, War, and the Making of Modern Germany, 1740 - 1815," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102–3.

¹⁷ Albrecht, *Königliche Braukunst: Die Wittelsbacher Und Das Bier*, 115–27.

of Bavaria, and both now operate as *Staatsbrauereien* (state breweries). Though the Bavarian government played a far bigger role in the brewing industry than simply owning a handful of companies, these public businesses proved to be persistent sources of tension in the postwar market economy.

Another form of corporate-turned-public ownership manifested in the case of the Citizens' Brewery of Pilsen, later renamed the Pilsner Urquell brewery. By the early nineteenth century, the quality of beer produced in the western Bohemian city of Pilsen had supposedly reached a low point. The city had multiple small breweries, but production rested in the hands of roughly 260 individual citizens who traced their royal rights to brew beer back to 1295. In 1839, those citizens concentrated their resources to build a large, cutting-edge brewery to compete with imported beer, mostly from Bavaria. The resulting *Měšťanský pivovar* (*Bürgerliche Brauhaus* – Citizens' Brewery) did indeed cut a swath through the beer market in Bohemia and far beyond. The brewery remained under the hereditary ownership of the “brewing-rights citizens” until its nationalization in 1945.¹⁸ In this one case, at least, the Communist promise to complete and surpass the “bourgeois revolution” by sweeping away the last vestiges of feudal privilege was arguably fulfilled. The hybrid system of ownership in Munich and corporate model in Pilsen not only complicate the simple dichotomy between public and private business that took on such meaning during the Cold War but do it with examples of prominent breweries of worldwide renown.

Still, many breweries operating in Central Europe until World War Two operated on more familiar ownership models, such as the joint-stock Radeberger Brewery near Dresden in

¹⁸ Prof. Eduard Jalowetz, *Pilsner Beer in the Light of Practice and Science* (Plzeň: Euroverlag, 2001) [Original: Prof. Eduard Jalowetz, *Pilsner Bier im Lichte von Praxis und Wissenschaft* (Wien: Verlag Institut für Gärungsindustrie, 1930)], 6; Pavel Průcha, "The first Pilsner on Earth in the past and nowadays," *Brewers' Guardian*, 12 December 2000, 62; <http://pravovarecne-mestanstvo-v-plzni.cz/index.php/o-nas>

Saxony. As Radeberger states in its company history, the five investors who created the brewery in 1872 knew little about beer. They possessed resources and a belief that a new brewery in Radeberg would find commercial success by producing the increasingly popular style of golden lager first made in Pilsen, Bohemia (thus: “Radeberger Pilsner”). Their bet paid off handsomely. In many ways, Radeberger represented the perfect model of what the Communists sought to eliminate from the economy in countries where they took power after defeating Nazi Germany. The company owed its existence to pure capitalist initiative. Its founders were scions of aristocratic families, “big capitalists,” and political bigwigs.¹⁹ Though it is no new revelation in the history of Germany or capitalism more generally, the fact that three of the five founders of the brewery also served in important political functions, including both the mayor and treasurer of Radeberg and a Reichstag member, illustrates that even here the lines between state and business blurred.

Beer and Government under the Third Reich

As blurred as those lines were before 1933, the Nazi seizure of power effectively obliterated them. As recently published works have made clear, under National Socialism beer-related politics and economics ran together in an increasingly indistinguishable muddle of power struggles.²⁰ Their findings largely accord with existing historiography on the interplay of economics and politics under Hitler. Nazi Germany did not establish a detailed “command economy” on the level of later socialist central planning.²¹ Still, the process of *Gleichschaltung* replaced industry trade groups with government-controlled organizations, and the only real

¹⁹ <https://www.radeberger.de/geschichte/>

²⁰ Dorothea Schmidt, *Die Kraft Der Deutschen Erde: Das Bier Im Nationalsozialismus Und Die Hauptvereinigung Der Deutschen Brauwirtschaft in Berlin-Schöneberg* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019); Terrell, “The People’s Drink.”

²¹ By command economy I mean the model by which central planning completely or to a great extent replaces market mechanisms for determining how much supply is necessary to meet demand.

obstacles that state officials faced to arbitrarily intervening in private business were political and economic, not legal or legislative. Though the need for stability and a return to growth after 1933 checked some of the most extreme ideological impulses, that reluctance to upset industry apple carts faded once the rearmament campaign began with the Four-Year-Plan in 1936.²²

For brewers, any resistance to the Nazi Party line required skill in pure power politics and maneuvering in the snake pit of Third Reich bureaucracy. Oversight of the brewing sector fell under two separate organizations. The *Hauptvereinigung der deutschen Brauwirtschaft*, (Central Association of the German Brewing Industry, hereafter, Central Association) emerged from the structure of Walter Darré's Reich Food Office and technically controlled all matters regarding agricultural goods and beer sales, while the *Wirtschaftsgruppe Brauerei und Mälzerei*, (Business Group of Breweries and Malthouses, hereafter: Business Group) was "coordinated" from the once and future German Brewers Association and had responsibility for technical and economic issues on the production side. The two had poorly defined jurisdictions, leaving ample room for scheming and backbiting.²³ Many brewery owners and industry leaders actively supported the Nazi Party and its goals. Still, when their interests clashed with those of Hitler's most ardent underlings, including teetotalers and economic "rationalizers," German brewers had some success in forcing compromises to rationing and production plans to suit their agenda, largely on the back of the widespread popularity and cultural importance of their product. This was particularly true of the southern German states and most especially for Bavaria.²⁴

²² Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, Third Edition (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), 42.

²³ Schmidt, *Die Kraft Der Deutschen Erde: Das Bier Im Nationalsozialismus Und Die Hauptvereinigung Der Deutschen Brauwirtschaft in Berlin-Schöneberg*, 24–27.

²⁴ Schmidt, 39-41; Terrell, "The People's Drink," 62–67.

As Germany began to incorporate annexed and conquered territories into its governing structure in the lead up to the war, political jockeying with beer extended past the borders of the “Old Reich” into occupied regions. In Bohemia and Moravia, Reich officials encountered the only brewing facilities in continental Europe that could challenge Germany’s beer makers pound for pound on quality and capacity. Whether they actively sought to remove this competition or merely conformed to the general system of economic exploitation, German “protection” involved decimating Czech brewers. As a start, Nazi officials and their local pawns confiscated Jewish businesses and ownership shares.²⁵ Annexation of the Sudetenland had seen nearly one-third of Czechoslovakia’s breweries folded into the existing bureaucracy in Germany, while those in the Protectorate became subject to a newly-created *Českomoravský svaz pro chmel, slad a pivo* (Czech-Moravian Union for Hops, Malt, and Beer), which filled the same role as the Business Group in the Old Reich. These brewers had to deal with the same restrictive economic measures described above, directing resources for the war effort, but without any of the state support designed to mitigate the fallout.²⁶ Although total beer production did not decline significantly, that was possible only because breweries diluted the strength of their products and used large amounts of adjuncts, mostly beet sugar, to replace barely. It also did not prevent the closure of more than a third of the Protectorate’s breweries.²⁷

Scholars have given too little attention to the strife within the brewing sector during these years, as different actors tried to use the powers of the Party and state to gain a competitive edge, or at least prevent their rivals from doing so. A few critical examples of those dynamics in the Third Reich and Protectorate make the post-1945 continuities more apparent. Perhaps most

²⁵ Skála, *Dějiny Města Plzně, Vol. 3 1918 - 1990*, 527; King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 178.

²⁶ Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, 203–5.

²⁷ Joza, 207.

obviously, this period shows that clashes between state *Beamten* and the brewing sector took place alongside struggles between individual breweries, despite state efforts at market rationalization. To direct more resources to the war effort, the government started in 1938 to reduce the strength of beer for civilian consumption by limiting barley supplies and attempted to require producers to “adulterate” their product with non-barley adjuncts such as sugar. Bavarian and southern German brewers successfully rebuffed these latter efforts (in part with the threat of popular unrest), preferring to further reduce the beer’s strength rather than make it “impure,” but other regions accepted the adjunct regime.²⁸ In either case, these emergency provisions weakened Germany’s beers more and more as the war intensified.

Beer quality was not the only area where the state intervened. By the early war years, the Central Association aimed to stop beer makers from taking on new clients if any other brewery already had a delivery contract with them.²⁹ Then, as now, competition in the beer market mostly centered around a struggle for territory, trying to conquer competitors’ “tap space” (i.e. beer on draught in a bar) and “shelf space” (bottle selection either in retail or at a bar). Well before the Nazi era, breweries in Germany had the legal power to require a retail establishment to carry only their brands as a part of a “tied house” system, but not all establishments agreed to do so, and when contracts expired or were cancelled the field lay open for a supplier change. The Central Association’s ordinances sought to cement existing relationships and thereby eliminate the wasteful competitive practices that producers employed to attract new customers. As the war continued, the Association sought to further reduce the brewing industry’s demand on resources

²⁸ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 66–67.

²⁹ Message from Günther, Weihenstephan Bavarian State Brewery to the Administrative Office of the Technical University of Munich, “Gegenstand: Seminar-Brauerei, Amberg,” 30 October 1940, BayHStA, MK 67367, 1-2.

by limiting beer shipments to no more than 250 kilometers, essentially dictating an end to interregional trade.³⁰

If a brewery could secure an exception to these rules, it would give a massive boost to its fortunes and simultaneously draw the ire of competitors, especially because gaining exceptional treatment depended on a beer maker's utility to government officials, rather than meritocratic values. Bavaria's state-owned Weihenstephan Brewery, under the management of the Bavarian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, serves as an excellent example. The brewery requested in January of 1942 that the state allocate it more shipping kegs because production had continued to rise steadily into the 1940/41 brewing year.³¹ At least some of that consistent business came from deliveries to troops at the front, which presumably could only help elevate the producer's status with government officials. In fact, Weihenstephan was one of only a handful of breweries that made "special products" exempted from the Central Association's 250 km transport limit. These exceptions existed for beers deemed "not interchangeable" (i.e. could not be produced locally) and ranged from Weihenstephan's "Champagne wheat beer" to the famed *Schwarzbier* of the Köstritzer brewery in Thuringia and even a *Grätzer* (Polish *Grodziskie*) from the occupied Warthegau.³²

The special privilege of this state-owned Brewery did not go without challenges from its competitors. In May of 1943 one of Weihenstephan's administrators wrote to oversight officials

³⁰ Message from Günter, Weihenstephan Bavarian State Brewery to the Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs, "Gegenstand: Einspruch gegen die Aufhebung von Ausnahme-Genehmigungen der Hauptvereinigung der deutschen Brauwirtschaft, Berlin zu deren Anordnung 99," 28 May 1943, BayHStA, MK 67367, 1.

³¹ Message from the Weihenstephan Bavarian State Brewery to the Administrative Office of the Technical University of Munich, "Gegenstand: Anschaffung von Transportfässern," 28 January 1942, BayHStA, MK 67367, 1.

³² Message from Günter, Weihenstephan Bavarian State Brewery to the Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs, "Gegenstand: Einspruch gegen die Aufhebung von Ausnahme-Genehmigungen der Hauptvereinigung der deutschen Brauwirtschaft, Berlin zu deren Anordnung 99," 28 May 1943, BayHStA, MK 67367.

in the Ministry to brief them on a dispute over the exemption. “Apparently, in the regions of North Germany that we supply with wheat beer, a number of breweries see competition that must be eliminated.”³³ The problem, he reported, was that the state allowed Weihenstephan to produce its wheat beer at a higher strength than beers made elsewhere. Given a choice between the two, customers naturally selected the stronger beer. From there, the report gets increasingly serious in nature. A shipment of Weihenstephaner beer to Rathenow in western Brandenburg was “spied on” by unnamed agents, and the allegation made that the Bavarian brewery had used its special privilege to send contraband beer along with its permitted shipments. The Reich Ministry of Armaments and War Production evidently received complaints that the wheat beer shipments constituted sabotage of the Führer’s orders!³⁴ Though the record becomes spotty in the later years of the war, it appears that the Central Association did cancel or at least restrict Weihenstephan’s exemption from the 250 km rule, but not because of the complaints of fellow German brewers. In fact, the problem did not originate in Germany at all, but in Bohemia.

While German occupation authorities cared little about the average Protectorate brewery, the nearly feudal nature of the occupation regimes (a “darwinistic struggle of bureaucratic jurisdictional imperialism” in Christopher Browning’s words) incentivized them to exploit valuable resources in their own fiefdoms.³⁵ The Reich “Protector” in Bohemia and Moravia, Konstantin von Neurath, apparently recognized Pilsner Urquell as such a resource. He duly restricted Czech breweries from shipping beer over 250 km in parallel with the Central Association but carved out an exception for the brewery in Pilsen, arguing that it was a similar case to the other “special beers” such as Weihenstephan. In a June 1943 letter to Bavarian

³³ Günter, “Gegenstan: Einspruch,” 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

³⁵ Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), loc. 5900.

Ministry officials, the Bavarian state representative in Berlin explained that all previously valid exemptions had henceforth been limited as a result of the “long-running struggle [*seit langem geführten Kampf*] of the Reich Food Ministry with the Reich Protector over continued shipments from the Pilsner Brewery over 250 km... Only now has the Minister of Food succeeded in defeating this preferential treatment of Pilsner Breweries, which breweries in the Old Reich find so disturbing, after a stronger restriction of these exemptions.”³⁶

When Weihenstephan reported in January of 1942 that it needed more kegs, the troops it supplied were preparing for a spring offensive in Russia, including an attack on Stalingrad, and about one week earlier the Wannsee Conference had taken place to coordinate the “Final Solution.” By the time the Bavarian representative in Berlin wrote back home about the Pilsner Urquell issue eighteen months later, the German Sixth Army had surrendered at Stalingrad after two million casualties on both sides, and the majority of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust had perished.³⁷ As the situation in German-controlled territories deteriorated, the archival record becomes sparser. Terrell, who covers the Nazi era more broadly, describes an environment of general decline and desperation. Resources were scarce, production minimal and highly adulterated, and breweries were converted into emergency fire stations or used to store weapons, vehicles, and supplies.³⁸ This, along with the general inaccuracy and indiscriminate Allied bombing and artillery, led to the intentional and unintentional destruction of many facilities in Germany.³⁹ In the Protectorate, damage overall remained more limited. Prague, for

³⁶ Message from the Bavarian Representative in Berlin to the Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs, "Betreff: Staatsbrauerei Weihenstephan," 1 June 1943. BayHStA, MK 67367, 2-3.

³⁷ Peter Hayes, *Why?: Explaining the Holocaust* (New York ; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 114; Michael Ray, "Timeline of the Battle of Stalingrad," *Britannica Online*, <https://www.britannica.com/list/timeline-of-the-battle-of-stalingrad>.

³⁸ Terrell, "The People's Drink," 73–75; Evžen Vogeltanz, "5. květen 1945 v plzeňském pivovare," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů k.p. Plzeň č. 4* (April 1985): 1.

³⁹ Michael Bess, *Choices under Fire: Moral Dimensions of World War II* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), chap. 4.

example, was not bombed heavily except for a supposed mistake by American pilots who thought they were attacking Dresden in mid-February 1945.⁴⁰ Pilsen fared worse. The city not only had famous breweries, but also the Škoda motor works and one of the largest weapons plants in the Nazi empire. It also served as a vital railroad hub. The Allies sent multiple heavy air attacks in 1944 and 1945 as a result. No fewer than 136 bombs fell on the Pilsner Urquell brewery alone.⁴¹ By the time the German forces surrendered, many of the industry's leading producers lay in ruins.

Conclusion

The tight and tightening bond between the state and the brewing industry and the leading role of Bavaria, Bohemia, and Saxony's interconnected beer market in Central Europe shown here faded in the wake of disaster, atrocity, and calamity, only to reemerge clearly as the war-torn Beer Zone tried to get back on its feet after German surrender. Immediately after the war, state responsibility for this cultural commodity reached levels exceeding those in the late Third Reich. Intensive government planning remained in place in the West, for a time, even after the establishment of the Federal Republic. Brewers, for their part, turned the lessons they had learned navigating the bureaucratic and ideological minefields of Nazi Germany to the task of dealing with the incoming Allied military governments and fledgling German administrations. The erection of new political boundaries, including ethnic cleansing and a global ideological Cold War, damaged the transnational beer network in Central Europe, but did not destroy it, and left the door open for its powerful resurgence by the late 1950s.

⁴⁰ Jarka Háľková, "The bombing of Prague: was it a mistake?" Radio Prague International, 14 February 2005, <https://english.radio.cz/bombing-prague-was-it-a-mistake-8095885>

⁴¹ Skála, *Dějiny Města Plzně, Vol. 3 1918 - 1990*, 528.

Chapter 2: Filtering the Beer Industry

Setting the Stage

With the war's conclusion in 1945, new authorities began to redistribute control of the beer industry to those they deemed worthy. The state actors ceased to be “Germany” and “the Protectorate.” Instead, the American, French, British, and Soviet militaries declared an end to German governance and established occupation zones.¹ Czechoslovakia's exiled former president Edvard Beneš agreed to a postwar political program heavily influenced by Klement Gottwald's Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ). As the Red Army pushed West into the Bohemian Crown Lands toward American forces advancing East from Bavaria, Beneš established a new Third Czechoslovak Republic controlled by a National Front bloc of anti-fascist parties.² Until October 1945, administration ran through presidential decrees enacted by local, regional, and state National Committees. In the three regions that later became Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and West Germany, the incoming authorities hunted collaborators and initiated “denazification,” identifying, removing from power, and punishing those who had aligned themselves with the Nazi regime.³ Areas under Soviet influence quickly moved to expropriate large businesses and estates, “nationalizing” them under state control. Though the application and results played out unevenly in different areas of Central Europe, the threat to those who had held political or economic power under Nazi rule was everywhere present.

¹ Bernard Law Montgomery of Alamein, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount of Alamein*. (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1958), 299–300.

² Hugh Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), loc. 2614.

³ Mikkel Dack, *Everyday Denazification in Postwar Germany: The Fragebogen and Political Screening during the Allied Occupation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

Between ethnic expulsions, denazification, and confiscation of large businesses, practically every brewery administrator had to confront sudden changes. The Czechs expelled most of the German-speaking population from the Bohemian Crown Lands both with and without official authorization.⁴ Simultaneously, in both the Czech lands and the Soviet Occupation Zone of eastern Germany, the first wave of nationalization swept the largest beer producers. On 11 June, the Communist Party in the Soviet Zone published an action program calling for the expropriation of businesses owned by “Nazi big wigs and war criminals,” as well as those that “serve public needs important to life” or were “abandoned by their owners.”⁵ Ten days later, a presidential decree in Czechoslovakia confiscated the properties of German and Hungarian expellees, accused collaborators, and traitors. By the end of October, the Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) in Germany enacted the confiscation program and Czechoslovakia brought all major industrial, agricultural, and financial institutions into state ownership regardless of their previous status.⁶

Nationalization was not total in either area, nor was it foreordained that state systems with full centralized control of the economy would later emerge. As Norman Naimark argues, it took years for Stalinism to solidify in the areas liberated or occupied by the Soviet Union.⁷ In late November 1945, the recently reconstituted *Sächsische Zeitung* in Dresden carried a short article describing nationalization in Czechoslovakia but repeating promises from Beneš’s still-democratic government that “Czechoslovakia shall remain primarily a land of farmers and small

⁴ R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁵ “Die 10 Punkte des Aktionsprogrammes,” *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 18 August 1945. 3.

⁶ Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, loc. 2642.

⁷ Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe: The Postwar Struggle for Sovereignty* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019).

business people.”⁸ Still, in the following years the states pushed private businesses to adopt new forms of ownership such as the cooperative and required them to work through state-owned distribution, finance, and supply organs. Some owners yielded “voluntarily,” giving up their property or taking on the government as an operating partner.⁹ In other cases, owners died, fled to the West, or failed to return after escaping Nazi rule, and the state swept in to take control.¹⁰ This steady ratcheting up of coercion continued alongside periodic spikes in nationalization, such as after the February 1948 Communist coup in Czechoslovakia or the SED’s transformation into a more Stalinist “party of a new type” in late 1948 and 1949.¹¹

The western Allies did not implement nationalization in their zones of Germany outside of a few heavy industries. Still, their governance brought plenty of challenges for German brewers, who swapped one system of centralized administration for several, hostile, similar structures.¹² All three Western occupation regimes began the postwar period with policies of aggressive denazification and harsh treatment of the German economy, perhaps best exemplified in the infamous Morgenthau Plan developed by US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. designed to reduce Germany to an agrarian economy. Though the US government abandoned the plan by the time the war ended, American occupation officials “incorporated many, later embarrassing, elements of this extremist position” into their initial administrative decisions.¹³ On

⁸ “Verstaatlichung in der Tschechoslowakei,” *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 25 November 1945.

⁹ For example, a very small brewery in or near the town of Brand-Erbisdorf in Saxony that survived as a standard partnership until taking on state partnership in 1958 and continued in that model until full in 1972: “Handelsblatt zum Handelsregister Firma Brauerei Rechenberg G. & H. Meyer KG. Sits in Rechenberg-Bienenmühle,” 26 April 1957, HsArch-S, 11057 Nachtrag 200; “Die Geschichte der Brauerei Rechenberg,” Company Website, <https://www.rechenberger.com/damals.html> [accessed 25 November 2022].

¹⁰ Inquiry Commission Radeberg for SMA Order Nr. 124, “Fa. Exportbierbrauerei, Radeberg. Begründung zur Beschlagnahme auf Grund des Befehls Nr. 124 der SMA,” 8 February 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141; Factory Council of the Beer Brother's Distillery to National Central Committee, “Věc: Konfiskace podniku fy Bratří Beerové, Praha VII., Tusarova 41,” 1 October 1946, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219.

¹¹ Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 24–27.

¹² Hoffmann, “Germany Is No More,” 600; Hardach, Landmesser, and Nocken, “4. Germany Under Western Occupation, 1945-1949,” 68–69.

¹³ Hardach, Landmesser, and Nocken, “4. Germany Under Western Occupation, 1945-1949,” 68.

top of that, as Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann points out, “[r]ecent historical accounts have corrected the image... that most Nazi criminals were never punished. The Americans... arrested more than 100,000 individuals.”¹⁴ In the big picture of the postwar years, however, a shift from radical, punitive policies to more lenient and constructive ones best captures the change over time in the Western zones, and, for that matter, in the East once Cold War tensions spoiled any chance of a settled agreement for Germany’s future.¹⁵ When it came to business interests, the situation was, if anything, more favorable from the beginning. While the occupation governments targeted German industry, and especially its top leaders, for denazification, the temptation to minimize political goals in favor of keeping experienced professionals in place to run the economy as productively as possible is readily apparent in both primary and secondary sources.¹⁶

Beer makers sought room for maneuver within this larger pattern, but the picture on the ground must have looked oddly unchanged in some ways. In Germany, Nazi-era industry groups and administration offices changed their names, lost their most “politically unreliable” elements and had to report to the Allied military governments, but otherwise their functions stayed remarkably similar. The entire industry operated under severe restrictions on production, with most beer kept to a miniscule 2 percent original gravity. At the beginning of the occupation, and occasionally thereafter, the authorities stopped commercial beer making entirely.¹⁷ This policy, colloquially referred to as a *Brauverbot*, or “brewing ban” aimed at reserving grain for bread

¹⁴ Hoffmann, “Germany Is No More: Defeat, Occupation, and the Postwar Order,” 601; Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944 - 1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Raymond Stokes, *Divide and Prosper: The Heirs of I.G. Farben under Allied Authority, 1945 - 1951* (Berkeley, 1988); Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe*.

¹⁵ Hardach, Landmesser, and Nocken, “4. Germany Under Western Occupation, 1945-1949,” 70–71; Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 122-29, 133–34.

¹⁶ The contemporary cases of H., H., and Adreas S. provided below make this pattern clear, see also: Dack, *Everyday Denazification.*; Stokes, *Divide and Prosper*.

¹⁷ Secretariat of the Minister of Agriculture and Nutrition in the French Zone to Beer and Beverage Industry Professional Association in Lindau County, “Betr.: Malzkontingent Brauwirtschaftsjahr 1948/49,” 20 August 1948, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

production and went through multiple cycles of relative relaxation and strictness until its final repeal in the western zones on 15 September 1948, and in the East one month later.¹⁸ The Allies also allowed for exceptional production of stronger beer, usually for their own military and occupation personnel.¹⁹ But for all the radical changes that the occupation governments brought, their policies for beer and breweries in the early years generally operated as mirror-images of Nazi administration in its final days, tightly controlling and restricting production, limiting access to raw materials with byzantine procedures for procurement, and doling out preferential treatment or punishment based on political reliability. Though the ends were more diverse and humane than the brutal Nazi goal of racial domination, the continuity of structures left business operators on the ground relying on many of the same tactics and methods to survive and gain some comparative advantage. The situation in Czechoslovakia looked similar. The brewing industry remained more centrally planned than before the war, big beer makers became state-operated, and that, combined with the German expulsion and hunt for collaborators hardly allowed for a return to “normal.” Factory-level Communist Party organizations also felt suddenly empowered to directly advocate for government interference in their businesses.²⁰

The only word that can accurately capture what happened in the brewing industry after the collapse of the Third Reich is “scramble.” Former Nazi affiliates, alleged collaborators, upper managers, and officials scrambled for physical, political, and legal safety under any cover they

¹⁸ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 84–85; Dr. v. F., Deputy Chairman, DWK to L., Secretariat of the DWK, “Betrifft: Preisanordnung über Bier mit Stammwürzegehalt 12 %,” 12 October, 1948, BArch, DC 15/973, 152-155; “Berliner Brauereisorgen,” *Neue Zeit*, 9 October 1948.

¹⁹ Secretariat of Minister of Agriculture, “Betr.: Malzkontingent Brauwirtschaftsjahr 1948/49.”

²⁰ See V., Factory Trade Union Organization, ROH and L. J., Factory Council of the Tilgner and Co. Distillery to Economic Commission, ROH in Opava, “Věc: Protest proti restituci fy. nár. spr. Tilgner a spol., tov. jedmných likérů, výroba octa a šřav, Opava - Sadová 44,” 27 February 1947, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219; see also Skála et al, *Dějiny města Plzně*, 546-547; J. F. U., Assistant Central Director of Czechoslovak Breweries, n.p. to Ing. L. F., KSČ Main Office, “Věc: stupňovitost piva,” 9 June 1947, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219.

could find. Brewery workers and middle managers scrambled to secure control over property and resources to ensure their livelihoods. Incoming authorities scrambled to lay legal claim to businesses and sort people into categories of guilt and innocence. Owners of expropriated businesses scrambled to file for restitution of their property and prove their credentials as victims of the Nazi regime. The government archives from these days have a prodigious paper trail of power struggles amongst existing owners and administrators in the brewing industry and between them and the incoming authorities. Denunciations and alibis (the so-called *Persilscheine*) for the Nazi years flew around, any of which could be genuine or purely self-serving.²¹ To make matters more complicated, officials dealt with constant accusations and counteraccusations that a person's political past was being leveraged by their rivals to try to gain advantage. The evidence below leaves little question, in fact, that in the murky realm of hybrid government/industry management during the occupation years, beer industry representatives did try to push one another out of positions of authority to their own benefit with claims of Nazi sympathies, corruption, or plain incompetence. Thus, the most remarkable feature of the political economy of beer in the first decade after the war is not the glaring differences between West and East, but rather the similarities and how long they continued.

Thousands of individuals, from officials to white and blue collar employees, tried to navigate the postwar transition to their own best interest under a dizzying array of different ideological and national conditions, but four common strategies and patterns of behavior are discernible. 1. They attempted to instrumentalize the shifting political winds by appeals to ideology or weaponizing an opponent's past; 2. they used the specter of economic dysfunction in a moment of extreme dearth; 3. they played parallel governing authorities off one another; and 4.

²¹ Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 127.

they leveled accusations of past and present crimes. All these tactics shine through in the cases detailed in this chapter.²² The interplay between continuity and rupture are front and center of the analysis here. In some places, for example the American Occupation Zone, much of the language and argumentation used by German politicians and beer professionals hardly skipped a beat from the Third Reich. Other areas, such as the British Zone, had greater organizational continuity.²³ The new political circumstances certainly did matter a great deal, and are made clear throughout. The second key takeaway, however, is that all the back-and-forth between industry professionals, local and national politicians, and (in the German case until 1949) occupation officials dragged government authorities into the reorganization and redistribution process, bringing state power, even in its most fledgling manifestations, further into the process of shaping the power structures in the industry that emerged from World War Two.

The Western Zones of Germany

In Bavaria, beer became an issue practically from day one of the American occupation. The U.S. military made plans to ban brewing for civilian consumption in 1945 even as the fighting raged on. Less than a month after German surrender, the decree went out to shutter all but seven breweries. The remainder produced only for American consumption.²⁴ Just six months after the German surrender and amid widespread destruction and food insecurity, the Bavarian State Minister for Food and Agriculture circulated a memorandum titled “*Über das Bier in Bayern*” (“On Beer in Bavaria”) to his counterpart in the Ministry for Education and Welfare.

²² These are not dissimilar revelations to the “toxic mistrust, profound bitterness, and spiritual malaise” discovered in postwar Germany in Monica Black, *A Demon-Haunted Land: Witches, Wonder Doctors, and the Ghosts of the Past in Post-WWII Germany* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2020).

²³ Robert W. Carden, “Before Bizonia: Britain’s Economic Dilemma in Germany, 1945-46,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 3 (1979): 542–45.

²⁴ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 84.

The document, presumably crafted to influence the military government, laid out every conceivable argument for the need, not mere desire, for beer in Bavaria's society and economy, from its role as the basis of the population's beverage supply to its service as a "barometer of public opinion." "If you take beer away from the Bavarian farmer and worker... you also destroy the tightest economic thread within the fabric of the Bavarian food economy."²⁵ Much of the concern focused on the milk supply, which for reasons both direct and indirect depended heavily on beer production. Charity and civic life also played a role, as breweries supported many social and cultural institutions. Bavaria still had a significant number of church and cloister breweries, their profits helped fund "schools, [care]homes, kindergartens, and establishments of social welfare."²⁶

This memo forms part of a document chain on both the Bavarian and American sides of the military administration in the American Zone in which German government officials desperately tried to cajole and/or force their occupiers to relax brewing restrictions.²⁷ Many of the arguments, especially those that suggested a potential radicalization of Bavarian citizens to "revolutionary tendencies," if they did not get their beer, match closely with rhetoric from the later years of the Third Reich.²⁸ If practical appeals and threats of unrest could not get the job done, the memo also attempted a sentimental approach with a kind of pastoral rural idealism similar to a later *Heimatfilm*. "If you want to understand the economic importance of the brewing industry in Bavaria, it is not enough to read essays and books about it, check statistics, make comparisons, and visit businesses. You have to get to know the country and the people, how they

²⁵ Bavarian State Minister for Food and Agriculture to State Minister for Education and Welfare, "Betreff: Bierherstellung," 10 November 1945, BayHStA, MK 67367, section "Über das Bier in Bayern."

²⁶ Ibid., section "Was bedeutet die Stilllegung der Brauereien für die bayerische Wirtschaft," 1-2.

²⁷ Terrell, "The People's Drink," chaps. 1-2, especially pg. 81.

²⁸ Terrell, 97.

are bound together, how they live and think, how they work and are happy.”²⁹ In Bavaria, re-established German government organs pursued every avenue to secure the survival of the industry.³⁰

The memo’s reference to the milk supply also serves as a useful avenue to explore how serious an economic role beer played in areas with prominent and highly productive brewing industries. One can easily think of issues such as employment, tax revenue, profits for producers and retailers, and so on. But the impact of beer production on regional agriculture stands out as well. Not only in Bavaria, but also in Württemberg under French occupation, German officials warned that restricting the beer supply would cause dairy farmers, who depended on beer as a source of sanitary, somewhat-nutritious hydration, to hoard milk for their own consumption.³¹ Then there is the question of brewer’s barley and hops, two specialized crops that could bring revenue windfalls to farmers. The fact that Central Europe’s best barley and hop growing regions concentrate in southern Germany and western Czechoslovakia gave farmers in those areas almost as strong a stake in the beer industry as brewers themselves. That goes a long way to explaining why beer politics in the Lesser Beer Zone took on an added layer of severity in comparison to the rest of the Greater Beer Zone, and nowhere is this more apparent than in Bavaria, as the early date and tone of the 1945 memo makes clear.³²

Even so, Bavaria was certainly not alone in the beer war. Across Germany, brewery operators scrambled to ensure the best treatment they could while officials pleaded on their behalf and military governments decided their fate. A business’s fortunes were best served by

²⁹ Bavarian Minister for Food, “Betreff: Bierherstellung,” section “Über das Braugewerbe in Bayern,” 1.

³⁰ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” chap. 2.

³¹ Central Committee for Nutrition, Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition in the French Zone to Director General of Agriculture and Supply in the Direction du Revitallement, Baden-Baden, “Betr.: Verteilung an Malz, Bezug: Ihre Schreiben vom 5. 6. 47 No. 3348, 3368/69,” 28 June 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175; “Über das Bier in Bayern,” Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 92-96.

³² “The Soul of Beer: Malting Barley from Germany,” Central Marketing Society for German Agriculture, 2008.

providing an immediate use to the military authorities. For example, records show that at some point during their initial occupation American military forces confiscated the Weihenstephan brewery, likely designating it as one of the few beer makers allowed to stay open and produce for the occupiers in the immediate postwar months. By the end of November 1945, Resolution Nr. II 30220 set the date for resumed civilian beer production on 16 February of the following year. While the brewing ban came and went in the American sector during the occupation years, Weihenstephan remained under U.S. military control, forcing Bavaria's other state-owned brewery, the Hofbräuhaus München, to take over production of Weihenstephan beer for the German market.³³ The U.S. policy in the south exceeded the other zones of Germany in its intensity, though not its general thrust. Everywhere the military governments curtailed brewing for civilian consumption while designating some production for their own personnel. The British and the Soviet militaries joined the Americans in confiscating entire breweries.³⁴ Bavarian brewers and state politicians confronted their occupiers' restrictive beer policies with the most public and direct resistance in occupied Germany, a tradition with a history as old as Bavaria's membership in a unified German nation-state.³⁵ While those conflicts have been documented, however, the most surprising discovery here is that the battles over beer and the brewing industry's survival in other parts of Germany, and Czechoslovakia, were no less intense and bitterly contested as in the Bavarian case, even if they took place at a lower volume.³⁶

³³ Dr. Ing. Fischer, Administrative Office of the Technical University of Munich, Weihenstephan to Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs," n.d. (after 22 Nov. 1945, before 16 Feb. 1946), BayHStA, MK 67367; "Vereinbarung zwischen dem Staatl.Hofbräuhaus in München vertreten durch das Bayer.Hofbrauamt München - Hofbräuhaus und der Staatsbrauerei Weihenstephan - Weihenstephan," 16 February 1946, BayHStA, MK 67367.

³⁴ R. S., Director of Schwerter Brewery A.G., "Bericht des Vorstandes," 29 October 1946, HsArch-S, 11077 Nr. 01525, 16; G. H., "Anglo-amerikanische Reparationen aus Deutschland," *Neues Deutschland*, 18 September 1946.

³⁵ Terrell, "The People's Drink," 173.

³⁶ Terrell, chap. 2;

Early disputes recorded in archival documents focus heavily on the all-important questions of business proprietorship and administrative authority. Economic devastation and shifting political winds quickly emerged as useful tools to improve one's station, with scruples and honesty as optional attachments. One aspiring wholesaler in Wuppertal (British Zone) named Dirk Haas tried to get around a ban on new alcohol sales licenses by claiming that he had owned a similar business in Neustadt, Saxony, before fleeing ahead of the Red Army. He had tragically lost all the paperwork for his "officially approved and licensed" business during his escape. Nonetheless, Haas argued, he did not need a "new" business license, but rather a restoration of his existing one. This grift (for it was, indeed, a grift) did not get very far. The official who handled his case, Dr. Jochim Schreier of the *Zentralamt für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft* (Central Office of Food and Agriculture in the British Zone, ZEL), denied the application after he found that Haas had fabricated his story and had an extensive criminal record of graft and larceny.³⁷ Haas's attempt, however, points to the struggles plaguing authorities and proprietors trying to rebuild an economy out of rubble and shattered administrative networks. The military governments and their German subordinates in local and regional offices wielded immense power over the economy, but that opened the door to endless lobbying, manipulation, and coercion by industry actors. It also gave outsized importance to the personal attitudes of bureaucrats, such as resentment toward those who had fled West from the Soviet advance. As Schreier explained, another reason he rejected the application was that "Haas is an eastern

³⁷ H. W., "Eidesstattliche Verschierung," 23 July 1945, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47; H. W., Seed, Spirits, and Wine Wholesaler to Legal Division of the Department of Agriculture, Food, Demense (?), Forestry and Land Improvement in Governor's Office of the North-Rhine Province, 10 October 1945, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47; G., Wine Inspector, "Aktenvermerk! Betr. Fa, H. W.," 10 November 1945, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

refugee [*Ostvertriebener*]. In my opinion it is not feasible to give a wholesale license to every eastern refugee when our own businesses [*die eigenen Betriebe*] don't have enough work."³⁸

We know of the Haas affair, not because of him, but because of Dr. Schreier, whose case paints a vibrant picture of scheming and backbiting in the brewing industry and government administration in the British Zone. It is worth considering in detail because it reveals patterns that appear throughout occupied Germany and even Czechoslovakia in the early postwar years. A power struggle that ensued over Schreier's appointment to a high administrative office shows all four of the strategies noted above for industry and government actors to advance their interests. It also shows the impact of administrative continuities from the Third Reich and the early importance of the Lesser Beer Zone (here, Bavaria) to developments in the industry of what later became West Germany. Jochim Schreier was a Nazi Party member and served from January 1944 to March 1946 as the manager of the *Brauwirtschaftsverband* (Beer Business Association) of western Germany, a regional office in Hamburg that had power over the allocation of raw goods as well as sales and distribution.³⁹ This state organ answered to the Central Association (within the Reich Food Ministry) in the Third Reich and then, initially, to the authorities in the British Occupation Zone. The manager position took on growing power late in the war, as resources became scarcer and rationing stricter.⁴⁰ All of this helped to open Schreier up to later attacks from industry members. In the immediate postwar moment, however, his prominent role in the Nazi food administration did not deter the British military government. Not only did he keep his post, but the British called on Schreier to join the German inter-regional Food

³⁸ Interview of H. H. by Dr. S., Head Government Councilor, "Protokoll," 23 November 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

³⁹ Statement by Assessor S., Brewing Industry Association North Rhine Province, 1946 [Anlage 2 to "Abschliessender Bericht" 22 January 1947], BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁴⁰ H. G., Chairman of the Brewers' Association of the British-Occupied Zone of Germany to Dr. Schlange-Schöningen, Minister of Nutrition and Agriculture in the British Occupation Zone of Germany, "Betr.: Brauereiverband der british besetzten Zone Deutschlands," 1 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47, 1-2.

Allocation Committee (GIFAC) in July 1945 as an advisor on the beverage industry. He then took over as head of the main office for the beer market in the newly formed ZEL.⁴¹

It was during this period, in October and November of 1945, that a lawyer named Dr. Krüger approached Schreier seeking a wine distributor's license for Dirk Haas. Later, in January 1946, Krüger returned to Schreier as a representative of the Bremme Brewery in Barmen. At this meeting, according to Schreier, Krüger put in an application for the brewery to produce soft drinks, a coveted contract. He asked Schreier if the Bremme Brewery "had any chance" against the Wicküler-Küpper brewery, a presumed favorite for the job. Schreier's reply, even in his own notes, speaks to the arbitrariness of such decisions and how easily an opportunity for backroom dealing could appear. "I responded that I could not say. Maybe the Wicküler-Küpper brewery, maybe also the Bremme-Brewery, perhaps even another brewery as well could get a chance. [Fellow brewery representative] Herr D., for example, is also very active."⁴² Four days later, the selfsame Herr D. arrived to inform Schreier that the Wicküler-Küpper brewery was "not seen as politically unobjectionable" and indicated that the British Field Security Sections was investigating the brewery for publishing and distributing antisemitic children's books during the war. Schreier dismissed the issue with assurances that none of the brewery's members were ardent Nazis to his knowledge, that an initial investigation from the American Counter Intelligence Corps had ended without definitive conclusions, and that no new investigation was underway. Schreier also argued that Herr D. had distorted the truth, because the complaint was not that the brewery had published the book, but merely that it had distributed it abroad. Under the surface of both conversations lay a deep unhappiness with Schreier among the brewers in

⁴¹ Dr. R., Department Head in the Central Office for Nutrition and Agriculture in the British Zone to Schlange-Schöningen, "Betrifft: Hauptstelle für die Brau- und Mineralwasserwirtschaft beim ZEL," 1 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁴² "Aktenvermerk!" 30 January 1946 [Anlage 6 to "Abschliessender Bericht" 22 January 1947], BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

Wuppertal, who believed that he favored the Wicküler-Küpper brewery at the others' expense. Herr D. informed him that "no unpleasantness could be ruled out" for Schreier if he continued with his behavior.⁴³ No such "unpleasantness" appears to have occurred in the immediate aftermath, but shortly thereafter, in late March or early April 1946, ordinance 109 from the military government reorganized the industrial administrative system in the British zone, keeping a strong central planning authority with extensive power over businesses, including a Central Office for the Beer and Mineral Water Market (Beer Office).⁴⁴ Schreier was a strong contender to run the office, and at that moment he ran into greater trouble and became the key figure in a political and economic tug-of-war in the British Zone.

"Whoever took it upon himself to criticize the authoritarian economic policies of the Third Reich, even in a professional manner, was certain to end up with the Gestapo." With these words, Dr. Niklaus Richter, former chair of the Brewers' Association in the British Zone, wrote to Dr. H. Schlange-Schöningen, zonal Minister of Nutrition and Agriculture, in early October 1946. He sought to explain why he had recently resigned in protest over Schreier's appointment to lead the Beer Office, continuing,

it must be considered [in the ZEL], especially among the circles of former National Socialist functionaries, that it is not enough to rehabilitate oneself through questionnaires (*fragebogenmäßig zu rehabilitieren*), but rather one must relearn from the ground up, turn away from the authoritarian course, and find a way to democracy in political economy as well.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Dr. R. to Dr. Schlange-Schöningen, 1 October 1946, 2.

⁴⁵ H. G. to Schlange-Schöningen, 1 October 1946, 4.

Richter's words, and his resignation, were just one volley in a war waged by the British-Zone Brewers' Association against the appointment of Schreier. The Nazi past, the continued authoritarian structure of the German bureaucracy under British occupation, and a purported longing for real democracy all served as useful rhetorical avenues for Richter and his fellows to try to secure an outcome favorable to their business interests.

The campaign against Schreier started in April 1946, just after ordinance 109 created the new administrative office to oversee the beer industry.⁴⁶ Shortly thereafter an advisory board for the highly-influential Dortmund beer sector held a vote of no confidence against Schreier at a "secret meeting."⁴⁷ Around that same time (though not necessarily related), the British military government dismissed Schreier from his post for reasons only hinted at but apparently related to his political past.⁴⁸ An ally of Schreier's in the ZEL later acknowledged that the bureaucrat's NSDAP membership had caused him "political difficulties" in the West, and that he must first "carry out his denazification" (*Entnazifizierung [betreiben]*) before any further steps. What this involved in Schreier's case is not detailed but, considering Richter's later scathing critique, it seems likely that his opponents viewed it as a mere "rehabilitation through questionnaires." Even Schreier's ally makes the process sound like a mere formality.⁴⁹

While Schreier sought to rehabilitate himself over the spring and summer of 1946, Richter and the Brewers' Association moved to secure a favorable replacement to the Beer Office or, as they would describe it, establish a more democratic relationship between government and industry. The Brewers' Association recommended a Dr. Krämer, who took up

⁴⁶ Dr. R. to Schlange-Schöningen, 1 October 1946, 2.

⁴⁷ G. to Schlange-Schöningen, 7 October 1946, 2.

⁴⁸ Hans Carl Podeyn, Senate Director of Agriculture, Hamburg to Schlange-Schöningen, 25 September 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47, 2.

⁴⁹ R. to Schlange-Schöningen, 1 October 1946, 2.

the post on 1 September of the same year.⁵⁰ A later letter from the Beer Wholesalers' Association stated that Krämer's lack of experience and expertise made him an ideal choice to be a mere tool of the big breweries.⁵¹ But then, Richter and his compatriots saw their good fortune dissipate. The ZEL reassigned Krämer three weeks later and appointed Jochim Schreier to head the office. Richter immediately protested, and the Brewers' Association opened several different lines of attack against Schreier in the following weeks, covering the four basic narratives described earlier in this section: political appeals, economic dysfunction, parallel governing bodies, and accusations of crime. First, the Association claimed that the breweries deserved a voice in choosing government administrators as part of the shift toward democracy. It also attempted to use Schreier's Nazi party membership against him without directly attacking the "denazification" process itself. Second, they argued that their distrust of Schreier would make him ineffective in his post, leading to economic inefficiencies. Third, they attempted to manipulate the British occupation government to veto his appointment. Finally, the Brewers' Association employed its most powerful, and riskiest, maneuver by accusing Schreier of criminal activity including corruption and black market dealing.⁵²

With Schreier now "denazified," the Brewers' Association could not directly use his political past to try to remove him, so they settled for indirect approaches. Richter and his colleagues claimed that their objection had nothing to do with Schreier's former party affiliation, but clearly hoped it would help justify their opposition. Richter's letter of 7 October makes that very clear. He also accused another official from the Beer Office, "likewise a former national

⁵⁰ Dr. G., Chairman of the Brewers' Association of the British-Occupied Zone of Germany to Schlange-Schöningen, "Betreff: Hauptstelle für die Brau- und Mineralwasser-Wirtschaft beim Zentralamt für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft," 27 September 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47, 2.

⁵¹ Dr. Z., Professional Association of Beer Wholesalers in Hamburg-Schleswig-Holstein to Schlange-Schöningen, 15 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁵² G. to Schlange-Schöningen, 27 September 1946, 2.

socialist functionary,” of inappropriately working behind the scenes on Schreier’s behalf.⁵³ The chief executive of the Brewers’ Association, Dr. Weimann, wrote shortly thereafter, “the distrust of the industry against Dr. Schreier has nothing to do with his political past” but in the next sentence used suggestive language to argue that the real problem was Schreier’s “tendency to handle matters according to the authoritarian *Führerprinzip*.”⁵⁴ And again on the following page, “Herr Dr. Schreier, partly because of his earlier activities in the [Reich] Food Office, also has a number of intimate friends in the ZEL, who, like him, are former party comrades. Some of them have apparently not yet been denazified.”⁵⁵ The brewers had reason to believe that their audience would be receptive to the message. Most of their complaints went directly to Minister Schlange-Schöningen, a later CDU Bundestag member and adversary of Nazism.⁵⁶ For whatever reason, though, the minister does not appear to have been meaningfully bothered by Schreier’s past, and later letters from industry representatives drop the frequent references to Schreier’s Nazi affiliation. The most direct political avenue came to a dead end.

The brewers knocked on other doors to try to get what they wanted. In a pattern that repeated itself all over occupied Germany and in Czechoslovakia, the room for maneuver between parallel governing organs created incentives for forum shopping among interested parties. Within days of Schreier’s appointment, the British military government contacted Hans Carl Podeyn, Director of Agriculture for the Hamburg Senate, to raise concerns about the move. German officials needed approval from the military government for the transfer to go through, so Podeyn quickly dispatched a letter to Schlange-Schöningen to shore up support for Schreier’s

⁵³ G. to Schlange-Schöningen, 7 October 1946, 3.

⁵⁴ Dr. v. O., Chief Executive of the Brewers' Association of the British Occupied Zone of Germany to Schlange-Schöningen, "Betreff: Hauptstelle für die Brau- und Mineralwasserwirtschaft beim Zentralamt für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft," 7 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47, 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁶ John Farquharson, “The Consensus That Never Came: Hans Schlange-Schöningen and the CDU, 1945-9,” *European History Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1989): 355, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026569148901900304>.

appointment. In response to the occupation authorities' concerns, Podeyn argued that Schreier had been "fully rehabilitated with English approval" and that special reasons existed for his assignment to the post.⁵⁷ For the first reason, Podeyn attempted a kind of political judo throw, using his opponents' strength against them. Because Schreier had already been attacked by interest groups ("*von Interessenkreisen her beschossen worden*") but had nevertheless successfully completed a reexamination of his credentials, it made him even more reliable. The second reason was Schreier's outstanding qualifications for the job. Podeyn was not sanguine about British governance, suggesting in reference to a different appointment that they wanted personnel who would be "comfy and useful" for them. But he seemed most concerned that Richter and the Brewers' Association were using the British as pawns to exert their influence on the ZEL. "We have to reckon with the fact that wherever significant capital interests are at play, struggles will ensue, and the English perspective will get dragged in, honestly or less honestly."⁵⁸ Also worthy of note is the speed with which the concerns of the Brewers' Association gained the attention of both British and German authorities.

Podeyn's message also contributed to the firewall that Schreier's defenders threw up when the brewers argued that he would be ineffective and cause economic dysfunction because the industry disliked and distrusted him.⁵⁹ Podeyn wrote that "[Schreier] is one of the very few independent, well-regarded experts available who is not politically encumbered or bound to any interests."⁶⁰ The coming fusion of the British and American Zones also played a role. With the

⁵⁷ Podeyn to Schlange-Schöningen, 25 September 1946, 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Such complaints appear in almost every letter from G. and v. O. cited so far in this section, as well as the following: Dr. v. O. to State Secretary Passarge in the Central office for Nutrition and Agriculture, 21 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47; G. D., Chairman of the United Westphalian-Lippe Breweries to the Brewers' Association of the British Occupied Zone of Germany, forwarded to State Secretary Passarge, 17 December 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47; Brewers' Association of the British-Occupied Zone of Germany to State Secretary Passarge, 6 January 1947, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁶⁰ Podeyn to Schlange-Schöningen, 25 September 1946, 2.

Bizone came Bavaria, with its powerful and influential brewing industry. In a follow up letter, Podeyn shared the view of a Hamburg brewery director that “at this time there is no better man in northern Germany than Schreier... to serve as a counterweight against south Germany.”⁶¹ Southern brewers apparently held Schreier in high regard, an invaluable asset for such an influential position as the brewing market of the two zones approached unification.⁶² The head of the ZEL, in his response to Richter’s initial complaint, also credited Schreier with single-handedly rescuing the brewing sector in the British Zone from an almost certain shutdown in Fall 1945. While serving on the GIFAC, Schreier “through countless negotiations with English officials managed to prevent the closure of the breweries, especially, which had practically been a done deal beforehand.”⁶³ Once it became clear that the Brewers’ Association would pull out all the stops to defeat Schreier’s appointment, additional letters of support for him flowed in from other trade groups. The Brewing and Malting Artisan Group of the British Zone, which represented smaller producers, wrote to Schlange-Schöningen that the Brewers’ Association not only did not represent their views on the Schreier matter, but that Richter et al. were actively trying to shut them out of the conversation. Neither they, nor the beer wholesalers or mineral water producers had supported Dr. Krämer in the office, and they openly celebrated the appointment of Schreier.⁶⁴

Having tried and failed to get rid of him using his Nazi party membership, claims that he would be ineffective in the job, and through appeals to the occupation government, the Brewers’ Association resorted to one last ace up their sleeve: an accusation of corruption. This attempt

⁶¹ Hans Carl Podeyn, to Schlange-Schöningen, "Betr.: Beurteilung Dr. H.," 26 September 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁶² Hans Carl Podeyn, "Vermerk, Betr.: Hauptstelle für Brauerei- und Mineralwasserwirtschaft und Hauptstelle für Wein- und Trinkbranntweinwirtschaft," 27 September 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁶³ Dr. R. to Schlange-Schöningen, 1 October 1946, 1.

⁶⁴ H. W., Chairman and Dr. T., Manager of the Brewing and Malting Craft Group of the British Zone to Schlange-Schöningen, 14 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47; see also Dr. R., "Aktenvermerk," 22 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

went particularly badly. Not only did it reveal an embarrassing failure to coordinate a coherent message among brewery leaders, but it opened them up to counteraccusations of slander and obstruction. In his letter of 7 October, Weimann wrote that there was one issue with Schreier that the “brewing industry has, until now, most scrupulously [*peinlichste*] tried to avoid, but must now be broached if the industry’s stubbornness in opposing the appointment of Herr Dr. Schreier is to be understood.”⁶⁵ He then accused Schreier of accepting a bribe from Dr. Krüger on behalf of Dirk Haas in 1945. Nothing that followed went well for the brewers. To start with, they sent mixed messages. In another letter on 21 October Weimann claimed that questions about Schreier’s integrity were not the only reason why the industry wanted him replaced, although it was perhaps the most important one. That surprised the head of the ZEL, State Secretary Passarge, who wrote back, “in our conversations I had a completely different impression.”⁶⁶ At any rate, by making a charge as serious as corruption they appear to have inadvertently sidelined their other complaints, and the brewers continued to vacillate between emphasis on the corruption claim and casting doubt on Schreier’s effectiveness.⁶⁷ “For the ZEL,” continued Passarge, “your concerns about Schreier’s integrity are absolutely the primary concern.”⁶⁸ Arguments about economic democracy and the need for trust between government and industry leaders appear to have impressed exactly no one, or at a minimum failed to overcome counterarguments that Schreier would be a skilled and experienced advocate of British Zone brewers. Then again, the indiscriminating flurry of different tactics employed by the brewers to remove Schreier clearly undercut their legitimacy in the eyes of German officials.

⁶⁵ v. O. to Schlange-Schöningen, 7 October 1946, 2-3.

⁶⁶ State Secretary Passarge to the Economic Group of Breweries and Malthouses, 29 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁶⁷ Message from G. D. forwarded to State Secretary Passarge, 17 December 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47; Brewers' Association of the British-Occupied Zone of Germany to State Secretary Passarge, 6 January 1947, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁶⁸ Passarge to the Economic Group, 29 October 1946.

On 20 October, following a request from Schreier himself for an official investigation to clear his name, Schlange-Schöningen assigned a government attorney named Dr. Hofmann to explore the bribery claims. Once he began to uncover the facts of the case, things deteriorated further for Weimann, Richter, and company. None of the documentary evidence of the Haas affair proved corruption. The brewers put their hope in Krüger's credibility. Instead, Krüger turned over a copy of a letter from another member of the Brewers' Association where his testimony was solicited purely for the benefit of the industry, rather than any concern with corruption or ethics. It read,

This [Krüger's affidavit] would settle the Dr. Schreier problem, as it were, in a matter of hours... This statement will put an end to the Schreier case once and for all with no more fuss and without causing any greater damage to our trade through delay and escalation... The way things are now, you are doing a service to the brewing industry because, with the extreme tension between Herr Dr. Schreier and the entire trade, productive work is now unthinkable.⁶⁹

The bad optics got worse when Krüger admitted that he had initially spread the rumor that he bribed Schreier (with a bottle of cognac and several bottles of wine) in retaliation for Schreier appointing his competitors to important positions in beer trade organizations. Krüger had likewise intimated at the time that Schreier had used his position to receive free food and drink to sell on the black market. The lawyer had not made any official accusations until Schreier took his new position in September 1946, at which point he "was pressed from all sides, especially from Hamburg [i.e. the Brewers' Association], day in and day out, repeatedly late at night and also on Saturdays and Sundays" to substantiate his claims in an affidavit, which he finally did.

⁶⁹ Dr. R. B. to Dr. H., Carl Bremme Brewery, 16 October 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

When asked, point blank, if he thought that Schreier, an influential official in one of the most powerful administrative positions in the beverage industry, would find it so hard to get cognac and wine that he would let himself be bribed for it, Krüger flatly responded that he did not think so. He had made the statements at the time and felt compelled to stick with them. In an apparent effort to keep this embarrassing reversal private, he asked Hofmann to handle the matter in confidence. Hofmann informed him that he had forfeited any right to confidentiality when he signed a legal affidavit on the matter and given it to the Brewers' Association.⁷⁰ In a final, still more embarrassing episode before the government councilor presented his final report exonerating Schreier, Weimann called Hofmann in mid-December to inquire about the investigation. He mentioned that the Brewers' Association had "extensive materials against Herr. Dr. Schreier," to which Hofmann demanded that those materials be turned over. Weimann refused. Hofmann then informed him that claiming to have incriminating evidence without furnishing it could only be construed as an attempt to influence the investigation, whereupon Weimann apologized and said that was the furthest thing from his mind before ending the conversation.⁷¹

Hofmann's closing report dismissed the charges against Schreier and argued that the Brewers' Association's primary interest was to remove him from his new post, rather than uncover actual wrongdoing. The paper trail assembled by Hofmann verified Schreier's version of events, completely discrediting Krüger in the process. Two other claims of corruption brought by the brewers similarly turned out to be false or unprovable. The exoneration had no caveats. "[I]n no case was Dr. Schreier proven to have engaged in a behavior that could make an intervention

⁷⁰ "Aktenermerk!" 1 November 1946 [Anlage 5 to "Abschliessender Bericht" 22 January 1947], BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

⁷¹ Dr. S., Head Government Councilor, "Vermerk," 22 December 1946, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47.

against his person necessary.”⁷² On the following page: “it is striking that the claims presented by the Brewers’ Association first arose at a moment when the Association was trying to remove Dr. Schreier from his position.”⁷³ Thus, the episode came to an end, an innocent civil servant cleared of suspicion, and the duplicitous leadership of a trade organization foiled in its plot to coerce a government agency into installing their pawn in a powerful office. That, at least, is the story that emerges from the government archives.

But is it the full story? Reading against the grain of the official documents and with more hindsight, there are reasons to give the Brewers’ Association more credit than Hofmann and the others did. Schreier had been a Nazi Party member, and a high-ranking economic official in the Third Reich. Without more information about his denazification, it is impossible to say whether it was a mere rubber stamp, but the British military government found reason to dismiss him in 1946. Hans Carl Podeyn asserted that industry leaders manipulated the occupying powers to get their way. Perhaps that was a clear-eyed assessment of the power dynamics. Or perhaps it served to dismiss British concerns as merely “misinformed.” Moreover, the brewers had, apparently, been assured of a more cooperative relationship with the administration, and the record suggests that the German officials sprang Schreier’s appointment on them without consultation. Schreier’s apologists never denied his “dictatorial” style of management, a central complaint of the Brewers’ Association, and instead they focused almost exclusively on his expertise and reputation. In the end, the one indisputably bad choice that the brewers made was turning to Dr. Krüger and the rumors that he had concocted to slander Schreier. The corruption case crumbled almost from the start, and the effort made the Brewers’ Association look like bad faith actors.

⁷² Dr. S., "Abschliessender Bericht Betr.: Untersuchungsverfahren gegen den kommissarischen Hauptgeschäftsführer der Hauptgeschäftsstelle Brau- und Mineral Wirtschaft Dr.rer.pol.H. H.," 22 January 1947, BArch-K, Z 6/II 47, Blatt 2.

⁷³ Ibid., Blatt 3.

Ultimately, the strategies employed by brewing industry representatives in the Schreier case and the way their government interlocutors responded matter more than the actual fairness or unfairness of the outcome. Each occupation zone of Germany presented a unique case for its beer industry, not to mention the completely different circumstances in Czechoslovakia. But in each region similar conflicts played out among industry and government actors struggling over control and power in regulatory offices, board rooms, and simple corner pubs. Brewers and administrators were subject to the politics of the day just like everyone else. Paeons to economic democracy and criminal accusations looked the same coming from beer makers as they did from any other citizen, and there is little evidence that the effects of political processes such as denazification on the beer industry, important as they were for its later development, were markedly different than on other trades. On the other hand, the fact that actors on the ground trying to navigate the power struggles of the day put arguments about the importance of keeping the brewing industry alive and functioning right alongside their points about political and criminal accountability speaks volumes to the weight that beer carried as a valuable commodity.

The case of the beer industry in the French Occupation Zone serves as the best proof of this concept among the western Allies. The historiography uniformly identifies the French military government as the most coercive and extractive of the western three, exceeded only by the Soviet Union. Certainly, compared to the British Zone, where nearly 90 percent of those investigated for political crimes were exonerated and German self-administration reemerged faster and with more autonomy, the French ran a harsh occupation.⁷⁴ They fell in line with the general trend of reestablishing German governance on the local and regional level, but those

⁷⁴ Hoffmann, "Germany Is No More," 600; Willi A. Boelcke, "Industrie und Technologie in der französischen Besatzungszone," *Bulletins de l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent* 13, no. 1 (1989): 177–200; Hardach, Landmesser, and Nocken, "4. Germany Under Western Occupation, 1945-1949," 68–69; Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 117.

administrative structures look more like transmission belts of the military government's policies than reestablished German administration.⁷⁵ Because the French were the least inclined to oblige German guidance on how to manage their zone, the different expectations for running the beer industry appears there in the sharpest relief. Most importantly, the manner in which the occupiers did ultimately try to exploit the value of the brewing industry under their control demonstrates that even here the raw material value was a force to be reckoned with.

German officials and business representatives in the French Zone struggled to get even the modest influence that their peers in the British and American Zones had, but they tried nonetheless. The French military government in Baden-Baden took responsibility for the territory that later comprised the Saarland (until 1955 a separate state under French protection), Rhineland-Palatinate, and most of Baden-Württemberg. Alongside the French commanders and civilian administrators, whose internal disagreements are a matter of study in their own right, in 1946 the occupiers established new German state governments in the regional capitals and a central zonal administration in Baden-Baden.⁷⁶ This new governance structure departed further from the organization of the Third Reich than those in the British or American Zones, favoring more centralization and keeping more power with the military government for longer. Nevertheless, many of the same patterns evident in the other western zones appear here.

German brewers and officials tried to exert some influence on a French zonal administration that they actively perceived to be authoritarian and extractive. The recent war and Nazi past appear more in icy subtext than the open text of communications between German businessmen and officials and French occupiers, but the acrimony was readily apparent, as was

⁷⁵ Boelcke, "Industrie und Technologie in der französischen Besatzungszone," 181.

⁷⁶ Edgar Wolfrum, *Französische Besatzungspolitik und deutsche Sozialdemokratie: politische Neuansätze in der "vergessenen Zone" bis zur Bildung des Südweststaates 1945-1952* (Düsseldorf: Droste-Verlag, 1991).

the German understanding that their situation compared poorly to conditions in the Bizone. In the 1946/47 brewing year, French authorities authorized beer production to supply approximately twenty-three liters of beer per person for the entire year.⁷⁷ In a July 1947 meeting of major players in the zone's beer industry, one participant pointed out that Bavaria had produced nearly 92 liters per person in 1945/46. The French Zone looked even worse in retrospect, as the participant noted, because the Rhineland and Baden had only managed two-thirds of their approved production before resources ran out. The tone of the meeting speaks to the envy with which industry leaders in the southwest looked to their immediate East and North, though a degree of skepticism is certainly called for. Some of the claims made about the "English" and American occupation zones strain credulity, as when the head of the Brewers' Association in the French Zone stated that "despite the brewing ban, in Bavaria and the English Zone you can get beer everywhere."⁷⁸ The industry representatives did not expect their wine-heavy region to match beer-loving Bavaria liter for liter in production, but they saw the French restrictions as onerous and their arguments for the importance of the industry largely mirrored those put forward in the other sectors. The occupation government had to understand the economic importance of beer and the danger of keeping the brewing industry grasping for straws. The meeting participants emphasized "in particular, that beside the need for beverage production, employment for the workers, and keeping businesses in operation, the financial question for the state is also of great importance. The beer tax of RM 35 per hectoliter plays a significant role in the finances of the states."⁷⁹ Not all of the French Zone was "wine country" either, as German

⁷⁷ Henry Wilde, "Rund Um Die Französischen Zone," *Das andere Deutschland*, February 15, 1947, <https://portal.dnb.de/bookviewer/view/1026553342#page/9/mode/1up>; "Protokoll über die am 21.7.1947 stattgefundenen Arbeitstagung der Fachverbände Brauereien, Mälzereien und Hopfenkaufleute," 21 July 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁷⁸ "Protokoll," 21 July 1947, 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*,

officials pointed out in a letter to the French civilian administration. Württemberg, they suggested, lacked wine growing areas on the same scale as other regions, and limiting beer production would wreak havoc on the desperately needed milk supply.⁸⁰

One German state organ in particular, the Central Committee for Nutrition within the Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition in the French Zone, played intermediary between German businesses and French military authorities. Their constant pivoting between demanding industry leaders and vindictive French administrators exemplifies the challenges and opportunities that parallel governing bodies presented to economic actors at the time. The Nutrition Committee tried to explain unique regional and national economic circumstances in Germany (such as the beverage supply in Württemberg) to the French in Baden-Baden while setting realistic expectations for German brewers. To the latter point, when the Brewers' and Maltsters' Associations resolved to ask the French administration for 3 million hectoliters of beer production in 1947/48 instead of the 1.5 million of the previous year, the Nutrition Committee talked them down to only 2 million, citing insufficient raw ingredients.⁸¹ To the former, when presenting the request for more production to the Director General of Agriculture and Supply in the French government, the Nutrition Committee deftly modified the central pitch to appeal to an almost colonial mindset of peak resource utilization. 2 million hectoliters of beer production would ensure that "1.) the high quality brewing barley will not be milled [i.e. for bread], 2.) malt will remain available for eventual export purposes, 3.) the beer demand of the occupation troops can continue to be fulfilled without interruption, 4.) the necessary diastase malt will be available

⁸⁰ Central Committee for Nutrition, Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition in the French Zone to Director General of Agriculture and Supply in the Direction du Revitallement, Baden-Baden, "Betr.: Verteilung an Malz, Bezug: Ihre Schreiben vom 5. 6. 47 No. 3348, 3368/69," 28 June 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁸¹ Central Committee for Nutrition to Director General of Agriculture and Supply, "Betr.: Bierproduktionsprogramm," 13 August 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

to produce children's food goods."⁸² With each point, even feeding needy children, the Nutrition Committee emphasized the most efficient exploitation of resources. Barley, for example, comes in many levels of quality. For bread and other products of milled grain, any barley will do. Brewing beer requires kernels of a particular size with the correct ratio of water, protein, and enzymes. Brewer's barley therefore fetches higher prices on the market, and the supply must be identified and secured immediately after harvest to ensure that none of the brewer's barley ends up being wasted on other products.⁸³ The French military government's interest in the details of beer production appears to have been low, to say the least, but its interest in getting the highest value out of the occupation zone's resources was high.

Much like their allies in the other zones, French occupiers appear to have been forced to care about beer to some degree for purely utilitarian reasons and almost against their will. The military government handled matters pertaining to the brewing industry carelessly. The Director General of Agriculture and Supply sent inquiries to the Nutrition Committee that lacked a realistic comprehension of the situation.⁸⁴ Vital planning decisions took longer than they should have and documents arrived with errors and vague instructions.⁸⁵ When the Nutrition Committee requested clarity on one issue, they received an icy and still-vague response centered around the phrase "the orders are clear enough."⁸⁶ The orders were not clear enough, as the Committee pointed out in its own reply "otherwise our follow up would have been unnecessary."⁸⁷ The

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ John Mallett, *Malt: A Practical Guide from Field to Brewhouse* (Boulder, Colorado: Brewers Publications, 2014).

⁸⁴ Central Committee for Nutrition to Director General of Agriculture and Supply, "Betr.: Bier für Hotels, Kaffees usw.. Ihr Schr. v. 30.7.37 [sic] - DGEF/AGR/No. II 4617 PV/108," 7 August 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁸⁵ Central Committee for Nutrition to Malt Beer Brewery Groterjan A.-G., 29 August 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175; A. Paccoud General Administrator, French Military Government, Baden-Baden to General Administrator for the Military Government of Rheinland-Pfalz, "Betr.: Bierfabrikationsplan," 10 September 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁸⁶ Paccoud, to President of the Central Committee for Nutrition, "Herstellung von 6%igem Bier. Bezug: Ihr Brief II A 42 vom 24. November 1947," 8 December 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁸⁷ Central Committee for Nutrition to Direction Ravitaillement, "Betr.: Herstellung von 6%igem Bier. Bezug: Ihr Brief vom 8.12.47 Nr. 6966," 12 December 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

French were not unique in their intentional or unintentional misunderstanding of beer's role in German society. As Terrell points out, "[f]rom the American perspective, beer was a luxury of consumer desire and ranked quite low on the list of priorities."⁸⁸ Similar tendencies in the Soviet Zone will be discussed later in this chapter. As has already been seen in the Schreier case, German officials in the British Zone had to fight just to keep the breweries open.

In the French Zone, like the rest of Germany, the size and scale of their country's brewing industry aided German business and political leaders by making a total shutdown of breweries a legitimate threat to the fragile economy. Unemployment already presented a crisis. Beer sales remained subject to heavy taxation, offering a particular concern to the military governments if production should cease.⁸⁹ The milk supply remained a pressing issue. To these sticks, industry advocates added several carrots. Every calorie mattered in the food supply, and brewers could argue that their product offered a surprisingly efficient use of food resources. Brewing beer extracts the nutritious sugars from grain and produces a beverage that offers a clean source of fluids and calories to the drinker.⁹⁰ Fermentation also adds important vitamins to the mix, especially B-vitamins. When produced at very low strength (as it was during the occupation years), the negative effects of alcohol are not a factor in beer consumption. To top it all off, after the grains had been used to make beer, breweries typically sold them to farmers to feed their livestock, whose digestive systems can break down the leftover fibrous materials that humans' cannot. Beer offered two-for-one value to the food supply. And, if Germany hoped to return to economic growth, the reputation of its beer made the brewing industry a strong

⁸⁸ Terrell, "The People's Drink," 83.

⁸⁹ "Protokoll über die am 21.7.1947..." Terrell, *The People's Drink*, 113-114; "Amtliche Bekanntmachungen für das Bundesland Sachsen: Herabsetzung der Biersteuer," *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 16 December 1945; H.P., "Brot statt Bier," *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 13 January 1946.

⁹⁰ R. H., Director of Operations, Felsenkeller Brewery Dresden to Brewery Department, LRS, "Betr.: Die physiologische Bedeutung des Bieres im Sommer," 17 March 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 71.

candidate for profitable exports. As the Nutrition Committee wrote to the French military government with a tellingly national framework, “The quality beers of German breweries have always been a major export article in the entire world.”⁹¹

The French administrators certainly did want to export high quality brewing products from their zone of Germany, but their primary object of focus was not beer, it was malt. While much of the French zone did not rank among the powerhouse areas of German beer production (such as Bavaria, North Rhineland, and Saxony), the Rhineland-Palatinate grew significant amounts of brewer’s barley and had a strong malting industry. With domestic demand low, most of that malt was available for export. In at least one case, Belgium requested restitution payments in the form of barley malt, but for the most part it appears that the occupation authorities assigned their import/export office, Oficomex, to sign standard business contracts for profitable exports to Luxemburg, Holland, and Switzerland.⁹² On the surface, occupation authorities shipping thousands of tons of high quality food goods out of Germany even as the German population continued to face nutritional shortages appears cruel. Certainly, the hostile socialist press in the Soviet Zone portrayed it that way.⁹³ However, this was a common strategy in the difficult postwar years that appears in Czechoslovakia as well.⁹⁴ Premium exports earned high profits, allowing authorities to finance social support and import cheaper food alternatives.

Oficomex also authorized imports of lower quality barley into the French zone, indicating that

⁹¹ Central Committee for Nutrition, French Zone to Direction Ravitaillement, Baden-Baden, "Betr.: Lohnherstellung von Bier durch Fürstlich Fürstenbergische Brauerei K.-G., Donaueschingen, zum Zwecke des Exports von Bier nach USA," 17 July 1948, BArch-K, Z 7/175; "Protokoll über die am 21.7.1947..."

⁹² Central Committee for Nutrition to Hubert Wantzen Malthouse, "Betr.: Lieferung von 63 to Malz an Brasserie de Malmedy," 4 May 1948, BArch-K, Z 7/175; Central Committee for Nutrition to Grain Department in the Ministry for Agriculture and Nutrition in Rheinland-Pfalz, "Betr.: Malzexport bezw. Verwendung des Gersteaufkommens," 21 April 1948, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁹³ "Rund um die Agrarkrise," *Neue Zeit*, 27 July 1948.

⁹⁴ "Zápis ze schůze sekce nápojového průmyslu NHK ÚV, konané dne 31.8.1948 v 10 hodin," 31 August 1948, NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV - 100/17 Sv. 24 Ar. J. 217; "Sekce nápojového průmyslu. Devátá schůze presidis, konaná dne 6.IX.1948 v 10 hodin," 6 September 1948, NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV - 100/17 Sv. 24 Ar. J. 217, 3.

this was the strategy.⁹⁵ None of the occupying powers, apart from the Americans, had the luxury of running their zones with anything other than the most shoestring budget possible, but the need for fiscal austerity does not let the military government off the hook.

French occupation authorities prioritized their malt export demands to the detriment of the German beer and even food supply. At the same time, they arranged for “exceptional” production of stronger beer for their own personnel. In their initial draft plan for malt production in the 1947/48 business year, the Nutrition Committee proposed using 58 percent of total malt output for exports. They expressed hope that the French authorities would agree to a small but meaningful improvement in civilian production while still offering to meet reasonable expectations for export and other needs.⁹⁶ Instead, Oficomex and the French military government signed contracts to send nearly 75 percent of the planned malt production abroad.⁹⁷ Even before the official numbers came down, the Committee sent messages warning that the domestic malt supply would likely be further reduced and German breweries would only get the barley that “did not fulfill the necessary requirements for export.”⁹⁸ When, by spring 1948, it became clear that there would not be enough malt to meet export contracts (as the Committee repeatedly warned would happen), the military government set its sights on a supply of 6,000 tons of cheaper imported barley to fill the gap. That barley had been designated for the food supply, and even then “is of such poor quality that according to normal trade standards would only be used as animal fodder.”⁹⁹ The Nutrition Committee sought to make up the loss in bread grain by

⁹⁵ Central Committee for Nutrition to the Grain Department, 21 April 1948.

⁹⁶ Central Committee for Nutrition to Director General of Agriculture and Supply, "Betr.: Malzprogramm 1947/48," 13 August 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁹⁷ Central Committee for Nutrition to M. G., "Betr.: Malzexport," 12 December 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁹⁸ Central Committee for Nutrition to Grain Department, "Betr.: Malzexport," 1 October 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175; Central Committee for Nutrition to M. G., "Betr.: Malzherstellung in Rheinland/Pfalz," 7 November 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

⁹⁹ Central Committee for Nutrition to the Grain Department, 21 April 1948, 3.

adjusting plans for other supplies, but there is no getting around the fact that the military government had knowingly attempted to increase malt exports despite a bread grain situation that had “not improved much” from the previous year.¹⁰⁰

Tellingly, one region under the French military government received an increase to its beer production quota in 1947/48. The Saarland, now no longer a German state but a French protectorate, apparently benefited not only from that distinction but also from its valuable mining operations that received special priority in the beer supply.¹⁰¹ Additionally, the military government in Baden-Baden authorized the state-level military governors to “designate two or three breweries to produce a beer with 6 percent alcohol, to be reserved for French needs.”¹⁰² The French Administrator General’s office, which sent these instructions, had such a poor understanding of beer production that it confused alcohol content with original gravity, a crucial difference. This “strong” beer (half the strength of peacetime beer) represented only about 15 percent of the total production designated for French citizens in their zone but required three times as much malt and hops to brew per hectoliter.¹⁰³

German officials such as the Nutrition Committee had enough to deal with from the French side, but as in the British Zone they also had to contend with German businesses taking every opportunity to advance their own multifarious agendas. Not all requests came from a place of ambition. The paucity of resources required a relative concentration of supply allocations to

¹⁰⁰ Central Committee for Nutrition to the Beer and Beverage Industry Professional Association in Lindau County, "Betr.: Malzkontingent Brauwirtschaftsjahr 1948/49," 26 June 1948, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

¹⁰¹ Central Committee for Nutrition to the Saarland Administrative Commission for Nutrition and Agriculture, "Betr.: Bierproduktionsprogramm 1947/48," 29 September 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175; Central Committee for Nutrition to the Baden Ministry of Finance, "Betr.: Malzlieferungen an badische Brauereien," 7 June 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

¹⁰² A. Paccoud to the General Administrator for the Military Government of Rheinland-Pfalz, "Betr.: Bierfabrikationsplan," 10 September 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

¹⁰³ Central Committee for Nutrition to all States, "Betr.: Lastenverteilung für Bier an franz. Staatsangehörige," 11 June 1948, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

larger breweries, leaving smaller facilities out in the cold through no fault of their own and thus understandably petitioning for help.¹⁰⁴ But in many cases the actions of industry leaders appear altogether more self-interested. In one letter from December 1947, the Nutrition Committee sharply rebuked the Königsbacher Brewery in Koblenz for communicating directly with French officials in the military government's supply division. After the Nutrition Committee had requested a certain ratio of hops per hectoliter, Königsbacher apparently sent a surreptitious missive indicating that it could make do with less. "Understandably, we see our request [to the military government]... disavowed in the strongest manner when a brewery as renowned as yours sends such information to the supply division."¹⁰⁵ What good it did Königsbacher to undermine the Committee is unclear, but the German officials squeezed between the military government and business actors had to constantly reassert their authority.

The Nutrition Committee even dealt with its own version of a Dr. Richter or Weimann-like figure in the person of Director Willi Mayer, the chairman of the Malthouses' Association in the French zone. Mayer aimed to advance the interests of the malting industry above all else, at least in the eyes of the Committee, and actively used whatever government organ seemed most likely to give him his desired results. In many cases he acted as a close ally of the military government, whose desire for exports he shared for the benefits it could bring to the malthouses. His zeal led him to repeatedly overstep his bounds. In June of 1947, Mayer had taken advantage of conflicting orders from the state and central military governments to jump the gun and set in motion his own plans for malt deliveries to Berlin without authorization. The Committee's letter to Mayer seethed. "There can be absolutely no rectification in this matter whatsoever," they

¹⁰⁴ President of the Central Committee for Nutrition to Dr. L. S., Lindau, "Betr.: Wiedereröffnung der Weizenbierbrauerei Humbert Bulligan, Lindau-Schönau," 19 May 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

¹⁰⁵ Central Committee for Nutrition to the Königsbacher Brauerei A.-G., Koblenz, "Betr.: Hopfen," 19 December 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

wrote in the first lines, "...we do not take orders from states or companies, we give them."¹⁰⁶ The problems did not end there. In April 1948, amid the export fiasco that sent maltsters scrambling to find more barley, Mayer made a trip to Baden-Baden to visit Oficomex and the supply division in the military government, after which he stopped by the office of the Nutrition Committee who later reported: "At that point, Herr Mayer mentioned that he had a telegraph from the district food office in Kaiserslautern, according to which some 2,000 tons of barley were available... We asked Herr Mayer to send a copy of the telegraph to us... In his response, Herr Mayer no longer speaks of a telegraph, but instead a phone call with the office in Kaiserslautern."¹⁰⁷ The issue of "dictatorial" management styles also rears its head again, in a later communiqué from the Committee, "Mayer... is of the opinion that the trade group can dictate its allotment decisions to the malthouses without dissent."¹⁰⁸ German officials, including the Minister of Agriculture and Nutrition in the French Zone, pushed back against Mayer's forceful style and especially his commitment to the export business. His intransigence might have endangered a real improvement for German brewers and civilians at a crucial time. The officials' goal for the 1948/49 business year was to have German breweries receive as much of the barley harvest as possible to keep them busy and operating. While the French priority for export had prevented such a policy up to then, the political and economic situation was changing quickly.

¹⁰⁶ Central Committee for Nutrition to M. G., "Betr.: Malzlieferungen nach Berlin," 17 June 1947, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

¹⁰⁷ Central Committee for Nutrition to the State Food Office in the Ministry for Agriculture and Nutrition for the State Government of Rheinland-Pfalz, "Betr.: Restliches Braugersteaufkommen in der Pfalz," 16 June 1948, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

¹⁰⁸ Central Committee for Nutrition to the Minister for Agriculture and Nutrition, State Food Office in the State Government of Rheinland-Pfalz, "Betr.: Schiedsgerichtsverfahren in Sachen Fachabteilung Handelsmälzereien Rheinland-Pfalz, Heidelberg, gegen Malz-Fabrik Mengelbier & Cie., Andernach-Rh., und Malz-Fabrik Bruchsal-Berhausen A.-G., Worms," 5 July 1948, BArch-K, Z 7/175.

By the time all the Brewers' Associations in the French Zone sat down for a meeting in mid-August of 1948, conditions were set for them to expect major improvements to their situation. In June, France had joined with the British and Americans in enacting unified currency reform. The French remained a "recalcitrant" partner on western German unification until spring 1949, but the currency and economic reforms, Marshall Plan, and Berlin Blockade of 1948 made their capitulation to American and British plans increasingly inevitable.¹⁰⁹ When the French Zone brewers met, a report circulated (to the surprise of the Nutrition Committee) that the French military government had approved an increase in beer production for the following year, and, shockingly, had agreed to more than quadruple the malt allocations. Whether this was a false rumor or a premature leak is unclear, but the spirit of the report was accurate. The German Bizonal administration had recently recommended ending brewing restrictions in the British and American sector, and on 15 September the military governments approved the plan.¹¹⁰ Although this change, along with Ludwig Erhard's economic liberalization that accompanied currency reform, signified the beginning of the end for the restrictive regimes that kept brewers fighting and begging with government offices to survive, it did not remove the importance of state power in their quests for competitive advantage.

While West Germany eventually took the "American way" in liberalizing and reprivatizing its economy, its occupation years, drawing continuity from the Third Reich, normalized a close relationship between the government and beer industry.¹¹¹ Beer business leaders proved their adeptness at playing to the needs of the political moment to try to ensure their survival and that of their trade. In doing so, they demonstrated the impressive and flexible

¹⁰⁹ Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 138.

¹¹⁰ Terrell, "The People's Drink," 85.

¹¹¹ Volker Berghahn, *Unternehmer und Politik in der Bundesrepublik* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1985).

utility that their product had to the economic and ideological projects of state leaders, wholly apart from the cultural and social capital that beer started to regain after 1949. With occupying military governments to serve as a perfect foil, German officials accustomed to regulating brewers had to play advocate for them and used many of the same rationales on their behalf. State and central governments in the new Federal Republic struggled to fully extract themselves from that special relationship, and arguably never did. Even after the West German state returned to the more limited roles of taxation and regulation in the brewing industry, it remained easily drawn in anytime German beer became caught up in a major dispute or controversy that might rob the state of taxes, brewers of their jobs, and – most importantly – the people of their drink.

The Soviet Occupation Zone and Czechoslovakia

“Some [SS] officers... simply ran out of time, surprised by the speed of the Red Army. Inside the deserted SS barracks, survivors later found signs of the hasty retreat: glasses filled with beer, half-eaten bowls of soup, board games abandoned midway.”

- Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*¹¹²

“In Budweis/Budějovice, thousands of residents celebrated the twin tidings of August 2 [authorizing the expulsion of Germans] at a demonstration and beer fest three days later.”

- Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*¹¹³

“Several days later I was in Stanislau. I went that evening, it was a humid summer evening, into the city with an acquaintance to have a glass of beer. Near the train station a procession of people

¹¹² Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 558.

¹¹³ King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 196.

came toward us on the street, driven like a herd of cows. We stepped into a side street and saw that they were Jews, meagerly dressed and miserable in appearance. It was some 800 to 1,000 people, who slowly and wearily strode toward their fate.”

- Article in the *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 5 September 1945¹¹⁴

In some ways, the situations in eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia could not have been more different after the collapse of Nazi rule. Painting in broad strokes, on one side of the border between Bohemia and Saxony lived vanquished perpetrators, on the other side victorious victims. In the borderlands of Czechoslovakia, vengeful Czechs and Allied governments drove millions of German speakers from their homes and businesses but only after tens of thousands had died in unauthorized acts of retribution.¹¹⁵ Many of those millions of people ended up in eastern Germany, straining its devastated infrastructure and stretching its depleted resources. North of the Ore and Lusatian mountains, the Red Army unleashed on the civilian population all the fury that four years of brutal warfare and the deaths of tens of millions of their fellow citizens had bred. Even after the initial violence subsided, the official policy of the occupation regime involved extraction, exploitation, and purging the population of Nazism.¹¹⁶ Moscow's military arrived en masse and the last of its troops did not leave until almost five decades later. South of those mountain ranges, Czechs overwhelmingly welcomed the Soviet and American armies as liberating heroes, and violence between troops and Czech civilians was the exception, not the rule. Czech and Slovak citizens who had not actively collaborated with the German occupiers did not have to fear political

¹¹⁴ Alexander Göbel, "Nazimorde in Polen: Bekenntnisse eines 'Politischen Leiters,'" *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 5 September 1945.

¹¹⁵ Bryant, *Prague*, 147.

¹¹⁶ Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany a History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995); Hoffmann, "Germany Is No More," 602.

purges in the early years. Before 1945 ended, Red Army troops withdrew from even major cities in Czechoslovakia.¹¹⁷ Perhaps most importantly, after 9 May a Soviet Military Administration held the highest political authority in eastern Germany and even dedicated Communists had to work to gradually restore governmental power to German hands over the following years. In Czechoslovakia, the National Front government under President Beneš held de jure power in a recognized sovereign state before the guns fell silent.

In other ways crucial to this study, developments in the Czech lands and Soviet Occupation Zone paralleled one another closely and resemble patterns in the western zones of Germany to show the power of beer as a cultural commodity and the complex continuities in the relationship of governments to the beverage and its makers. Every power struggle is unique, but they are still power struggles. The pressures and incentives facing actors in the brewing industries of eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia largely took the same form with different content as those in the American, British, and French Occupation Zones. The one major exception to that rule was the rapid process of property redistribution that took place in areas under Soviet influence. Authorities confiscated businesses on a wide scale and either handed their ownership to “politically reliable” proprietors or placed them under state management. In both cases, a process that started out with a more diverse range of possible outcomes trended toward blanket nationalization and government administration on a state socialist model. Still, it is one of the major contentions of this chapter that the redistributive process changed the “who” but not the “how” of conflicts between and among beer industry actors and government officials. Evidence from the process of confiscation and allocation reveals the same four common strategies detailed above. Weaponized politics, parallel governing bodies, the threat of economic dysfunction, and criminal accusations all served

¹¹⁷ "Aus aller Welt," *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 9 December 1945.

the purposes of prospective new owners, state-appointed managers, factory councils, and government officials. Even after the question of ownership and management was answered, these tactics continued to appear in disputes over organizational structures, resources, and personnel decisions. It hardly needs stating that these developments gave state power deep and thorough control over beer in the future GDR and ČSSR, taking the process begun under the Third Reich to its extreme conclusion. Other continuities appear as well. By the end of this period miniscule beer trade links between Bohemia, Saxony, and Bavaria reappeared and the new socialist governments in the East began to openly acknowledge the unique blend of economic and national cultural import that eventually characterized their policymaking and discourse on the industry.

As the fighting came to an end, conditions augured badly for brewery owners and operators in both regions, though they were certainly worse in Germany. Among the zones, the Soviet occupiers bestowed an exceptionally unfortunate fate on their region. Though the total level of wartime industrial loss, measured statistically, did not match that in the western zones, the East contained cities such as Dresden and Berlin, where the war's final months had produced street by street destruction on a debilitating scale. The disruptions to infrastructure ran wide and deep. Dresden, for example, had only regained about half of its prewar water supply by August 1945.¹¹⁸ The Soviet Red Army then enforced the most punitive and extractive policies of any occupying power. Pending Allied agreement on the future of Germany, the SMAD directed its energies at two goals: punishing and obliterating the power base of those that it considered "most responsible" for Nazism and extracting as much value out of its zone as possible. Keeping the German population alive formed a necessary third priority, but helping the German economy back on its feet did not. The SMAD's treatment of the brewing industry followed its three goals. The

¹¹⁸ "Dresden und Umgebung: Dresdens Wasserversorgung gesichert," *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 17 August 1945.

Communist Party of Germany, whose leaders returned to their homeland on the heels of the Red Army, released an action plan in June of 1945 calling for a coalition government of antifascist parties similar to the National Front in Czechoslovakia.¹¹⁹ It also called for the expropriation of “Nazi big wigs and war criminals” along with “businesses that serve life-sustaining public needs” or were abandoned. The Communists suggested that management be turned over to communal, provincial, or state administration. On 30 October, the SMAD issued Order Nr. 124 confiscating all property that had belonged to the German state, Nazi officials, or groups subsequently banned by the Red Army.¹²⁰

In Czechoslovakia, presidential decrees from Edvard Beneš and local seizures of property in the early postwar months achieved many of the same ends as the SMAD’s policies even as “wild” expulsions of German speakers depopulated the borderlands.¹²¹ On 5 May, a group of workers at the Pilsner Urquell brewery in Plzeň seized control of the property. They established a revolutionary factory council to govern the facility, which they unilaterally declared to be national property against the wishes of the remaining management team.¹²² On 19 May, the provisional government placed all properties belonging to “disloyal” entities and persons under national control.¹²³ By August, the wild expulsions wound down just as the leaders of the Allied powers agreed to “orderly and humane” population transfers from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and other areas of Eastern Europe.¹²⁴ By the end of the month the Minister of Industry announced plans to

¹¹⁹ Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries*, 103.

¹²⁰ "Befehl des Obersten Chefs der Sowjetischen Militärverwaltung, Oberbefehlshaber der Gruppe der Sowjetischen Besatzungstruppen in Deutschland," *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 3 November 1945.

¹²¹ King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 191; K. F., Vice President, LVS, "Regelung des Flüchtlingsproblems in Sachsen: Anordnung über die Lenkung und Betreuung der Flüchtlinge innerhalb des Landgebiets Sachsen," *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 13 July 1945.

¹²² Evžen Vogeltanz, "5. květen 1945 v plzeňském pivovare," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů k.p. Plzeň* č. 4 (April 1985): 1; Evžen Vogeltanz, "Jak úředník 'znárodnil' pivovar," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů k.p. Plzeň* č. 9 (September 1985): 7.

¹²³ King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 192.

¹²⁴ Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 236; King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 196.

nationalize roughly two-thirds of the industrial economy. A follow-up presidential decree brought all large businesses in the food industry under state control, including the remaining large breweries. In the following year, the Czechoslovak government created a centralized state-owned corporation, Czechoslovak Breweries, n.p. (*národní podnik*, “national corporation”), headquartered in Prague to manage the five largest breweries in its territory.¹²⁵ The same centralizing impulse appeared in the Soviet Zone of Germany, where large brewing operations saw sudden shifts in state management that incrementally brought them under more-centralized systems of planning and coordination.¹²⁶

As clean and neat as those processes appear from the birds-eye view contained in the documents of central state offices and secondary literature, the detailed picture painted by local and regional sources looks altogether more chaotic and reveals familiar strategies from actors on the ground. Property redistribution affected the entire supply and retail chain, not just giant breweries. Take, for example, the case of the *Zoske Bierstube* (Beer Pub) in the Friedrichshain district of East Berlin. When the guns fell silent, a man named Dieter Maier owned the pub. Less than three weeks after German surrender, Maier’s wife appeared at the local Department of Trade and Industry to register the business in her name.¹²⁷ At the end of June, the couple received their registration and trade license, but within a month Maier’s NSDAP membership had gained enough attention that interested parties started writing to the district office requesting that the bar be handed over to them on political grounds. Early missives spared little time worrying about Maier’s actual deeds, presuming (correctly) that his political affiliation would suffice to have his property

¹²⁵ V. Majer, Minister of Nutrition to F. H., Director of Czechoslovak Breweries, n.p., “Věc: Celostátní ústřední orgán pro průmysl pivovarský - vydání listiny o zřízení,” SOAP, ČP kr. 1, inv. č 1, 14 September 1946; John Gillespie, “The People’s Drink: The Politics of Beer in East Germany (1945-1971)” (M.A. Thesis, Murfreesboro, TN, MTSU, 2017), 37–38.

¹²⁶ Gillespie, chap. 1.

¹²⁷ Department of Trade and Industry, Friedrichshain Administrative District, Berlin, 28 May 1945, LArch-B, C Rep. 105 Nr. 25023.

seized. “Allow me to apply for the restaurant of Pg. [*Parteigenossen*, “party comrade”] Maier, Warschauer Street 28,” wrote one applicant. “I had a locale but lost it due to enemy activity. I would like to note that I was never in the NSDAP or its organizations and am an invalid due to war injuries.”¹²⁸ The District Work Office put forward another possibility along nearly identical lines. “The antifascist family Kubnick [who lost their own establishment in a bomb attack] have not yet had a locale assigned to them... Zoske’s Bierstube at Warschauer Str. 28 has become available.”¹²⁹ The district administration closed the establishment in September, determined to find a more politically suitable operator. The bureaucrat assigned to handle Maier’s case wrote, “[i]n the course of building a new state, it is not acceptable that we allow former Pg’s to have an influence on the public. Former Pg pub owners offer no guarantee that the establishment will be led in the sense of our current development.”¹³⁰ His language suggests that the intense scrutiny given to pubs later in GDR history by socialist leaders reflected ideas already in circulation among Communist Party members at this early date.¹³¹ More immediate to this chapter, a rival’s past politics appears yet again as a path for business operators to advance their own interests.

Criminal accusations opened another route, and on this count, Maier sealed his own fate. Among the applicants to take over the beer pub on Warschauer Str. was a Frau Eichel, whose tragic tale helped her gain the trusteeship. She had owned a pub during the Third Reich, but Nazi officials forced her to sell it as a result of her husband’s political activities. Her husband spent four years in a concentration camp, and two years after his release a Nazi officer shot him to death during an air

¹²⁸ Willy Pinkenhagen to the Mayor of the Friedrichsheim [*sic*] Administrative District, 24 July 1945, LArch-B, C Rep. 105 Nr. 25023.

¹²⁹ Work Office to the District Office Friedrichshain, Department of Trade and Commerce, 17 August 1945, LArch-B, C Rep. 105 Nr. 25023.

¹³⁰ S., Case Officer and (illegible), Office Head, District Office Friedrichshain Dept. of Economics, Trade, and Commerce, "Stellungnahme: Betrifft: Gastwirtschaft Maier," 27 December 1945, LArch-B, C Rep. 105 Nr. 25023, 1.

¹³¹ Thomas Kochan, *Blauer Würger: So trank die DDR* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2011), 31–32.

raid because of “an exchange of words.” Twice she tried to buy new establishments, but the first was expropriated for the “total war effort” and Allied bombs destroyed the second. In short, she was an ideal “victim of fascism” with relevant experience and sufficient funds to run a pub.¹³² As the district office considered Eichel’s credentials, Maier’s lawyer argued that his client’s Nazi party membership had been purely instrumental, and that he had been a decided antifascist who allowed Communists to gather in his pub and hid them from the Gestapo. He also referred to government statements in the newspapers that “only the most active PGs or profiteers” should face punishment. His arguments failed.¹³³ Frau Eichel received trusteeship over the establishment in February 1946 after the German police arrested Maier and referred him for prosecution. Maier then destroyed whatever hope he may still have had of recovering his position by refusing to give the pub over to Eichel. She had to call on the police to forcibly open the establishment, whereupon they found that Maier had taken everything of value that he could and destroyed the rest out of spite. Maier’s action sealed Eichel’s control over the business. He was forced to “gift” her his establishment. Though not all property transfers proceeded as hectically and destructively as this one example, the clash of interests and motivations are emblematic of the larger forces at play.

The process of nationalization across the brewing and malting industry in Czechoslovakia demonstrates the broad and consistent nature of power struggles in the beer industry. With hindsight, events in the years immediately after 1945 look like the first steps on an inevitable path to total nationalization after the Communist seizure of power in February 1948. That is not, however, how it appeared to actors on the ground at the time. The criteria for expropriation

¹³² M. B. to Mayor’s Office Freidrichshain, Arbitration Commission, "Betrifft: Begründung für die Zuweisung der Gaststätte 'Maier,'" 25 September 1945, LArch-B, C Rep. 105 Nr. 25023, Bl. 34.

¹³³ Dr. K., Mayor’s Attorney, Friedrichshain Administrative District, 29 October 1945, LArch-B, C Rep. 105 Nr. 25023; Dr. K. to the Mayor of the Friedrichshain Administrative District, 29 November 1945, LArch-B, C Rep. 105 Nr. 25023.

sometimes made a case very clear. The largest businesses became state property and those that had been owned by Germans transferred into state management.¹³⁴ In the former Sudetenland and other heavily German areas, no arguments sufficed to avoid the confiscation of eighty-eight beer businesses as “enemy property.”¹³⁵

In the rest of the Republic, the sometimes-vague criteria for confiscation and uncertainty of their application forced beer industry actors to plead their cases for and against expropriation to the central authorities. Different groups appealed to different governmental and political bodies, in yet another clear example of forum shopping. While Czechoslovakia did not have military and civilian governments to pit against each other, it did have a powerful Communist Party with an agenda often at odds with the National Front government.¹³⁶ Factory-level workers’ councils and Communist Party organizations sent letters to the Minister of Nutrition, a Social Democrat who had final authority over nationalization in the brewing industry, but simultaneously dispatched petitions to other powerful bodies including a Beer and Liquor Industry Subcommittee in the Communist Party Central Committee.¹³⁷ In some cases, petitioners got the outcome they had hoped for, in others the Subcommittee could not help, but either way it made sense to try. The Communist Party had the most power in the national government, including control over the Ministry of Agriculture and, after July 1946, Ministry of Finance. Both organs consulted on

¹³⁴ Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, 215.; V. Majer, Minister of Nutrition to F. H., Director of Czechoslovak Breweries, n.p., "Věc: Celostátní ústřední orgán pro průmysl pivovarský - vydání listiny o zřízení," SOAP, ČP kr. 1, inv. č 1, 14 September 1946; *Úřední list republiky československé*, Part 170, 21 September 1946.

¹³⁵ Joza, 215.

¹³⁶ National Economic Subcommittee, ÚV-KSČ to Factory Council of the First Prague Citizen's Brewery, "Zestátnění Vašeho pivovaru," 5 December 1945, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219;

¹³⁷ Director and Chairman of the Prague Main Office of Villages, Towns, and Counties in the Czech lands to the Parliamentary Club of the KSČ, 25 March 1947, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219; "Seznam likérnických a octárenských konfistáů, jež mají býti odevzdány čsl.průmyslu lihovarnickému a dožďarenskému NP v Praze a to dle návrhu ministerstva výživy čj. 51418/V ze dne 16. června 1947," 16 June 1947, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219; Message (from the NHK?) to Dr. S., Cabinet Member, Ministry of Domestic Trade, "Stanovisko k přípisu č.j. 10.323," 30 October 1947, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219.

nationalizations in the food industries.¹³⁸ Whatever their effect, the letters to the Beer and Liquor Subcommittee show, by their mere existence, efforts to use the power of the Communist Party as leverage against the national government. They also show political and economic appeals in their rawest, or perhaps most calculated, form.

President Beneš' early expropriation decrees did not specify what was to become of confiscated businesses, leaving most of those decisions in the hands of local and regional authorities. Workers' factory organizations that had sprung up in the wake of liberation seized on those criteria and added as many Communist credentials as they could in their appeals to the Beer and Liquor Subcommittee. The first such letter in the group's files puts this on display. "Our brewery," wrote the representatives of one factory council in the Moravian town of Vsetín,

which was formerly German, is now under national management... We have written to the Minister of Nutrition requesting to form a cooperative... We have learned that both the town and the state government are applying for control of this brewery... Most of our employees have worked here for 20-25 years and know the brewery well, therefore they would like to invest their savings in the business... Our employees have organized themselves, two-thirds have joined the KSČ and all are union members.¹³⁹

In another letter one month later the factory council of the First Citizen's Brewery in Prague wrote that the employees had unanimously approved a resolution calling for the nationalization of the plant. Here too, the brewery already operated under national management but had not been officially expropriated. The workers' representatives sought to head off any arguments that the shareholders might suffer hardship from the loss of their property. According to the letter, those

¹³⁸ "77. Vládní nařízení ze dne 9. dubna 1946," *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení republiky Československé*, Part 38, SOAP, ČP kr. 1, inv. č 2, 2 May 1946.

¹³⁹ Thonetova Brewing Company in Vsetín to the National Economic Subcommittee, 17 October 1945, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219.

owners were a group of families who had already doubled their initial investment from dividend payments over the years. They were no “smalltime shareholders,” and could hardly claim to be “harmed in their property” by confiscation. Moreover, these employers had treated their workers terribly and resisted any effort to improve conditions. They ran the entire operation by “tight private-capitalist” methods, “only focused on the profits of the shareholders.” “In consideration of these reasons,” they concluded, “and considering that there were members of the board of directors who supported the Germans during the occupation, cooperated with them, and have been sitting in prison since May, national management was introduced with the hope that the old conditions would never return.” Only full expropriation could guarantee that.¹⁴⁰

In some cases, factory councils made militant *Realpolitik* pitches to the Communist Party, arguing for the need to have party organizations strategically located and in control of vital infrastructure. “We are the only business in Chrudim where all the workers are in the factory Communist organization,” wrote one distillery requesting to be kept open. “We think that such a factory is useful for party purposes, since Chrudim and its surroundings were predominantly under the power of the [now banned] Agrarian Party.”¹⁴¹ In the town of Rakovník to the west of Prague a brewery’s Communist factory organization wrote to the Subcommittee requesting support for nationalization “out of the most serious economic reasons.” The state had placed the business under national management and slated it for nationalization due to its critical role in the town’s power grid. As with many larger beer producers, the facility had its own powerplant. The brewery had supplied Rakovník’s electricity and managed the town’s gas infrastructure since the mid-1930s, a convenient public/private hybrid system. Now, however, the former managers were

¹⁴⁰ Factory Council of the First Prague Citizen's Brewery to the National Economic Subcommittee, "resoluci," 23 November 1945, NArch-C, KSC-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219, 2.

¹⁴¹ Factory Council and Factory KSC Organization of the Chrudim Distillery, n.p., 21 February 1946, NArch-C, KSC-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219.

scheming with the local National Socialist Party to declare the powerplant as sole property of the brewery, not public infrastructure, and thus remove the legal basis for nationalization. The brewery's Communists pleaded with the Subcommittee to help them foil this plot, which defied the interests of the local citizens, the "unanimous" will of the employees, and even the intentions of the Minister of Nutrition.¹⁴²

For all the anti-German sentiment that jumps out of the letters written to the Subcommittee, there is noticeably less concern for "victims of fascism" than there was in the Maier/Eichel case in East Germany. There appears, as well, limited sympathy for Jewish business owners or shareholders persecuted by the Nazis.¹⁴³ Beer industry businesses had quickly fallen in line with Nazi racial policies after the 1938 Munich Agreement. Even before Hitler summoned Czechoslovak president Emil Hácha to Berlin to inform him that his country would be occupied in March 1939, the Pilsner Urquell brewery had removed all "non-Aryan" members from its Board of Directors. The new Protectorate government "aryanized" all ownership shares immediately following the occupation.¹⁴⁴ Žatec/Saaz, a town in northern Bohemia whose name is synonymous with some of the most coveted hops in the world, had around 1,000 Jewish residents before the Munich Agreement. Many of those families had built successful businesses as hop merchants, but their town lay on the wrong side of the new border created at Munich in 1938. In short succession one of the most renowned products of Bohemia saw many of its most prominent trading houses expropriated and transferred into German ownership.¹⁴⁵ Jewish proprietors and operators played a

¹⁴² Factory Organization of the Rakovnický Brewery and Malthouse to the Kladno District KSČ Economic Commission, 2 May 1946, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219.

¹⁴³ Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, n.d.), 159.

¹⁴⁴ Skála, *Dějiny Města Plzně, Vol. 3 1918 - 1990*, 527.

¹⁴⁵ Fischer interview, Nov. 24, 1997; Englová interview, Jul. 18, 1996; Brown, *Miracle Brew*, 120.

minimal role in the postwar power struggles over brewery ownership, however, reflecting how thoroughly the Nazis had decimated the Czechoslovak Jewish community.

Multiple distillery factory councils writing to the Beer and Liquor Subcommittee mentioned Jewish former business owners, almost exclusively with the purpose of denying their status as victims of Nazism and undercutting their restitution claims. Employee representatives at the Beer Brothers' Distillery in Prague wrote to the Subcommittee in October 1946 to counter the arguments of the firm's former owners that they had lost the business due to aryanization, which would warrant restitution. According to the factory council, the original owners had been in England at the time of the German occupation and thus, "beyond the power of the occupiers." They were not forced to sell their business "under pressure of persecution," but had done so voluntarily via their attorney in Prague before aryanization took place.¹⁴⁶ As dubious as that argument may be, it is sympathetic compared to that put forward by the factory council and trade union leadership at the Tilgner and Co. Distillery in Opava. The city approved a restitution request from Erika Fingerová (nee Lichtwitz), daughter of former owner Alfred Lichtwitz. The employee leaders complained that the restitution dossier "only talks about Arnošt and Alfred Lichtwitz as Jews, who were persecuted by the Germans." But they themselves had been ardent Germans, only employed Germans in high positions, and socialized their daughter entirely in German circles. "Of Mrs. Fingerová (nee Lichtwitz), the daughter of Alfred Lichtwitz, it is generally known that she behaved as purely German... even up to and during the period when the state was under threat in 1938."¹⁴⁷ The workers' representatives claimed that the Lichtwitz family should not be treated as

¹⁴⁶ Factory Council of the Beer Brother's Distillery to the National Central Committee, "Věc: Konfiskace podniku fy Bratří Beerové, Praha VII., Tusarova 41," 1 October 1946, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219. 150250

¹⁴⁷ V., Factory Trade Union Organization, ROH and L. J., Factory Council of the Tilgner and Co. Distillery to the Economic Commission, ROH in Opava, "Věc: Protest proti restituci fy. nár. spr. Tilgner a spol., tov.jedmných likérů, výroba octa a šťav, Opava - Sadová 44," 27 February 1947, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219.

Jews, because in reality they were Germans.¹⁴⁸ They almost certainly knew when they wrote this that Alfred Lichtwitz had paid the highest price for his identity. Nazi authorities ordered him sent to Terezín in January 1942. Three months later they deported him to a ghetto in Zamość, Poland, where he was murdered later that year along with thousands of other Jewish residents.¹⁴⁹

German breweries, including some prominent ones in the Soviet Zone, had to confront their earlier support for the Nazi war effort and possible involvement in crimes against humanity. Hardly any important businesses in the Third Reich could deny the former and few major industries were totally disconnected from the latter. In July 1945, criminal police in the town of Radeberg uncovered mass graves at a former “work education camp” that provided labor to the Sachsenwerk industrial plant.¹⁵⁰ It is unclear if this same camp provided the “foreign and POW” labor that reportedly worked at the nearby Radeberger Export Beer Brewery, but in May 1946 Mayor Paul Brückner reported in a letter to the Economic and Labor Department of the Dresden District Administrative Office that the brewery had employed sixty to seventy prisoners of war and foreigners, who “to some extent were treated badly and beaten.”¹⁵¹ This accorded with an eyewitness affidavit that stated a man named Krause (referred to as the *Lagerführer* or “camp leader”) had beaten prisoners.¹⁵² Another affidavit reported that Krause himself claimed to have caught prisoners stealing potatoes out of hunger, at which point he threw them on the ground and

¹⁴⁸ Antisemitism, both official and popular, in postwar Czechoslovakia has been well documented, including in the immediate days after the war ended, see Bryant, *Prague*, 53–54, 148, ch.4; the question of property restitution is more complicated, however, the postwar Czechoslovak government did better than some of its neighbors in terms of Jewish organizations as legal heirs to the communities destroyed by the Nazis and their allies, see Jacob Ari Labendz, “Synagogues for sale: Jewish-State mutuality in the communist Czech lands, 1945-1970,” *Jewish Culture and History* 18, no. 1 (2017): 54-78.

¹⁴⁹ “April 1942, Deportation of Jews from Zamosc, Poland to the Belzec death camp,” Yad Vashem, <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/this-month/april/1942-2.html>; “Alfred Lichtwitz,” Institut Terezinské iniciativy, <https://www.holocaust.cz/en/database-of-victims/victim/105871-alfred-lichtwitz/>.

¹⁵⁰ H.Z., “Tote klagen den Faschismus an: Zu den Mordtaten in Radeberg,” *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 24 July 1945.

¹⁵¹ Mayor Brückner of Radeberg to Economics and Trade Division of the Dresden District Administrative Office, “Betrifft: Befehl Nr. 124 hier: Radeberger Exportbierbrauerei,” 27 May 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141, B. 7.

¹⁵² L. B., “Eidesstattliche Bestätigung,” 27 May 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141, B. 8.

made the prisoners clean them up.¹⁵³ In a separate document, a brewery representative confirmed that the business had employed foreign laborers to make dried potato cutlets. Two such workers had been sent to the coal mines in Hirschfelde in punishment for an unnamed offence, and “individual [foreign workers] were beaten.”¹⁵⁴ Beyond the case of Radeberger, at least two other facilities, one brewery and one malthouse in the Leipzig area, used foreign workers from France, Czechoslovakia, and Poland during the war, suggesting a more widespread practice.¹⁵⁵

The files dealing with Radeberger make clear how claims of past Nazi affiliation and proximity to war crimes dominated conversations about business leadership among officials carrying out the denazification and expropriation process. These disputes determined power and ownership throughout the beer supply and retail chain. According to the director of a Dresden area bank, Radeberger had come under attack in 1933 as a “Jewish Brewery.” It received this designation because the German-Jewish Arnhold Brothers’ Bank controlled the capital stock. Radeberger’s then-director and several members of its board also counted as “non-Aryan” by Nazi racial categorization.¹⁵⁶ By 1935, the increasingly oppressive situation for Jews in Germany forced the Arnholds to give up their bank in Dresden, and with it the brewery. The records do not explicitly state when the “non-Aryan” brewery director and board members were forced out of their positions, but after the war the authorities tasked with denazifying Radeberger felt an understandable suspicion toward anyone who had managed to stay in a position of authority

¹⁵³ O. F., “Eidesstattliche Bestätigung,” 27 May 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141, B. 9.

¹⁵⁴ F., Representative (Obmann), “Firma Radeberger Exportbierbrauerei Radeberg G.m.b.H.,” 3 April 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141, B. 12.

¹⁵⁵ S., Head of Internal Matters and Stamps, County Archivist, Leipzig County Council, “Ergänzung zum Ministerratsbeschuß vom 28.6.1964 aus Wirtschaftsarchiven unseres Bezirkes Leipzig zur Dokumentation,” 4 April 1966, SSta-L, 20968 Nr. 264, Bl. 16; S., Head of Internal Matters and Stamps, County Archivist, Leipzig County Council, “Ergänzung zum Ministerratsbeschuß vom 28.6.1964 aus Wirtschaftsarchiven unseres Bezirkes Leipzig zur Dokumentation,” 4 April 1966, SSta-L, 20968 Nr. 264, Bl. 17.

¹⁵⁶ Dr. R. R., Esq., Bank Director, Finance and Tax Division, LVS, “Bescheinigung,” 22 October 1945, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3068, B. 11.

during the Nazi years. As a result of their inquiries, the investigating officials received the typical flurry of self-exonerations and witness statements attesting to the antifascist commitments of suspected individuals. The brewery had a three-person managerial board in May 1945. One, the brewery's director of operations, died that month as a result of injuries sustained during a bomb attack while he was either on vacation or fleeing the Red Army, depending on the source.¹⁵⁷ Another, sales manager E. H., admitted to having been an "inactive, ununiformed" member of the National Socialist Motor Corps, but claimed to have never attended any events and been kicked out in 1942 due to a "lack of interest" in his membership on the organization's part. He also provided nine affidavits or statements from colleagues and acquaintances confirming his complete noninvolvement with Nazism and personal antipathy to the Party.¹⁵⁸

The fate of the third Radeberger executive, Karl Werner, shows how a brewery leader might navigate an inquiry into his political past, but also how government administrators' attention gradually shifted from the Nazi era to more present-focused political and economic concerns in eastern Germany over the course of 1946-1947. Werner started out in a difficult position. Records showed an application to join the NSDAP in 1933, a black mark for one of the most powerful people in a prominent business. In his sworn statement of October 29, 1945, Werner did not deny the application, but had a credible story to tell. He had joined Radeberger's executive board in 1931. Already at that time the Nazi movement had a powerful influence in Saxony. They had taken second place in the 1930 Reichstag elections with 18 percent of the vote statewide, including 16 percent in the district containing Dresden and Radeberg. In the following

¹⁵⁷ Inquiry Commission Radeberg for SMA Order Nr. 124, Office of the Economy, Radeberg, "Fa. Exportbierbrauerei, Radeberg. Begründung zur Beschlagnahme auf Grund des Befehls Nr. 124 der SMA," 8 February 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141; Brückner to Division of Economics and Work, State Council of Dresden County, "Radeberger Exportbierbrauerei," 23 January 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141.

¹⁵⁸ E. H., Member of the Radeberger Export Beer Brewery, A.G. Board of Directors to the Dresden City Council Office of Business Restructuring, "Betr: Betriebsüberprüfung," 6 November 1945, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3068, Bl. 7.

years they gained tremendous power on their way to winning 41 percent of the vote in the July 1932 election.¹⁵⁹ Werner, therefore, could not afford to ignore public attacks on him by Nazi agitators, who claimed that he was a Jew and represented the “finance capital” of the Arnholds. There is a kind of realistic honesty in Werner’s postwar recounting of that moment. He did not claim to have been a brave opponent of Nazism or spoken out against antisemitism, as so many of his compatriots stated that they “privately” did. Werner simply said that he went to the local Nazi group office in Chemnitz and denied being a Jew. He requested that the attacks on his person be retracted, an appeal denied by the unnamed Nazi functionary in his story. Instead, the NSDAP representative suggested that Werner join the Party, at which point the attacks would stop. He refused.¹⁶⁰

After the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, a high-ranking local Nazi official told a member of the brewery’s executive board that the Party had evidence of Werner’s “anti-national socialist disposition.” The exact details of how Werner avoided persecution under the Nazis yet kept his reputation clean enough to survive postwar political cleansing demonstrates how much a nimble sense of social identity, and a degree of luck, could help industry leaders to deal with their past. It also shows how transnational connections between Saxony and Czechoslovakia could play a role. As Werner later explained,

[the Nazi functionary] said I was a Jew, at least a half-Jew, but in any case, a friend of the Jews. They had confirmed that I lived for a long time with a Jewish family and kept company with them. I was a subscriber to the *Berliner Tageblatt* and had supposedly

¹⁵⁹ Wahlen in Deutschland, “Weimarer Republik 1918-1933, Reichstagswahlen, Sachsen,” Last updated 23 July 2015, <https://www.wahlen-in-deutschland.de/wusachsen.htm>, [accessed 28 December 2022].

¹⁶⁰ R. H., “Eidesstattliche Erklärung,” 28 October 1945, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3068, B. 4-5.

forbidden a National Socialist cell leader from wearing his uniform while on duty. That was also true.¹⁶¹

To keep his post, Werner said he had consulted with a member of the Arnhold family and the then-director of Radeberger, both Jews, and they decided that he should join the Party. He applied, but his application repeatedly got flagged for insufficient evidence of his “Aryan” racial status. His wife’s father was a “full Jew” from Czechoslovakia, which would have resulted in his dismissal from the brewery after 1935 if the Nazi authorities had been able to confirm it. Luckily, Czechoslovak officials sabotaged requests for information about Werner’s father-in-law, which kept the matter in limbo. He remained an applicant, but not a party member, from 1933 until early 1939.¹⁶²

After Germany occupied the Czech lands, the Nazi Party fully denied Werner’s application for membership on the grounds that his wife was a “half-Jew.” Werner argued and appealed, delaying further action as long as he could. In Fall 1944 he received a conscription notice into *Organisation Todt* justified by his wife’s racial status. He again appealed his case until, on 13 February 1945, the massive Allied bombing raid on Dresden left the local Nazi Party headquarters, with all the paperwork on Werner’s case, “reduced to ashes.” Summarizing neatly, Werner claimed that: 1. He was never actually a member of the NSDAP; 2. his application resulted from a request by his Jewish colleagues; and 3. he had never been a fascist and was a “strong opponent” of the NSDAP “because of persecutions resulting from the Nuremberg Laws.”¹⁶³ Werner’s self-exculpation is unusual for its overwhelming focus on his own personal treatment by the Nazi Party. It lacks the typical ideological rhetoric of yearning for democracy or

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 5.

socialism. The man was a blunt and straightforward (perhaps imprudent) character, as would soon become clear to officials who had to deal with him. For the time being, however, his story allowed him to keep his post. On 2 January 1946 the Office of Business Reorganization in the city council of Dresden declared “no political concerns” about him.¹⁶⁴

Still, Werner’s association with the brewery’s Nazi-era management continued to cause him trouble even as he took on greater power and began to clash with both German and Soviet government officials over control of Radeberger and its properties. His newfound authority resulted from the death of the only other surviving board member in December 1945. Radeberger suddenly found itself with a one-person executive. The city council of Dresden, where the brewery’s management offices were located, also named Werner as trustee for the firm’s confiscated ownership stock that same month.¹⁶⁵ In effect, Karl Werner now both owned and managed the most prominent brewery in the Soviet Zone, albeit on behalf of the city of Dresden. The mayor of Radeberg, Paul Brückner, reacted strongly against the move, pointing out that the firm’s main production site lay in Radeberg, not Dresden.¹⁶⁶ Brückner feared that the Dresden city council would use its geographical control over the firm’s headquarters to claim total ownership and all profits from the business.¹⁶⁷

The town and city fought over this important resource like feudal principalities over a disputed plot of land, but if it was a dispute between rival lords, it had decidedly modern political overtones. Brückner had deep antipathy toward Werner, who he repeatedly rejected as a potential

¹⁶⁴ R. H., to Office of Business Restructuring, LVS, "Befehl Nr. 124 der SMA," 4 February 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3068, B. 44.

¹⁶⁵ R. H., to Office of Business Restructuring, Dresden City Council, "Befehl Nr. 124 der SMA / Bestellung von Prokuristen," 21 January 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3068, B. 24-25.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ Similar dynamics played out across the Soviet Zone, see Dr. K. and Dr. S., Central Administration of State-Owned Businesses in Saxony to the Industrial Administration 59: Breweries, “Betr.: Beschlagnahme der Niederlage Senftenberg der Brauerei zum Felsenkeller Dresden,” 16 June 1947, HsArch-S, 11572, Nr. 71.

trustee and later described as “not capable of mustering the necessary social understanding for the current time.”¹⁶⁸ One of his primary complaints came from his discovery that Werner had continued paying “widow money” to the wife of the brewery’s deceased Nazi-era director, a man Brückner acknowledged was not a Nazi but still considered “one of the worst reactionaries and imperialists.”¹⁶⁹ But, Dresden managed to secure the capital shares, and they named Werner as trustee, so the mayor of Radeberg sought to split the businesses and place the Radeberg site under his town’s management. Werner and the brewery leaders in Radeberg panicked at this suggestion. They understood how deeply interwoven the operations were. Brewery leaders in Radeberg told Brückner that “a separation of the two breweries would bring a catastrophic decline.”¹⁷⁰ Brückner’s primary concern was to keep the business’s economic value in his town, so destroying it would hardly achieve his goals. Instead, he appealed to have the firm taken over by the state administration of Saxony, removing the problem by pushing it up to a higher authority.¹⁷¹ Once again, industry leaders had reached for their expertise and the threat of greater economic dysfunction to parry the political machinations of an opposing party.

Brückner, a Communist, had multiple tools for getting rid of business leaders he did not like, or at least keeping them out of his orbit. After the mayor’s request for the state administration to step in, Werner wrote to them and shot for the moon, asking not only that the full business be kept together, but that the confiscation by the city of Dresden be undone and that he be named trustee for the entire corporation pending a final decision by the state.¹⁷² He got half

¹⁶⁸ Brückner to Economics and Trade Division of the State Council Office in Dresden, 1 August 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141.

¹⁶⁹ Brückner to Division of Economics and Work, State Council of Dresden County, "Radeberger Exportbierbrauerei," 23 January 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141.

¹⁷⁰ Brückner, “Aktennotiz,” 1 February 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141, B. 24.

¹⁷¹ R.H. to the Office for Business Reorientation, LVS "Befehln Nr. 124 der SMA," 4 February 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3068, B. 43.

¹⁷² R.H. to LVS, 4 February 1946.

of his wish, temporarily. The authorities kept the beer company intact and Werner remained on the executive committee until August 1946. His exact powers in that position become unclear, however, as county-level officials granted both the directorship and trusteeship of the Radeberger facility to other figures, and Brückner continued to firmly oppose any additional responsibility for Werner. He painted the man as an unreformable capitalist, and opponent of the new political administration, and a man of “sneaky dexterity.”¹⁷³ At any rate, on 30 June 1946 the state of Saxony held a referendum on the expropriation of properties belonging to “war- and Nazi-criminals,” which overwhelmingly passed.¹⁷⁴ This official transfer of ownership for Radeberger and fifteen other Saxon breweries into the hands of the “people” (represented by the State of Saxony) solved the trusteeship question. It also caused a reorganization of management structures in the industry to accommodate the creation of the centralized *Industrieverwaltung 59 – Brauereien*; (Industry Administration Nr. 59: Breweries; hereafter Brewery Administration) under the Central Administration of State-Owned Businesses.¹⁷⁵

Whether Brückner’s attacks on him had their intended effect or not, Werner disappears from the records dealing with Radeberger in August 1946, only to reappear in the files of the Brewery Administration in December, as director of operations at Dresden’s Felsenkeller Brewery taking part in a “preliminary expert panel” of brewery leaders in the city.¹⁷⁶ Despite having served in a high position under the Third Reich, having applied to join the NSDAP, and

¹⁷³ Brückner to Economics and Trade Division of the State Council Office in Dresden, 1 August 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141.

¹⁷⁴ Dr. U., Vice President and S., Secretary in the Justice Department of the Saxony State Administration, “Betrifft: Berichtigung der gerichtlichen Register und Grundbücher auf Grund des Volksentscheids,” 1 October 1946, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

¹⁷⁵ “Bericht über die 4. Verwaltungsratsitzung der Industrieverwaltung 59 – Brauereien – am 15. November 1946 in der Brauerei zum Felsenkeller Dresden,” 15 November 1946, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

¹⁷⁶ “Niederschrift über die Sitzung des vorläufigen Fachausschusses für Brauereien und Mälzereien am 10. Dezember 1946, 10,30 Uhr, im Sitzungszimmer der Industrie- und Handelskammer für das Bundesland Sachsen, Dresden-A 20, August-Bebel-Str. 46,” 10 December 1946, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

taking heavy fire from a prominent Communist leader for his politics and character, Werner merely moved from one leadership position to another. He had a credible story to rebut attacks on his political past. He clearly enjoyed support from the Dresden city council. And, though it is not stated in the records, circumstantial evidence suggests that Werner's experience in brewery management made him economically hard to dismiss. Good administrators were in short supply in postwar Germany. Of the five men who served as either director of production or trustees for Radeberger between 8 May 1945 and 8 May 1946, three died, and one was Werner.¹⁷⁷

Werner lost none of his confidence in his new role. His pugilistic style and willingness to directly challenge the Soviet military administration (much as he had fought the Nazi administration) jump off the page, as does his ability to use his area expertise to make strong economic arguments on behalf of the beer industry. One of the early debates that he took part in involved the need for bittering materials to make beer. The hop supply available to East German breweries did not come close to meeting their needs. Saxony had approximately 61.5 tons available.¹⁷⁸ For comparison, Bavaria in 1945 produced a little over 3,858 tons.¹⁷⁹ To bridge the gap, brewery leaders from across the Zone had met in Berlin and agreed to use a vaguely-named "bittering compound" in significant quantities. The expert panel hoped that in three or four years the hop supply would recover and make this unnecessary. Werner, quick to question the motives of the occupying power, "argued for the need to make clear to the responsible officials that beer cannot be brewed solely with bittering compounds in order to avoid the risk that the Soviet authorities could curtail [*drosseln*] the use of hops entirely."¹⁸⁰ He had good reason to worry.

¹⁷⁷ H. to Office for Business Reorientation, 4 February 1946; Comptroller of Radeberger Exportbierbrauerei A.G., "Betriebsbogen für die Charakterisierung der durch den Volksentscheid landeseigen gewordenen Unternehmen," 30 June 1946, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 3141.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷⁹ Bavarian State Minister for Food and Agriculture to State Minister for Education and Welfare, 10 November 1945, 2.

¹⁸⁰ "Niederschrift," 10 December 1946, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

The hop shortage drove brewers in eastern Germany to actions increasingly out of favor with Soviet officials, as they tried to continue buying hops from their two traditional source regions. Unfortunately, those regions were Bohemia and Bavaria. Any trade across those borders now required either breaking the law or coordinating a highly complex bureaucratic process to get the necessary approval from multiple government agencies in each territory. Cross-border trade with Czechoslovak hop growers took place through the black market and served small, private breweries under less state scrutiny. Attempts to barter for hop deliveries from Bavaria failed when Saxon officials dragged their feet. The frustration and impatience on the part of Saxon brewers is apparent from the records, but it was only the tip of the iceberg in their difficulties with the government.¹⁸¹

As Werner suspected, Soviet leaders had little interest in helping the German brewing industry. While the day-to-day details of economic administration in non-vital industries fell to German officials, negotiations with the SMAD still took place constantly because the occupying power tightly controlled access to key resources, including coal and grain.¹⁸² Those conversations reveal a stark contrast between the expectations of German beer industry leaders and the interests of Soviet officials. At one “chance encounter” in April 1947 the head of the Brewery Administration reported “the negotiations [to get more coal] with engineer [Viadosow of the SMAD] proceeded fruitlessly... Viadosow is of the opinion that it would suffice to have one brewery in each city for the supply of the population.”¹⁸³ At another meeting later that month

¹⁸¹ "Reisebericht aus der amerikanischen Zone des kaufm. Direktors der Industrieverwaltung 59," 12 February 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74; Portion of expert panel meeting missing title page, n.d. [attached to document dated 12 February 1947], HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

¹⁸² Ciesla Burghard, “Winner Take All: The Soviet Union and the Beginning of Central Planning in East Germany, 1945-1949,” in *The East German Economy, 1945-2010: Falling Behind or Catching Up?* eds. Harmut Berghoff and Uta Andrea Balbier (Washington D.C.: German Historical Institute, 2013), 74; Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, ch. 1.

¹⁸³ "Aktenvermerk, Betrifft: Am 11. April 1947 stattgefundenen Besprechung in der Landesregierung Sachsen," 11 April 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

the language appears clearer and more permanent. Again in the context of insufficient coal supplies, the head of the Administration stated, “the Russian officer Viadosow is, in any case, of the opinion that there should only be one brewery in each city.”¹⁸⁴ The lack of respect or care for beer businesses in their zone extended to the Soviet military leadership’s failures to instill any kind of discipline in their troops’ treatment of the brewing industry. As already mentioned above, by Fall 1946 the Brewery Administration reported that multiple violent incidents had occurred when Red Army soldiers appeared at breweries demanding beer without authorization. That was the worst, but not the only problem brewers dealt with from Soviet personnel in eastern Germany. In April 1947, Werner wrote to the state government of Saxony asking them to intervene with the SMAD to ensure that the Red Army return its empty beer bottles to the breweries. This mundane issue caused endless headaches for the brewing industry in the Soviet Zone and later in the GDR, as planned economies counted on reusing bottles to avoid wasting resources. At this early stage, Werner made it clear that the breweries could not meet their obligations to supply beer to the Soviet troops if they did not return the empties.¹⁸⁵ Considering that soldiers with guns might turn up to confiscate whatever beer they did not get, it is unclear what impact Werner’s threat could have, but he proved more than willing to fight with almost anyone on behalf of his industry, and himself.

The now-director of operations at the Felsenkeller brewery joined a chorus of German voices from across the occupation zones (and Czechs to the South) pushing arguments for the nutritional utility and economic value of breweries in times of need. In March 1947, Werner

¹⁸⁴ "Protokoll über die Branchenkonferenz am 23. April 1947 der Industrieverwaltungen 59 und 60 in den Räumen der I.V. 59, Dresden - A. 27, Am Eiswurmlager," 23 April 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

¹⁸⁵ R. H. to the Industry and Trade Office, LRS, 25 April 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 71.

wrote to the brewery area specialist in the Saxon State Government to decry the planned reduction in coal allotments. By now, his arguments will look familiar.

The consequences will not only be that the breweries must operate at a loss due to insufficient utilization of their capacity and that they will have to lay off employees, but also that the beer tax income, which plays a not insignificant role in the budget, will not achieve anywhere close to its prescribed amount... Moreover, I see it as my duty in my capacity as the Saxon brewing industry's contact with the state government to point out that there is a risk to the population's health if an insurmountable shortage in the beverage supply arises.¹⁸⁶

With insufficient clean drinking water, milk, juices, wine, and lemonade to meet all needs, beer production took on a vital role in the food supply. Werner requested that the state government classify beer as a foodstuff (*Lebensmittel*) rather than a *Genussmittel* so that breweries could receive the same supply priority as bakeries and dairies.¹⁸⁷

He had good reason to think that officials might receive these points favorably. Functionaries in the state government did see concrete value in beer, and not just for the reasons Werner suggested. They also recognized the potential of their region's premiere brewery to generate hard currency revenue with export shipments. In March 1947 the Leipzig Trade Fair returned to its traditional twice-yearly schedule and Radeberger representatives received permission to present their Pilsner to visitors.¹⁸⁸ The fair served to display the recovery of the Soviet Zone economy, but also as a space to negotiate delivery contracts, and exports were the

¹⁸⁶ R. H. to Brewery Department, LRS, "Betr.: Die physiologische Bedeutung des Bieres im Sommer," 17 March 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 71.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ SZ, 11 August 1946; "Niederschrift über die am 20.2.1947 in den Felsenkeller-Gaststätten Dresden-Plauen stattgefundenen Betriebsleitertagung," 20 February 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

number one objective. All effort was to be made to secure contracts with “countries strong in hard currency” such as the Nordic states, Switzerland, and the USA. England ranked as a second preference. Interestingly, third preference went to the western occupation zones of Germany.¹⁸⁹ Radeberger proved its value at Leipzig, signing RM 10.5 million in foreign contracts.¹⁹⁰ Even at this early stage, German officials in the East recognized what they had in their premier beer producers, opening the door for industry advocates to use profitability as a pillar of support.

Playing the economy card without a good sense of politics, however, did not serve industry leaders well. Werner’s arguments sometimes crossed the line. Mayor Brückner may have been right that the brewery executive lacked “social understanding for the current time” as he clearly struggled to adjust his business mind to the Soviet Zone. In another missive, this time to the Brewery Administration, Werner continued to speak about the Felsenkeller Brewery as if it were only natural that it should put its own business interests first and try to expand, even within the new organizational structure of state ownership and administration. He fought redistribution of the brewery’s former properties and suggested that any losses should be compensated. The Brewery Administration official who received the letter underlined multiple passages and scribbled sharp rebukes in the margin. To the claim that Felsenkeller had a responsibility to grow its value he wrote, “no, the Brewery Administration does that” (underline in original). Worse, when Werner wrote that Felsenkeller needed a compensatory property for those it had lost, the official wrote “monopoly-capitalistic thinking is to be rejected!”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ "Niederschrift über die Branchenkonferenz der Industrieverwaltung 59 und 60 in der Felsenkeller-Gaststätte Dresden, am 25.2.1947, Beginn 10 Uhr," 25 February 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

¹⁹⁰ "Niederschrift über die 3. Branchenkonferenz der Industrieverwaltung 59 und 60 in der Felsenkeller-Gaststätte Dresden am 25. März 1947, Beginn gegen 1030 Uhr.," 25 March 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

¹⁹¹ R. H. to Industry Management Group 59 - Breweries - LRS, "Betr.: Brauerei Reisewitz," 24 April 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 71.

Despite the admonitions, Werner proceeded in his unabashed style, which may explain why he became the target of corruption accusations in the Spring of 1948. As with the Schreier case in the British Zone, the chaotic early postwar years made claims of side-dealing quite believable. It also made accusations harder to definitively prove or disprove, leaving an air of general suspicion. In April 1947, the head of the Grenzquell Brewery in Wernesgrün, Saxony accused Werner of using his advisory position to the Brewery Administration to intentionally undermine Grenzquell. Simultaneously, a rumor reached the Brewery Administration that Werner had presented himself as the “General Director of the State-Owned Brewery Cooperative” at a local Dresden pensioners’ organization. Werner reacted to both claims with opprobrium, demanding an investigation to clear his name in the first case and dismissing the second as an obvious falsification (there was, after all, no such thing as the State-Owned Brewery Cooperative).¹⁹² Unlike the Schreier case, however, these accusations dissipated quickly when challenged and no official investigation ensued. The Grenzquell leadership claimed to have never filed a complaint, even though Werner had it on good authority that someone there had cast aspersions on him with “high positions in the government or Party” in Berlin. Whatever the real story was, Werner’s response to the mere suggestion of impropriety speaks to the fact that he felt vulnerable to such an attack. Whatever his opponents threw at him, he managed to hold on at least until yet another major reorganization of the brewing industry in early 1948 pushed his story out of the archival records.

The Beer Zone at the Dawn of the Cold War

“... nelze připustit, aby v letních měsících - a zvláště též s přihlédnutím k období voleb do národních výborů - docházelo k omezování dodávek piva.”

¹⁹² R. H. to Industry Management Group 59 - Breweries - LRS, 8 April 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 71.

“... it cannot be allowed, especially in the summer months and particularly with an eye toward the upcoming elections to the National Committees, that there be any limitation in the supply of beer.”¹⁹³

Chaos and scrambling defined 1945 to 1948 at all levels of the beer industry. Those realities did not change overnight in the second half of 1948, but signs of a new order appeared. The dam broke first in Czechoslovakia. Stalin began pressuring the Czechoslovak Communist Party the previous summer after the ČSR had briefly considered accepting Marshall Plan assistance. Increasingly frustrated at their inability to control the state, the KSČ forced a confrontation with the non-Communist leadership, who miscalculated their position and ended up helping Klement Gottwald’s party to seize power in late February.¹⁹⁴ One month later, the Soviet Union withdrew from the Allied Control Council in Germany to protest plans for further independent development in the Bizone.¹⁹⁵ In June, the dispute between Marshall Tito and Stalin reached a peak, and Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform, marking a period of intensified hostility to the West and internal purges across the Soviet Bloc.¹⁹⁶ Later that month, Soviet representatives left the joint administration of Berlin, the Western Allies reformed the currency in their zone, the SMAD did the same in the East, and the Berlin Blockade began.¹⁹⁷ In the following year NATO came into existence, as did the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. With the start of the Cold War, a new status quo, however unfavorable, began to solidify in Central Europe.

¹⁹³ R., State Planning Office, "Zajištění surovin pro očekávané překročení výstavu piva v roce 1957," April 1957, NArch-C, Státní úřad planovací II, Praha - ka. 283.

¹⁹⁴ Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe*, 19-20.

¹⁹⁵ Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 50.

¹⁹⁶ Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe*, 23.

¹⁹⁷ Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005), 38–41; Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe*, 170.

With currency reform in Germany and newly empowered Communists pushing for centrally-planned economic growth in Czechoslovakia, many brewers began to get their feet under them again for the first time. Others disappeared from the map, defeated by the competition in the West or shuttered in the interest of economic efficiency in the East. Those that remained finally got permission to produce “peace-strength beer” in Fall 1948.¹⁹⁸ The conditions that had kept beer industry actors focused exclusively on their survival and the survival of their businesses gradually began to give way to a more open field of play where all arguments did not have to be couched in terms of pure economic necessity or political ideology. Those remained dominant issues in the discourse about beer well into the 1950s and never lost their importance. But as state involvement stabilized into a gradual retreat in the West and unquestionable reality in the East, the first hints appeared that “soft” topics such as cultural continuity and social life could factor into decision-making.

The Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia brought rapid changes to the economy, including the beer industry. After the initial sweep of brewery expropriations in 1945 netted the state nearly 100 facilities, confiscations ceased for the next three years except for the 1947 seizure of the Schwarzenberg family’s nine breweries.¹⁹⁹ Once the KSČ took power, it reinitiated the government’s nationalization program. A law passed on 28 April 1948 authorized additional expropriations of private industry, and on 3 July a decree from the Minister of Nutrition confiscated another seventy-seven breweries in Czechoslovakia, the majority of what remained.²⁰⁰ A document from September 1949 lists only three possible categories for breweries in Czechoslovakia: 1. “nationalized” (132), 2. “state-, community, or cooperatively owned” (61),

¹⁹⁸ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 85; Dr. v. F., Deputy Chairman, DWK to L., Secretariat of the DWK, 12 October 1948.

¹⁹⁹ Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, 215.

²⁰⁰ *Úřední list republiky československé*, Part 133, 16 July 1948.

or 3. “marked for closure” (34).²⁰¹ By 1953 these last two categories disappeared.²⁰² The authorities established a new central coordinating organ in Prague with subsidiary regional and local corporations for all breweries. Despite multiple name changes and reorganizations, this basic management structure remained in place until 1989.²⁰³

Even as Czech beer businesses suffered mass closures and rationing in the early years of “building socialism,” industry representatives argued for their trade’s value to the economy. Those points began to blend, gradually, into “softer” claims about national traditions of quality beer and the utility of the industry to the long-term socialist project. Here, too, some industry veterans maintained a “capitalist business mindset.” At a May 1948 meeting of the Beer Subcommittee, members debated how to reorganize the Czechoslovak malting industry in light of its nationalization. The permanent members, all Communists, supported a centralized administration with one corporation each in the Czech lands and Slovakia. An invited guest from the malting industry pushed back. As the minutes note, “[h]e claims that this arrangement is against the interests of the malting industry and especially malt exports.”²⁰⁴ The guest participant worried that having a single corporation represent all Czech malt would eliminate the traditional trademarks that carried huge weight on the market. His Communist interlocutors chastised his thinking as backward but still assured him that the individual facilities would keep their trademarks, and pointed to the example of Pilsner Urquell, (now a product of Pilsen Breweries, n.p. - factory Urquell) to prove that this move would not hurt the quality distinction.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ List of Breweries in Czech lands, 10 September 1949, SOAP, ČP kr. 1, inv. č. 4,

²⁰² Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, 216.

²⁰³ Skála, *Dějiny Města Plzně, Vol. 3 1918 - 1990*, 547.

²⁰⁴ "Sekce nápojového průmyslu: Schůze konání dne 18.V.1948 ve 14 hodin," 18 May 1948, NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV - 100/17 Sv. 24 Ar. J. 217, 2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

While they toed the Communist line to economic organization, Subcommittee members genuinely cared about revitalizing their industry. The meeting minutes reveal how they understood the government's interest in the beer and malt trade. "Even if the Minister of Foreign Trade has eminent interest in malt as an export article, a large portion of malt is consumed domestically. Beer was always a good indicator of the economic situation, and here, as well, it is of serious consideration."²⁰⁶ Perhaps the members fooled themselves by thinking that the government would see value in the domestic beer market at a time of economic difficulty. They considered themselves representatives of high quality and traditional Czech goods, but the authorities in Prague Castle saw them as a resource to be exploited for immediate gains. In their August and September meetings, the Subcommittee reported that the Ministry of Nutrition had designated the entire Czech hop harvest for export, and likewise planned malt exports to the United States. Much like the French and American military governments in Germany, Czechoslovakia's economic planners sought to exploit the high price of Central European brewing ingredients on the export market and relegated their domestic breweries to using cheaper substitutes.²⁰⁷ Despite this unfavorable situation for Czechoslovak beer drinkers, the government seemed only too happy to broadcast (literally) that it was exporting the highest quality beer and malt in the country. In 1949 the weekly Czechoslovak film newsreel ran a short segment showing barley exports and Pilsner Urquell being shipped to the Middle East by airplane.²⁰⁸ The socialist state at this point celebrated the finest of Czech barley malt and Bohemian beer, but only as they vanished over the horizon heading for foreign shores.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 3.

²⁰⁷ "Zápis ze schůze sekce nápojového průmyslu NHK ÚV, konané dne 31.8.1948 v 10 hodin," 31 August 1948, NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV - 100/17 Sv. 24 Ar. J. 217; "Sekce nápojového průmyslu. Devátá schůze presidis, konaná dne 6.IX.1948 v 10 hodin," 6 September 1948, NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV - 100/17 Sv. 24 Ar. J. 217.

²⁰⁸ "Plzeňské pivo chcu všade (1949)," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0D-zAoZFN5M> (accessed 10 October 2022)

Representatives of the Pilsner Urquell brewery had their own bones to pick with government policy. In February 1950, leaders of the Communist factory organization wrote to all the highest Party and state leaders requesting a policy change. Their message encapsulates the slow shift to include cultural arguments alongside the economic and political issues that have recurred throughout this chapter. The Ministry of Nutrition had proposed lowering the strength of Pilsner Urquell by a single degree of original gravity, a change that would slightly decrease the beer's flavor intensity and alcohol content. In response, the brewery sent a kind of manifesto on their operation to the president of the republic and general secretary of the KSČ, Klement Gottwald, as well as the deputy general secretary of the Party and the prime minister. "We see in this policy the first step toward levelling [*znivelisování*] our brewery down to the others," they wrote. "We are convinced that this will mean the end of Plzeň as a metropole of Czech and world brewing."²⁰⁹

The factory council's "breakdown" of the issue started with the specific and moved to the general, hitting all the economic, political, and cultural highlights along the way. The fate of their brewery, they claimed, was of grave concern to the entire Czechoslovak state. It had always stood as the shining representative of "Czech brewing." Losing that status would decrease foreign demand at a time when they already struggled with policies that exported the best brewing ingredients (to capitalist countries no less) and left domestic brewers struggling. Their sterling reputation had just recently led to an export contract for shipments to American troops in West Germany, to be paid in US dollars! Germany had an excellent brewing industry, so if the Americans chose to buy Urquell, it could only be because of the outstanding quality of the beer. But already foreign competitors claimed that Urquell's quality was slipping because

²⁰⁹ District Factory Organization Committee of the KSČ, Pilsner Breweries, n.p. to M. Š., Deputy General Secretary of the KSČ, 21 February 1950, NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV - 100/12 Sv. 24 Ar. j. 219.

Czechoslovakia sent its best malt and hops abroad. Rumors had spread that German occupiers had sabotaged the brewery during the war to “destroy the special yeast” that gave their beer its character. Hurting Pilsner Urquell hurt workers most of all, the committee wrote to the Communist leadership, and especially those in heavy industry. Already unions were writing to protest the strength decrease. “Beer cannot just be treated like any other good. In our circumstances, beer is a nationwide beverage [*celonárodní nápoj*] and forms a substantial part of the daily nutrition of the workers.”²¹⁰ Finally, they referred back to the war, noting that their brewery suffered heavy damage from Allied bombing unlike most of its competitors. “In such a situation, we hope is not an immodest request that, considering our business’s importance to the entire country [*celostátní význam*], it receive all possible support, both material and propagandistic... unfortunately, instead of that we are forced to explain and defend the position that we have long held.”²¹¹ The letter pounded away on export value, state pride and tradition, socialist ideology, Czech food culture, and a reminder of the unifying trauma of war.

East German brewers, too, worried that their government undervalued them as it took greater control of their operations. On top of war damage, the Soviet administration had not been kind to brewers in the Eastern Zone. Production fell year-to-year from 1946 to 1949. The largest breweries had been nationalized and organized under a single office in Dresden. Other medium- to large-sized producers fell under state or local control, while many of the smaller businesses in the industry remained private, or semi-private with state partnership. Leaders in East Berlin did not fully nationalize the beer industry until the 1970s, but they did chip away at the remaining privately-owned sector whenever possible.²¹² Resources remained under government control, so

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid., 4.

²¹² Agnes Arp, *VEB: Vaters ehemaliger Betrieb: Privatunternehmer in der DDR* (Leipzig: Militzke Verlag, 2005).

no business could avoid working with the state to rebuild or operate. More importantly, the state-owned breweries made up most of the productive capacity in the industry.²¹³ All these systems existed before the founding of the German Democratic Republic and continued after it, but currency reform and the new state did bring an economic upswing, and brewers saw their fortunes start to improve. That did not, however, mean that the SED held any special interest in the fate of its beer makers. The regimes in the GDR and ČSSR notoriously focused on heavy industry to the detriment of all else in this period. Consumer goods in general could have bounced back faster and more broadly with more investment.²¹⁴ In East Germany, beer seemed especially disregarded in the government's eyes, perhaps partly reflecting the personal views of emerging authoritarian leader and teetotaler Walter Ulbricht. Once again, this showed especially in Saxony, the heartland of beer production in the East. As one tax official wrote in response to complaints of impossible deadlines in 1951, the beer sector was "judged differently" than some industries. "I will share with you, confidentially... the willingness to extend tax deadlines for the brewing industry is not particularly large." Brewers, it seemed, were expected to fix their own problems, in this case by "educating publicans to a better payment morale."²¹⁵ Beer production did grow quickly and steadily in the first half of the 1950s, especially after the Workers' Uprising of 1953 forced Ulbricht and the party leadership to invest more in consumer goods, but already their state's brewers fell behind the recovery in West Germany (see figure 1.1).

While the state instituted major changes in the beer industry, continuity in personnel balanced those changes. In fact, persistence and experience served as major assets to holdover

²¹³ Gillespie, "The People's Drink: The Politics of Beer in East Germany (1945-1971)," 37–42.

²¹⁴ Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, loc. 2840; Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 161; Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand*; Phillip J. Bryson, *The Consumer under Socialist Planning: The East German Case* (New York: Praeger, 1984).

²¹⁵ Dr. L., Tax and Finance Consultant in Legal Department of the Saxony Chamber of Industry and Trade to Unknown, "Zahlungstermine für Biersteuer," 15 January 1951, HsArch-S, 11500 Nr. 391.

employees and administrators even as political purges and oppression ran rampant under Ulbricht²¹⁶ The state may not have championed beer, but as this chapter has made clear, business insiders knew their industry was too large and valuable to fully neglect. With war losses and a stream of specialized workers heading West, experienced brewers and plant directors who made it through denazification benefited from their importance to the economy.²¹⁷ Serious personality defects and a “burdened” political past did not necessarily spell the end for their careers or upward mobility.

The case of Mathis Martin, head of the Waldschlößchen Brewery in Dresden in 1950, shows the drama that could be unleashed when uncomfortable past deeds reemerged, but also the countervailing considerations industry leaders had to deal with. Martin slipped by denazification efforts without awkward questions about his past until, in 1950, he was recommended for a new job leading a brewery in Magdeburg. At that point, rumors began to swirl that he had held a prominent position in Nazi Germany’s occupation administration in western Ukraine, operating breweries to supply the troops and civilian personnel.²¹⁸ He also caught flak from Communists for being a practicing Catholic. While Martin claimed to have been drafted to the East, his wife let slip that he had volunteered. The ensuing vicious dispute became so heated that a special meeting had to be called with fifty members of the regional beer trade, representatives from the SED county-level committee, and the head of the national brewery union.²¹⁹ They debated for six hours over the fate of a single man. Martin, for his part, had counteraccusations to lob at practically everyone who spoke ill of him, shrouding the entire matter in an air of uncertainty as

²¹⁶ Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 157–61.

²¹⁷ This is similar to the dynamic described in Connelly, *Captive University*, 10.

²¹⁸ As Waitman Boern has shown in his study of the German military’s complicity in Holocaust in Belarus, this was a common and important element of German occupation in the East, see Boern, *Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus*, chap. 7.

²¹⁹ Streubel, “Bericht über die gemachten Beobachtungen in der SED Betr.Gr.-Versammlung der Waldschlößchen Brauerei,” 9 February 1950, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 4503.

to who was politically “clean” and who was putting on a good act.²²⁰ The file ends with a statement from the accused, and gives no indication if any action was taken against him. Figures such as Mathis Martin serve as a reminder of just how little there was a true “clean break” in the personnel running the economy, and with their continued presence came a continuation of mindsets and ideas about beer and beer culture in Germany.

Of course, one would expect to find the most continuities in West Germany, where the state did not radically restructure the beer industry or its ownership and the market economy reemerged. In most important ways, that is correct. Beer in West Germany became overwhelmingly a privately produced commodity, with businesses and their trade groups determining for themselves how to make it, how to market it, how to define its meaning, and how to respond to criticism of it. All of that is the subject of subsequent chapters. There were, however, two important exceptions to the rule that the West German state stepped out of the brewing business in the 1950s, and those exceptions help reveal the mentality that industry leaders had as they glided toward the “economic miracle.” Both examples come from Bavaria, proving again the significance of the Lesser Beer Zone and Terrell’s argument that Bavaria’s beer culture set the pace for postwar West Germany. They suggest a kind of hangover from more than two decades of extreme state interference in the industry. On the one hand, brewers became allergic to certain kinds of government involvement in their market. Private breweries expressed frustration when they faced supposedly unfair competition from state-owned breweries, as proven by the vitriol thrown at the Weihenstephan Brewery in the late 1940s by its Munich-area rivals. On the other hand, brewers and publicans clearly did not adopt a libertarian attitude toward the market, proclaiming all regulation to be anathema. Well into the 1950s, they

²²⁰ Statement from A. S., 14 March 1950, HsArch-S, 11384 Nr. 4503.

practically begged the Bavarian government to continue using its power to protect them from competition by keeping price controls on beer. A look at some of the conflicts roiling the brewing industry in the early Federal Republic, then, reaffirms Volker Berghahn's argument that West German business leaders only gradually came to support the social market system envisioned by Ludwig Erhard.²²¹ But the way that brewers, in particular, expressed their understanding of the German state's interest in the beer supply speaks to more than just the persistence of personal and generational mentalities. The recurrence of those same themes in the following decades, bolstered by the larger cultural discourse described in Part II and punctuated by the international disputes shown in Part III, suggest continuity at a deeper level.

Though many aspects of life quickly changed with the currency reform and lifting of most state controls on the economy in 1948, breweries' expressed sense of struggle did not. Competition, now reopened, remained fierce. Germany's beer producers, then and now, have the legal right to contractually bind or "tie" pubs and other establishments to serve only their products. In June 1949, the first shot across Weihenstephan's bow came in the form of a complaint by the Hackerbräu Brewery in Munich filed with the Bavarian state government. Hackerbräu claimed that Weihenstephan had started negotiations with one of its tied pubs to deliver beer in early April. Despite a phone call from a Hackerbräu representative making it clear that this violated a legal contract, Weihenstephan began supplying beer to the establishment anyway, claiming that Hackerbräu's contract only bound the husband and wife that owned the original pub, not their son who managed a second location, and with whom Weihenstephan had made its deal. Both possibilities seem plausible, but Hackerbräu clearly sought to make a point in its letter by emphasizing the impropriety of such an action by a state-owned brewery. "Even a

²²¹ Berghahn, *Unternehmer und Politik in der Bundesrepublik*.

brewery in state possession cannot exempt itself from respecting those rights and duties that are mutually recognized and ensured by private businesses fighting hard for their existence. In fact, we believe that state business in particular should be subject to especially strict measures regarding commercial behavior.”²²²

Weihenstephan responded to the complaint in mid-August, putting forward its understanding of the family business arrangement and also throwing a counteraccusation at Hackerbräu.

Incidentally, an accusation of unfair business practices could be raised by the Weihenstephan State Brewery against Hackerbräu, A.G. In the weeks before the introduction of full strength beer, the Hacker Brewery repeatedly attempted to give the impression to our customer base in Freising that it could deliver its export-quality bottled beer at an excessive and forbidden price. This was not the case.²²³

From there, lawyers got involved to rebut a charge of bribery against Weihenstephan. Multiple other breweries in Munich and Freising raised complaints against the state brewery, leading one of its representatives to suggest a widespread conspiracy against them. “These events and a number of observations... strengthen our suspicion that this is a planned campaign against the state breweries and particularly against the Weihenstephan State Brewery.”²²⁴ The root of the problem lay in the long period of forbidden competition stretching from the Nazi era to 1948 that forced breweries to fight for their lives, followed by the opening up of the market and unleashing of rival interests. Proving once again the carry-on effects of new divisions in the Greater Beer

²²² Board of the Hackerbräu Brewery A.G., Munich to Dr. P., Ministerial Advisor in the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, "Betreff: Staatsbrauerei Weihenstephan; unsere Beschwerde wegen unlauteren Wettbewerbs," 15 June 1949, BayHStA, MK 67367.

²²³ Dr. K. and B. A., Weihenstephan Bavarian State Brewery to Administrative Office of the Technical University of Munich, "Betreff: Beschwerde der Akt. Ges. Hackerbräu in München," 13 August 1949. BayHStA, MK 67367.

²²⁴ Dr. K., to Administrative Office of the Technical University of Munich, "Gegestand: Wettbewerbsverhältnisse," 17 September 1949, BayHStA, MK 67367.

Zone, Weihenstephan also pointed out that it needed to retrench its business in Bavaria because of the “separation from our sales territories in the eastern Zone.”²²⁵ Whatever its reasons, the state brewery lost its fight against Hackerbräu. The Bavarian government ordered it to stop delivering to the disputed pub.

Even as public and private breweries struggled to deal with the fallout from the state’s retreat from the beer trade, other elements of government control remained in place or had yet to be settled. Interest groups fought to secure advantage much as they had done under the occupying powers and the Third Reich. Price controls remained on barley, malt, and beer for the time being, but hops sold on the free market again by 1949. This first step toward market pricing quickly resulted in problems when the price of hops from the 1949 harvest skyrocketed.

Bundestag members from the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) in Bavaria brought the issue to the parliament floor, inquiring as to what the federal government planned to do about “speculative” hop prices “out of harmony with production prices.”²²⁶ The administration’s reply, compiled by the Ministry of Nutrition, Agriculture, and Forestry, reinforces the importance of the Beer Zone for the brewing industries of central Europe (and the world) but also stands its ground on free market prices. “On the world market, only German and Czech hops qualify as ‘quality hops.’ Practically the entire European and non-European foreign market have supplied an important portion of their hop needs from Germany and Czechoslovakia.”²²⁷ The Czech hop harvest of 1949 had disappointed, so demand for German hops spiked, inflating prices.

Moreover, officials in “the Eastern zone” (GDR) had expended considerable time trying to

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Bundestag Anfrage Nr. 51, 1. Wahlperiode 1949, "der Abgeordneten Dr. Solleder, Kahn, Dr. Horlacher und Genossen - betr.: Preisbildung des Hopfens," 17 February 1950, BArch-K, B 116/41429.

²²⁷ S., BMEL HG 2, "Vermerk. Betr.: Preisbildung des Hopfens," 27 February 1950, BArch-K, B 116/41429, 1.

negotiate for hop deliveries equaling almost 10 percent of the West German harvest.²²⁸ The talks had failed to produce an agreement, but the possibility of a huge export deal exacerbated the supply crunch. Despite all of that, the West German ministry declared in no uncertain terms that “the reintroduction of a strict hop market regime is not possible under today’s economic-political conditions.”²²⁹ In spite of southern hand wringing, the FRG had chosen the path of the free market and would not turn back.

To borrow a phrase, beer culture in Bavaria was just the same as in the rest of Germany and the Czech lands, only more so. That “more so” is evident in the 1950s battles over beer prices. As FRG officials negotiated the initial beer tax law that would lower prices and make the industry more viable, hotel and restaurant owners in Bavaria fought bitterly to limit the inevitable reduction in their profit margin, even if it meant taking a larger bite out of tax revenue and the brewery’s share. In an early conversation regarding the matter in February 1950, the relevant ministerial director in the Bavarian Ministry of Finance took such offense to the publicans’ demands that he hung up the phone on their representative mid-call. The association’s representative wrote directly to Minister President Hans Erhard to express his outrage that a “democratic public servant refused to take seriously the board resolution of a trade organization with 20,000 members.”²³⁰ The ministerial director did not apologize, stating that the demands were ridiculous, and that he hung up because the representative “would not let himself be interrupted and I was not going to let him speak to me in that tone.”²³¹ Harsh tones only marked the beginning of the dispute. In a missive to every major legislative body and relevant ministry in

²²⁸ Archival records in Saxony discussed above prove that much of the pressure for East German hop imports came from that state, with its premier breweries.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²³⁰ L., State Chairman of the State Association of the Bavarian Hotel and Restaurant Industry to Dr. H. Erhard, Minister-President of Bavaria, "Betr.: Bierpreisbildung," 10 February 1950, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

²³¹ Dr. R., Ministerial Director, Bavarian State Ministry of Finance to Dr. H. Erhard, "Betreff: Bierpreisbildung - Zum Schrieben vom 16.2.1950 Nr. 3239," 17 February 1950, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

the federal and Bavarian state governments (see footnote), the publicans' association promised to "seek justice with all the means that the Bonn Basic Law and Bavarian Constitution give us, should the planned diktat be carried out."²³² Over a year later, after the law change had occurred despite their demands, the organization warned of a "dangerous radicalization" of its membership.²³³

The publicans' association eventually called for an end to price controls altogether, but the brewing industry tried to keep state regulation of the market as long as possible. The government did, eventually, recognize the publicans' pain and in 1952 agreed to a small increase in beer prices. That, however, set off counterreactions from trade unions concerned with their members' pocketbooks and opposition parties from both left and right in the Bavarian parliament who happily used popular discontent with the change to their advantage.²³⁴ The governing CSU responded by leaning heavily into folksy (though not quite *völkisch*) odes to Bavarian beer culture.

We know that a beer price increase, even when it is fully justified by political economy, will always be an unpopular policy in Bavaria... it is not just about the pocketbook, but also the customs, feelings, and historical traditions of a people. In all cases the imponderables [*Imponderabilien*] must be taken into consideration.... Every land and

²³² A. L., State Chairman and T. S., First Deputy State Chairman of the State Association of the Bavarian Hotel and Restaurant Industry to the Federal Parliament, the Federal Assembly, the Agricultural Committee of the Federal Parliament, Bavarian Minister-President H. Erhard, the Economic Ministry, Minister of Finance Schäffer, Head Councilor Dr. Louis, State Secretary Dr. Hartmann, the Party Caucuses of the Federal Parliament, the Bavarian Parliament, the Complaint Committee of the Bavarian Parliament, the Party Caucuses of the Bavarian Parliament, Minister of the Economy Seidel, Finance Minister Ehardt, Food Minister Dr. Schlögl, the Bavarian State Economic Ministry, the Bavarian State Finance Ministry, and all counties of Bavaria, "Denkschrift über Bierpreissenkung!" 12 June 1950, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

²³³ S., Chairman of the State Association of the Bavarian Hotel and Restaurant Industry to Dr. H. Erhard, 29 August 1951, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

²³⁴ M. W., L. H. and G. S., Board of the German Trade Union Confederation in Bavaria to H. Erhard, "Bierpreisfrage," 21 June 1952, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119; "Beantwortung der wegen der Bierpreisneuregelung eingebrachten Interpellationen der SPD und der BP durch die Staatsregierung," n.d. (after 21 June 1952), BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

every people has its national drink based on the historical development, habits, and traditions of the population.²³⁵

Only after he had waxed eloquent about the “imponderables” of Bavarian beer culture did the government representative address economic questions such as wage growth and price inflation.

The liberalization of beer markets in West Germany, much like their central administration and planning in the GDR and ČSR, became all but inevitable as a result of leadership choices made in the early 1950s, and set the stage for what was to come in the following decades. Both paths had their detours and dead ends. Following the deaths of Stalin and Klement Gottwald in 1953 and the Workers’ Uprising in East Germany that same year, both the KSCĚ and SED adopted the Soviet initiative of a “New Course” for their economies aimed at drastically improving the dreadful consumer goods supply, and it is certainly no coincidence that the beer industries in both states saw a major upswing in the immediate aftermath.²³⁶ In the West, and specifically Bavaria, the battle over beer prices started to become more anachronistic as the 1950s wore on. Federal Economic Minister Ludwig Erhard personally weighed in on the matter in late 1951, announcing to the state price setting offices that each federal state would decide individually when to lift price controls. Notably, Erhard originally planned to remove all restrictions on a nationwide basis but changed course after “running into resistance from precisely those federal states where beer production is most crucial for [the Federal Republic].”²³⁷ One by one, the other federal states lifted beer price controls until, by July of 1955, only Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg retained them, and the latter had already begun talks

²³⁵ “Beantwortung... Bierpreisneuregelung,” 1-2.

²³⁶ Pavel Bělina, *Dějiny Země Koruny České: Od Nástupu Osvícenství Po Naši Dobu* (Karlín, CZ: Paseka, n.d.), 353; Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand*, chap. 4; see also, *Figure 1*.

²³⁷ Ludwig Erhard, Federal Economics Minister to Price Setting Office for the Federal States, “Betr.: Bierpreisregelung,” 30 November 1951, BArch-K, B 116/41429.

for abolition. But the Bavarian Economic Minister, Otto Bezold, fully supported brewers' arguments that Bavaria's unique beer culture required special government controls. Historically, he argued, "in contrast to most other German states, beer in Bavaria was not just a *Genussmittel* but a people's drink (*Volksgetränk*)." As such Bavarian governments had, for centuries, had an influence on its pricing.²³⁸ His arguments won the day for the time being, but as more years passed complaints and pressure campaigns multiplied. Publicans once again threatened "radicalization" over price politics.²³⁹

The Bavarian Minister President, by then Dr. Wilhelm Hoegner, appeared ready to throw in the towel by Spring 1957. "In reality, a price control is impossible in a social market economy," he stated bluntly in a meeting of the state Council of Ministers. "[I] cannot see the necessity of an exception for beer."²⁴⁰ Despite that, it took another year and the formation of a new coalition government in Bavaria for the law to finally get passed and the last postwar price controls for beer in West Germany to fall. The Bavarian Brewers' Association wrote bitterly to then-Minister President Dr. Hanns Seidel of the CSU that "those in power remain forever liable [*mit der Verantwortung behaftet*] for setting off a fatal concentration process in the mid-sized Bavarian brewing sector and for taking away the price-worthiness of Bavarian beer, which made it a traditional *Volksgetränk*."²⁴¹ Despite losing this battle, brewers in Bavaria, and the entire greater and lesser Beer Zones, had become thoroughly adept at using their toolkit of economic, cultural, and political arguments to push state policy in their preferred direction.

²³⁸ Otto Bezold, Bavarian State Minister for the Economy and Commerce to Dr. Wilhelm Hoegner, Bavarian Minister President, "Betreff: Bierpreise," 21 November 1955, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

²³⁹ S. S., Chairman, and H. Z., General Counsel of the Unterfranken District Office of the State Association of the Bavarian Hotel- and Restaurant Industry to Dr. Wilhelm Hoegner, 18 April 1957, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

²⁴⁰ "Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Ministerrats vom Dienstag, den 23. April 1957," 25 April 1957, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119, 10.

²⁴¹ E.F. P. President of the Bavarian Brewer's Association to Dr. Hanns Seidel, Bavarian Minister-President, 18 April 1958, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the threads of material and political continuity that persisted in German and Czech beer industries through the most extreme period of rupture in either nation's history since the late nineteenth century. In a time when the overwhelming focus of ordinary people and government leaders had to stay on survival and rebuilding basic infrastructure, brewers adapting accordingly by dropping any reference to beer's value beyond its contributions to the daily nutritional and economic life for the devastated population of Central Europe. Even so, they did not have to develop their arguments from scratch. Historically, brewing industries had accumulated substantial material capital, and beer had acquired an important place in the nutritional habits of Germans and Czechs, setting the beverage's defenders up with a useful toolset of arguments to help themselves and their trade survive and prepare for a resurgence. In many cases, power struggles within and between the industry and government closely resembled those under Nazi administration, maintained by the need in all regions to replace one regime of state economic planning with another.

As leaders and workers in the beer industry turned to new authority figures to fight for their survival and livelihood, they tended to use similar rhetorical tools to try to gain support from those in power. Industry figures cleared away rivals with timely reminders of their political past, threatening almost anyone who had held a leadership position in a major business in Hitler's empire. Business leaders simultaneously petitioned parallel administrative bodies, seeking the best outcome for a request or even turning different agencies against one another. Savvy industry operators also made positive, forward-looking arguments. Increasingly, they earned points within the new power structure by portraying their work in the ideological framework of democracy, socialism, or simply antifascism. Their threats of even greater

economic turmoil resulting from layoffs and business closures increasingly gave way to promises of a clean, low-alcohol source of calories and hydration. The high quality and financial value of Central European hops, malt, and export beer served as frequent reminders to government authorities that any policies causing permanent damage to the beer industry would amount to killing a golden goose.

Military administrations and an exile government returning to rebuild its country had neither the ability or the inclination to adjust their policies to suit German and Czech cultural traditions when they brought no immediate improvement to the situation. They could only afford to care about the need for a beverage supply, the gainful employment of tens of thousands of people, and the value of tax revenue and hard currency. The roaring flame of beer culture shrank to a pilot light during these years, but it kept flickering. War and new political divisions similarly reduced but did not destroy the vital interregional connections in the Beer Zone. Western Germany's food supply suffered badly from being cut off from eastern German agriculture, forcing strict food rationing measures including the *Brauverbote*. East German brewers longed for access to the high-quality brewing malt and hops largely concentrated to their West and South. Czech hop harvests had a direct impact on prices around the world, sending Bavarian lawmakers scrambling to the new federal government to control the spike in beer production costs. Small breweries in Saxony bought Bohemian hops on the black market to avoid relying on insufficient government supplies. Pilsner Urquell proudly boasted to the central government in Prague about a contract to deliver beer to American troops in West Germany. Even in this period when regular, formal beer trade between the three regions practically disappeared, they were too deeply bound in this sector for all activity to stop.

As the 1940s gave way to the 1950s, authorities in West Germany began the delicate process of disentangling themselves from the day-to-day operations of the beer industry as the governments to their East continued to solidify total state control. The industry in all three states took on more or less the form that they would keep for the next four decades, and stability brought the first significant period of revitalization and growth. For many breweries, it had been ten years or more since they had been able to produce a regular strength beer for ordinary civilian customers. With this slow return to a kind of normality came a reemergence of cultural and social arguments for the importance of beer in Germany and the Czech lands. Pilsner Urquell's factory council lectured Communist leaders about the value of its product as an icon of Czech economic excellence and a matter of national concern. After a friendly soccer game between teams from Düsseldorf and Leipzig in 1951, Leipzig's mayor invited all the players to the Ratskeller for a social hour over beer. The East German weekly film newsreel *Der Augenzeuge* showed images of the communal gathering with foaming mugs in all hands and a giant banner on the wall reading "East and West united! All of Germany should be the same!"²⁴² Bavarian politicians, publicans, and brewers could, without missing a beat, switch tracks between beer's role in the economy, its function as a social glue holding together the fabric of society, and its "imponderable" significance to traditional lifestyles in their state. As Chapter Three shows in detail, the steadily intensifying drumbeat of national, gender, and class identities bound up in messages about beer did not supplant, but rather complemented and melded with arguments about its economic worth and power as a political issue. All of these discursive narratives built on existing structures of meaning and symbolism that predate 1945, the Third

²⁴² *Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge* (1951/10), available through: Progress, <https://progress.film/record/321> from DEFA, DEFA Newsreel Collection, Clip ID: Q6UJ9A004763 [Accessed 10 June, 2021];

Reich, or the turn of the century. The beer culture(s) that emerged in Germany and the Czech lands in the 1950s and grew from there represented something new, not a “return” to traditional values that had existed before. To ignore the important continuities, however, undervalues their staying power and misses a crucial element in the composition of that new beer culture.

Interlude: The Path to “Peak Beer” (1945 – 1989)

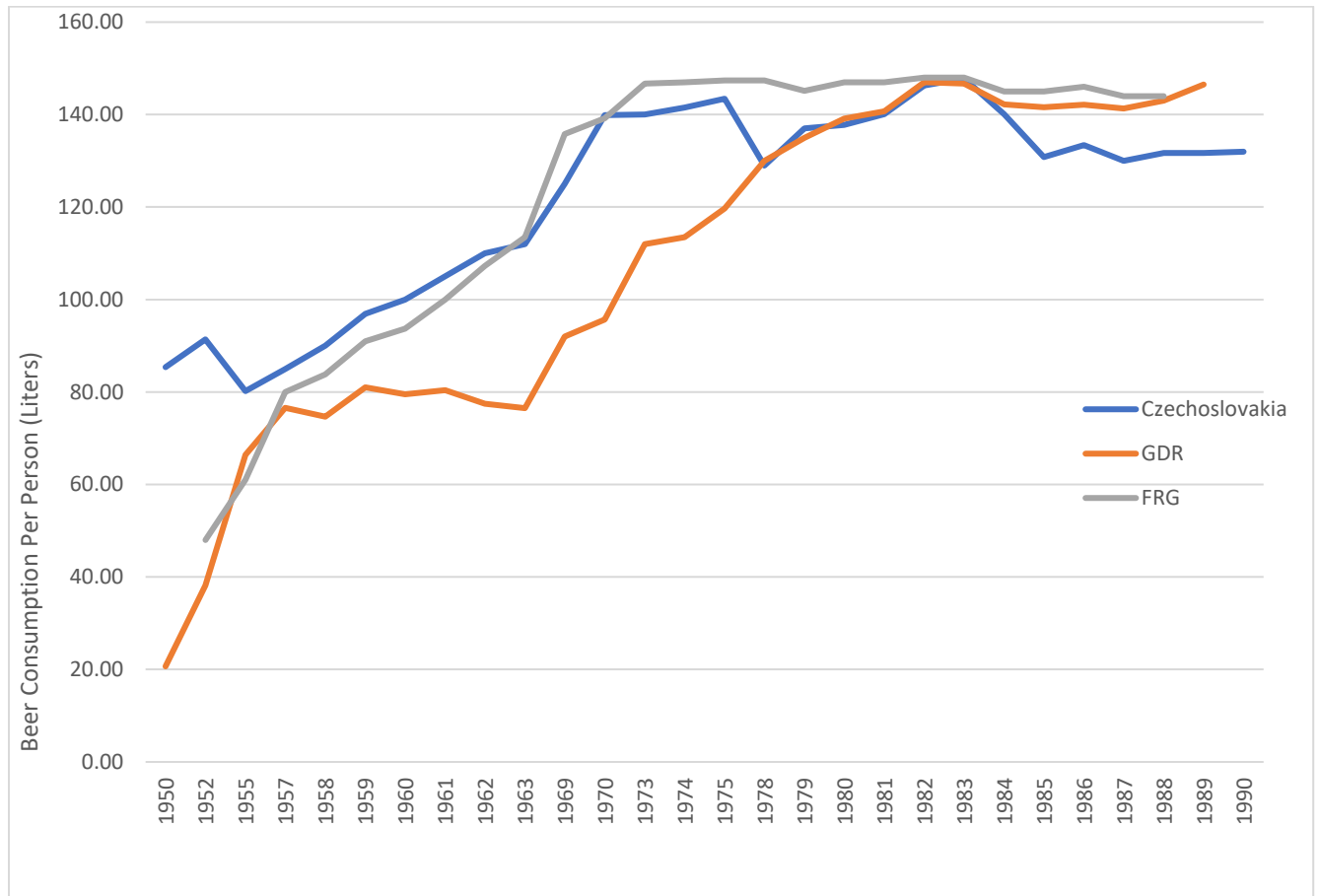


Figure 3 Per person beer consumption 1950 - 1990 (Liters per person). Statistics gathered and compiled by the author from a variety of sources including Statistical Yearbooks of the FRG and GDR as well as Czechoslovak government documents cited elsewhere throughout this paper. Citations for each individual data point are available upon request.

As the above chart makes clear, beer consumption and the production that supported it grew quickly and steadily in West Germany, East Germany and Czechoslovakia as basic state structures were established and postwar reconstruction work progressed through the 1950s. Conditions certainly were not identical in the three states, but a detailed study of all the shifting bureaucratic structures in the GDR and ČSSR would run quickly into pointless tedium, just as a play-by-play description of each change and development in the FRG’s beer market would. More

to the point, a number of studies have already done the yeomen's work of laying out those facts.¹ Instead, this brief interlude offers a summary of the two most important and relevant evolutions in Central Europe's beer industries as all three approached "peak beer" in the 1980s, the point at which either their populations could no longer sustain higher demand (likely the case in West Germany and Czechoslovakia) or their economies could not manage to produce significantly more beer without major new investment (true in East Germany and Czechoslovakia). Though the economics of beer are dealt with less in Part II, these trends form critical context for the actions and words of politicians, industry leaders, media producers, and ordinary citizens presented in Chapters Three through Six.

First, as the chart indicates, per capita consumption of beer in all three countries grew tremendously through the 1950s and 1960s, but by the early 1980s all three saw the upward trend flatten at remarkably similar levels. For a few years between roughly 1982 and 1984, East Germans, West Germans, and Czechoslovaks all drank nearly 150 liters of beer per person per year dividing the supply by the entire population. Taking only adults puts the number about twenty liters per person higher, meaning that every adult, on average, drank just under half a liter of beer every day. Of course, men drank more than women, Czechs more than Slovaks, Bavarians more than people in Schleswig-Holstein, and so on. In general, however, even taking all the caveats into consideration, it is remarkable that the three countries appear to have "topped out" at almost the same level of peak beer consumption and done so at roughly the same time.

¹ Gillespie, "The People's Drink: The Politics of Beer in East Germany (1945-1971)," chap. 1; Terrell, "The People's Drink"; Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*; Skála, *Dějiny Města Plzně, Vol. 3 1918 - 1990*; Thomas Kochan, *Blauer Würger: So trank die DDR* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2011); Johan F. M Swinnen, *The Economics of Beer* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Peter Lietz and Hans-J. Manger, eds., *Die Brau-Und Malzindustrie in Deutschland-Ost Zwischen 1945 Und 1989: Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Deutschen Brau- Und Malzindustrie Im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: VLB Berlin, 2016); Nancy Bodden, *Business as Usual? Die Dortmunder Brauindustrie, Der Flaschenbierboom Und Die Nachfragemacht Des Handels 1950 Bis 1980* (Dortmund: Gesellschaft für Westfälische Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 2019); Pavel Šimon, "Dějiny pivovarnictví v Čechách," <http://www.pivety.com/DejinyCechy2.htm>.

Variations in their path do matter, however. West Germany and Czechoslovakia had already come close to the point of saturation by 1970. The Czechs had less ground to make up thanks to the relatively mild war damage suffered by their industry, and the FRG's brewers flourished alongside the rest of the economy during the 1950s and 1960s before the good times came to a rather sudden end with the slowdown starting in the early 1970s. This may help explain developments in Chapter Four. Substantial concern about high alcohol consumption rates emerged in Czechoslovakia and West Germany among government officials and in the public sphere earlier than it did in the GDR, which had a longer, slower path to peak beer (and, as will be shown, peak *Schnaps* as well).

Second, even as they produced more and more beer overall, the three countries followed the worldwide trend toward consolidation in the brewing industry. Czechoslovakia emerged from World War Two with 269 breweries still in operation. By 1958 that number had dropped to 132 as the twin government programs of nationalization and rationalization shuttered smaller and less efficient facilities in favor of high-producing plants. Subsequent efforts to make the trade as efficient as possible brought investment in a number of very large brewing conglomerates to expand their capacity, but as a result even more small and medium-sized brewers became redundant. By the Velvet Revolution in 1989 only 71 breweries were left.² The trajectory in the GDR largely mirrored that in the ČSSR and for the same reasons.³ West Germany stood out in the later twentieth century for its resistance to hyper-consolidation in the brewing industry, with citizens who remained unusually loyal to regional and local brands and styles.⁴ But even the

² Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, 215, 229.

³ Peter Lietz and Hans-J. Manger, *Die Brau-Und Malzindustrie in Deutschland-Ost Zwischen 1945 Und 1989: Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Deutschen Brau- Und Malzindustrie Im 20. Jahrhundert*.

⁴ Frank von Tongeren: "Standards and International Trade Integration: A Historical Review of the German 'Reinheitsgebot,'" in *The Economics of Beer*, ed. Johan F. M. Swinnen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 59.

stubborn beer lovers of the FRG could not hold back market forces entirely. More than 1,200 West German breweries shut down their boil kettles for good between the early 1950s and 1989. Nearly 1,000 of those closures came in Bavaria, which nevertheless still had three quarters of the state's brewhouses before reunification.⁵ These statistics strongly support observations of both contemporary observers and later commentators that a saturation of the West German beer market and stagnating demand starting in the 1970s led to even fiercer and more ruthless competition in the FRG, which goes a long way to help explain why brewers in that state fought ardently against national and supranational policies that they feared could further weaken their market position.⁶ In Czechoslovakia and East Germany, the frequently-repeated and accurate critique that the states failed to invest sufficiently in their brewing infrastructure must be balanced with the reality that both economies suffered systemic and debilitating inefficiencies as a result of their attempts to steer all trade and production with a central plan. Real investments were made into the beer industry, but they were made with an eye toward producing the people's drink as efficiently as possible, with quality often deprioritized as a result. There is little evidence to suggest that either GDR or ČSSR leaders intentionally allowed beer makers to fall into disrepair out of neglect for that product in particular.

⁵ Statistisches Jahrbuch BRD 1952, 158; Deutscher Brauer-Bund e.V. Bericht 1988-90 (Bonn: Deutscher Brauer-Bund e.V., 1990), 41.

⁶ Bodden, *Business as Usual?* 12–14; RC. Beraud and J. Sack, "Erwiderung eingereicht gemäß Artikel 41 der Verfahrensordnung des Gerichtshofs von der Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften in der Rechtssache 178/84 - Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaft gegen Bundesrepublik Deutschland - wegen Anwendung des sogenannten Reinheitsgebotes auf aus anderen Mitgliedstaaten eingeführte Biere," 12 February 1985, BArch-K, B 102/334150, Anlage 3, pg. 115.

Part II: You Are What You Drink: Beer, Identity, and the State

“Bier muß ernst genommen werden, weniger weil es Historie hat, mehr deshalb, weil es ein Miteinander gutwilliger Menschen im Sozialismus erleichtert.”

(“Beer must be taken seriously. Less because it has history, and more because it facilitates the togetherness of good-willed people in socialism.”)

- Peer Review of *Rundgesang und Gerstensaft*, (1987 – GDR)

In the ruins of Dresden, breweries struggled for every resource. Exploring the early postwar years through dry, official archival records can easily obscure the misery of everyday life in that time, but occasionally an offhand remark makes the dreary reality inescapable. In November 1946, the Waldschlößchen brewery reported that it had no restaurant furniture available because “[t]he furniture that was in our possession was burned, almost without exception, last February.”¹ The referenced conflagration seems most likely to be the infamous firebombing of the city by American planes, an attack that cost tens of thousands of lives and had to be mentioned, almost casually, twenty-one months later as a source of continuing difficulties for the brewery operators. When I first read the report, I thought perhaps it referred to February 1946, which would also make sense if the furniture had to be burned as a last, desperate source of fuel for warmth in the depths of winter. Another example, from the nearby Felsenkeller Brewery, presents a more haunting reminder of Germany’s very dark, very recent past. Felsenkeller could not afford to waste any useful material, including paper. They wrote on whatever they saw lying around, including old advertising flyers, such as the one shown in Figure 4:

¹ Message from Waldschlößchen Brewery to Industrial Management Group 59 - Breweries - LRS, "Rundschreiben Nr. 23 -Betr.: Mitgliedschaft bei der VLB, Berlin," 14 November 1946, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 60.



Figure 4: Felsenkeller Lager Advertisement: Courtesy of the Sächsische Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden. HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74

Text: "Even grandfather drank Felsenkeller Lager / It is the real man's beer / And that is why it remains, by old custom, Dresden-Felsenkeller Lager / The drink / For the workers by hand."

“Felsenkeller Lager” the flyer proclaims, is “grandpa’s beer,” “the real man’s beer,” and by “old custom,” is “for the workers by hand.”² The flyer has no date on it, but the details confirm its origins in the Third Reich, most obviously its clear visual and rhetorical allusions to National

² Felsenkeller Lager advertising flyer, n.d., HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74.

Socialist propaganda. For the leaders of Saxony's major breweries, who met in the Felsenkeller offices on 3 November 1947 to discuss the challenges of their industry, this piece of paper represented nothing more than scrap. They turned it over and used it as the sign-in sheet for their meeting. Because they did so, it is preserved in the files of the Saxon Central State Archive in Dresden, a single, striking physical manifestation of continuities in the social and cultural bonds between beer and identity in the Beer Zone.

Part II demonstrates that while broad social attitudes and political stances on gender, class, nationality, and other currents of identity undeniably shifted over time in West Germany, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, their role in formulating popular perceptions of beer culture, and beer culture's role in reinforcing them, remained largely the same and would have been easily recognized by the creator of this Nazi-era promotional sheet. Indeed, if one did not know the Nazi connotations of this hammer image and the phrase "[f]ür die Arbeiter der Faust," one could easily think that this was an early piece of Communist beer advertising (only the economic implausibility of such a thing in 1947 convinced me otherwise initially). Masculinity and working-class traditions were bedrocks of socialist propaganda despite simultaneous claims to be liberating women and breaking with the past to build a totally new society.³ The beer culture shown in Chapters Three and Four through entertainment, advertisements, news, policy, public information campaigns, and political speech by no means remained static over the postwar period. It did change. Historical actors adapted messages to the circumstances of the moment. Content producers left their jobs and were replaced by younger generations who embodied different cultural eras. But those changes did not disrupt the core narratives of association between the product, its consumers, and its spaces of consumption that became [re]established in

³ Jennifer V. Evans, "The Moral State: Men, Mining, and Masculinity in the Early GDR," *German History* 23, no. 3 (2005): 355-370;

the “boom years” of the first two full decades after the war. Part I showed the raw economic strength of beer as a commodity in German and Czech society. Part II explores how beer became and remained an anchor for belonging in a group, for identification with certain notions of gender, class, and nationality. The exact identities it supported resulted from real social historical continuities and was bolstered by imagined narratives of old-timey custom and tradition. In effect, it shows what it means for beer to have been a *cultural* commodity, a good with significant power in society beyond what economic statistics can show.

Chapter Three lays out the key identity fixations that found affirmation or definition within German and Czech beer culture, looking most closely at gender and nationality but also briefly considering class dynamics. The chapter covers the period after 1945 and ends in 1970, though not because these cultural markers disappeared or even significantly changed after that date. Rather, what I show here is the (re)birth of a cultural commodity, the continuities with its past, and the establishment of its postwar character during a time of relative economic prosperity and growth. In these years, consumption, including beer consumption, received far more positive and celebratory coverage than it would later. Yet, I do not believe that the myths and meaning behind beer most apparent during this period were a temporary phenomenon unique to the moment. Rather, because political and media circumstances in this period were most favorable to narratives that celebrated economic prosperity and the virtue of consumption, these years give a clear image of relatively static popular ideas about beer culture unvarnished by any substantial concern with abuse or addiction. The staying power of these symbolic associations only becomes more apparent in the following chapters, when various forces arise to challenge prevailing attitudes toward the beverage. In this way, Chapter Three presents a fundamentally different perspective than those that preceded it and those that follow. Every chapter before and after

presents some kind of narrative arc showing change over time, while this one mostly gives a snapshot, a synchronic attempt to get at elements of that oh-so-elusive yet also omnipresent phenomenon: culture. Culture changes with the passage of time just as everything does.

However, it is precisely my point to suggest that beer culture in postwar German and Czech societies changed far more slowly than the economies, political structures, and professional establishments that served as its context.

Chapter Four then provides the first clear case study of that dissonance by showing the strenuous efforts of state leaders to direct a top-down change in popular attitudes toward beer. It considers public health efforts to combat rising rates of alcoholism and growing concern with alcohol abuse throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Whether it came in the form of a general desire to stop or reverse increasing consumption rates or more focused attempts to keep drinking limited to the “right time, right place, right person,” Germans and Czechs under both liberal democratic and state socialist models of governance demonstrated that their engrained habits of alcohol consumption, and especially attitudes toward their “liquid bread,” counted for far more in determining their behavior than attempts at state intervention or education. Even in authoritarian countries such as East Germany and Czechoslovakia, officials never managed to control the narrative around the health impact of beer or instill the official message from doctors and experts that beer was “alcohol” just like wine and liquor, rather than a nutritious refreshment in a category of its own. Seemingly in spite of themselves, government and public health figures still relied on popular differentiations between the different types of alcoholic beverage when trying to get their message across to the public or designing laws and regulations that needed to function in the real world and take into account the views of ordinary people. Having established the economic and cultural power of beer in Parts I and II, the study concludes with Part III,

which shows Czechs and Germans on both sides of the Iron Curtain taking to the metaphorical ramparts in the space of international law and diplomacy to assert control and ownership over sacred elements of their national beer cultures.

In these two chapters, I explore German and Czech “beer cultures,” the broad and nebulous array of habits, customs, and traditions associated with this beverage within two national, and three political contexts.⁴ The challenges of this task are as obvious as they are plentiful. Culture is notoriously difficult to define, though there have been some genuinely enlightening efforts made by historians such as William H. Sewell Jr. who seek to bridge the gap between an anthropological and historical use of the term.⁵ My use of the word in this study is necessarily of the same nature, quite “soft” in comparison to anthropological studies. It is fundamentally focused on change (or lack thereof) over time and accounts for culture as both something “performed” by individuals under given circumstances and a loose structure with internal logic that provides meaning to those actions. I say that this is necessary because a study of beer culture could hardly operate otherwise. Beer is a ubiquitous daily object in much of the world and especially so in Germany and the Czech lands. Tens of millions of individuals “perform” beer culture in these countries each day. Still, I maintain that there are coherent systems of symbolism generating meaning into each of those acts, in large part beyond the conscious awareness or control of the actors.

⁴ I use these three words to denote different valences of repetitive action. Habit, custom, and tradition, respectively, suggest to me a spectrum of lesser to greater degree of awareness and intentionality in the act of repetition.

⁵ William H Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Chapter 3: “That good ol’ men’s drink of the noble forefathers” – Beer, Gender, and National Identity (1945-1970)

While all of Part II deals with questions of identity, this chapter most directly explores the kinds of self-meaning that beer provided to particular groups in postwar German and Czech societies and the longer social and cultural history they emerged out of. Recent literature on identity has demonstrated that people's self-understandings are composed of multiple, flexible, and fluid formations made from different threads of discourse or bodies of knowledge.¹ I seek the ways that beer called forth different aspects of identity in the moment that historic actors chose to speak and position themselves with respect to it. I also consider continuities between beer's social and cultural role in the postwar period and previous eras in central European history. As in Part I, these continuities are of two kinds. The first can be reconstructed from a serious consideration of primary source evidence and secondary literature and suggests the staying power of real social and cultural structures that emerged around beer by the nineteenth century. These include the formation and persistence of beer drinking social milieus and the physical spaces in which they collectively drank. The second is a semi-fictional history of beer's role in German and Czech societies, an imagined historical beer culture supportive of larger imagined communities. Beer myths wove a small handful of real evidence from earlier eras together with a great deal of nostalgia and escapist fantasies of past golden ages to produce fairy tales about the primordial roots of popular drinking habits and social patterns. I argue that it is this combination of continuities, one resulting from material realities that played out over decades and perhaps centuries, and one persistently reimagined from convenient half-truths and simplistic recourse to “natural” origins for complex cultural and social phenomena, that makes

¹ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1-47.

the culture surrounding a commodity like German and Czech beer so “sticky” and consistent in its broad strokes.

Beer and Gender

The word “*Vatertag*” (Father’s Day) dances across the black and white screen. Polka music plays in the background. Men cook sausages and steaks over an open fire in the middle of a field, cooling bottles of celebratory champagne in a brook. A voiceover announces that their “self-roasted” meat “naturally tastes much better than at home.” Beer flows freely. Men stumble around the clearing, or doze with bottles tucked under their arms. With no transition, the scene shifts to a wood-cutting contest. Muscles strain as a two-person saw tears through a log. Axes chip away at thick trunks laid out for the competition. The winners clink together bottles of cold beer to refresh themselves after their “hot battle.” “Hops and malt,” recites the narrator, “may God keep them!” (*Hopfen und Malz, Gott erhalt’s!*) Again without transition, the image switches to a brewery packaging line. Foaming bottles rush past. Women appear on screen for the first and only time, in clean white aprons working on the production line. This, the narrator explains, is “the source of the noble liquid [*edlen Nasses*]. Mechanized, hygienic, modern, and yet [still] the good old men’s drink of the noble forefathers [*gute alte Männergetränk der edlen Vorväter*].” As a final wrap up to the beer-soaked montage, a series of images flash by from the Fifth International Congress of the European Brewery Convention in Baden-Baden. Titans of the beer industry in suits smile and clink glasses congenially. One woman, presumably the wife of one of the participants, is shown half off camera as the attention remains on her male companions.² This opening sequence from a 1955 episode of the West German weekly newsreel *Blick in die Welt*

² *Blick in die Welt* (1955), BIDW20845 [Accessed 6 May, 2021]

encapsulates beer's overwhelming association with men, masculinity, and male social bonding in postwar Central Europe.

That single clip, just a few minutes long, amounted to a mere drop in an ocean of such gendered rhetoric in West Germany, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia in the second half of the twentieth century. Real historical patterns in the social and spatial settings of beer drinking dating to at least the late nineteenth century combined with invented tales of beer's ancient lineage as a manly beverage to feed a dominant cultural perception. The mass media then reflected that notion back on society, further entrenching a normative idea that affected consumer preferences and opinions recorded in polls and market research. Although gender relations in Europe arguably changed more rapidly in the late twentieth century than ever before in human history, and despite targeted efforts by some profit-minded business leaders and ideologically-driven socialist functionaries to consciously reframe beer as a product more appealing to women and fostering of female sociality, shifts toward a more egalitarian beer culture remained surface-level at best.³ Indeed, while certain commentators on beer culture in these states suggested in the later decades of the twentieth century that beer had become a more female-friendly drink (or perhaps women had become a more beer-friendly crowd), countervailing forces actually accelerated in some parts of the globe.⁴ As beer producers fought viciously over market share, one trend that grew in many places including the US and South Africa was beer advertising investment for mass consumer sports specifically targeted at male fans.⁵

³ On gender relations, Uta G. Poiger, "Generations: The 'Revolutions' of the 1960s," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 640-660; Dagmar Herzog, "East Germany's Sexual Evolution," in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, eds. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008):71 – 90.

⁴ Johanna Schulz and Hans Jann, *Wohl-bekomm's... ein Prost dem Bier* (Forchheim in Oberfranken: Forchheimer Reihe F. Streit, 1981), 29; Emil Ulichberger, *Rund Ums Bier*, 4th ed (Leipzig: VEB Fachbuchverlag Leipzig, 1986), 48.

⁵ Anne Kelk Mager, *Beer, Sociability, and Masculinity in South Africa*, African Systems of Thought; Variation: African Systems of Thought. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

The popular conception that beer had been a drink of men more than women since the foggy days of antiquity appeared all over the postwar Beer Zone accompanied frequently by language that emphasized tradition and history as the roots of the association. Another episode of *Blick in die Welt* from 1962 honoring Father's Day showed men packing up a horse-drawn carriage with beer for a day in the forest. After noting that the camera (a feminine noun in German) was "the only feminine thing allowed to come along," the narrator described the boozy, manly atmosphere in the forest as "like the olden days [*wie anno dunnemals*]." ⁶ The filmmaker's juxtaposition of masculinity, "primordial" German forests, and beer gives a profound sense of naturalistic connections between them. ⁷ To be sure, sources as ancient as Plato considered certain alcoholic beverages "manly" and others "effeminate." Which drink fell into which category depended on the preferred libation of the dominant culture. Max Nelson, in his work on beer in the ancient world, makes a compelling argument that ancient Greek and Roman authors associated their preferred drink, wine, with masculinity and the barbarian's beer with femininity. ⁸ However, what Plato and the producers of *Blick in die Welt* took as a natural state of things results from gendered social segregation. The gendered drinking patterns of twentieth-century Europe have their origins in more recent historical developments, namely the growth of pub and tavern life in the Early Modern period.

In the Middle Ages, public houses primarily served for the provision and security of travelers, and supplying alcoholic beverages was a given. ⁹ The beer drunk in these

⁶ *Blick in die Welt* (1962/24), BIDW20018 [Accessed 12 January 2023].

⁷ On connections between the German forest and the importance of the "natural" to national identity see Jeffrey K. Wilson, *The German Forest: Nature, Identity, and the Contestation of a National Symbol, 1871-1914* (Toronto [Ont.] : University of Toronto Press, (Beaconsfield, Quebec : Canadian Electronic Library, 2012), 2012).

⁸ Max Nelson, *The Barbarian's Beverage: A History of Beer in Ancient Europe* (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁹ Ingrid Jeske, "Speise, Trank und Unterkunft: Zur Entwicklung des Gastgewerbes von der Antike bis ins 18. Jahrhundert," in *Kneipenkultur: Untersuchungen rund um die Theke*, ed. Gudrun Schwibbe (Münster: Waxmann, 1998), 11-13, 16.

establishments different little from what was made in many homes. The early commercial and hospitality brewing that grew out of this domestic arrangement remained primarily a woman's job into the fourteenth century, as society regarded it "low-status, low-skilled, poorly remunerated work."¹⁰ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, commercial beer production boomed in its first "golden age," and men moved in to dominate the now-profitable industry.¹¹ At the same time, pub and tavern life thrived. By the end of the Middle Ages "a dense network of inns and taverns had come into existence" in Central Europe.¹² Women were a constant presence in these spaces, but never on equal social footing. They spent time in taverns as members of the publican's household (or as publicans themselves), and often as sex workers.¹³ They could not, however, usually participate in male drinking rituals or sociability. As B. Ann Tlusty argues, women's greatest impact on drinking habits during this time came in "defining the ground rules for norms of drinking behavior" by criticizing or condoning men's consumption.¹⁴ She continues "[w]hat was the norm for men would become the deviation for women... whether it was tavern space, immoderate alcohol consumption, or power."¹⁵ As with any rule, this one had exceptions, but it generally held true through the Early Modern period.¹⁶ There is scant

¹⁰ Ibid., 13; Judith M. Bennet, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World 1300 - 1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6.

¹¹ Eline Peolmans and Johan F. M. Swinnen, "A Brief Economic History of Beer," in *The Economics of Beer*, ed. Johan F. M. Swinnen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9

¹² Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty, "The World of the Tavern, An Introduction," in *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 7.

¹³ Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order*, 141.

¹⁴ Michael Frank, "Satan's Servant or Authorities' Agent? Publicans in Eighteenth-Century Germany," in *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 16; B. Ann Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), chapter 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 116.

¹⁶ Brennan points to "gin shops" as a public drinking space where women were unusually well represented, Thomas Edward Brennan et al., *Public Drinking in the Early Modern World: Voices from the Tavern, 1500-1800* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), xii-xiii; Tlusty also mentions rare exceptions, Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order*, 143.

evidence to suggest a gendered preference for beer in the Early Modern era, but the changes that eventually brought about such a distinction had already begun.

The modern conception of beer as a “man’s drink” really emerged in the nineteenth century. It resulted from women’s continued exclusion from spaces of beer consumption in the period when that consumption exploded and the “better parts” of society increasingly associated wine with propriety, a virtue demanded of woman above all. As men of the traditional middling and lower classes (artisans, laborers, fieldhands, etc.) became more pub-centered in their social lives, Europe’s highest social classes largely abandoned the tavern.¹⁷ The emergent bourgeoisie followed in their footsteps.¹⁸ Public social life among these groups relocated to new, less-alcohol focused spaces such as coffeehouses, while their drinking escapades gradually shifted more to private homes and gatherings (salons) or into the emerging network of clubs and cabarets.¹⁹ Women gained a greater physical presence in these spaces, though often without anything resembling an equal social footing.²⁰ Only certain groups of the better off, such as university students, bucked the trend. At the same time, new market trends in alcoholic beverages left beer as the least-convenient option for at-home drinking. Distilled spirits, growing in popularity since the Thirty Years War, offered a libation that could be stored for long periods of time without spoiling.²¹ Advances in bottling technology during the seventeenth century also began to make wine easier to transport in household quantities and gave it a longer shelf life.²² Of course, beer

¹⁷ Brennan et al., xi.

¹⁸ Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, 148.

¹⁹ Bryant, *Prague*, 86; 102.

²⁰ Bryant makes particular reference to the importance of the salon to middle-class Czech life in Prague, and to strictly gendered nature of the conversations expected to occur there, see Chad Bryant, *Prague: Belonging in the Modern City / Chad Bryant*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021), 33.

²¹ David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001; Jeske, “Speise, Trank und Unterkunft,” 18.

²² Mack Holt, *The Politics of Wine in Early Modern France: Religion and Popular Culture in Burgundy, 1477-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 98.

bottling began at the same time.²³ In England, bottled beer became a major industry with shipments following the empire all over the world.²⁴ But beer for local consumption remained cheaper and its (poorer) drinkers less likely than wine consumers to shell out extra money for a portable package when they could simply drink at the pub.²⁵ Beer also tended to spoil faster and had a lower alcohol content per unit of volume. With much beer still of dubious quality and poor durability, the longstanding preference for wine among Europe's wealthier social circles took on a decidedly domestic angle.²⁶ Among bourgeois and professional circles, the backbone of nineteenth-century temperance movements, wine became a preferred beverage over the cheap, distilled "demon alcohol" that had begun to rampage through the lower classes in the previous century. Wine took on a hue of sophistication, gentility, and moderation.²⁷ This aura of domesticity, gentility, modesty, and even piety (not only did Christ turn water into wine, but the Bible mentions wine 165 times), combined to construct a social expectation that the "good" woman drank wine at home, if she drank at all. The "bad" woman drank liquor, at first at home and then, as in William Hogarth's famous *Gin Lane* painting, out in the streets in a state of immiseration.²⁸ Beer continued to be drunk at the pub, overwhelmingly by men.

Urbanization and industrialization only exacerbated this trend, as middle-class temperance movements with strong female participation targeted liquor and, to a lesser degree, beer. Pubs that served mostly beer and spirits also proliferated as the social and political loci of

²³ Holger Starke, "Zur Geschichte des sächsischen Brauwesens," *Mitteilungen des Freiburger Altertumsvereins* 87 (18 November 2000), 140.

²⁴ Joza, *Historie Pivní Lahve v Čechách*, 11–13.

²⁵ Joza, 18.

²⁶ James S Roberts, *Drink, Temperance, and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 16

²⁷ Roberts, *Drink, Temperance, and the Working Class*; Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*.

²⁸ William Hogarth, "Beer Street/Gin Lane," 1751, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beer_Street_and_Gin_Lane#/media/File:Beer-street-and-Gin-lane.jpg.

the new industrial working class.²⁹ As more working-class women moved into the industrial workforce, they, like their male colleagues, began to drink more alcohol.³⁰ Blue collar women also reached primarily for beer out of both cost considerations and a sense of propriety (wine was too expensive, and liquor “indecent” for a woman).³¹ Their presence in public drinking spaces remained limited, however, and for women, aspirations of a middle class lifestyle included aspirations for more “refined” beverages such as wine.³² Beer did not break out of male-dominated pubs and taverns to the same degree as wine and liquor until the mid-twentieth century. As late as 1938, only 30% of German beer went into bottles.³³ Notwithstanding the Central European custom of retrieving beer by the pitcher- or “growler”-full to drink at home, most of the other 70% ended up in pubs and restaurants, to be served, primarily, to men. Though it started to become more acceptable for women to visit public drinking spaces in the decades before World War II, they continued to prefer drinks “typical” for women such as wine and cocktails. In the Third Reich, women and youth became the primary targets for anti-drinking and anti-smoking campaigns while public health officials and experts largely spared adult men the brunt of their anti-alcohol rhetoric. Such policies were hardly conducive to any equalization of beer consumption between the sexes.³⁴ In short, the tendency of women to prefer beer less than men at least until the mid-twentieth century has roots in recent social, cultural, political, and economic history rather than any kind of essential quality. What changed, or did not change, as

²⁹ Roberts, *Drink, Temperance, and the Working Class*.

³⁰ Bryant, *Prague*, 89, 102.

³¹ Manfred Hübner, *Zwischen Alkohol und Abstinenz: Trinksitten und Alkoholfrage im deutschen Proletariat bis 1914* (Berlin: Dietz, 1988), 132–33.

³² Laura L. Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle: Drink and Worker Culture in St. Petersburg 1900 - 1929* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 6, 141.

³³ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 8.

³⁴ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 37–39.

those circumstances began to rapidly shift in the postwar years is the story of the remainder of this section.

So much for its origins, but one might reasonably ask what larger impact could result from this mutually reinforcing cultural pattern of “men drink beer – beer makes men manly – manly men drink more beer” which leaves little place for women. I would suggest that there are concrete outcomes that go beyond any general distaste for male chauvinism by itself. Perhaps the most important result of such discourse appears in Chapter 4, which deals with public health efforts to address alcohol abuse and alcoholism and shows that officials and experts dealt with male and female drinking differently. Although alcoholism among women remained far less common than among men, it was increasingly alcohol consumption among women and youths that inspired the most panic in public health circles, leaving less attention on the group most likely to abuse alcohol (working age men). Perceptions of beer, the most male-gendered alcoholic beverage, as a relatively harmless drink of moderation played a major role here. Similarly, as scholars studying efforts to produce greater gender equality in socialist states make clear, traditional attitudes toward women’s roles in family life arguably constituted the greatest material hinderance to higher educational and career achievements in the later twentieth century. Even in countries that abolished restrictions on access to education and work force participation for women, the expectation that they would still play a far greater role in maintaining the household, caring for children, and supporting their spouse created powerful informal barriers to advancement.³⁵ Any cultural or social force, therefore, that reinforced notions of an exclusively male right to leisure, must be seen as contributing to the persistence of such attitudes. The only question remaining is: does the evidence show that beer culture reinforced such notions?

³⁵ Farquharson, “The Consensus That Never Came”; Sharon L. Wolchik, “The Status of Women in a Socialist Order: Czechoslovakia, 1948-1978.”

Beer and Gender in West Germany

Gender patterns in West German beer drinking show the staying power of historically constructed consumer identities. Women's beer consumption rose in the postwar era but remained significantly lower than men's even though the spatial context of beer drinking transformed over the course of a few decades. While the male space of the pub, and especially the *Stammtisch* (regulars' table) - a social gathering usually around alcohol and often at a bar, pub, or beer hall - remained a staple of FRG society, a great deal of beer drinking moved into the home and other private spaces, facilitated by the boom in food packaging and preservation.³⁶ Still, the media continued to overwhelmingly depict beer as a man's drink, including images of women consuming the German "liquid bread" rarely and almost always in the company of male companions. Beer advertisements that appealed to women did so in a clear understanding of their roles as the primary grocery purchasers for their households at a moment when packaged beer sales in supermarkets became the fastest growing and most important sector in the industry.³⁷ Only after the conservative gender politics of the 1950s and 1960s came under fire during the sexual revolution of the late 1960s and 1970s did efforts to sell beer to women for their own consumption, portrayals of women drinking beer, and narratives of an increasingly egalitarian consumer base make a more conspicuous appearance in West German society. The impact of those changes on overall representation of beer consumption and consumer preferences are

³⁶ Nancy Bodden, *Business as Usual? Die Dortmunder Brauindustrie, der Flaschenbierboom und die Nachfragemacht des Handels 1950 bis 1980* (Dortmund: Gesellschaft für Westfälische Wirtschaftsgeschichte e.V., 2019).

³⁷ Bodden, *Business as Usual?* 10-11; On the rising importance of women as consumers in West German society see also Weinreb, *Modern Hungers*, 5, 166-173.

notable but hardly revolutionary, proving once again how slowly such cultural associations change, if they change at all.

As beer production recovered in the 1950s and 1960s, consumption preferences remained heavily skewed in favor of men, and the close link between alcohol consumption and male-only social gatherings appeared deeply anchored in West German culture. In 1949, with beer production still lagging in quantity and quality, 21 percent of men responded “beer” on a survey that asked their favorite beverage (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic). Only 3 percent of women said the same.³⁸ More importantly, when asked if they drink beer at all, 91 percent of men answered in the affirmative, compared to 62 percent of women. Nearly half of men said that they drank beer “often” as opposed to only 15 percent of women.³⁹ By 1965, with the postwar brewing industry fully recovered and achieving record sales, a similar question yielded 83 percent of men reporting to drink beer “often, or now and then,” but a mere 46 percent of women. The 8 percent drop for men is surprisingly, but small enough that it could be statistical noise. That the number of women who reported drinking beer plummeted by 16 percent seems suggestive of a real change. In both cases the downward shift does not augur an overall decline in beer consumption, those numbers continued to skyrocket. Rather, it shows a more realistic indication of men and women’s preferences for beer in a fully functional economy with a wide selection of alternatives. In 1949, the brewing industry still promoted its product as a source of clean hydration and nutrition. In some cases, beer may have been the only reliable beverage option. With the shift to the peace-time economy in the 1950s, breweries changed strategies and

³⁸ Both groups reported preferring wine to beer, but this number reflected the poor quality of available products in Spring 1949. When asked if they would drink more beer if the quality improved, 44 percent of men said yes, while only 16 percent of women agreed.

³⁹ Elisabeth Noelle and Erich Peter Neumann, Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Jahrbuch der öffentliche Meinung, 1947-1955* (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1956), 35, 37.

promoted beer as a drink of relaxation, leisure, and recovery from manly labor. Beer became a *Genussmittel* again.⁴⁰ With want replacing need as the primary concern, and greater ability to buy coffee, tea, or wine (all preferred more by women), female interest in beer decreased substantially. Most tellingly, of all the beverages included in the survey, none displayed a gender gap as large as beer with its 37 percent difference in preference. Only distilled spirits even came close. Such results make even more sense in light of another poll that investigated social habits for men and women. The *Stammtisch* continued to serve as common ground where men could meet and discuss issues both trivial and serious. A 1967 poll showed that 80 percent of West German men had attended a *Stammtisch* at some point in the recent past. Only 20 percent reported never participating in such gatherings. The female equivalent given by the survey, the *Kränzchen*, evokes images of friends chatting over coffee rather than alcoholic beverages.⁴¹

Increasingly, however, one did not need to visit a public drinking establishment to have ready access to quality beer. The “lady of the house” could simply pick it up with the other groceries. As the West German beer industry emerged from the postwar years, the bottling boom arrived in earnest. Whereas in 1938 70 percent of beer arrived at its site of consumption in a keg or barrel, by 1956 more than half of the FRG’s production had switched to bottles and (to a much lesser extent) cans.⁴² By the end of the decade that number hit nearly 60 percent on its way to 75 percent by the time the two Germany’s reunited in 1990.⁴³ At the same time, the new conveniences of the modern kitchen, the first major taste of the “economic miracle” for so many German families, immediately made the household beer supply more durable and more

⁴⁰ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 142–46.

⁴¹ Noelle and Neumann, *Jahrbuch der öffentliche Meinung 1965-1967*, 21-22.

⁴² *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 8–9; *Blick in die Welt* (1955), Clip ID: BIDW20845.

⁴³ No title, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 February 1960; “Der Durst ist fast gelöscht,” *Welt-Report*, 10 November 1983.

enjoyable. West German officials, including Minister of Economics Ludwig Erhard himself, gestured to the rapidly modernizing and revitalizing brewing industry as one of the success markers of the social market economy. In a 1953 episode of *Blick in die Welt*, the narrator extolled the promise of Erhard's economic plans to make former luxuries such as refrigerators available to all. A bustling refrigerator assembly line appeared on screen to emphasize the message. In celebration of their 100,000th refrigerator produced, the workers of the plant gifted one of their models to the workers of a car factory. As the camera showed dozens of employees from both facilities gathered around, one man opened the fridge to reveal a second gift, rows of cold beer bottles happily enjoyed by the throng of (almost exclusively male) workers.⁴⁴ Beer offered everything that the postwar West German government wanted in a sign of prosperity. It was a traditional good in the minds of the German people, but a massive beneficiary of the modernizing and booming economy of the "miracle" years. It fit perfectly into the gendered conservatism of family life in the early FRG, a reward for male labor and a sign of the new domestic conveniences available to the housewife. As Terrell puts it, "beer was part of a much larger process of political and economic stabilization predicated on the construction of a male producer-citizen and a female consumer-citizen."⁴⁵

While women did not drink beer nearly as much as men, they commonly appeared in media representations of the beverage in particular ways. Beer advertising, news clippings, and depictions in entertainment frequently showed women, but almost always as the accompaniment, the enticement, or the support system for male consumption. Out of thirty-five scenes of beer drinking on the West German film newsreel *Blick in the die Welt* from the 1950s, twenty-three show men drinking beer alone or with other men, eleven showed men and women enjoying the

⁴⁴ *Blick in die Welt* (1953/21), BIDW21780 [Accessed 20 May, 2021]

⁴⁵ Terrell, "The People's Drink," 122.

Volksgetränk together, and just a single shot portrayed women drinking beer without a male present.⁴⁶ Many of those images of women consuming beer alongside men came from reports on festivals such as Munich’s famed Oktoberfest and other communal gatherings from around West Germany.⁴⁷ Historians have noted the longstanding tradition of heavy drinking at festivals and celebrations of major holidays dating back to at least the Middle Ages in Europe, where the entire community participated and often abandoned some normal rules of social comportment.⁴⁸ Scenes from 1950s West German beer festivals appear well in fitting with this legacy of exceptional spaces, albeit with the added impulse of the accelerating *Freßwelle* (“eating wave”) that gripped the country as food scarcity receded.⁴⁹ The combination of traditional debauchery and the collective release from the trauma of war and occupation likely helps to explain why these gatherings disproportionately included women while regular drinking sessions at the local pub did not. Even so, one woman attending the 1963 Oktoberfest felt the need to distinguish between the purpose of her visit and that of many men. “I go for entertainment,” she told a reporter covering the event, “but some men go to booze [*saufen*].”⁵⁰ Women also appeared regularly in beer advertising and media as sexualized enticements to male consumption. Ad campaigns featuring women in bathing suits and content centering gendered, anthropomorphized, beer glasses began already in the early 1950s as a sign of not only the gendered aspects of beer selling but also the shift away from a consumer economy struggling to

⁴⁶ Personal data compilation and analysis. Primary source base: <https://www.progress.film/>

⁴⁷ See, for example: *Stuttgart, Germany - American zone (Stuttgart, Deutschland - Amerikanische Zone)*, (1946) H00123 [Accessed 28 April, 2021]; *Blick in die Welt* (1950/00), BIDW21274 [Accessed 24 May, 2021]; *Blick in die Welt* (1950/39), BIDW21663 [Accessed 16 June, 2021]; *Blick in die Welt* (1951/12), BIDW21652 [Accessed 26 May, 2021]; *Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge* (1956/40), Q6UJ9A0048X8 [Accessed 1 June, 2021]

⁴⁸ Hübner, *Zwischen Alkohol und Abstinenz*, 32–33; Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order*, 6.

⁴⁹ Alice Autumn Weinreb, *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York, 2017), 145.

⁵⁰ *Blick in die Welt* (1963/40), BIDW20634 [Accessed 8 July, 2021], timestamp: 8:00.

deal with shortage and toward one trying to cope with excess.⁵¹ At a 1956 celebration of the yearly “Senatsbock” beer in Hamburg, a city usually more associated with liquor, the festivities opened with a dozen or so young women making a runway walk holding ceramic beer mugs while surrounded by a hooting and hollering crowd of mostly men. The camera of *Blick in die Welt* jumps back and forth between images of the young women posing and serving beer and shots of transfixed male faces puffing cigars as they watch.⁵² Indeed, still images and videos portrayed women serving beer as “Biermädel” or working in breweries along bottling lines as regularly, or perhaps more, than they showed them drinking the beverage.⁵³

Was there any active effort to set women on an equal footing in West German beer culture? The time was arguably ripe to do so, with spatial consumption patterns shifting in a more favorable direction. The bottling boom and subsequent increase of beer consumption at home, often with meals or while watching the increasingly ubiquitous television, partly demolished one of the historic social barriers to women’s consumption.⁵⁴ While scholars make no bones about how bad the 1950s retrenchment of conservative gender norms was for women attempting to get fair treatment in the workplace, consumption was a different matter.⁵⁵ On the other hand, there is little reason to think that feminists and women’s rights advocates viewed

⁵¹ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 147–49.

⁵² *Blick in die Welt* (1956/05), BIDW20120 [Accessed 20 May, 2021], timestamp: 4:45.

⁵³ Exemplary are “Vesperzeit im Münchener Hofbräuhaus (1951),” German History in Documents and Images, https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2624; *Blick in die Welt* (1959/20), BIDW20005 [Accessed 20 May, 2021]; *Blick in die Welt* (1958/40), BIDW20336 [Accessed 8 June, 2021]; *Blick in die Welt* (1957/36), BIDW20535 [Accessed 27 May, 2021]; *Blick in die Welt* (1955), BIDW20845.

⁵⁴ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 9.; Dipl.rer.oec. Werner Bischoff und Dr.rer.oec. Werner Jurich - Institut für Bedarfsforschung, Abt. Nahrungs- und Genußmittel, “Die Entwicklung des Bedarfs an alkoholischen Getränken bis 1970,” n.d., BArch, DL 102/39, 104; E. Schuster, “Epidemiologie des Alkoholmißbrauchs,” In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976), published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 34-51. 1976. BayHStA, MInn 110959.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Heineman, “Chapter One: The Hour of the Women: Memories of Germany’s ‘Crisis Years’ and West German National Identity,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1948-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 39.

beer drinking as a worthy battlefield on which fight for equality.⁵⁶ What little effort did emerge to promote women's inclusion in beer culture as something other than servers, production workers, and objects of the consumptive male gaze therefore fell to the industry itself, which naturally kept the door open to any avenue of increased sales as long as it did not undermine their products appeal to the core, male, market.

Certainly, West German beer companies continued to view women primarily as a visual and commercial avenue to men's stomachs, but they made some efforts to appeal to women as beer drinkers. In the mid-1950s, the Bavarian Brewers' Association, especially, made connections with women's organizations, organized advertising campaigns aimed at women to attract female purchasing power, and placed ads in women's publications.⁵⁷ The problem, again, lies in the ambiguity of this outreach. It could be seen as an effort to attract female consumers, or just as easily as a pitch to the primary grocery shopper in the household. In their own journals, industry specialists and experts openly discussed the importance of appealing to women in their roles as housewives trying to make the most economical choice in the family's (read: husband's) beer supply. "Enjoying beer at home is also cheaper than in restaurants," wrote a representative of the German Brewers' Association (DBB) in a 1957 booklet, "which the housewife, especially, will not overlook while she is doing her shopping."⁵⁸ Later the same publication shows an image of a woman cooking with a bottle of beer at hand captioned "the housewife knows to value beer in the household and kitchen."⁵⁹ At the same time however, this booklet did at least depict

⁵⁶ As Uta Poiger points out, people fighting for greater equality for women used the term "feminist" less often in West Germany than, for example, France or the US, but the movement that emerged in the 1960s aimed at many of the same legal and societal goals as their counterparts elsewhere. See Poiger, "Generations: The 'Revolutions' of the 1960s," 654.

⁵⁷ Terrell, "The People's Drink," 155–56.

⁵⁸ Dr. Erich Kaindl (Deutscher Brauerbund), "Das Bier im Deutschen Wirtschaftsleben," in *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk über das Bier* (Nuremberg: Verlag Hans Carl, 1957), 9.

⁵⁹ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 131.

women as beer consumers, showing an image of two women smiling and chatting over glasses of beer. Here the caption reads “beer is not just enjoyed by men.”⁶⁰ A few pages later comes another image of a woman drinking beer, this time in a classic advertising pose, gazing into the camera as she is just about to sip from a glass. Then, again, shortly thereafter a young woman drinking a beer and holding a bottle while incongruously being nuzzled by a horse in a field.⁶¹ As ham-handed as these efforts appear, they suggest some interest on the industry’s part to foster female beer consumption in West Germany. They did so, however, in the face of an overwhelmingly masculine discourse about beer in their society, a discourse that they actively contributed to.

Character, as the saying goes, is what one does when no one is watching. By that same logic, some of the most telling examples of powerful men’s perception of women’s relationship to beer come from sources less public-facing than media newsreels or mass advertisements. In 1951, one official in the Federal Ministry for Nutrition and Agriculture wrote to another after a meeting where one of their female colleagues had represented their division in a discussion on beer prices. The head of the division “expressed his view that the price division should not, in the future, be represented by a lady in inter-ministerial conversations about alcoholic beverages.”⁶² Again, in a 1962 meeting of two Bavarian state senate committees discussing the ongoing legal conflicts over non-*Reinheitsgebot*-conforming “sweet beer” being imported into their state, one senator tried to play devil’s advocate for the beverages in a telling way. “It isn’t just native Bavarians who drink beer in Bavaria,” he argued. “In this age of foreign travel, beer consumption by non-Bavarians plays a significant role. And perhaps the world of women

⁶⁰ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 124–25.

⁶¹ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 129,132.

⁶² In House Message from Buchner, BMEL to Dr. Doebel, Ministerialrat, BMEL, 27 August 1951, BArch-K, B 116/41429.

[*Frauenwelt*] is somewhat more inclined toward sweet beer.”⁶³ Without making the audacious suggestion that perhaps authentic Bavarians (i.e. Bavarian men) would ever want to drink something other than “real beer,” the senator suggests that sweet beer might be made available for “others,” namely foreigners and women. Shortly thereafter in the course of discussion, another senator echoed a similar sentiment, even more explicitly. According to the minutes, he dismissively opined that, “[w]hoever wants to drink beer will, according to [the senator’s] experience, drink real beer [*richtige Bier*]. In his experience sweet beer – or malt drink or whatever you call it – is in any case only drunk by women.”⁶⁴

From politicians to media creators to advertising, in West Germany from 1945 to 1970 beer, a beverage historically drunk more by men as a result of specific sociocultural forces, became, or remained, “that good ol’ man’s drink of our noble forefathers.” This conclusion accords with the best historiographical understanding of FRG society in the 1950s and most of the 1960s, which, despite noting the percolating unrest that would explode into social revolutions by the end of the period, generally mark it as an era dominated by conservative, Christian-democratic values. The existing work on beer marketing and industry attitudes toward women further support that narrative.⁶⁵ In short, the gender politics of beer in early postwar West Germany conform closely to the overall gender politics of the period, which demonstrate strong continuity with past dominant attitudes. What is undoubtedly of greater surprise, however, is how closely this pattern accords with developments on the other side of the Iron Curtain as demonstrated below, and, crucially, how consistent such attitudes remained through the following decades as the above-mentioned social revolutions followed their course.

⁶³ J.L. Trum, Bamberg, "Bericht über die Sitzung des Rechts- u. Verfassungsausschusses mit dem Wirtschaftsausschuß am 29. März 1962," 30 March 1962, BayHStA, Senat 3246,

⁶⁴ Trum, "Bericht über die Sitzung... am 29. März 1962," 13.

⁶⁵ Terrell, "The People’s Drink," 149–56.

Beer and Gender in East Germany

Greif auch zum Bier mein stiller Junge,

Das Bier, das lockert manche Zunge.

Gespräch beim Bier ist produktiv

Und stärkt so manches Kollektiv.

Turn to beer my quiet young man,

beer, that loosens many a tongue.

Talk over beer is productive,

and so it strengthens many a collective.

Das Bier mit seinen Kalorien,

Erzeugt enorme Energien.

Im Betrieb und auf dem Bau,

Leider nicht so bei der Frau!

Beer with its calories,

produces enormous energies.

At the plant or on the job-

but sadly, not with your wife!

- Oktoberklub, “*Bierlied*” FDJ Song (1978)

In a somber moment on screen, two film producers stroll together in a park and discuss the challenges of loneliness in East Germany society. The pair, a man and a woman, discuss a young filmmaker under their tutelage who is struggling to complete his film on a factory cadre of young women. Prompted by the sad state of some of the characters he has found, they present competing ideas about social isolation in their land. The male producer argues that the film will capture an important issue in the GDR. “Even among us there are lonely people,” he explains, “but we don’t talk about them. It’s as if it were a shame or an awkward disease. We would rather sit and drink, not much but regularly. And women, especially educated women, they don’t even

go to the pub. They sit at home and drink in the evening.”⁶⁶ Though this film comes from 1979, its emphasis on the interlocking themes of drinking, gender, sociability, and space mirrors closely developments in West Germany. The East German pub, as well, remained a predominantly male space, with close ties to male work culture and class. According to this telling, even when men experienced loneliness and sought respite through alcohol, they tended to go to a space where they could, so to speak, be alone together. In that environment, they overwhelmingly reached for beer, quite often accompanied by *Schnaps* (as the film portrays in several scenes). Women drank increasingly more as the twentieth century wore on, but they drank more at home, and they drank mostly wine when they could get it or spirits if they could not. That, at least, reflects the picture that the socialist East German leadership had of gendered alcohol consumption in its country and the situation that it sought to address in its programs for building a more egalitarian social system.

Unlike in the FRG, the GDR’s leaders made an active effort to change the material and sociocultural conditions that had made many drinking spaces highly segregated between men and women. This involved, on the one hand, active campaigns to close or renovate the dingy, suspicious “dark pubs” of the past and channel the brewing industry’s limited financial resources into expanded bottling capacity. As part of its campaigns to combat alcohol abuse, East German public health and social commentators also regularly produced scathing attacks on the idea that drinking, and especially beer and liquor drinking, made a person more “manly.”⁶⁷ On the other hand, the media consciously changed the way it portrayed alcohol consumption. Fictional print and broadcast content in the GDR depicted the world that the SED claimed to be building, and

⁶⁶ *Alle meine Mädchen*, directed by Iris Gusner (1979), available through: Progress, <https://www.progress.film/search/asset/50491034> [Accessed 6 October 2022]

⁶⁷ Dr. med. Wohlauf, Bernburg, "Der Griff zum Glas: Ausweg oder Selbstbetrug?" *Freiheit* (Halle), 22 May 1958.

part of that meant aspirationally showing women doing all the things more typically expected of men as they joined the workforce *en masse*, such as drinking beer in restaurants and pubs with coworkers both male and female. Nonfiction reporting, however, continued to show the continuity of both male-centered drinking spaces and gendered drinking habits. The authoritarian government in the East never directly aimed to make beer less of a “man’s drink,” but it did openly attack the underpinnings of that reputation, at least in theory. It failed, in part, as a result of the leadership’s questionable commitment to the ideal in the first place and resistance from a population unpersuaded to abandon persistent notions of identity and happy to express their resistance through subtle forms of *Eigensinn*.⁶⁸ As Sharon L. Wolchik suggested in an article written before Communism fell, on paper, authoritarian socialist regimes assumed that they had all the tools necessary to force the establishment of gender equality in both material and social conditions through control of education, media, and the economy.⁶⁹ As she recognized, this type of positivist thinking on a regime’s part missed entirely the breadth and depth of gendered thinking in a society at the levels of everyday cultural and social life. Writing over four decades later, Josie McClellan likewise concluded that, “the underlying messages about gender... were and remain[ed] anything but progressive.”⁷⁰ Beer culture serves as just one example of an overlooked reservoir of support for traditional attitudes toward interactions between men and women.

⁶⁸ Alf Lüdtkke, *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse, 1993); As Jennifer V. Evans and Shelley E. Rose have recently pointed out, German socialism had long had a “conditional, ambivalent” stance on feminism, see Jennifer V. Evans and Shelley E. Rose, eds., *Gender in Germany and Beyond: Exploring the Legacy of Jean Quataert* (New York: Berghahn, 2023); on the decidedly mixed track record of the East German government with issues of gender equality, see also Poiger, “Generations: The ‘Revolutions’ of the 1960s,” 648-649; Gundula Barsch, *Von Herrengedeck und Kumpeltod: die Drogengeschichte der DDR* (Geesthacht: Neuland, 2009), 140.

⁶⁹ Wolchik, “The Status of Women in a Socialist Order: Czechoslovakia, 1948-1978,” 583–84.

⁷⁰ Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 180–81.

Even in the earliest days of the German Democratic Republic, media creators identified the pub as a space in which the old Germany and the new would do battle for the future of society. That fight could not help but extend to the social dynamics between men and women. In a 1949 DEFA film, *Die Brücke (The Bridge)*, an honest and surprisingly unresentful group of *Ostvertriebene* (eastern expellees) arrive at their new home in Eastern Germany and try to build new lives for themselves while dealing with hostile and xenophobic townspeople. As is typical with DEFA films, the narrative contains a simple moral arc about solidarity. The humble and congenial refugees form friendships with a few kindly locals, who eventually help their community overcome its prejudice against the transplants and in the end they all come together to fight a shared threat. In case anyone missed the message, that threat took the form of a fire intentionally set by the town's sinister petty bourgeois pub-owners who personify distrust and anger at outsiders. Indeed, the pub serves as a key setting in the film, and its traditional gendered character speaks to the townspeople's backwardness and reactionary nature. As the refugees arrive in town their *de facto* leader, Michaelis, talks to his wife about things he looks forward to in their new home, a town with fancy buildings, architecture, and culture. "You're also just thinking about a pub, where it stinks of beer and *Schnaps*," his wife shoots back. "Well," Michaelis replies gently and smiling, "a man who does his work and has a lot running through his head needs a sip from the bottle sometimes."⁷¹

Many of the scenes that depict conflict between the locals and refugees take place in the town pub, a space decorated in traditional style with mostly wood features and ceramic ornamentation that almost shout of provincial *Gemütlichkeit* (roughly: coziness). Here the

⁷¹ *The Bridge (Die Brücke)*, directed by Artur Pohl (1949) available through: Progress, <https://progress.film/record/6702> from DEFA, DEFA Movie Collection, Clip ID: Q6UJ9A002KYZ [Accessed 28 April, 2021], timestamp: 4:00.

expellees gather separately from the locals and, as the female bar owner complains, “sit the entire evening with one glass of beer.”⁷² The pub’s entirely-male *Stammtisch* serves as a breeding ground of resentment toward Michaelis and the other easterners, and in the end the arson plot that serves as the film’s climax emerges from a conversation when the evil female bar owner joins one of these reactionary circles (downing shots of *Schnaps* as she does) to conspire against the refugees.⁷³ The movie thus reinforces gendered stereotypes about alcohol consumption by showing that good, virtuous women shun the pub while bad, reactionary women shoot liquor and plot against social progress. It does so even as it consciously criticizes traditional male-dominated drinking spaces as sites populated by *Spießbürger* (petty bourgeois philistines) who reaffirm one another’s political backwardness. The good, virtuous male pubgoer visits to reward a hard day’s work and relieve his manly proletarian burdens.

Whether attitudes shifted with time or different filmmakers understood the matter differently, later East German movies did make a conscious effort to apply the state’s stated ideals of gender egalitarianism to the traditional male drinking space. Few images evoked German male sociability more than a game of “skat” over beers at the *Stammtisch*. Yet, in the 1955 production *Heimliche Ehen* (*Secret Marriages*), one of the critical scenes that depicts women’s improving status in East German society shows the two female leads gaining access to this male-dominated space. When the two women, one an architect and the other the chairwoman of the local agricultural cooperative, show up in the pub to find prominent local men drinking beer and playing skat, the chairwoman suggests a move to one of the male participants. Symbolically, an older male professor expresses his shock. “You play skat?” he asks, astonished. One of the other players gracefully yields his place to allow the two women to join, without

⁷² *The Bridge*, timestamp: 13:30.

⁷³ *The Bridge*, timestamp: 57:30.

dissent from the other men at the table.⁷⁴ By demonstrating their ability, if not superiority, in a skillset typically reserved for men, the two women are meritocratically included in the game and the social drinking space that accompanies it by men who accept that they belong. In that way, the scene in the pub is a microcosm of the film's narrative.

Later, in 1963, a much more famous movie contained a similar scene of acceptance. In *Divided Heaven* (*Geteilte Himmel*), the young lead character Rita joins an otherwise entirely male work brigade at a railcar assembly plant to fulfill the practical element of her education as a future teacher. In an early scene, she joins the rest of her brigade at a pub after their shift to celebrate a colleague's birthday. The filmmaker chose not to hide the sometimes-awkward reality of these older, blue-collar men and young, future-white-collar woman sitting together around a large table drinking beer and singing. At one point, two of the men start a conversation about Paris, with one leaning into whisper something inaudible in the other man's ear. The film implies that the comment is of a sexual nature, because when Rita catches the eye of the second man, he quickly pushes his colleague away with a look of embarrassment and redirects the conversation. Even the song they sing speaks to the contrast between the old Germany and the new, exemplified by Rita's presence in the pub. As the other men break out in melody, the wizened brigade leader comments to the young woman, "songs you marched to stay with you for a long time... even when you have no use for them anymore."⁷⁵ When Rita leaves the pub, she meets her lover and the male lead, Manfred, out on the street in the rain. Manfred's discontent with life in East Germany drives his character development through the film, ultimately pushing him to leave Rita and emigrate to West Berlin. Here, his unhappiness with the situation comes

⁷⁴ *Secret Marriages // Heimliche Ehen* (1955), available through: <https://progress.film/record/8878> Progress, from DEFA, DEFA Movie Collection, Clip ID: Q6UJ9A002K0X [Accessed 7 July, 2021].

⁷⁵ *Divided Heaven*, Directed by Konrad Wolf. DEFA Film Library, 1963. Accessed June 15, 2020, timestamp: 19:30.

across as he comments, “you come home late every night and smell like beer and smoke.” She brushes off his critique with a laugh and explains, “like others’ beer; like others’ smoke.”⁷⁶ Her discomfort with smelling like “a bar” speaks again to the social awkwardness of a woman existing in such a traditional male space and the potential that her pub visit might prompt jealousy in Manfred.

The similarity of scenes from *Heimliche Ehen* and *Geteilte Himmel* take on special meaning in light of the fact that, in the time between these two film’s productions, the GDR government undertook a concerted attack on the bars and pubs within its territory. Starting in the late 1950s and particularly with the announcement of a renewed push for Cultural Revolution at the Tenth Party Congress in 1958, First Secretary Walter Ulbricht targeted the old “dark pubs” [*dunkle Kneipen*] of Germany’s past as dangerous breeding grounds for political backwardness and subversive activity.⁷⁷ Ulbricht himself mentioned playing skat in the pub as a definitive sign of the “old” culture that the GDR sought to overcome at a 1960 Culture Conference.⁷⁸ Hundreds of bars and pubs did shut down or undergo renovation into modern “Gaststätten” or “Klubhäuser” as a result of the program. Still, the overhaul of East Germany’s drinking spaces remained decidedly incomplete and, as it turned out, improving the space in which one served alcohol did not automatically produce better behavior from either publicans or customers, even when accompanied by new laws and regulations meant to govern public alcohol consumption.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Divided Heaven*, timestamp: 22:15.

⁷⁷ Kochan, *Blauer Würger*, 31–32.

⁷⁸ Kochan, 33.

⁷⁹ Kochan, 53-54; "Übersetzung aus dem Polnischen: Gesetzentwürfe über die Bekämpfung des Alkoholismus und über die Voraussetzungen zur Zulässigkeit von Schwangerschaftsunterbrechung - Quelle: 'Trybuna Ludu' vom 14.4.1956," 14 April 1956, BArch-L, DP 1/1397; Dr. Andrew C. Ivy, Professor of Physiology and Department Head of Clinical Science, University of Illinois, Chicago, "Definitionen der Grundbegriffe der durch den Alkoholkonsum Gestellten Probleme," 4 - 15 August 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21624; K. H. M., Stellv. Abteilungsleiter, Abt. Klubs u. Kulturhäuser to Dr. W. M., Stellv. des Ministers, Ministerium für Kultur, "Betr.: Maßnahmen im Bereich der Klubs und Kulturhäuser zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholmißbrauchs," 23 February 1967, BArch-L DR 1/22371; Message

Concerted efforts to transform the dense networks of simple workers' pubs, neighborhood watering holes, and "Bierstuben" [*beer parlours*] that clustered especially in the urban centers of East Germany started in earnest in the early 1960s. Yet, in 1969 officials in the Ministry of Justice continued to call for a "transformation of certain 'pubs' [*Kneipen*'] into cafés, espresso bars, wine parlors, etc."⁸⁰ The 1979 East German film *Alle meine Mädchen* mentioned at the beginning of this section contains multiple scenes shot in what can only be described as "*dunkle Kneipen*" as do other media depictions of public drinking spaces in the GDR from its later decades.⁸¹ The old bars and taverns did not disappear in the GDR, despite some progress and active state plans to do away with them. Government initiatives to create the material circumstances promoting a more egalitarian public sphere and propagandize a future world in which those changes would eradicate the gendered social segregation (and thus, incidentally, public drinking) could only go so far.

Individual media creations may have shown gender barriers falling in East German beer culture, but the weight of statistics tells a different story and shows parallels with West Germany. The association of beer with male sociability and masculinity stayed ingrained in the society of the "Workers' and Peasants' State." Film and television producers remained more likely to reflect back the reality of their culture in this sense than to consciously show women "cracking" male-dominated spaces. In a selection of ninety-six portrayals of beer drinking in East German

from Referat Jugendfragen, Ministerium für Kultur to Pietschmann, Leiter der Abteilung Klubs und Kulturhäuser, Ministerium für Kultur, 23 July 1968, BArch-L, DR 1/22371.

⁸⁰ L., MdJ, "1. Entwurf eines Programmes zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholmißbrauchs auf der Grundlage des Beschlusses des Ministerates über die ersten Erfahrungen seit dem Erlaß des StGB bei der Durchsetzung der Verantwortung der Leiter der Staats- und Wirtschaftsorgane für die Verhütung von Straftaten," 26 August 1969, BArch-L, DP 1/3035.

⁸¹ *Alle meine Mädchen*, (1979), timestamp: 34:00; *Für Mord kein Beweis* (1978), available through: Progress, <https://www.progress.film/search/asset/50491772> [Accessed 7 March 2023]; *...und freitags in die "Grüne Hölle*, directed by Ernst Cantzler (1989), available through: Progress, <https://www.progress.film/search/asset/50491034> [Accessed 1 October 2022].

newsreels, movies, and tv shows from the late 1940s to 1970, more than half show men drinking alone or in exclusively male company. Only three show women consuming beer by themselves or among other women.⁸² The ratio bears remarkable similarity to what appeared in West Germany in the same decades. That sense of parallel social and cultural development in the two German states hardly changes when one zooms in to examine representative examples of how the media and industry portrayed women's relationship to beer. As Donna Harsch has explored in detail, women in East Germany remained largely responsible and burdened by the same traditionally prescribed domestic duties, even as the state also set out on its ambitious ideological plans to bring more female workers into the labor pool.⁸³ This led to a cleft between the regime's claims that it was eliminating the roots of gender inequality and the daily experiences of women who found themselves "doubly burdened" by their employment and their home lives.⁸⁴ Thus, in the GDR, as in the FRG, women often appeared as employees engaged in the work of producing (most often bottling) beer even as the media rarely depicted them as ordinary drinkers.⁸⁵ Just as in the West German case, beer consumption and its increasing move into the household as more of the product went into bottles became deeply entangled with the push for modernity, both in the industry and in the domestic space where ownership of refrigerators and televisions played an important role in people's drinking habits.⁸⁶

⁸² Personal tabulation of film evidence available through progress.film, DRA, and Socialism on Film video archive.

⁸³ Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

⁸⁴ Weinreb, *Modern Hungers*, 195.

⁸⁵ VK Horst Kroitor, "Hopfen und Malz gewonnen," *BZ*, Nov. 29, 1960; *Aktuelle Kamera*, "Aktuelle Kamera - Hauptausgabe - Beitrag: Neue Abfüllanlage in Radeberger Bierbrauerei," aired November 19, 1967, on DFF-1, made available by the Deutsche Rundfunkarchiv: Stiftung von ARD und Deutschlandradio, DRA archive number: 640851.

⁸⁶ Dipl.rer.oec. Werner Bischoff und Dr.rer.oec. Werner Jurich - Insitut für Bedarfsforschung, Abt. Nahrungs- und Genußmittel, "Die Entwicklung des Bedarfs an alkoholischen Getränken bis 1970," n.d., BArch, DL 102/39, 50,



Image 2.2 East German keg manufacturer uses the image of a well-dressed woman lifting an empty aluminum keg to portray how light and modern the product is. Image courtesy of Bundesdarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, DE 5/3143, Bd. 2.

Much more frequently, female figures appeared as the purchasers and support for male beer consumption. Katherine Pence's work confirms that the task of provisioning the household fell overwhelmingly on women in the GDR just as it did in the FRG.⁸⁷ East German media sources sometimes mocked male attitudes toward gender disparities in domestic work and, in so doing, tacitly acknowledged their widespread continuity in the society. Take for example a satirical poem printed in the *Berliner Zeitung* in 1956 describing a group of men sitting at their *Stammtisch* and complaining about their wives' growing aspirations of equality. At one point the central character describes to his fellow drinkers the dystopian future that he envisions:

I see us going to the Konsum [grocery store]
for milk and meat and bread and beer.

⁸⁷ Katherine Pence, "'Women on the Verge': Consumers between Private Desires and Public Crisis," in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* ed. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 293.

I see us standing at the cooking stoves,
while our wives - are sitting here!”⁸⁸

Likewise, in East German society as in the West, women frequently appeared in the role of either the “nagging” spouse criticizing a man’s drinking habits, or as the victim of carry-on effects from male alcohol abuse. The twist, in the GDR, came from the state’s particular interest in encouraging the first case and not exacerbating the second. In many depictions, a woman’s voice often closely mirrors the Party line on wasteful, destructive drinking. In a 1956 episode of the satirical short-series *Das Stacheltier*, a lazy supervisor at an East German shoe factory conspires with the other men from his department to earn a premium by overfulfilling their production quotas with a low-quality shortcut. They take the extra money and spend it lavishly on parties where the booze flows freely. When the plant manager discovers the scheme and docks the supervisor’s pay as a punishment, his wife drives home the real penalty. “I tell you in the future things are going to be different! Spending money gone. No more beer or cigarettes. You’ll see!”⁸⁹ But just as this notion of the wife as consumer and money-manager (juxtaposed to the husband as producer and earner) continues to fit neatly in the concept of a traditional patriarchal household, so too did state officials’ concerns about the unintended consequences of their anti-alcohol abuse policies. In the late 1950s, as East German law enforcement and public health leaders discussed how best to deal with public drunkenness, they singled out overreliance on monetary fines as a bad idea for a very particular reason. As one protocol from an interagency meeting states, monetary fines issued for public intoxication “will burden the family of the

⁸⁸ Paule Panke, "Sorgen am Stammtisch," *BZ*, March 11, 1956; for similar example, see Schmitt, "Frieda und Otto 7 bis 10 Spree-Athen," *BZ*, Jan. 4, 1969.

⁸⁹ *Das Stacheltier - Hauptsache, das Geld stimmt!* (1955), available through: Progress, <https://progress.film/record/3889> from DEFA, DEFA Documentary Collection, Clip ID: Q6UJ9A002Q0P [Accessed 22 June, 2021], timestamp: 6:00.

drinker to a greater or lesser degree.”⁹⁰ Especially in the late 1950s, when the ratio of men to women dealing with chronic alcohol abuse exceeded five to one, this policy’s concern for the drinker’s family overwhelmingly translates to a concern for the wife along with any children.⁹¹ In the GDR, as in the FRG, male alcohol consumption remained the referent against which the state and society compared women’s relationship to drinking, for better or worse.

Beer and Gender in Czechoslovakia

“*Dobré pivo, děvče hezké –
to jsou dary země české!*”

(“A good beer, a pretty girl –
those are the gifts of the Czech lands!”)

- Czech aphorism recorded in *In Pivo Veritas* (1985)

⁹⁰ "Protokoll über den Ausspracheabend betr. den Entwurf einer V.O. über die Betreuungsstelle für Trunkene," 9 January 1957, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232.

⁹¹ Ratio calculated by author from a series of reports, see: Dr. Leonhardt, Medical Director of Alfscherbitz Hospital in Schkeuditz, Leipzig District, "Zusammensetzung des Kontingentes der Kranken," 28 November 1956, BArch-L, DQ 1/20523; Dr. Baumm, Director of Bernburg Mental Hospital, "Zusammensetzung des Kontingentes der Kranken," 2 December 1956, BArch-L, DQ 1/20523; "Zusammensetzung des Kontingentes der Kranken," 19 December 1956, BArch-L, DQ 1/20523.



Figure 5 Front cover of 1985 Czech book In Pivo Veritas. Author's image taken at Czech National Library in Prague.

Czechoslovakia shared with East Germany an outward commitment to tearing down gender inequality according to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism.⁹² The call to accomplish this mission extended beyond major constitutional and legislative actions of state leaders to realms of everyday

⁹² Wolchik, "The Status of Women in a Socialist Order: Czechoslovakia, 1948-1978," 583.

life and economics. In 1945, for example, a high-ranking member of the Central Council of Trade Unions said that the goals of postwar housing construction included eliminating “the backward idiocy of women’s domestic enslavement.”⁹³ Just as their neighbors to the north struggled to bring real parity in gender relations (to the degree that they actually strove for such a thing), leaders in Czechoslovakia displayed the same mix of partial commitment and inability to overcome the many obstacles preventing such a fundamental shift in social attitudes and power structures. While the Communist Party amplified female participation relative to the interwar period and succeeded in bringing far more women into higher education and the labor force than peacetime economies of the past, neither change eliminated gender inequality.⁹⁴ Employers still discriminated against women and paid them lower wages than men, and the “double burden” of childcare and household work remained firmly in place.⁹⁵ The planned economy’s many inefficiencies likewise made those last two tasks more difficult, further increasing the difficulties faced by many women.

In terms of drinking practices, Czech society held many of the same gendered presumptions as German. At the risk of sounding repetitive, the role primarily conceived for Czech women (by Czech men) in the world of beer came as aesthetic accompaniment and enticement to male consumption. Indeed, the world-famous archetypal image of a beaming Bavarian *Biermädchen* dressed in traditional folk costume proudly displaying foaming mugs of beer in one or both hands could just as easily be a picture from Bohemia.⁹⁶ For decades after its founding in 1895, the Czech Shareholders’ Brewery in České Budějovice/Budweis (later known simply as the Budweiser Budvar Brewery) had precisely such an image as its primary logo. Once

⁹³ Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960*, Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 27.

⁹⁴ Bryant, *Prague*, 151; Wolchik, “The Status of Women in a Socialist Order: Czechoslovakia, 1948-1978,” 584.

⁹⁵ Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, loc. 2918; Bryant, *Prague*, 185.

⁹⁶ Rainer J. Christoph, Dagmar Svatková, Václav Peterík, “*Mal bayerisch - mal böhmisch*,” *Geschichte, die Brücken bauen* (Plzeň: Förderkreis Deutsch-Tschechischer Schulen zwischen Nürnberg und Prag, 2007), 12.

again, the concrete reality that women drank beer and did so regularly with no evident lack of enjoyment compared to men contrasts with the social and cultural perception of beer as a “man’s drink.” In his book on the Budvar Brewery, Winfried Dimmel states at one point, “beer is primarily bound to the masculine part of Czech culture.”⁹⁷ Elsewhere he writes, “beer has become institutionalized as a people’s drink [*Volksgetränk*] in Bohemia and enjoys great popularity among men and women.”⁹⁸ As Dimmel’s separate statements on culture and consumption suggest, beer, as a commercial product, served both men and women. As a cultural commodity, it remained thoroughly masculinized.

The appearance of beer in Czech television and movies had, if anything, an even starker gender dynamic than in East and West Germany. In a sample of forty scenes depicting beer consumption from 1945 – 1978 in Czech motion pictures of all genres, thirty-one showed men alone or in the company of other men, while only nine showed men and women together drinking beer. No shots of women enjoying beer among themselves appeared in this sample, which is not to suggest that they did not exist at all, but certainly speaks to their relative rarity. A decent proportion of these not only depicted men exclusively but did so in a way that tied beer drinking directly to the masculine nature of their working lives. Common fare included cinema newsreels that showed Czech men gulping beer as they sweated through their day’s work at the steel mill, or a documentary depicting them sipping and singing with their comrades at the pub while reminiscing about their time as log rafters guiding cut lumber down the Vltava.⁹⁹ In yet another parallel to the German cases, Czech women did appear in depictions of beer production

⁹⁷ Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei und die Konstruktion des Nationalen: Brauindustrie im Spannungsfeld von Wirtschaftsnationalismus und Verdrängungswettbewerb* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2017)26.

⁹⁸ Dimmel, 96.

⁹⁹ *Československý filmový týdeník 1962/34*, ČT-A, IDEC: 212 562 26270/0030, timestamp: 2:30; *Kdyby zašlo Podskalí* (1967), ČT, IDEC: 267 532 33327.

and consumption, but even if the camera occasionally showed them hoisting glasses to their own lips, more often it caught them carrying glasses to tables of men, or working the monotonous rhythm of the bottling line.¹⁰⁰ As in East Germany, the tedious work of operating automated or semi-automated bottling machines remained an overwhelmingly female occupation to such a degree that breweries pitched their modernization efforts in the packaging process as a form of alleviating an unfair burden on their women workers.¹⁰¹ In fact, the association was strong enough that one article in the Pilsner Urquell brewery's internal newsletter made a point of noting the oddity that "the majority of the employees on the bottling line are male" when describing a new facility just opened in Sarajevo.¹⁰² In planning documents for a new brewery expansion in the city of Ostrava in the early 1950s, the local official overseeing the process offhandedly mentioned that 100 new employees needed for the facility would be made up of "women and workers with lower work capacity."¹⁰³ Socially and professionally, in the Czech lands, too, women remained on the outside looking in at the world of beer.

The pub remained a crucial space of Czech male sociability during the postwar period. The ubiquity of pubs in both the wider social history and contemporary portrayals of life in Bohemia and Moravia matches and arguably exceeds the German examples. In a spy movie, where did resistance fighters make contact under the Nazi occupation? The pub.¹⁰⁴ In a

¹⁰⁰ *Televizní noviny 1961*, ČT, IDEC: 261 531 39999/1013; *Televizní noviny 1962*, ČT, IDEC: 262 531 39999/0808; *Televizní noviny 1963*, ČT, IDEC: 263 531 39999/0122; *Televizní noviny 1963*, ČT, IDEC: 263 531 39999/1219.

¹⁰¹ *Televizní noviny*, 13 December 1972, ČT, IDEC: 272 531 39999/1213; inž. Petr Nový, "Program komplexní socialistické racionalizace v našem národním podniku," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 7 (July 1974): 1-2.

¹⁰² Ing. P., "Zahraniční pivovary," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 9 (September 1981): 2.

¹⁰³ Planning Advisor, District National Committee Ostrava, "Posouzení hospodářského-technické dokumentace, rekonstrukce pivovaru v Ostravě," 21 November 1951, NArch-C, Státní úřad planovací II, Praha - ka. 283, 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Past* (1950), available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Socialism on Film: The Cold War and International Propaganda, https://www-socialismonfilm-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/SearchDetails/N_507300_The_Trap#MediaSearchDetails [Accessed 16 January 2023].

documentary, where do young men spend most of their free time? The pub.¹⁰⁵ News programs reported that the town burghers of old and the farmers of the 1960s met to conduct their business in the pub, and the former case was worth memorializing in a museum replica (which still served as an active pub) in the town of Liberec.¹⁰⁶ The frequency with which social and gastronomical life in the *hospoda* appeared in mainstream Czech television and film news as an unremarkable aspect of daily life leaves little room to doubt its culturally-acknowledged centrality. Voices critical of Czech pub life are enveloped by the sheer volume of counter-examples that constantly reiterated the normality of it.¹⁰⁷ As those critics pointed out, television and film constantly reinforced cultural drinking habits.¹⁰⁸ But the pub was more than just a place to drink, its social and political role was expansive. Dimmel states that taverns served as the “nuclei and crystallization points of the Czech national movement” in the nineteenth century. Former Czech presidential candidate Ladislav Ják declared in a 2012 documentary that pub life was critically important to the Czechs because “the lifestyle of the Czech pub is primarily being together. Not sitting home. Not watching TV.”¹⁰⁹ While plenty have offered criticism, few commentators deny the importance of the pub to the social life of the dominant culture in the Czech lands, nor the overwhelming association of pubs with beer, which makes the gendered nature of both the space and the beverage vital questions to understanding the overall gender dynamics of the society.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ *Spotlight 1965*, No. 9 (1965), Socialism on Film, https://www-socialismonfilm-andigital-co.uk.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/SearchDetails/N_508248_SPOTLIGHT_9_65#MediaTranscript [Accessed October 18, 2022]

¹⁰⁶ *Televizní noviny*, July 12 1966, ČT, IDEC: 266 531 39999/0712; *Televizní noviny*, 3 October 1966, ČT, IDEC: 266 531 39999/1003.

¹⁰⁷ *Civilizace na rozcestí - Pořád: Míra lidského štěstí* (1967), ČT, IDEC: 267 531 09804.

¹⁰⁸ P. Ú., "Opatření proti kriminalitě mládeže a vliv odborného učiliště na mladou generaci při prevenci přestupků či trestné činnosti," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 9 (September 1979): 3-5;

¹⁰⁹ Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei*, 33; *O pivu a u piva: Za doprovodu Slovanských tanců* (2012), ČT-A, IDEC: 312 294 34011, timestamp: 12:15.

¹¹⁰ A good example of tacit acknowledgement despite critique, Dr. Rudolf Vodrážka and Milena Bartoňová, *Nebezpečí Návyku na alkohol u dětí a mládeže* (Prague: Ministerstvo Zdravotnictví Ústřední Ústava Zdravotnické Osvěty, 1960).

Mass media combined with dominant (overwhelmingly male) voices to sideline women from equal participation in the critical social sphere of Czech beer culture. Take, for example, a scene of the supposed opportunities available to women under the egalitarian framework of socialism. A 1965 report on the Czech television news, *Televizní noviny*, takes just a couple of minutes to show scientists hard at work at a beer laboratory in the hop-growing hub of Žatec in northern Bohemia. A male scientist and his female lab assistant appear on screen conducting chemical tests and measures on various ingredients, but particularly hop varieties that could improve Czech beer production. Yet, incongruously, when it comes to the last step of the process, a taste test to evaluate the effect of different methods on the final product, the female lab assistant has disappeared and been replaced with a random man who had not yet appeared in the scene.¹¹¹ Or again in a similar example from a cinema newsreel that aired in 1965, a “film poll” asks young Czechs how they prefer to spend their free time. The first half dozen or so respondents, all male, suggest that they like reading and working side jobs, but the most common answer is that they like to spend time in pubs drinking beer, ideally with friends but sometimes alone. Shot after shot shows young adult males hoisting foaming mugs. The scene then immediately switches to a young woman, the only one to appear in the segment, who is shown sorting through a pile of beer coasters and trading them with other collectors. The voiceover states “Mita says she only frequents pubs because of these lovely coasters. You should see the gleam in her eye when she sees a new one!”¹¹²

Bohumil Hrabal’s 1974 novel *Postřižiny* (*Cutting it Short*) offers a fascinating exception that seems to prove the rule of women’s “otherness” in Czech beer culture. A film version of the

¹¹¹ *Televizní noviny*, 7 August 1965 ČT, IDEC: 265 531 39999/0807.

¹¹² *Spotlight 1965*, No. 9 (1965), Socialism on Film, https://www-socialismonfilm-umdigital-co-uk.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/SearchDetails/N_508248_SPOTLIGHT_9_65#MediaTranscript [Accessed October 18, 2022].

book was released in 1981 and lent its name to a beer brand inspired by Hrabal's love of the Czech national beverage that is still available in the Czech Republic today. *Postřiženy* offers a comedic and idyllic variation on a moment of recent Czech history that Hrabal lived through, life in the First Czechoslovak Republic in a small town dominated by the local brewery. Beer, of course, has a constant presence throughout the film, most notably in scenes that feature the female lead, Maryška, who steals the show in her role as an idealized wife to the protagonist. Maryška is playful, childlike, and exuberant with a lust for life most clearly expressed in her passion for roasted meat eaten in a decidedly unrefined manner and mug after mug of the beer that her husband's brewery produces. Yet, Maryška's stereotypically-masculine appetites are counterposed by her prototypical appearance. She is the very model of normative European beauty standards for women. Her long blond hair (which ends up chopped short by the end of the film, hence the title) and slim frame go on full display during one of the film's more egregiously superfluous scenes, which shows her bathing nude in a wooden tub for several minutes with no clear purpose or relevance.¹¹³ The fact that Hrabal chose beer-guzzling as a defining characteristic of his idealized Czech woman speaks to a vision of womanhood (through the eyes of a man), which is both dainty and hardy, imperturbable and excitable, a paragon of an entire gender but also a particular culture. Yet, it does not signal a space for women in actual, real-life Czech beer culture. Maryška drinks her beer at home, in the company of her husband or brother-in-law, or as a kind of spectacle for a crowd of stunned male onlookers. Her consumption is anything but normal and ordinary.

* * *

¹¹³ *Postřiženy* (1981), based on the novel *Postřiženy* by Bohumil Hrabal (1974);

The final note on beer's gender association in postwar Central Europe considers intersections, specifically the intersecting impact of class on gendered beer consumption. As I previously stated, beer was and remained a working man's drink in both its mass media profile and in the public consciousness. As most of the examples presented in this section suggest, however, the class line was far more fluid than the gender line. Case studies abound of a close association between blue collar identities and beer consumption in the public imagination, from classic Weimar-era German films such as *Kuhle Wampe* with its boozy working class engagement party, to Rita visiting a modest beer pub where she clearly feels like an outsider among her assembly line colleagues in *Divided Heaven*. Writing of middle-class life in Prague during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bryant suggests that crossing the class boundary to experience blue collar social spaces primarily involved leaving the café or cabaret and heading to the pub, where beer was swilled. In his chapter on the life of a carpenter who lived through the turmoil of the early twentieth century and well into the Communist period, pubs and beer appear more frequently than in any other part of the text, a central element in the political organizing of the proletariat.¹¹⁴

The less colorful but more comprehensive work of government officials and market researchers also backs up the assumption that the lower-earning strata of German and Czech societies tended to prefer beer somewhat more than their higher-paid counterparts.¹¹⁵ But in all

¹¹⁴ Bryant, *Prague*, chaps. 2–3.

¹¹⁵ MdJ, Hauptabteilung II, "Information über die Verwirklichung des Artikels 3 StGB," 8 November 1971, BArch-L, DP 1/2485, 11-12; Message from the Forensic-Psychiatric Department of the Psychiatric Clinic and Policlinic of the Mental Hospital at Munich University to Dr. S., Ministerial Advisor, Bavarian State Ministry for Work and Social Order, "Betr.: Tonbildschau," 10 March 1979, BayHStA, MArb 12843, 2; H. K., "Untersuchungen Möglichkeiten der praktischen Anwendung der Faktoranalyse, dargestellt am Beispiel der Bestimmung von Faktoren, die das Kaufverhalten der Konsumenten im Sortiment Spirituosen beeinflussen," 29 December 1979, BArch-L, DL 102/1345; Dr. P. D., Institut für Marktforschung, "Dokumentation zur Befragung 'Verbrauchsgewohnheiten bei einigen ausgewählten Genußmitteln,' Teil: Alkoholische Getränke," December 1981, DL 102/1497, 15-19.

of these sources, the chasm between white collar and blue-collar consumption pales in comparison to the divide between men and women, especially in media depictions. Of 169 random scenes of beer drinking in postwar television and movies from these three states combined, sixty-five show groups that are clearly comprised only of workers (in the Marxist sense). On the other hand, fifty-one depictions show groups that are apparently made up of white-collar professionals. To compare, in that same collection of scenes, just four show women drinking beer alone or with other women, sixty-four show men and women together, and the remainder are depictions of men alone.¹¹⁶ East German statistics published in 1981 show a less extreme difference in real-life consumption, but still a very large one. According to the report 96 percent of men self-report as “beer drinkers” compared to 70 percent of women, but while 78 percent of men drank the people’s drink regularly, only 33 percent of women said the same.¹¹⁷ Looking at income, the same study showed little drop off in beer consumption at higher earning rates, although “workers and employees of collective farms” did show the strongest attachment to beer and spirits of any trade group.¹¹⁸ In short, the idea that beer was a working man’s drink was not pure myth, but it was a man’s drink first, and a worker’s drink second. In the 1960s, the director of the Bavarian Brewers’ Association sought to overcome the particularist appeal of some messaging around beer by pointing out that the beverage had “long since ceased to be the drink of the lower classes.” Notably, he argued instead that notions of the blue collar or Bavarian provincial nature of beer were giving way to its reputation “as a national drink.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Statistics compiled and calculated based on author’s visual media research. Even with context clues, class is less-easy to determine than gender in visual media, so in many of these portrayals no concrete conclusion can be drawn.

¹¹⁷ Donat, “Verbrauchsgewohnheiten,” 15; see Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 156 for West German equivalent.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 19; see Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 149 for West German equivalent.

¹¹⁹ As quoted in Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 161–62.

Beer and the Nation – What is a national beverage? (1945-1970)

Detective Ledvina (tasting champagne): “Doesn’t do much for me. Not better than a Pilsner.”

Detective Carter: “Pilsner?”

Von Kratzmer: “A renowned domestic beer. The liquid bread of the Czech people.”

- *Adéla ještě nevečeřela* (1977)

“Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness...”

- Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977)

“As we have seen earlier, in everything 'natural' there is always something unchosen. In this way, nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era - all those things one can not help. And in these 'natural ties' one senses what one might call 'the beauty of *gemeinschaft*'. To put it another way, precisely because such ties are not chosen, they have about them a halo of disinterestedness.”

- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983)

Two forces have served to maintain and reinvent the importance of beer to German and Czech national identity (and nationalism) over the course of the twentieth century. Chapters One and Two already showed the economic importance of the brewing industry. Its ability to turn the fruits of the “nation’s soil” into world-renown commodities reflected national pride in quality work from both the farms and industries of all three states, as they would become after World War Two, thus making it a business sector of outsized influence. The second force, examined here, is the hardest to come to terms with by virtue of its diffuse and unfocused nature: popular cultural consciousness and mass media. A large part of showing the role of beer in common conceptions of German and Czech national life involves communicating the “everywhere-and-all-the-time-ness” of the beverage, hence the vignettes that appear throughout this dissertation. However, seeing that beer suffused everyday life does not, by itself, prove its attachment to national identity. For that, one must look more closely at how individuals and media creators explicitly infused beer with national and cultural meaning, meaning that then pervaded the

population's daily life by dint of beer's ubiquity, and through that pervasiveness fed back into the minds of individuals and media creators when they chose how to portray life in their societies. Understanding the power of beer for Czech and German national feeling requires seeing it in this way, as a clear expression of what Bourdieu and Anderson describe, a process of making beer seem "natural" to these nations, as the previous section showed that it had been made "natural" to masculinity.

Beer and German National Identity

The *longue durée* histories that West Germans told themselves about their "national drink" frequently touched on similar highlights. Take, for example, two publications: a 1957 industry-backed booklet titled *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk* written as a booster for the brewing trade's rapid revival, and a special edition of the popular history magazine *Damals* from 2016 exploring the roots of German beer in honor of the 500th anniversary of the original Bavarian "Beer Purity" decree.¹²⁰ Separated by half a century, the two sources take their readers on similar jaunts through the major milestones in brewing history established by archaeologists and historians. First, they touch on the most ancient incontrovertible evidence of beer production available at the time that they wrote. In 1957, that meant looking at ancient Babylon circa 3,500 BCE.¹²¹ Fifty years later, beer had gotten significantly older; *Damals* lists evidence of alcoholic cereal beverages produced in China dating from the seventh millennia BCE.¹²² After listing ancient beer-drinking cultures, they both stop to mention Tacitus' *Germania* and the passage that describes "the Germans" as a beer drinking people: "Their drink is a liquor prepared from

¹²⁰ The 1957 book has no listed author. The *Damals* special feature on beer includes seven articles by six different credited authors.

¹²¹ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 13.

¹²² "Hopfen und Malz, Gott erhalt's!," *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte*, 2016.

barley or wheat brought by fermentation to a certain resemblance of wine.’”¹²³ The next major event for both comes in the era of Charlemagne and the first seeds of commercial brewing planted in Europe’s monasteries after the 817 Council of Aachen declared it suitable for consumption during fast days.¹²⁴ From this point forward, the story of German beer truly becomes “German,” and remains so thereafter. The powerhouse export beer trade of the Hanseatic cities earns glowing mention, followed, with due reverence, by the story of the 1516 Bavarian Beer Purity decree.¹²⁵ The sixteenth century gives way with shocking rapidity to the late nineteenth, when the technological strides of industrialization allowed the German brewing industry to achieve new heights of both quality and quantity.

Similar as the two sources may be considering the five decades separating them, a crucial evolution does appear in their framing of the relationship between beer and the nation. Both make free use of the term “*Nationalgetränk*” in reference to German beer. In fact, the earlier text seemingly ascribes that judgement to Tacitus himself as it paraphrases his words, though the passage from *Germania* says nothing of the sort. The most critical rupture, however, comes in the final article of the 2016 *Damals* special feature, in which Prof. Dr. Franz Meussdoerffer punctures the “Myths of ‘German Beer.’” The authors of the 1957 booklet would not have been pleased. One myth on the chopping block is the very idea that “German beer” has a discernible and unique history older than the German nation-state, and certainly that such a thing could be talked about in the time of the Bavarian Beer Purity decree. “[In the fifteenth century] hardly anyone would have taken the Germans for beer drinkers. The ‘Germans’ were not perceived at

¹²³ Cornelius Tacitus, *The Agricola and The Germania* (Digireads.com, 2009), 53; “Hopfen und Malz, Gott erhalt’s!”; *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk über das Bier*, 13.

¹²⁴ Franz Meussdoerffer and Roswitha Meussdoerffer, “Flüssiges Brot,” *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte*, 2016; *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 13–14.

¹²⁵ Karl Gattinger, “Die Obrigkeit maischt mit,” *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte*, 2016, 30; *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 14.

this time as a unit, but rather as tribes that differed clearly in their typology, customs, and language, and also in their drinking habits.”¹²⁶ He goes on to point out that people at that time spoke of the Germans in the manner of Martin Luther, whose notions of Germanness could hardly be equated with modern nationality, though debates continue whether links between the two have been undervalued.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, Meussdoerffer further suggests that German brewers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century benefitted from the perception of beer as a “primordially-German” beverage, bolstered by both the brewing successes of German emigrants in places such as Brazil and the USA and the rise of German nationalism in the course of the nineteenth century.¹²⁸ This “constructivist” notion of German national beer culture, though far more accurate, was not at all popular with German brewers, beer boosters, and media creators in the second half of the twentieth century. While Meussdoerffer’s identification of German unification as the key pivot point in the evolution of German beer culture seems most plausible, counterarguments must be considered.

Following the birth of the German Empire in 1871, regional beer cultures within the now-unified German-speaking territories did not necessarily fade away, but the new state served as a powerful force for turning provincial issues into national issues. Many areas along the Rhine in Western Germany were and remain wine country. Schleswig-Holstein and northeastern Germany always drank less beer than territories in the South, East, and Northwest.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, the

¹²⁶ Franz Meussdoerffer, “Mythos ‘deutsches Bier,’” *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte*, 2016, 42.

¹²⁷ Helmut Walser Smith, *Germany, a Nation in Its Time: Before, during, and after Nationalism, 1500-2000* (New York: Norton, 2020), chap. 2; David Blackbourn, *Germany in the World: A Global History 1500 - 2000* (New York: Norton, 2023), xviii..

¹²⁸ Meussdoerffer, “Mythos ‘deutsches Bier,’” 44.

¹²⁹ Dipl. oec. B. S., Diplomwirtshaftler K. H. und Dr. S. E., “Untersuchungen zu wesentlichen Unterschieden im Verbrauchsniveau zwischen den Bezirken, Teilbericht: Analyse und Bewertung der Unterschiede im Verbrauchsniveau zwischen den Bezirken bei der Position Bier,” 30 June, 1986, BArch-L, DL 102/1800, 4; “Billigeres Bier? Ein Gesetzentwurf der Regierung,” *F.A.Z.*, 17 May 1950, 3; <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/726675/umfrage/absatz-von-bier-in-deutschland-bundeslaender/>.

beer supply took on increasing gravity as an issue in national politics as a result of both the growing financial power of the industry and the symbolic importance of the beverage in some of the new country's most economically and politically influential regions, including Bavaria, Berlin, Saxony, and the northern Rhineland.¹³⁰ Regional politics presented only one reason to pay close attention to beer, however. New mass political movements, which claimed legitimacy by supposedly representing the interests of the ordinary *Volk*, also elevated issues of daily sustenance in the political realm. Beer took on a valence as the beverage of the masses for both *völkisch* nationalists and socialists. The German words *Volksgetränk* and *Nationalgetränk*, which according to Google Books hit relative peaks in their usage during this time, effectively capture this spirit.¹³¹ Both terms have a history of use specifically referring to characteristics of everyday life in *Deutschland* reaching back to at least the early nineteenth century.¹³² The Google Ngram graph below demonstrates that the prevalence of both terms in German-language texts correlates roughly with the evolution of German nationalism as a political force, at least until the end of the period under study here.¹³³

¹³⁰ Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei Und Die Konstruktion Des Nationalen: Brauindustrie Im Spannungsfeld von Wirtschaftsnationalismus Und Verdrängungswettbewerb* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, n.d.); Prof. Dr. Gunther Hirschfelder, "Stammtisch, Kneipe, Biergarten," *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte* (4-2016), 36-41; Prof. Dr. Franz Meussdoerffer, "Mythos 'deutsches Bier,'" *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte* (4-2016), 42 – 44; Gustav Stresemann, *Die Entwicklung des Berliner Flaschenbiergeschäfts* (PhD. Dissertation, University of Leipzig, 1900).

¹³¹ https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Nationalgetränk%2C+Volksgetränk&year_start=1800&year_end=2019&corpus=31&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2CNationalgetränk%2C%3B%2C%3B.t1%3B%2CVolksgetränk%3B%2Cc0

¹³² The following titles contain those references and are included in the publicly-available Google Books database: Joseph Serviére, *Die Getränke-Kunde oder theoretisch-praktische Anleitung zur naturhistorischen Kenntniß* (1824); *Großherz. Badisches Landwirthschaftliches Wochenblatt* (1841); Heinrich August Pierer, ed., *Universal-Lexikon der Gegenwart und Vergangenheit* (1841); C. H. F. Hartmann, *Das Bier als deutsches Nationalgetränk und seine Wirkungen als Heilmittel auf den menschlichen Organismus* (1864); *Jahresbericht der Grossherzoglichen Handels-Kammer zu Mainz für das Jahr 1863* (1864)

¹³³ Smith, *Germany, a Nation in Its Time*, 230; David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 89.

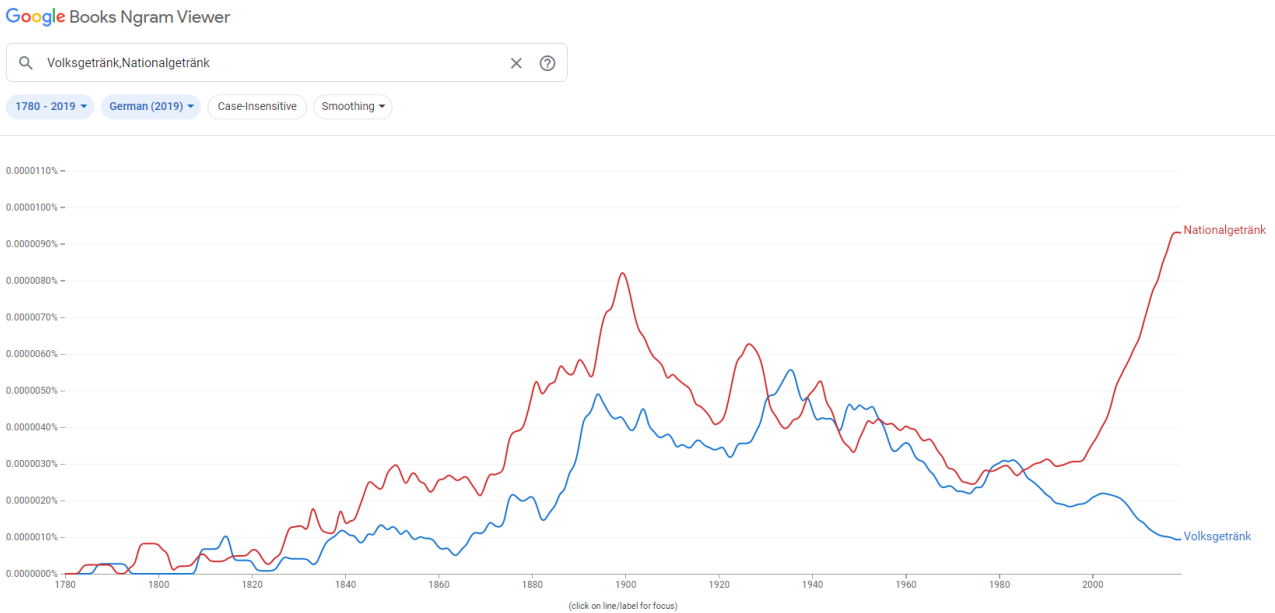


Figure 6: Google Ngram chart showing usage of the terms “Volksgetränk” and “Nationalgetränk” in German from the late eighteenth century to the present day.

As always, challenges to the people’s beer supply and the need to define “their” culture against the “other” pushed both leaders and ordinary Germans to identify more intensely with beer as marker of nationality. At its 1907 party congress in Essen, Germany’s largest political party, the SPD, responded to its radical anti-alcohol fringe with a program that endorsed beer as the preferred moderate drink of the German working class to supplant the dangerous *Schnapps*. As one member pointed out, “[i]n Germany we have long counted on the pleasures of beer. An equally delicious alternative to beer has not yet been found.”¹³⁴ The industry, too, embraced national narratives to gain political clout when under pressure. The rising threat of temperance movements in the Weimar years, for example, forced German brewers to respond defensively, and they did so by advocating for themselves among the public as a unified, German national industry rather than disparate regional associations. Brewers attacked critics by arguing for their

¹³⁴ *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitag der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands: Essen - 15. bis 21. September 1907* (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts), 371.

product's positive contributions to society in the German state on a wide front of issues, perhaps best summarized by the closing line of a 1920 German Brewers' Association anti-abstinence flyer that proclaimed the "high social, national/popular [*volks-*], and financial-economic importance of the brewing industry."¹³⁵ During World War II, German POWs interned in the United States could read in their camp newspaper about the superiority of "German beer," emphasizing the "central role of the German purity laws in beer brewing." The "national pride that beer provides" based in "German authenticity and time-honored traditions" was contrasted with "American superficiality and new inventions."¹³⁶ By the postwar period, beer had firmly entrenched itself in both internal and external perceptions of German national culture.

As Chapter Two makes clear, the fact that beer mattered a great deal to many Germans' sense of cultural identity meant very little in the ruins of a country under the military governance of its victorious enemies (though that would not stop the Bavarians from raising the issue).¹³⁷ Still, despite the fact that German beer and beer culture had generally existed in comfortable harmony with National Socialism and its social order of rabid bigotry, the industry itself appears to have emerged from World War II with a relatively clean political reputation.¹³⁸ German business leaders and, eventually, those who favored investing in a quicker reconstruction of the shattered country on both sides of the Iron Curtain worked their influence on the occupation

¹³⁵ Image of 1920 German Brewers' Association flyer reproduced in Sina Fabian, "Between Criticism and Innovation: Beer and Public Relations in the Weimar Republic," in *Reshaping Capitalism in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. Moritz Föllmer and Pamela Swett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 192.

¹³⁶ C. Rinne, "Chapter 6: Bee Stings and Beer: The Significance of Food in Alabamian POW Newspapers," in *Food, Culture and Identity in Germany's Century of War*, ed. Heather Merle Benbow and Heather Perry (Cham, Switzerland, 2019), 133–34.

¹³⁷ Terrell, "The People's Drink," chap. 2.

¹³⁸ Examples of a close association between Nazism and German beer include the famous, such as the mythification of Hitler's failed "Bierhall Putsch" in 1923, and the brutally mundane, such as SA thugs' tendency to use their favorite pubs as improvised jails and torture chambers for political enemies during their reign of terror in the early 1930s. See Gordon Alexander Craig, *Germany: 1866-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 759; Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 36. For the best accounts of beer under Nazi rule see Terrell, "The People's Drink," chap. 1 and Schmidt, *Die Kraft der Deutschen Erde*.

governments to support the revitalization of the trade with arguments of economic necessity, but only with the establishment of the FRG and GDR in 1949 did the tide turn and beer regain forward momentum as a cultural force in its own right. The question is, as the new Germanys emerged from a cataclysm of hyper-nationalist violence, how “German” was this beer culture?

Some evidence suggests that narratives of a characteristic German national proclivity for beer even after 1945 ignore a highly diverse landscape of beverage cultures. This had certainly been the case prior to the nineteenth century, but the question remains valid well into the postwar period, largely because of the outsized role that Bavaria played in most German beer politics and in many outside perceptions of Germany’s beer culture. Some Bavarians continued to refer to beer as the “national drink” of Bavaria, rather than Germany, throughout this time.¹³⁹ Likewise, Bavarian brewers and their political advocates in the state government had a tendency to speak of Bavarian beer as a product wholly distinct from what the rest of Germany made and drank. In a letter to Bavarian Minister President Dr. Hanns Seidel in 1958, the Free State’s economic minister reported that Bavaria’s share of the total beer production in the Federal Republic had declined over the decade from nearly 40 percent closer to 30 percent. But he then added, reassuringly, that Bavarians still drank almost twice as much beer per person as the nationwide average, and that “in the rest of the world the fame of *Bavarian* beer [emphasis mine] is based, not least, on the *Reinheitsgebot*.”¹⁴⁰ Bavarians had no reason to fear that their unique and superior beer culture would be subsumed within the watered down (pun intended) FRG market

¹³⁹ "Beantwortung der wegen der Bierpreisneuregelung eingebrachten Interpellationen der SPD und der BP durch die Staatsregierung," n.d. (after 21 June 1952), BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119, 2; Helmut Hochrain, *Bayerisch Bier: Ein Vergnügliches Brevier von Helmut Hochrain mit Illustrationen von Franziska Bilek* (München: Bayerischer Landwirtschaftsverlag, 1957), 86; "Bayerische Senat - 5. Sitzung. Mittwoch, den 11. April 1962," 11 April 1962, BayHStA, Senat 3246;

¹⁴⁰ Message from Otto Schedl, Bavarian State Minister of the Economy and Commerce to Dr. Hanns Seidel, Bavarian Minister-President, "Betreff: Bierpreise," 17 March 1958, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119, 10.

of “German” beer. The need to address that concern indicates the perceived distance and difference between the two, at least in the minds of some state politicians.

Indeed, much of the distinction that Bavarians drew between the beer made in their state and the rest of West Germany centered on the Free State’s adherence to a stricter version of the “Purity Law” enshrined in the beer tax code of 1952. The law’s most important stipulation, to the minds of its boosters, stated that only barley malt, hops, water, and yeast could be used in the production of bottom-fermenting (lager) beer in Germany. Top fermenting ales could also include malt from non-barley grain and certain types of sugar. These ales made up only a tiny fraction of the beer market in Germany, where lager dominated. The national tax law also carved out limited exceptions to the four-ingredient restriction for export-only beers.¹⁴¹ Bavaria, on the other hand, had long held to a version of the Purity Law that exempted its famous top fermenting wheat beers, but nothing else.¹⁴² For those reasons, although the vast majority of beer made in West Germany corresponded to the Bavarian *Reinheitsgebot*, and even though Baden-Württemberg also stuck with the Bavarian-version of the regulation, some industry and state representatives continued to insist that the Purity Law “only existed” in Bavaria.¹⁴³

Still, the context in which Free State leaders made arguments for Bavarian beer exceptionalism makes a difference in understanding Bavaria’s place in national German beer culture. Not surprisingly, the rhetoric became most heated when a legal or market threat to Bavaria’s brewers appeared. This first becomes evident in the later 1950s and 1960s, against the

¹⁴¹ J.L. T., Bamberg, "Bericht über die Sitzung des Rechts- u. Verfassungsausschusses mit dem Wirtschaftsausschuß am 29. März 1962," 30 March 1962, BayHStA, Senat 3246, 8; https://slow-brewing.com/blog_post/die-reinheitsgebote-im-rechtlichen-kontext/.

¹⁴² Fritz Wagner, Hg., *Das Getränkebuch: Ein Lehr- und Nachschlagebuch für Gaststätten, Bars, Kaffeehäuser, für Milchbars und Soda-Fontänen* (Giessen: Fachbuchverlag Dr. Pfanneberg & Co., 1955), 55.

¹⁴³ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Ministerrats vom 15. April 1958, 22 April 1958, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119; "Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Ministerrats vom Dienstag, den 23. April 1957," 25 April 1957, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119; Wagner, Hg., *Das Getränkebuch*, 59.

backdrop of legal disputes between Bavaria and its fellow federal states over interstate trade in so-called “sweet beer” (top-fermented beer made with sugar) into Bavaria. That debate exacerbated arguments over beer price controls detailed in Chapter Two, as Bavarian brewers used the threat of competition from “impure” beer to argue for more aggressive government support. It is thus not surprising to see sentiments coming from Bavaria in this period that serve to “circle the wagons” and emphasize difference, rather than harmony, between beer culture there and in the wider FRG. Robert Terrell, whose illuminating and thorough writing on the “Sweet Beer Fight” needs no revision here, similarly notes that the *Reinheitsgebot* “came to reflect provincial differences and divergent capital strategies in the Bavarian and West German brewing sectors,” though he sees somewhat greater importance in those differences than I do.¹⁴⁴ All told, clear signs exist that certain parties had a vested interest in elevating regional above national primacy in defining their beer culture and did so more vociferously when they felt challenged. Bavarian breweries, especially small and middle-sized operations, placed a great deal of stock in distinguishing themselves from massive beer factories in other parts of Germany, and succeeded in having their talking points repeated often in the news press (regional and national) and in the halls of power in Munich.¹⁴⁵

In the GDR as well, different regions varied widely in their beer consumption, and thus in the culture around the beverage. Here, with the major exception of Berlin, beer drinking grew gradually less ubiquitous as one travelled from south-to-north after starting in the most beer-soaked regions of Saxony and Thuringia. Northern coastal areas of today’s federal state of

¹⁴⁴ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 172.

¹⁴⁵ Small and middle-sized breweries in Bavaria wielded significantly more influence than their counterparts in other West German federal states, in 1949, “artisan-scale” breweries in Bavaria accounted for sales nearly ten times larger than similarly-sized businesses in the Baden-Württemberg, which was the closest competitor on the matter. See *Statistisches Jahrbuch der BRD 1952*; see also Fritz Ludwig Schmucker, “Bayerns ‘fünftes Element:’ Land der Biere, Land der Brauereien,” *F.A.Z.*, 21 November 1989.

Mecklenburg-Pomerania consumed the least of the people's drink per person, with a stronger proclivity toward distilled spirits instead.¹⁴⁶ In some ways this tracks with the class attachment to beer discussed in the previous section. Saxony played the role of industrial heartland in East Germany, and the southern regions in general had a higher population density than the north. This idea is further bolstered by the fact that dense, urban East Berlin had a higher per person consumption rate than its relatively rural surrounding districts.¹⁴⁷ Both factors certainly lent themselves to higher beer consumption, given the greater inclination to beer among the urban industrial working class, but they do not suffice as an explanation, because agricultural and forestry workers (better represented in the rural north) also drank well above the average quantity of beer. In the end, as one later market report concluded, the difference could only be explained by the power of regional consumption habits, i.e., continuities of beer culture.¹⁴⁸

These differences, however, did little to challenge the concept of a unified German national beer culture in East Germany. While East Berlin and Dresden could claim to be the two beer capitals of the GDR in both consumption and production, precious few attempts at noting or celebrating differentiation between them and the rest of the GDR on that point appear in the historical record. Certainly, unique customs and habits remained in the GDR's beer drinking regions. East Berlin kept its *Berliner-weiße* and its *Bockbier* festivals, and Berliners still referred to a glass of beer as a *Molle*.¹⁴⁹ The Leipzig Trade Fair in Saxony served as the most important showpiece for the best that the GDR's economy had to offer, and beer from Saxony tended to

¹⁴⁶ S., H. and E., "Untersuchungen zu wesentlichen Unterschieden..." 3-8.

¹⁴⁷ Connelly, *Captive University*, 227.

¹⁴⁸ S., H. and E., "Untersuchungen zu wesentlichen Unterschieden..." 5-6.

¹⁴⁹ *Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge* (1955/02), Q6UJ9A0048DW [Accessed 8 June, 2021]; Dr. Robert Heuss, "Analysen von Berliner Bockbieren," *Die Brauerei: Wissenschaftliche Beilage*, Nr. 4 (April 1950): 25-30; "Entwurf: Grundriß eines Arbeitsprogramme zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholismus," 27 April 1960, BArch-L, DP 1/1397.

garner the greatest attention and praise there.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, even the continued use of the term “Saxon” or “Saxony” in the labelling of beer became an act of clinging to a regional tradition after the East German government eliminated the states and replaced them with “districts” in 1952.¹⁵¹ As the image below indicates (and simultaneously nods to the continued power of *Ostalgie* or “nostalgia for the East” in the present day), the “Saxon brewing arts” remained a bit of cultural capital that the GDR government sought to exploit.

¹⁵⁰ See Katherine Pence, "A World in Miniature': The Leipzig Trade Fairs in the 1950s and East German Consumer Citizenship," in *Consuming Germany in the Cold War: Consumption and National Identity in East and West Germany, 1949-1989* (Oxford: Berg, 2003): 21-43; "Bericht über die 4. Verwaltungsratsitzung der Industrieverwaltung 59 - Brauereien - am 15. November 1946 in der Brauerei zum Felsenkeller Dresden," 15 November 1946, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74; Selbmann, Minister of the Economy and Economic Planning, State Government of Saxony, "Mitteilung an alle sächsischen Aussteller der Leipziger Frühjahrsmesse 1947," 25 January 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74; "Niederschrift über die am 20.2.1947 in den Felsenkeller-Gaststätten Dresden-Plauen stattgefundenen Betriebsleitertagung," 20 February 1947, HsArch-S, 11572 Nr. 74; *Guten Tag, DDR* (1965), DEFA08629 [Accessed 24 January, 2023]; Vi., "Zu Gast bei den Burgkeller-'Geistern,'" *NZ*, Aug. 29, 1966. 24; *GDR Magazine 1969 No. 26*. (1969), Socialism on Film, http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/Details/N_507496_GDR_Magazine_No_26_1969 [Accessed January 10, 2019];

¹⁵¹ Mario Frank, *Walter Ulbricht: Eine deutsche Biographie* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 2001), 238; nostalgic replicas of beer made during the GDR can still be purchased in supermarkets in Dresden today, the top of the label contains a logo and the words “Sächsische Braukunst” or “Saxon art of Brewing.” Photo from November 2021 in personal collection of John Gillespie.



Figure 7: A bottle of beer available for purchase in Dresden, Germany in 2021. The label is a facsimile of GDR-era beer labels. The top line translates to “Saxon Brewing Arts.” Photo from author’s personal collection.

But the spotlight of public and state attention did not shine on these examples of regional character. The contrast the Bavarian case in West Germany makes a comparison particularly stark. Of course, the absence of any regulatory discrepancies, such as the *Reinheitsgebot* squabbles in the FRG, would have lent itself to more muted conversations about the diversity of beer cultures in the East.¹⁵² But even when one factors that issue out, the cultural landscape of beer consumption in the GDR appears qualitatively uniform, even despite its substantial

¹⁵² East Germany did away with the *Reinheitsgebot* in the 1950s when it revised Nazi-era beer production standards and tax codes, though there was debate on the matter and the “best” (i.e. export-focused) breweries in the GDR continued to adhere to the four-ingredient-limit for their premium products. See Wilhelm Dahmann, “Wie weit sind die Erzeugnisse der Genußmittel-Industrie standardisiert?” *Die Lebensmittel-Industrie: Zeitschrift für Ökonomik und Technologie*, 5. Jahrgang (Feb. 1958): 81-83.

quantitative variety.¹⁵³ No doubt some of this results from the active efforts of the East German regime to downplay regional and local attachments in favor of loyalty to the Party, the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, and (theoretically) the German nation that would one day reunify under socialism. As Jan Palmowski has convincingly shown in his history of *Heimat* politics in East Germany, such efforts at extreme uniformity in the earlier years of the GDR under the leadership of Walter Ulbricht gave way to a more locally differentiated cultural landscape in the 1970s and 1980s, but attachment to local and regional beer producers and traditions appear more like muted background noise throughout the period.¹⁵⁴

Despite these signs of divergence (both between the GDR and FRG, and between Bavarians and the rest of Germany) the strongest evidence supports the conclusion that Germans in the postwar years continued to see a *German* beer culture as one unique characteristic of their national identity, and an important one at that. To make this claim, I rely on two threads of theory and scholarship about the nature of national identity and its relation to provincialism. First, there is Benedict Anderson's original premise that a national writing culture, especially a national press, plays a vital role in the process of imagining a new community. This suggests that a similar dynamic exists for the imagining of certain issues into the realm of national concern. The steady drumbeat of news, advertising, and popular culture discussing beer in a German framework, characteristic of German history, relevant to the German people, and valuable to the German economy proves the functional existence of a beer culture imagined to be shared among

¹⁵³ I fully recognize that here I am arguing that the absence of evidence is evidence of absence, which is usually a dubious claim. In support, I offer the fact that I have spent more time studying beer culture in East Germany than either of the other two states here, including a review of beer-related material in three of the country's major newspapers, hundreds of hours of newsreels, television, film, and radio content, thousands of government records, and all secondary and popular literature on the subject that exists to my knowledge. No where have I seen substantial evidence of a strong regional beer culture outside of the exceptions I name here.

¹⁵⁴ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-1990* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

all Germans. Something as simple as a short 1950 piece in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*F.A.Z.*) reporting increased beer exports speaks to this as it announced a revival in shipments of “German beer” to the world, grounding the importance of that development in the outsized impact that the brewing industry had in supporting demand for “German raw ingredients and supporting materials.”¹⁵⁵ The mundane nature of this example is precisely the point. Such unremarkable messages graced the eyes and ears of the population in a steady, banal stream of associations reminding them that beer from Cologne and Munich might be Rhenish and Bavarian, separately, but at the end of the day they were German beers, in a way that they were not, and never would be, European or attached to any other larger identity.¹⁵⁶ The same dynamic prevailed in East Germany.¹⁵⁷ Second, Celia Applegate’s work leaves little room for surprise that a cultural object or icon could come to serve simultaneously as a sentimental symbol for local or regional belonging and as a powerful tie to national identity, as she discovered very much the same dynamic with *Heimat* culture.¹⁵⁸ Multiple particularist meanings absolutely could be and were inscribed within a larger national narrative that in no way weakened that narrative. As Helmut Smith writes of commemorative, regimental beer steins available to military veterans in Wilhelmine Germany “they showed the army, the nation, and service as an expression of

¹⁵⁵ “Höherer Bierexport,” *F.A.Z.*, 4 March 1950.

¹⁵⁶ See “Senkung der Biersteuer vorbereitet,” *F.A.Z.*, 8 November 1949; “Bierausfuhr soll erhöht werden,” *F.A.Z.*, 21 November 1949; H. K., “Der Song vom Bier,” *F.A.Z.*, 18 March 1950; *Blick in die Welt* (1950/39), BIDW21663 [Accessed 16 June, 2021]; “Gegen Bierpreisfreigabe,” *F.A.Z.*, 18 June 1952; “Bierkrieg?” *F.A.Z.*, 23 June 1952.

¹⁵⁷ See for example, “Zahlen und Tatsachen,” *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 17 November 1945; “Amtliche Bekanntmachungen für das Bundesland Sachsen: Herabsetzung der Biersteuer,” *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 16 December 1945; H.P., “Brot statt Bier,” *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 13 January 1946; “Gesicherte Bierversorgung,” *BZ*, March 25, 1948; “Berliner Brauereisorgen,” *Neue Zeit*, Oct. 9, 1948; “Ganz Berlin deutsche Hauptstadt des Friedens: Aus der Rede des Genossen Albert Norden auf der großen Kundgebung in Westberliner Sportpalast; Störenfriedpolitik endet schlecht; Wir drohen mit Milch und Gemüse, mit Weizen und Bier,” *ND*, Nov. 14, 1958; “DDR wird realer gesehen: Bürgerliche Auslandspresse über unsere Erfolge / Bonner Lügen ziehen nicht mehr,” *Berliner Zeitung*, June 29, 1960; G. “Bier verleitet zum Mäusen ... behauptet ein zynischer Chronist,” *NZ*, Jan. 7, 1965.

¹⁵⁸ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

harmony,” and they did so despite also having specific markings for the veteran’s home state and military unit.¹⁵⁹ In short, Bavarians or Saxons could very well continue to think of their beer as something different than what was brewed in Berlin or Dortmund, and yet still think of German beer as something distinct from what was brewed in Belgium or Italy.

West German national media reinforced the importance of beer as a German national issue not only through a steady downpour of reports on the matter, but regularly in very explicit, almost nationalistic, content. Continuing with the *F.A.Z.*, consider an article from November 1949 describing the challenges facing German brewers attempting to export their products. The author first complains that Great Britain had bound many countries (India, Pakistan, Iraq, and Egypt are named) to only import beer from its breweries through the power of London’s international finance services. He then accelerates into full claims of anti-German discrimination within the “Sterling Bloc” countries.

But there is also, in many ways, an open resistance to German products. Even in the case of negligibly small German beer exports it is often sought, among the Sterling Block countries, to revoke import authorizations after they have already been granted.

Something as marginal as 100 cases of German export beer leads import controllers to react as zealously as if the foreign market must be shielded from an inundation of German beer. Danish and Dutch beers, however, can pass unrestricted in great quantities.¹⁶⁰

Even Bavarian attempts to shape beer-related federal policies to suit their needs also, necessarily, made Bavaria’s state-level beer problems into West German national-level beer problems in a very visible public way. When, in December 1949, the chairman of the Bavaria Party identified

¹⁵⁹ Smith, *Germany, a Nation in Its Time*, 263.

¹⁶⁰ "Bierausfuhr soll erhöht werden," *F.A.Z.*, 21 November 1949.

the failure to address the beer tax code as “the first great constitutional breach” of the recently established FRG Basic Law and threatened “even stronger rejection” of the constitution among his party as a result, he confirmed for anyone not yet aware that beer was and would remain a pressing political issue in the young country even as he derided that country’s legal foundations.¹⁶¹ When a Bundestag member from the Christian Social Union (CSU) asked on public record what the federal government planned to do about out-of-control speculation in the hop market (a supremely-Bavarian problem), he tacitly acknowledged that the Free State depended on federal help to deal with many matters vitally important to the survival of “Bavaria’s *Nationalgetränk*.”¹⁶² Even the head of the Bavarian Brewers Federation, Dr. Röhm, had to play politics at the national level, such as when representatives of the Bavarian hotel and restaurant industry tried to appeal to the Allied Control Commission in West Germany to block a proposed change in the FRG’s beer laws in 1950. Röhm decried it as “shameful” that “a German organization” would seek to go over the head of “their own government.”¹⁶³

As the FRG began to enjoy the fruits of the “economic miracle” in the mid-to-late 1950s, beer entered even more fully into statewide media and political discourse as a national issue, this time as a success story to be celebrated. In 1955, Federal Economic Minister Ludwig Erhard, whose name practically became synonymous with West German economic revival, made a celebratory visit to Stumm’s Brauerei in the Saarland to christen the facility’s newly installed bottling line. Erhard himself pushed the button to bring the machine into operation in front of a bevy of media cameras.¹⁶⁴ The following year, the newsreel *Blick in die Welt* reported that the

¹⁶¹ "Die Biersteuer-Verfassungsbruch: Opposition gegen Bonn," *F.A.Z.*, 13 December 1949, 4.

¹⁶² Bundestag Anfrage Nr. 51, 1. Wahlperiode 1949, "der Abgeordneten Dr. Solleder, Kahn, Dr. Horlacher und Genossen - betr.: Preisbildung des Hopfens," 17 February 1950, BArch-K, B 116/41429.

¹⁶³ "Kritik an der Bierpreispolitik," *F.A.Z.*, 1 August 1950.

¹⁶⁴ *Blick in die Welt* (1955), BIDW21477 [Accessed 24 May, 2021], timestamp: 4:15.

state had passed another milestone of renewed prosperity when the Dortmunder Union-Brewery exceeded 1,000,000 hectoliters of production in a single year, the single highest output from a German beer maker in one year up to that point in history. To understand fully how that development could play into viewer's perceptions of German national rebirth, one must take note of the overall tone of this newsreel. Immediately before celebrating a new economic peak for German beer, movie-goers saw a recorded statement from SPD leader Erich Ollenhauer on his return from an East Asian tour. Ollenhauer spoke passionately about the need for German reunification, relating how he had told Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that "peoples [Völker] know their own history, and one cannot indefinitely withhold a people's self-determination for national unity."¹⁶⁵ Immediately after this came news from Poland, where five new bishops were installed in their offices to administer the church in the "formerly German areas" east of the Oder-Neisse Line. The report eschewed overtly revanchist language, describing the images as "painful, but perhaps also a ray of hope" for the normalization of life in Poland.¹⁶⁶ Finally, following the report from Dortmund's beer scene, the newsreel ended with shots of Konrad Adenauer and the Saarland's Minister-President speaking about the state's entry into the Federal Republic. Though their language remained carefully moderate, both men made quick paeans to European values, but kept their focus primarily on the joyous return of the territory to their "beloved German fatherland" (in Adenauer's words).¹⁶⁷ The stunning success of Germany's beer producers in recapturing and exceeding historic prosperity in such a short time after World War Two played perfectly into wider narratives of national renewal and leaving behind a painful past, without discussing in too much detail the contents of that past.

¹⁶⁵ *Blick in die Welt* (1957/02), BIDW20310 [Accessed 7 June, 2021], timestamp: 0:45.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:00.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 8:15.

As much as there were Bavarians or Rhinelanders who read the beer economic miracle through a purely regional lens, the evidence speaks clearly to the prominence, regularity, and strength of national interest in beer. One final example, comparing two books published in 1957, helps to drive this point home. The first, an example of a supremely “provincialist” perspective, is titled *Bayerisch Bier (Bavarian beer)* and was published by the Bavarian Agricultural Press. The second, the already discussed *Bier – Unser Volksgetränk*, appeared in the same year on the initiative and sponsorship of the German Brewer’s Association. It should be immediately obvious, then, that both books were created by industry groups for self-promotion, and must be analyzed with that in mind. Still, they are evocative of the parallel discourses on beer existing at this time in West Germany. *Bayerisch Bier* is a light-hearted collection of short-stories, cultural reflections, and poetry about beer in Bavaria, packed with humor that often perpetuates sexist, racist, or xenophobic tropes.¹⁶⁸ The book opens with a quintessentially-provincial story of a 100-year-old man from Simbach am Inn in southeastern Bavaria, right on the border with Austria. Asked by reporters attending his birthday celebration about his life experiences, the man explains that he has never been east of Passau (less than an hour’s distance by car) nor west of Altötting (an even shorter distance). Asked if he ever had a desire to travel further, he replies “Why would I do such a thing? I would have to have been stupid to do that when I can see how foreigners travel here to drink our good beer because they can’t get any at home.” Bavaria, the narrator explains, has “everything that the deepest human longing for peace and quiet recovery might desire.”¹⁶⁹ Still, even with its unapologetically Bavaria-centric approach, there is a clear sense in *Bayerisch Bier* that the Free State’s beer culture represents something unique within a larger national context. “Outsiders” in the text come in form of the Japanese, Muslims, and even

¹⁶⁸ Hochrain, *Bayerisch Bier*, 43-45, 48, 66, 103.

¹⁶⁹ Hochrain, *Bayerisch Bier*, 7-8.

Americans, rather than fellow Germans. The author takes pride that more than half of West Germany's barley and seven-eighths of its hops come from Bavaria, speaks at length on the glory of the *Reinheitsgebot*, and makes a cheeky remark that "in North Germany they drink Schnaps with beer. In Bavaria we drink beer with beer."¹⁷⁰ In all of these cases, however, there remains the attachment of beer-loving Bavaria to the larger beer-drinking Germany.

At the same time, that larger beer-drinking Germany had its own narratives of a national unified beer culture without reference to Bavaria as a kind of prime mover. *Bier – Unser Volksgetränk* put forward a kind of essentialist story of the German "people's drink" in ways already detailed at the start of this section. Indeed, the title contains the argument (if a self-congratulatory industry booklet could be said to have an argument) that beer was "our," meaning the German, people's drink, jumping conveniently from Tacitus to the Hanseatic League to the Bavarian Beer Purity Law of 1516.¹⁷¹ In this telling, however, the regulation's Bavarian origin appears rather trivial, as the book's authors otherwise refer to the *Reinheitsgebot* as a German law that ensures the purity of German beer.

Beer is a pure drink of nature... malt and hops were not always and everywhere components of beer. But today the legal *Reinheitsgebot* applies in Germany, which forbids the use of any adjunct ingredients. 'Beer is prepared from malt and hops in water and fermented with yeast.' That is the definition of beer in the *Deutsches Nahrungsmittelbuch*.¹⁷²

Such language stands out even more in consideration of the fact that prominent voices in Bavaria at this same time continued to insist that the *Reinheitsgebot* (the only version worthy of the word

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 37-41, 95.

¹⁷¹ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 13 -14.

¹⁷² *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 61.

to them) simply did not exist elsewhere in Germany. As Chapter Five shows in greater detail, the Purity Law became more deeply entrenched in arguments about Germany's unique national beer culture in the late 1960s and thereafter as a result of disputes with the European Economic Community over market integration. The need to fight off "encroachments" by the common market more closely aligned Bavarian and non-Bavarian views on the matter, but even in these early days West Germany's national beer trade group based at least some of their claims of excellence on the code. In a more general way, a tendency to cling to beer as a symbol of German national identity, especially in light of the masculinized nature of that symbol, makes sense in the context of 1950s West Germany especially. As Elizabeth Heineman points out, the war had devastated Germany's adult male population and, in particular, largely discredited a sense of national identity rooted in martial, masculine virtues.¹⁷³ Beer offered a male-coded sense of Germanness rooted in peaceful consumption, German quality goods, and comfort.

Of the three states examined here, East Germany had the most fraught discourse on the place of beer within its national culture. As should be apparent from the previous paragraphs, West German brewers and politicians paid little heed to the "other Germany" when speaking or writing about German beer and German brewing.¹⁷⁴ The same cannot be said of the GDR, where the combination of an official socialist commitment to internationalism and the nationalist hangover (no pun intended) from World War Two both tamped down celebrations of national identity. However, media sources from the earliest days after the war leave no doubt of the importance and prominence of the beverage (even a very weak version of it) to a population still

¹⁷³ Heineman, "Chapter One: The Hour of the Women," 22.

¹⁷⁴ For example, *Bier – Unser Volksgetränk* stated that the *Reinheitsgebot* applied in "Deutschland" without qualification to East or West. The four-ingredient provision did not, in fact, exist in the GDR.

trying to dig itself out of the rubble of war.¹⁷⁵ One column in the East German CDU's newspaper *Neue Zeit* argued in 1948, "When one considers that beer is not just a *Genussmittel* but also a foodstuff, (6 percent beer has 250 calories per liter while 12 percent has 475), it seems appropriate that Berlin's breweries be better supplied with raw materials and the tax- and price-question comes to a suitable resolution, so that beer may also retain its character as a *Volksgetränk* into the future."¹⁷⁶ Fascinatingly, comparing this with the West German context, Bavarian beer provincialists often drew the distinction between their cultural context and that of the rest of Germany by claiming that beer, for them, represented a "foodstuff" [*Nahrungsmittel*], while other Germans saw it as a mere *Genußmittel*. It was clearly not an exclusively-Bavarian phenomenon to draw this distinction as a call to invest more resources in the beer supply. Particularly in moments when they found themselves in conflict or tension with other national groups, the distinctions that Germans drew between their different regional attitudes toward beer appear to have paled in comparison with the sense of solidarity that they felt as participants in a shared German beer culture opposed to outsiders. Recall from Chapter Two that Soviet occupation authorities in their zone of influence clashed with German economic officials on the question of how many breweries, truly, a country could need.

Doubtless, however, the strongest proof of beer's continuing significance to German national identity in East Germany comes from the way that media and government figures worked it into their Cold War rhetoric attacking the imperialist, capitalist, "other" Germany to the West. On this point, the socialist regime made much of beer's nature as the purported "working man's drink." The presumption that blue-collar Germans would want quality beer at

¹⁷⁵ See newspaper stories such as Br., "Aus der Schultheiss-Brauerei A.-G.," *BZ*, Oct. 16, 1945; "Letzte Berliner Neuigkeiten: Heimatlose Heimkehrer erhalten Weihnachtsgeld," *ND*, Dec. 20, 1946; "Berlin im Sommer ohne Getränke?" *ND*, March 24, 1948; "Blick auf Berlin: Bier und Schnaps," *NZ*, Jul. 20, 1948.

¹⁷⁶ "Berliner Brauereisorgen," *NZ*, Oct. 9, 1948.

low prices and in large quantities dovetailed with the SED's claim to better represent the needs of the workers in all matters, including their daily tipple. East German journalists and politicians returned to this theme again and again, solidifying beer as a kind of synecdoche for prosperity in the two Germanys. Many of these examples discarded any notion of moderation, as Figure 8 below suggests.¹⁷⁷



Figure 8 A brewery manager or state official drinks from a giant chalice of beer in celebration of newly completed renovations at the Wernesgrüner Brewery in East Germany in 1966. Image still shot from video courtesy Deutsche Rundfunkarchiv.¹⁷⁸

Regardless of the concrete reality that the beer supply in West Germany outpaced the East both qualitatively and quantitatively, the frequency with which the subject entered into

¹⁷⁷ I have published elsewhere at greater length on this topic with many more examples, see John Gillespie, "Chapter 10: Cold (Beer) War: The German *Volksgetränk* in East German Rhetoric (1945-1971)," in *Food, Culture and Identity in Germany's Century at War*, eds. Heather Merle Benbow and Heather R. Perry, 227-246 (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019).

¹⁷⁸ *Aktuelle Kamera*, "Aktuelle Kamera - Hauptausgabe - Beitrag: Neues Sudhaus in der Brauerei Wernesgrün eingeweiht," aired March 31, 1966, on DFF-1, made available by the Deutsche Rundfunkarchiv: Stiftung von ARD und Deutschlandradio, 324051.

ideological polemic in these countries (in a way unimaginable, for example, in the Soviet Union) proves that a great many Germans shared the views of Nikita Khrushchev when he joked in a speech to East Berlin workers that “the Germans cannot live without sausage and beer.”¹⁷⁹

As the GDR’s own economic recovery played out in the 1950s and 1960s, it too began to have more voices openly promoting the German people’s drink as an inheritance of cultural tradition and not shying away from noting continuing ties to the West. Using a variety of different scales, from the local context of Berlin to the global history of beer dating back to ancient Mesopotamia, East German writers mirrored their Western counterparts in grounding Germany’s predilection for the beverage in a *longue durée* narrative of cultural rootedness and slow, gradual evolution. They also unapologetically spoke of a positive role in GDR society for the beverage, assuming, of course, that it was enjoyed in moderation.¹⁸⁰ As in the FRG, the economic value of the industry to East Germany played no small part in constructing a positive reputation for it.¹⁸¹ Certain beer brands from the GDR, especially Radeberger Pilsner but also, occasionally, Wernesgrüner, Berliner Pilsner, and others received public praise for their export demand in both inside and outside the socialist sphere.¹⁸² Along with Czechoslovakia, the GDR served as a leading beer producer in the Eastern Bloc, providing finished beer, brewery equipment, and technical expertise to the other states within COMECON.¹⁸³ This association of East Germany with a more generalized German beer culture within the “socialist brotherhood” of the Soviet sphere led to some interesting cultural admixtures, such as at a 1954 GDR economic

¹⁷⁹ "Weite Perspektive durch sozialistische Zusammenarbeit," *ND*, July 25, 1958.

¹⁸⁰ Hans Ludwig, "Rund um 'Weiße' und 'Molle'," *BZ*, Sept. 23, 1960; Na., "'Pils' aus Berlin," *BZ*, Oct. 12, 1965; oha, "Schulabgänger, helft den Brand löschen!" *ND*, Nov. 23, 1965; Vi., "Zu Gast bei den Burgkeller-'Geistern,'" *NZ*, Aug. 29, 1970. 24; Emil Ulichberger, *Rund ums Bier* (Leipzig: VEB Fachbuchverlag Leipzig, 1983), 9-47.

¹⁸¹ For many examples taken from audiovisual media see John Gillespie “Imbibing the Future: Alcohol Moderation and Modernity in 1960s and 1970s East German Broadcast Media and Film,” *Contemporary European History* FirstView (2022).

¹⁸² *Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge* (1957/A 55) [Accessed October 12, 2020].

¹⁸³ Ulichberger, *Rund Ums Bier*, 1st ed., 53.

exhibition in Moscow, where waiters served Radeberger beer (the pride of the GDR) to exhibit-goers in a large beer tent on the grounds of Maxim Gorki Park, with entertainment in the form of a “Bavarian folk-costume group” playing its customary brass band music.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, Bavaria’s passion for beer remained a persistent cultural reference in East Germany despite the Cold War division between them and the fact that certain subjects important to Bavarian beer provincialists (namely the *Reinheitsgebot*) garnered virtually no attention in the GDR. East German satirists seemed to enjoy associating Bavarian beer culture with all manner of negative characteristics from the “idiocy of rural life” to rank laziness.¹⁸⁵ But even newsreels in the GDR occasionally reported on the opening days of Munich’s Oktoberfest without negative framing, suggesting that the story remained worthy of interest in the minds of East German news producers.¹⁸⁶ More importantly, the association of Radeberger, a beer made just north of Dresden, with Bavarian folk music at an exhibition in Moscow serves as an important reminder that, even in the 1950s “German” beer and “Bavarian” culture often seemed somewhat interchangeable in the minds of foreign audiences, but the umbrella category that they slotted both into remained “German.”

The continued references to Bavarian beer in East Germany throw into relief the intriguing fact that no single region of the GDR stood out as a “beer capital” of the country the way that Bavaria and Bohemia did in their respective contexts. Undoubtedly, the southern regions (Saxony and to a lesser extent Thuringia) did produce and drink more than other areas, especially with the high concentration of leading producers in Dresden, Leipzig, and Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz), and Gera.¹⁸⁷ They also had unique beer traditions that survived some or all of

¹⁸⁴ *Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge* (1954/44), Q6UJ9A0048BN [Accessed 27 May, 2021], timestamp: 3:45.

¹⁸⁵ *Das Stacheltier 59 - Frisch Gesellen, seid zur Hand!* (1955), Q6UJ9A002R3B [Accessed 5 May, 2021]; *Das Stacheltier 11/12 - Das GROSSE Abenteuer* (1953), Q6UJ9A002RY1 (Accessed 6 May, 2021), timestamp 28:15

¹⁸⁶ *Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge* (1956/40), Q6UJ9A0048X8 [Accessed 1 June, 2021].

¹⁸⁷ S., H. and E., “Untersuchungen zu wesentlichen Unterschieden...”

the GDR era, such as Gose beer in Leipzig (until 1966) and Köstritzer's Schwarzbier, styles that occupied miniscule niches in the overall beer market.¹⁸⁸ The neighboring Bohemians also recognized the regions to their immediate north as fellow beer-drinking lands, and exchanges in raw materials, technical expertise, and finished goods across the shared border had a long and vibrant history that remained alive and well under socialism.¹⁸⁹ But perhaps because of that proximity to not just one, but two of the world's most beer-soaked and beer-proud regions in Bohemia and Bavaria, even East German commentators tended to associate higher rates of beer consumption in their southern regions to influence coming over the border, rather than a native Saxon or Thuringian beer culture.¹⁹⁰ Such judgements appear poorly based in the historical record, which shows a thriving autochthonous beer culture in the Kingdom of Saxony peaking in the sixteenth century and declining only thereafter before its industrial revival three hundred years later.¹⁹¹

Two factors worked strongly against the establishment of Saxony as East Germany's equivalent of Bavaria or Bohemia. First, the region's beer renaissance in the second half of the nineteenth century, when brewery output quintupled in a span of fifty years, slightly lagged developments to its South and Southwest. That short delay resulted in the fact that Bavarian and Bohemian styles of beer came to dominate the Saxon revival, with many breweries advertising

¹⁸⁸ Dipl.rer.oec. B. -D.S. und Dr.rer.oec. W. D., "Berichtsreihe: Internationale Entwicklungstendenzen bei Nahrungs- und Genußmitteln, Bericht 4: Die Entwicklung des Bierverbrauchs im internationalen Maßstab," September, 1966, BArch, DL 102/224; Ulichberger, *Rund ums Bier*,

¹⁸⁹ Caitlin E. Murdock, "Böhmisches Bier und Sächsische Textilien. Das sächsisch-böhmische Grenzgebiet als Konsum-region (1900 - 1933)," *Comparativ* 11, H. 1 (2001): 66 – 76; *Pivní Tradice v Euroregionu Krušnohoří: Region, Kde Je Pivo Doma... / Biertradition in Der Euroregion Erzgebirge: Die Region, Wo Bier Zu Hause Ist...* (Joint publication of cities Žatec and Thum, n.d.); "Zhodnocení zásobování piven v našem kraji v letních měsících," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 8 (August 1972): 5-6; "Dny přátelství NDR - ČSSR," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 5 (May 1973): 5.

¹⁹⁰ Dipl.rer.oec. W. B. und Dr.rer.oec. W. J. - Insitut für Bedarfsforschung, Abt. Nahrungs- und Genußmittel, "Die Entwicklung des Bedarfs an alkoholischen Getränken bis 1970," n.d., BArch, DL 102/39, 39.

¹⁹¹ Holger Starke, "Zur Geschichte des sächsischen Brauwesens," *Mitteilungen des Freiburger Altertumsvereins* 87 (18 November 2000), 139, 141-143.

their Bavarian- or Pilsner-style beers.¹⁹² Reputationally, Saxony fell into the shadow of its famous beer country neighbors and remained there for at least the following 150 years. Still, even in this period industry leaders understood Saxony as a major center of their trade, as demonstrated by the fact that the original German Brewers' Association was founded in Dresden in 1871.¹⁹³ The establishment of a separate East German state, cordoned off from Bavaria and the Northern Rhineland, presumably would have been the prime moment for Saxony to emerge as a dominant player in its own national context. However, the relative downplaying of regional identities (including the abolition of the political entities Saxony and Thuringia) in East Germany may have stifled the development of a regional identification with beer culture in the southern GDR despite that fact that both production and consumption of the beverage in that area reached unprecedented levels during the postwar era, just as they did in Bavaria and Bohemia.¹⁹⁴

Overall, the 1950s and 1960s stand out as an era of good feelings about beer in Germany, both East and West. Despite the tensions of the Cold War, an uprising, the growth of an authoritarian police state in the East, and the emergence of popular protest movements in the West, the growing abundance of the people's drink emerging from the years of war and scarcity led to generally positive and cheerful attitudes toward the beverage's production and consumption. Along with the profits from an economic powerhouse industry, Germans in both states seemed eager to embrace a marker of the nation's cultural history not overtly tinged by the evils of Hitler and Nazism. The popular sentiment apparent in government reports, media productions, and market research surveys, accords quite well with the words of a 1960 episode of *Blick in die Welt*, which noted that although Germany (at that time) did not drink the most beer

¹⁹² Ibid., 141.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 143.

¹⁹⁴ ABI, Control Division, "Bericht zum Zustand von Sudhäusern in der Brauereiindustrie der DDR mit Erfordernissen zur Verbesserung der Situation auf diesem Gebiet," 15 November 1988, BArch-L, DC 20/11105.

in the world, it was “*doch das traditionelle Land des Bieres*” (nevertheless, the traditional land of beer).¹⁹⁵ The definite article in this statement carried a great deal of weight, and certainly would have generated strong feelings with many Czechs, had they come across it.

Beer and Czech National Identity

“*The Czech spirit may sometimes wander, the sweep of its mighty wings may sometimes lead it to the ends of the earth, but it will always come back to beer.*”

- Jan Neruda¹⁹⁶

“*Beer is at home in Bohemia, and the Czechs call this foaming beverage liquid bread. Germans also like beer.*”

- *Pivní tradice v Euroregionu Krušnohoří*¹⁹⁷

“*Pojď sem pivo,
pojď sem ke mně.
Vždyť jsme oba
z české země!*”
(“*Come here beer,
come here to me.
After all, we are both,
of this Czech country!*”)

- Czech aphorism¹⁹⁸

While Germans, divided politically, carried forward shared national traditions of beer culture in parallel, Czechs after the war found themselves living in region with a degree of national and linguistic homogeneity not seen in living memory, leaving a Czech beer culture that had evolved in constant tension with German-speaking communities suddenly uncontested. At

¹⁹⁵ *Blick in die Welt* (1960/31), BIDW20255 [Accessed 8 July, 2021].

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.databazeknih.cz/citaty/jan-neruda-63>.

¹⁹⁷ *Pivní Tradice v Euroregionu*, 1.

¹⁹⁸ Boris Grušin, *In Pivo Veritas* (Prague: Merkur, 1985), 41.

the same time, Czech and Slovak leaders reattached their war-weary nations in a political union that sought harmony between two societies that differed significantly on a range of awkward topics, including religiosity, political culture, and consumption habits. Very much in divergence from the German, especially East German, case, Communist politics and the later project of “building socialism” in Czechoslovakia took on an overtly national and nationalistic tone, especially in the early years when the KSČ campaigned stridently for German expulsion and the expropriation of private capital (German or not) explicitly in the name of the Czech nation.¹⁹⁹ In a fascinating parallel to the German cases of Bavaria, however, Bohemian regional beer culture had been growing increasingly “nationalized” since the late nineteenth century, setting it up to play an outsized role in defining both popular and official discourse on the beverage in the postwar era.

As a case study on how beer became either “Czech” or “German” in the Bohemian Crown Lands prior to 1945, one can do no better than to look at the example of České Budějovice/Budweis in southern Bohemia, where two in-depth studies have detailed how that process played out. Jeremy King’s *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans* tracks the larger development of national (and nonnational) consciousness in the city over a century from 1848 to 1948, not only showing how increasingly strident Czech and German groups sought to assert control on behalf of their nations, but also arguing that a large group of “Budweisers” resisted being pulled into either camp by prioritizing their local identity and political loyalty to the Habsburg empire – practicing a so-called “national indifference.”²⁰⁰ Fifteen years after King’s study, Winfried Dimmel published a monograph focused entirely on the city’s brewing industry, which King had also mentioned several times as a field of national conflict. Dimmel presents in

¹⁹⁹ King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 200–208; Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 210–16.

²⁰⁰ King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*.

greater detail the unique intensity with which the Czech/German conflict played out through a proxy war between the older, German-dominated, *Bürgerliche Brauhaus* (Citizen's Brewery) and the new, Czech-aligned, *Böhmische Aktienbrauerei* (Bohemian Shareholders' Brewery) founded in 1895.²⁰¹ Both authors make abundantly clear that “economic nationalism” grew to a fever pitch in the city in the decades before and after the turn of the century, as it did in much of Bohemia and Moravia, especially in regions where large Czech-speaking migrations transformed the linguistic and ethnic composition of cities and towns that German-speakers had long dominated. Beer brewing became one of the Bohemian Crown Lands' most valuable industries in parallel with similar developments in Germany because modern technology and transportation brought potential for excellent profit margins and export to distant markets.²⁰² With beer as with other parts of the economy, cooperation largely prevailed between Czech and German suppliers and producers to their mutual benefit, but national activists remained bent on cornering their communities' control of valuable resources.²⁰³ The intensification of national conflict (to greatly understate the matter) and political realignments from 1914 – 1945 naturally did nothing to alleviate the situation, which was finally, and violently, brought to an end by the expulsion of the vast majority of the German-speaking population from the territory of reconstituted Czechoslovakia in 1945-1946.

Part One has already shown how deeply national antagonism and anti-German sentiments played into the process of nationalization in the Czech brewing industry in the immediate postwar years. It also showed that politicians and industry leaders argued over how best to use the value of quality Czech beer products to further the national revival. Where that story left off

²⁰¹ Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei*.

²⁰² King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 106–7; Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei*, 50–58.

²⁰³ Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei*, chap. 3; Bělina, *Dějiny Zemí Koruny České: Od Nástupu Osvícenství Po Naši Dobu*, 157.

in the early 1950s, this section takes up the thread in the following two decades and starts with the commodity that played a uniquely outsized role in amplifying Czech pride in their national beer culture: hops. Every major beer producing country and region has some relationship to the primary flavoring agent in the beverage, and Bavarians, too, gave a great deal of attention to hop cultivation. The Hallertau region of central Bavaria alone produced over 80% of West Germany's hops and is renowned for quality.²⁰⁴ But even a West German author writing an instructional booklet for restaurant and bar personnel in 1955 stated matter-of-factly “[t]he best hops come from Czechoslovakia, the region of Saaz and Zatek [*sic*] is known for it. In Germany, Bavaria holds first place...”²⁰⁵ Doubtless many Bavarians would argue with that ranking, but one can hardly overstate the reputation that hops from the Žatec/Saaz region held and still hold for beer makers around the globe. A homebrewer's manual written in 2015 speaks of “Saaz” hops almost like a category of its own and includes in its section on hops four pictures of hop cultivation, one from Hallertau, and three from Žatec, including a mural depicting “Communist-era glory for the proletarian hop pickers” in Czechoslovakia.²⁰⁶

Czech hops remained a valued and prominent fixture in socialist Czechoslovakia both economically and culturally. By the early 1950s, regular exports of hops and brewer's barley began to flow again over Bohemia's northern border into East Germany. Not only did the GDR rely on the ČSSR for hops, but also for much of the material needed to rebuild and expand its own domestic hop production to avoid buying from the capitalist enemy in West Germany.²⁰⁷

While the East Germans hoped to stop buying their beer ingredients from non-socialist states,

²⁰⁴ Hochrain, *Bayerisch Bier*, 41.

²⁰⁵ Wagner, Hg. *Das Getränkebuch*, 54.

²⁰⁶ Randy Mosher, *Mastering Homebrew: The Complete Guide to Brewing Delicious Beer* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2015), 81–82.

²⁰⁷ “Bines” is not a typo; it is the technical term for the vines that hops grow on. See also, “Herr ober, ein Bock: Ab 15. Oktober Bockbiersaison in Berlin,” *BZ*, Oct. 10, 1953; “Hopfenversorgung aus Importen und Eigenaufkommen,” n.d., BArch, DE 4/24528, Perspektivplan, 19–22.

their capitalist rivals in the West apparently had fewer qualms with purchasing across the Iron Curtain, they continued to import sizable quantities of Žatec/Saaz hops from socialist Czechoslovakia. Recognition of the quality and cultural import of Czech hops in the West extended beyond industry experts sourcing materials. One 1958 episode of *Blick in die Welt* transmitted jolly images of a yearly hop festival in Žatec to its audience in the FRG, showing parades of participants in folk costumes, copious beer consumption, and the crowning of a “hop king” wearing a crown made of bines.²⁰⁸ Hops drew considerable profits as well, even in years when natural disasters, crop diseases, or poor weather did not artificially constrain supply and drive up prices, which happened on a regular basis.²⁰⁹ Not surprisingly then, and in direct contradiction to common tropes that the socialist regime in Czechoslovakia neglected the state’s hop industry, the government sought to expand hop acreage and undertook to mechanize as much of the work as possible, just as other hop growing regions of the world had done and continued to do.²¹⁰

Few subjects illuminate the hybrid economic and cultural value of beer better than the links between agriculture and landscape nationalism manifested in Czech hop cultivation, and the prominence of the topic for subject matter experts of both beer and Cold War cultural history has led to a number of distortions and misunderstandings.²¹¹ The establishment of a socialist state changed the valences of Czech (and for that matter East German) national relationships to

²⁰⁸ *Blick in die Welt* (1958/42), BIDW20574 [Accessed 7 June, 2021].

²⁰⁹ S., BMEL HG 2, "Vermerk. Betr.: Preisbildung des Hopfens," 27 February 1950, BArch-K, B 116/41429, 1; "Struktur des VLK-Getränke und Rentabilität," n.d., BArch, DE 4/24528, Perspektivplan, 4-7; "Hopfen und...," *Die Lebensmittel-Industrie*, 7. Jahrgang, no. 2 (Feb. 1960): 55-56.

²¹⁰ For the trope, see Pete Brown, *Miracle Brew: Hops, Barley, Water, Yeast and the Nature of Beer* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017), 120; for evidence of investment, Klaus Haupt, "Nachschub für 'Urquell,'" *ND*, Oct. 10, 1970; *Televizní noviny*, 7 August 1965 ČT, IDEC: 265 531 39999/0807; *Televizní noviny*, 3 October 1966, ČT, IDEC: 266 531 39999/1003.

²¹¹ On national identity and landscape see Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 15.

beer but could not and did not alter the fundamental culture of production or consumption. Popular authors who make casual recourse to Soviet domination or “totalitarianism” as an explanation for everything that happened in socialist states, along with their expert counterparts who twist themselves into knots trying to rescue that term from the fatal series of critiques that it has suffered, miss something profound about the societies they describe.²¹² As a poignant and popular example, take the “legendary” 1964 Czech musical *Starci na chmelu* (*The Hop Pickers*).²¹³ The movie premiered just a few years before the Prague Spring in a period of relative thaw. It is a daring, if not openly transgressive, depiction of adolescent social life in the state, grounded in the ordinary trials of teenagers (young love, bullying, trying to “fit in”) yet also political, as the most stridently Communist character is the antagonist who harangues the protagonist for his “individualistic” behaviors. The entire story takes place in the context of a youth work brigade sent to pick hops, a yearly required service that almost every young Czech living during the decades after World War Two experienced, giving tremendous relevance to both the setting and the storyline for ordinary viewers.²¹⁴ The lyrics to the film’s first full-length song speak so clearly to the subject of this chapter that they merit being fully repeated here. The English subtitles in a 2003 version of the movie, which encapsulate the historical distortions mentioned above in their unnecessary insertion of ideological language where none exists, are also provided for comparison.

²¹² Brown, *Miracle Brew*, and the English subtitles to “*Chmel je naše zlato*” provided in the following paragraph are indicative of the former. As an example of the latter, see the historiographical discussion on “totalitarianism” in Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic*; see Chad Bryant’s rejection of the term, Bryant, *Prague*, 169-170; Ian Kershaw contends that the utility of totalitarianism is “extremely limited,” Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London, England: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 34.

²¹³ “Myslíme jenom na to, že chmel je naše zlato,” Plus, May 5, 2021, <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/myslime-jenom-na-ze-chmel-je-nase-zlato-8482203>.

²¹⁴ See also Craig Stephen Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Greenwood Press, 2006).

“Chmel je naše zlato” (“Hops are our Gold”)²¹⁵

Czech Original	2003 English Subtitles	Author’s Translation (where different)
Myslíme jenom na to Že chmel je naše zlato Jediné co nám svato Je chmel a jenom chmel	Our one and only thought is, hops are our green gold. All that we think about is: more hops for our export.	Our one and only thought is, that hops are our gold. The only thing holy to us, are hops and only hops.
KECÁTE!	Blather!	
Protivo! Protivo! Děláme to pro pivo! Pro pivo, protivo, Češe každý Čech	Never fear, never fear, we're doing it for beer. for beer, never fear, for beer, every Czech the call will hear.	
Myslíme jenom na chmel Tam se občane nachvel Chmel to je naše zlato Chmel národa je tmel	So young people, Mums and Pops, Come with us to pick the hops. Hops are the bond that binds the nation Hops are the best of our cash	We think only of hops. Where citizens rush to (?) Hops are our gold, Hops are the glue of the
NEKECÁTE!	crops.	nation.

²¹⁵ *Starci na chmelu*, directed by Ladislav Rychman, produced by Jiří Pokorný (Filmové studio Barrandov, 1964), DVD (Filmexport Home Video s. r. o., 2003).

Kecáme, kecáme	Stop blathering!	
To si vzítí nedáme		
Jenomže, občane	We're blathering, yes, we're	
Taky facháme	blathering	
	A lot of tommy-rot.	
Od Tater až po Brdy	But citizens, remember:	
Bud' každý otec hrdý	We also work a lot.	
Až dá si jedno tvrdý		From the Tatra to the Brdy,
Že chmel jsem česal já	From the Tatra to the Cheb	Make every father proud.
	Lot [<i>sic</i>] every Dad feel proud,	When he hoists one,
Myslíme jenom na to	When he lifts his glass of good	That I picked the hops.
Že chmel je naše zlato	cheer,	
Jediné co nám svato	That was me picked the hops.	The only thing we think
Je chmel, jen chmel, jen		about,
chmel!	[No subtitles]	Is that hops are our gold.
		The only thing holy to us,
		Are hops, are hops, are
		hops!

Young people on a compulsory work brigade singing of the pride and glory they find in one of the nation's primary cash crops manifests a degree of nationalism that almost appears absurd. Indeed, there are absurdist elements to the film, most clearly displayed in the song *Den je krásný* ("The day is beautiful") that appears later, and literature from the Czech lands has a long and rich

tradition of absurdism, from Kafka to *The Good Soldier Schweik* to Kundera. It is not inconceivable, especially given the movie's overall transgressiveness, that the over-the-top enthusiasm in "Hops are our Gold" contains a critique of socialist propaganda in the form of parody.

Yet, even if one takes the lyrics at face value, the English subtitles in the 2003 version show a common failure by a present-day observer to see any meaning beyond Communist ideology in a song that undeniably has more to do with national identity than socialist identity. The translator of the lyrics went out of his or her way to insert technocratic language in places where the evidence does not merit such explicitness. The theme of collectivism certainly runs through the film's narrative, though not in an uncritical fashion. But in the very first stanza of the song the word "export" does not appear in the original lyrics. The English subtitles incongruously transform the semi-spiritual words "the only thing holy to us are hops and hops alone" into a paean to technocracy, "the only thing we think about are more hops for our export."²¹⁶ Again, in the third stanza, the translator adds the term "cash crop" where it does not appear in the Czech. Without those two mistranslated lines, "Hops are our Gold" is an ode to what Simon Schama calls the "ferocious enchantment" that national identity has with landscapes, in this case the fruits of an agricultural landscape.²¹⁷ At the same time, however, the underlying notion that hops held great value to Czechs (certainly to the Czechoslovak government) because of the hard currency earned through their "export" as a "cash crop" rings true as well. In short, the error occurs if one presumes that there is necessarily some conflict between the economic

²¹⁶ In doing so, the subtitles remove the clear reference in these lines to a common Czech aphorism recorded elsewhere, "*Bud' je provždy svato, že chmel je naše zlato.*" Or "be it always holy, that hops are our gold." See Boris Grušín, *In Pivo Veritas: Sentence, aforismy a další pozoruhodné texty z pražských restaurací, hostinců a pivnic* (Prague: Merkur, 1985), 40.

²¹⁷ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 15.

notion that hops are “gold” and the mystical nationalist idea that hops are “holy” and seeks to overwrite obvious reference to one concept with the other. It is not an “either-or,” but a “yes-and.”

For Czechs, seemingly more than for Germans, hops played a substantial, but still supporting, role in the pride they took in their overall national beer culture. Take the 1972 documentary *Czechoslovak Confrontations*, which shows the same hop harvest festival referenced in the 1958 *Blick in die Welt* report. To a degree that the West German news film had not, the Czechoslovak filmmakers explain in detail why the high quality of Žatec hops matters so much to Czech beer makers and drinkers. “The Pilsner Urquell, the Budweiser [Budějovický Budvar], the Smichov lager [Staropramen], and other excellent beers are all made of the famous Žatec hops. Hops have been cultivated in Bohemia for something like 1,000 years, and the traditional harvest home [festival] is just as old.”²¹⁸ In other words, 1,000 years of tradition rooted (literally) in the productive landscape of Bohemia underlies the excellence of Czech beer. The three above-named brands represented the three largest breweries in the country and a geographic range that covered all of Bohemia, with the brewing centers in the South (České Budějovice), West (Plzeň), and Center (Prague), all drawing their hops from the North (Žatec).²¹⁹

As much as the industry was concentrated in Bohemia and its residents certainly drank more, Moravia and Czech Silesia were not without notable breweries either, and neither internal nor external observers emphasized much distinction between Bohemian beer culture and Czech beer culture, while they certainly did differentiate between those and anything to do with

²¹⁸ *Czechoslovak Confrontation*, (1972), Socialism on Film, http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/Details/N_507139_Czechoslovak_Confrontation [Accessed January 19, 2019]

²¹⁹ List of Breweries in Czech lands, 10 September 1949, SOAP, ČP kr. 1, inv. č. 4.

Czechoslovakia as a whole.²²⁰ Some of this ambiguity actually results from a peculiarity of the Czech language, which uses the same adjective, *český*, to refer to both Czech and Bohemian nouns.²²¹ Thus, an organization such as *Zapadočeské pivovary*, n.p. could be translated as Western Bohemian Breweries, n.p. or Western Czech Breweries, n.p., if it were not (as it was in that case) set in contrast to its Moravian counterparts. Indeed, it appears quite clear that the creation of a multinational political union between the Czechs and Slovaks actively helped to minimize inner differentiation between Bohemians, Moravians, and Silesians.²²² Issues relating to the local beer supply appeared with equivalent urgency in all three regions, such as when the expansion of mining efforts near the Silesian city of Ostrava threatened to contaminate the local brewing water and Silesian officials fairly panicked at the thought of having less beer even as more blue collar workers moved to work in their factories.²²³ With Slovakia, on the other hand, Czechoslovak officials seems most concerned with trying to expand the meager brewing capacity in an effort to compete with the distilled drinks that the population preferred.²²⁴ An unfavorable reading might take this as a kind of national cultural chauvinism on the part of the Czechs, which would certainly be in keeping with some long-running resentments on the part of Slovaks. Still,

²²⁰ See Styblíková Julie, "A jeden historický ----- víte co je 'Břežňák?'" *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů k.p. Plzeň* č. 6 (June 1986): 6-7; Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei*; S., BMEL HG 2, "Vermerk. Betr.: Preisbildung des Hopfens," 27 February 1950, BArch-K, B 116/41429; *Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge* (1954/B 76), Q6UJ9A0049G8 [Accessed 10 June, 2021]; -jh-, "Plnění plánu v letošním roce," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 1 (September 1967): 1-2.

²²¹ Bryant, *Prague*, 27–28.

²²² Here the linguistic peculiarity becomes less confounding. While the adjectives for "Czech" and "Bohemian" are different, the nouns that refer to the lands of the Czech people, *Česko*, is different than the word that refers to Bohemia, *Čech*. Often, sources discussing Czech beer matters would interchangeably speak of "the Czech lands" and "Bohemia and Moravia," clearly indicating their inclusivity of both regions. See *Televizní noviny*, 25 October 1966, ČT, IDEC: 266 531 39999/1025; *Televizní noviny*, 8 June 1973, ČT, IDEC: 273 531 39999/0608.

²²³ "Zpráva o situaci výrobních závodů Moravsko-slezských pivovarů, n.p. s hlediska zajištění zásobování pivem ostravského kraje," 24 October 1951, NArch-C, Státní úřad planovací II, Praha - ka. 283; Planning Advisor, District National Committee Ostrava, "Posouzení hospodářského-technické dokumentace, rekonstrukce pivovaru v Ostravě," 21 November 1951, NArch-C, Státní úřad planovací II, Praha - ka. 283.

²²⁴ State Planning Office, "Věc: Investiční úkol na stavbu sladovny a pivovaru Topolčany," July 1956, NArch-C, Státní úřad planovací II, Praha - ka. 283.

even commentary from Slovakia, such as a 1970 documentary promoting those attempts to increase beer production in their country, noted unambiguously that the brewing industry had “the richest tradition in Czech districts” but made certain to point out that there was some native tradition of beer making in Slovakia.²²⁵

Pilsner Urquell undeniably played a prominent role in the national imagination of Czech beer culture for reasons explored in Chapters Two and Six. That is not to say, however, that Pilsner Urquell and Žatec hops stood above a more generalized fondness for the Czech “*tekutý chleb*” (liquid bread). Indeed, beer’s omnipresence in representations of Czech life arguably outstrips even that of Germans.²²⁶ Not all of those portrayals put beer consumption in a positive light, but plenty of them did, and the Czech brewing industry, not just Pilsner Urquell, received substantial attention and celebration on Czech tv news and film newsreels.²²⁷ Then there are films such as *Adéla ještě nevečeřela* mentioned earlier. After the blue-collar detective, Ledvina, turns his nose up at champagne because it does not compare with a Pilsner, he takes the protagonist, the “famed” American detective Carter, on a tour around Prague to enjoy all the Czech “delicacies.” Ledvina first introduces him to Pilsner Urquell, which seems to only mildly

²²⁵ "Továřň na pivo (1970)," from *Noc v archíve* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agBSWz29Zl4> (accessed 10 October 2022).

²²⁶ From the early 1960s alone see: *Smugglers of Death* (1959), *Socialism on Film*, http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/Details/N_507317_Smugglers_Of_Death [Accessed February 07, 2019]; *Spotlight 1965, No. 9* (1965), *Socialism on Film*, https://www-socialismonfilm-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/SearchDetails/N_508248_SPOTLIGHT_9_65#MediaTranscript [Accessed October 18, 2022]; *Československý filmový týdeník 1962/12*, ČT-A, IDEC: 212 562 26270/0008; *Československý filmový týdeník 1962/34*, ČT-A, IDEC: 212 562 26270/0030; *Československý filmový týdeník 1962/46*, ČT-A, IDEC: 212 562 26270/0046; *Československý filmový týdeník 1964/23*, ČT-A, IDEC: 212 562 26270/0019; *Televizní noviny 1961*, ČT, IDEC: 261 531 39999/1013; *Televizní noviny 1962*, ČT, IDEC: 262 531 39999/0808; *Televizní noviny 1962*, ČT, IDEC: 262 531 39999/1010; *Televizní noviny 1965*, ČT, IDEC: 265 531 39999/0727;

²²⁷ From the early 1960s alone see: *Televizní noviny 1962*, ČT, IDEC: 262 531 39999/0121; *Televizní noviny 1963*, ČT, IDEC: 263 531 39999/0122; *Televizní noviny 1963*, ČT, IDEC: 263 531 39999/0423; *Televizní noviny 1963*, ČT, IDEC: 263 531 39999/1219; *Televizní noviny 1964*, ČT, IDEC: 264 531 39999/0813; *Televizní noviny*, 7 August 1965 ČT, IDEC: 265 531 39999/0807; *Televizní noviny*, 28 August 1965, ČT, IDEC: 265 531 39999/0828.

impresses the foreigner. Determined to make his point, however, Ledvina then leads Carter around the city to pub after pub, drinking mug after mug of Czech beer until, at last, the American finds himself intoxicated (literally and figuratively) with the beverage and the city. Ledvina agrees with the praise and offers to take him somewhere special to celebrate a “historic date,” which turns out to be the founding of the famed Prague brewery and pub U Fleků. The stereotype of the foreign tourist overcome by the majesty and history of Prague is subverted by the quintessential Czech man’s insistence that he knows what is truly magical about his city and his culture.²²⁸ Chad Bryant’s recent argument that the physical space of Prague and its residents constant circulation through those spaces played a key role in forming Czech “national imaginations” adds a new layer of historical meaning to this beery escapade through the city.²²⁹ As this example suggests, much of the self-reflection on Czechs’ love of beer came in a light-hearted and somewhat self-effacing form. After all, beer might have been the serious business of the nation, but it was still beer, and the subject lent itself to merriment even for those who made it their life’s work. That should not, however, obscure the earnest belief that lay behind such depictions, eloquently expressed by one 1967 documentary celebrating the 100th anniversary of Prague’s Staropramen brewery, “Just like Madagascar with its... vanilla, Spain its wine, France its perfumes, Switzerland its watches, and Hungary its paprika, the Czechs have an ancient tradition of making beer.”²³⁰

Conclusion

Exactly when beer became a “man’s drink,” the “liquid bread of the Czech people,” and the German “national beverage” is hard to pin down exactly. Despite some thoughts attempting

²²⁸ *Adéla ještě nevečeřela*, timestamp: 14:15.

²²⁹ Bryant, *Prague*.

²³⁰ *Vyvalte sudy* (1969), ČT, IDEC: 269 531 03677, timestamp: 18:30.

to narrow down possible eras of origin, my affirmative arguments here are that those identity links originated well before 1945, but certainly existed quite firmly in German and Czech popular imagination by that year. Cultural life in Central Europe in the decades thereafter continued to reaffirm them in a generally continuous and uniform manner. The cultural continuity that Germans and Czechs practiced in making and drinking beer must partly be attributed to a self-conscious desire for continuity with this element of daily life. The constant references to tradition, custom, and history prove that these twentieth-century actors imagined themselves as carrying forward a genuine heritage of their social and national groups. Even if the objective reality of history did not accord with their ideas (which tended to lean on fallacious “natural” origins for gendered and ethnic drinking habits and project them into the “ancient” past), the attempt to hold with those fabricated continuities created a kind of continuity all its own.

Ordinary beer-drinkers and powerful state leaders held to those associations even in the face of countervailing forces. Sales-hungry industry leaders tried to sell more women on drinking beer. (Theoretically) egalitarian-minded politicians attempted to shift the dynamics of social space in their countries in a way that would have made more inroads for women in the overwhelmingly male beer cultures of the region. Both enjoyed limited success. Certain circles in Bavaria made a great deal of noise about Bavarian beer culture, with its unique network of small and midsized breweries and especially its fundamentalist adherence to the *Reinheitsgebot* as an autochthonous phenomenon radically different from what existed in the rest of Germany. Their insistence on the matter waxed and waned depending on circumstance and who they perceived to be the greatest threat at any given moment. More importantly, all of their sound and fury never fractured the association of beer, Bavarian or otherwise, with German national

identity, and the reality of operating in a unified Federal Republic with the rest of West Germany brought the weight of institutional momentum against provincialism. Their efforts, futile as they were, contrast sharply with the lack of any meaningful attempt to differentiate Bohemian beer culture from the rest of the Czech nation, and certainly the total absence of evidence that Saxony distinguished itself as the leading beer region of East Germany in the minds of Germans, even as it certainly did so statistically. As Chapter Five shows, by the 1980s the Bavarians stood on the ramparts ready to go to (probably metaphorical) war with the European Economic Community to protect the purity and superiority of “German” beer. Likewise, brewers in the Bohemian city of Plzeň sought to pick a fight with the Radeberger Brewery in Saxony, but both had no recourse except to work through their central state leaders, leaving their pride in their iconic regional beers wholly in the hands of the national government. Before any of that, however, Chapter Four details the single greatest challenge that beer, in all of its economic, cultural, and identitarian might, faced in postwar Central Europe – its own success.

Chapter 4. Liquid Bread or Demon Alcohol? Beer and Public Health (1950 – 1990)

“*Kdo pil, umřel.
Kdo nepil, taký umřel.*”

(“*Who drinks - will die.
Who does not drink - will also die.*”)

- Czech aphorism, *In Pivo Veritas*, 123.

“*Kdo dobré pivo pije,
Ten se dlouhého věku dožije.*”

(Who drinks good beer,
Will live to a ripe old age.”)

- Czech aphorism, *In Pivo Veritas*, 122

“*Durst wird durch Bier erst schön.*”
(“It takes beer to make thirst beautiful.”)

- German beer advertisement

As a commodity, a social locus, and a cultural marker, beer held tremendous power in Central Europe. As the previous three chapters have shown, a wide range of actors recognized the value of beer as a cultural commodity and sought to appropriate it to their own ends or revel in it while further expanding its influence and popularity in society. With rare exceptions, the evidence I have provided has given little indication of an active resistance to these efforts, only the jockeying between different groups who, in one way or another, shared the economic impulse to grow production and increase sales or the cultural imperative to carry on traditions and customs they thought essential to their identity. Their efforts to do so and the intensity with which they pursued their goals proves that beer had power worth fighting over. Really gauging that strength, however, requires an understanding of the opposing forces. In this case, that means looking closely at those who sought to actively curb or even eliminate beer production and consumption to put an end to the damaging effects of alcohol on public health and safety.

This chapter establishes clearly that such efforts started and grew steadily in intensity from an early date after the end of World War Two in all three states under consideration, and that beer presented a unique challenge to temperance-inclined public health experts and politicians. It would not have been a problem if there remained a realistic hope to eliminate alcohol consumption altogether. If one can consign all alcohol to the dustbin of history as the United States and some Scandinavian countries attempted to do in the 1920s, then distinctions between liquor, wine, and beer become meaningless. But by the mid-1950s, for the first time since the end of American Prohibition in the 1930s, Europe entered into a period of relative peace and prosperity and had a chance to consider what the future of alcohol legislation would look like without economic catastrophe or a global war of annihilation keeping supply and demand artificially contracted. At that point, governments quickly dismissed the idea of attempting total bans on alcohol again.¹ The collective memory of Prohibition had received a thoroughly negative impression from contemporary opponents of the laws who got to write the history because they won the proverbial war for repeal.² As such, proponents of alcohol moderation faced a much more nuanced challenge than their abolitionist counterparts in the past.

¹ See Prof. MUDr. Bohuslav Bouček, *Alkohol, Zlo Sociální* (Prague: Nakladatelství Československé Obce Sokolské, 1947); Dr. Jaroslav Skala, Assistant at the Psychiatric Clinic of Charles University, Prague, "Praktische Erfahrungen in der Trinkerbehandlung," Dritter Sommerkurs zum Wissenschaftlichen Studium der Verhütung des Alkoholismus, Genf, 5 - 16 August 1957, BArch-L, DQ 1/21817; Prof. Dr. F. Z., "Gutachten über Rudolf Neubert *Jugend und Alkohol*," 15 April, 1958, BArch DR 1/5046; Dr. S., Director of the Institute for Social Hygiene at the 'Carl Gustav Carus' Medical Academy in Dresden, "Alkoholmißbrauch - ein aktuelles Problem," May 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21624; Dr. Rudolf Vodrážka and Milena Bartoňová, *Nebezpečí Návyku na alkohol u dětí a mládeže* (Prague: Ministerstvo Zdravotnictví Ústřední Ústava Zdravotnické Osvěty, 1960); Ben, "Die Prozenze im Glas: Mediziner machen sich Gedanken um den Alkoholmißbrauch," *BZ am Abend* (Berlin-East), 21 January 1960; Dr. rer. nat. J. H. Ellgring, Psychologist, Max-Planck-Institute for Psychiatry and Social Psychology in Munich, "Soziale Bedingungen und Auswirkungen des Alkoholismus," In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976), published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 68-74. 1976. BayHStA, MInn 110959.

² See J.C. Burnham, "New Perspectives on the Prohibition 'Experiment' of the 1920's," *Journal of Social History* 2, no. 1 (Autumn, 1968): 51-68; Thomas Adam, "Between Civil Right and Government Intrusion: The Prohibition of Alcohol," a review of *Amerikas große Ernüchterung: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Prohibition* by Thomas Welskopp, *The Journal of the Guilded Age and Progressive Age* 11, no. 3 (Jul. 2012): 463-465.

Hard liquor had very few willing defenders in public health discourse, though it never seemed to lack willing consumers at the bar or liquor store. Wine received favorable treatment by comparison, but in the Germanys and Czechoslovakia (looking from a statewide level) it never became the primary source of alcohol. As mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, many public figures and even government leaders displayed an open bias toward wine as a supposed drink of culture and refinement, and thus (in their minds) also temperate consumption. Relatively high prices and limited availability did make wine a less likely avenue of excessive drinking in these countries, and that perhaps also contributed to a backwards interpretation that wine somehow lent itself to moderate consumption by virtue of its essential nature. Wine-loving France's monumental struggles with high rates of abuse and alcoholism during this same period should have given pause to any such interpretations, but did not seem to.³ Regardless, however, that still left beer unaccounted for and something of a puzzle for those preaching reduced alcohol consumption. The first section in the chapter below explores attempts by health experts and political leaders to solve this conundrum by focusing on anti-alcohol policies and campaigns in the authoritarian states of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, where the near-total lack of formal restraint on state power makes the cultural and social barriers to an effective public health approach to beer most visible. However, this is not really the story of a battle between "the public," who are resistant to moderation efforts and "the state," who tried their best to enforce them. All three countries suffered from chronic problems of mixed messaging in their public discourses on beer, and even powerful figures in their governments and societies openly

³ Address at the Spirits Professionals' Conference Technical Commission, "Thesen von Dr. Lahm...(illegible), Rostock, zum Thema Alkoholgenuß und Alkoholmißbrauch," 8 May 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21817, 2; Central Institute for Medical Education, German Hygiene Museum of Dresden, "Der Alkohol - Dein Feind! Der denkende Arbeiter trinkt nicht - der trinkende Arbeiter denkt nicht," 1959, BArch-L, DP 1/1397; Karl Puhmann, "Der Alkoholmißbrauch in Frankreich," *Der Tagesspiel* (Berlin-West), 27 July 1960; Vodrážka and Bartoňová, *Nebezpečí Návyku na alkohol*.

celebrated the people's drink or at least hesitated to tackle it head on. Multiple factors help explain this schizophrenic approach to public health campaigns involving beer. Not only did the beverage possess powerful ties to gender, national, and class identity, but, as section two makes most clear by looking at West Germany, a substantial body of popular mythmaking and professional literature existed attesting to beer's positive impacts on health even at significant rates of consumption. Beer did not receive and maintain the moniker "liquid bread" in both German and Czech for no reason. Proponents of the drink constantly talked up its supposed nutritional value and its low alcohol content.

Public health figures responded to beer's formidable reputation as a harmless, potentially healthful, beverage in Central Europe with a wide array of tactics ranging from vitriolic harangues to cheeky myth-busting to tacit accommodation of the drink's popularity and widely-believed health benefits. How they tried to attack the problem speaks volumes about the cultural power of beer in these three countries, but just as important is the fact that all of their efforts appear to have had little or no impact on consumption rates or public discourse. For good or ill (and even in the 1980s plenty of people continued to claim it was for good) beer was here to stay.

Demon Liquor? Beer and Public Health in the Socialist East

Though the situation in Czechoslovakia and East Germany differed in many respects, their shared political context created large areas of overlap in public health policy and rhetoric concerning alcohol consumption. Perhaps more importantly, both states had to try to square the apparent contradiction of simultaneously supporting efforts to combat alcohol abuse and addiction while also managing production of the population's entire alcohol supply. This was no small matter, nor was the internal conflict limited only to turf wars between Ministries of Health on the one side and Ministries of Finance and Economics on the other. State functionaries from

the Politburo down to rural youth club directors had to decide whether to prioritize meeting the peoples' demand for alcoholic beverages (which, in terms of sheer volume, meant beer above all else) or prioritize the population's health and safety.⁴ The socialist state's claim to put the physical wellbeing of its citizens above all other considerations ran headlong into the reality that issues resulting from frequent intoxication such as chronic illness, criminality, absenteeism, and industrial accidents seemed impossible to eradicate as long as alcohol remained freely available. Even intensified restrictions short of a total ban on alcohol sales amounted to little more than worrying at the edges of these problems. Yet all the economic and cultural considerations laid out in Chapters One through Three weighed on decisionmakers every time they considered more draconian limits on drinking, and officials frequently pointed them out in justifying their refusal to bring harsher measures into play.⁵ More to the point, state and society were not separate entities, even in these authoritarian systems where they sometimes appeared to be. The political leaders and public health experts designing and implementing alcohol policies in the GDR and ČSSR still came from the same national and cultural milieus as the ordinary citizens whose behaviors they sought to regulate. They did not lack an appreciation of the importance of alcohol, and especially beer, in the everyday social and dietary rhythms of their countries' populations.

⁴ See examples, K. H. M., to Dr. W. M., "Betr.: Maßnahmen im Bereich der Klubs und Kulturhäuser zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholmißbrauchs," 23 February 1967, BArch-L DR 1/22371; Youth Matters Specialist in, Ministry of Culture to P., 23 July 1968, BArch-L, DR 1/22371; "Auszüge: aus der Konzeption des Verbandes Deutscher Konsumgenossenschaften zur Entwicklung des Gaststättenwesens bis 1970 über die Entwicklung der Kulturarbeit in den Gaststätten," n.d., BArch-L, DR 1/22371; Thomas Kochan, *Blauer Würger: So Trank die DDR* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2011), 13.

⁵ Perhaps most interestingly the tantalizing suggestions by public health leaders such as Dr. Jaroslav Skala in Prague, who argued at a multinational medical conference on alcoholism in Geneva that that an overly-harsh policy like prohibition would "run into resistance" with the population, Skala, "Praktische Erfahrungen in der Trinkerbehandlung," 1.

In the earliest postwar years, the devastation and carryon economic effects of World War Two kept the alcohol supply artificially constrained, making talk of abuse and addiction a marginal issue, especially in the GDR.⁶ Marginal does not mean nonexistent, however. Even in the earliest months after Germany surrendered to the allies in 1945, public shame appeared in places such as East German newspapers when someone was caught trying to satisfy their personal desire for alcohol in a time of such want and desperation. The Soviet-approved media lashed out at those who “hamstered” or hoarded supplies and participants in the black market, especially those trying to conceal or acquire such superfluous commodities as wine or spirits.⁷ While the economic situation in the Czechs lands remained quite bad in these years, the relatively less-devastated situation allowed for more attention to concerns with alcohol and an earlier reestablishment of anti-drinking organizations and addiction care facilities, which East German officials would later reference as a model as they attempted to catch up.⁸

The signs that alcohol abuse already worried many people on the ground in these early years are there for anyone who looks for them, even if the political and economic upheavals of the late 1940s tend to bury them in the documentary record of the day. Just two years after the war ended, while alcohol remained in short supply in Czechoslovakia, a Czech medical professor named Bohuslav Bouček still felt the need to write a new informational pamphlet about the

⁶ W. Schminke, "Zur Frage der Verbreitung des Alkoholismus," *Das Deutsche Gesundheitswesen: Zeitschrift für Medizin* (Berlin - East) 12, H. 40 (Oktober 1957): 1245-1256.

⁷ "Wieder ein Hamsternest entdeckt!" *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 23 August 1945; "Wieder ein Hamsternest entdeckt," *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 30 August 1945; "Nazihamsterer überall!" *Volkszeitung* (Dresden), 2 September 1945; "Der Leser hat das Wort: 'Schwarzer Markt' und Hygiene," *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 1 November 1945.

⁸ Prof. Dr. M., "Aktenvermerk, Betr.: Rücksprache mit Herrn Dr. Skaler vom Prophylaktorium zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholismus in Prag," 6 October 1954, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232; Dr. R. to the Chief of Medicine, Prenzlauer Berg Polyclinic, "Betr.: Schreiben vom 13.4.1995 - Gesch.-Z.: O.A.Dr.Wi./Kö," 13 April 1955, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232; Dr. K., Head Medical Officer, Health Department, Prenzlauer Berg City District of Greater Berlin to the Attorney General, 25 February 1956, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232; Greater Berlin City Magistrate, "Magistratsvorlage: Einrichtung einer Betreuungsstelle für Trunkene," 26 February 1957, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232; Schminke, "Zur Frage der Verbreitung des Alkoholismus," 1245-1256.

dangers of drink for the country's *Sokol* (gymnastics and exercise club) network.⁹ In that same year, another Czech doctor directing a psychiatric clinic in Brno reported to the Ministry of Health that "the growth in alcoholism after the Second World War and its propagation especially among young people requires that existing therapeutic care... be supplemented by social-medical treatment specifically for people affected or threatened by alcoholism."¹⁰ A successful producer of liqueurs in Berlin received positive news coverage after its nationalization in 1949, but even then suspicion crept into the words of the journalist.

A refined nose and a good tongue are requirements [for employees] to be able to say 'something is missing here' after just a hasty nip. But doesn't it sometimes get a bit rowdy here? The manager, Lück, pointed out the house rules. 'Anyone who is encountered in a drunken state is immediately fired, without consideration to the individual.'¹¹

The continued use of resources to produce alcohol also received understandable criticism at a time when food rations remained frighteningly low. "Why don't we temporarily stop the production of beer?" one reader suggested in a letter to the *Sächsische Zeitung* in December of 1945. "We can do without beer, but we need bread to live."¹² Still, such direct coverage and worry about issues related to abundance, even abundance of intoxicating beverages, remained relatively uncommon and fringe in the first decade after the war.

When East German functionaries and public health figures began giving more attention to the issue in the 1950s, they first focused on the danger to those they perceived to be particularly

⁹ Bouček, *Alkohol, Zlo Sociální*.

¹⁰ Prof. MUDr. K. P., Superintendent of the Clinic for Nervous and Psychic Illnesses in Brno, "Guidelines for the Activity of Moderation Advice Offices," n.d. (1947), NArch-C, 314 MZd ka. 1.

¹¹ och-, "Vom Apriko-Brandy bis zum Zwetschgenwasser: Die Berliner volkseigene Likörproduktion / Beste Qualität gewährleistet," *BZ*, April 24, 1949.

¹² M.W., "Der Leser hat das Wort: Brot statt Bier," *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 13 December 1945.

vulnerable to moral and physical degeneracy, which meant women and, above all, youth. With the former, public health figures not only worried about increasing consumption among a group that had previously drunk less (and thus the growing risk of abuse disorders where before there had been very few), but they also mixed in healthy doses of sexism and patriarchy to fuel concerns. Dr. Fritz Lickint, writing in 1954, coupled the scientifically truthful claim that women's bodies are more sensitive to alcohol with a statement that "the female sex" is also "generally less capable of withstanding physical and mental burdens."¹³ The problem of youth drinking started to bedevil officials in the GDR by the start of the decade. Youth alcohol consumption brought plenty of worry from a public safety and order perspective, but under socialism it also shone a spotlight on the fundamental separation between healthy lifestyles, which the SED preached to its young people, and the social habits of older working-class men, who the Party held up as models for the next generation. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, East German officials in East Berlin and the capitals of what were then still states such as Saxony drafted out new "youth protection ordinances" designed to cover a range of issues relating to people under eighteen years of age, including their relationship to alcohol. In the words of one Saxon functionary in the state Ministry of Education's Division of Youth Protection, these laws differed from their Nazi-era predecessors in their focus on educating their subjects, rather than demanding blind obedience to a list of bans and restrictions. As a corollary to that approach, the laws' designers aimed for the harshest punishments to fall on adults who allowed or encouraged underage drinking, rather than the drinkers themselves.¹⁴

¹³ Prof. Dr. med. habil. Fritz Lickint, *Wem schaden Alkohol, Tabak und Kaffee?* (Berlin: VEB Verlag Volk und Gesundheit, 1954).

¹⁴ Division of Youth Protection, Ministry for Education, LRS (?), "Rededispotion zum Thema: Die neue Verordnung zum Schutz des Jugend vom 20. 9. 1949," 22 October 1949, HsArch-S, 11401 Nr. 2874.

This attempt to place the burden of preventing alcohol abuse by young people on the adults around them gained increasing urgency in a report and new draft ordinance for youth safety from 1952, which singles out the negative influence of older work colleagues as a major problem for teaching proper behavior to young blue-collar men. “As reported from Dresden, it is primarily young construction workers who are encountered in a drunken state. They are challenged to drink by the older colleagues, who say ‘whoever doesn’t drink isn’t a real man.’”¹⁵ Residents complained that adolescents commuting in the evening from the city back to their neighborhoods in the outskirts were falling down and vomiting on the train platforms.¹⁶ Eight years later a report from the Ministry of Health still railed against “the bad example set by the surviving drinking habits of older colleagues in the workplace, [which] is leading youths to spend their free time senselessly.”¹⁷ These early reports and policies targeting alcohol abuse reveal several patterns that recurred in the following decades in East Germany. Officials focused primarily on youth and women as groups increasingly at risk of abuse and addiction even as they noted that the milieu with the most firmly-entrenched destructive drinking habits were adult men (mostly in their productive years) in blue-collar professions. They understood excessive consumption as a “relic” of the pre-socialist past that should inevitably disappear since socialism had eliminated its root causes. And their policy responses failed, utterly, to address the issue. By the mid-1950s, GDR medical and legal officials began to put considerable energy and at least some resources into creating systems and institutions to deal with people in acute states of drunkenness, the chronically intoxicated, and those suffering from alcoholism (use of

¹⁵ Division of Youth Aid and Home Education, MdI and MfVo, "Entwurf: Verordnung zum Schutze der Jugend," 12 May 1952, HsArch-S, 11401 Nr. 2874, 1.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ MfG, "Bekämpfung des Mißbrauchs von Alkohol und Nikotin," 1960, BArch-L, DQ 1/20200, 1.

terminology was not uniform, especially by law enforcement).¹⁸ They got their inspiration from efforts that they admired in the ČSR, but in both cases the outcomes appears similarly ineffective.¹⁹

Another pattern becomes clear from these early years: an open assumption that distilled spirits played the largest role in abusive drinking and a tendency to distinguish between the threat posted by liquor and beer. In his 2011 book on alcohol culture in the GDR, Thomas Kochan argued that Ulbricht and the SED leadership vilified liquor above all else, and even launched a major campaign to promote wine as the “culturful” alternative, but he adds that “with beer, everything remained remarkably quiet all through the years. It was neither pilloried nor especially advertised as a liquor-substitute – it clearly remained a ‘*Volksgetränk*’ without qualification in the official cultural politics.”²⁰ While I agree that, rhetorically, beer received neither blanket demonization nor widespread promotion, I do not see this as a kind of silence or neglect, but rather the opposite, and it applies not just to East Germany but also to Czechoslovakia. In both cases the messaging regarding beer from the state, industry, press, and public health sectors offered a constant stream of confusing and contradictory ideas about the beverage’s positive or negative nature. That ambiguity appears even starker when placed in contrast to the campaign against liquor and propaganda pushing wine.²¹ The socialist leadership

¹⁸ "Vermerk Betr.: Einrichtung eines Versuchsprophylaktatoriums für Trinker - Sitzung vom 15. März 1955," 15 March 1955, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232; Document attached to DDR file DQ 1/21232 (1956 - 1960), "Abschrift - Aufgaben der Polizei - jAnstaltsunterbringung gemeingefährlicher Trinker, RdErl. d. MdI (KdR.) vom 27. 1. 1933 - III a II 23/33," 27 January 1933, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232; "Besprechung in der Rechtsabteilung des Magistrats am 25. Januar 1956," 25 January 1956, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232; "4. Entwurf - Verordnung über die Einrichtung einer medizinischen Behandlungsstelle für Trunkene," n.d., BArch-L, DQ 1/21232.

¹⁹ V. B., Chairman and M. M., Second Executive Director of the Anti- Alkohol and Venereal Counsel in Brno, to the Central Secretariat, KSČ, "Resoluce z březnové akce 1950 Brněnského kraje," 25 April 1950, NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV 100/1 Sv. 72 Ar. J. 565.

²⁰ Kochan, *Blauer Würger*, 103.

²¹ Even before an active effort to sell wine as the refined drink, prejudice in favor of the beverage appears to have remained embedded in the culture, see Karl-Heinz Gerstner, "Wie war es am Kuban, Traktoristen? FDJ-Delegation über ihre Reiseindrücke in der Sowjetunion," *BZ*, Nov. 18, 1951; Information for Minister of Food Industry from

clearly had the ability to coordinate its health, economic, and media bureaucracies to push a unified message in those cases, but it either could not or would not with beer. More importantly, however, I present evidence below that both the GDR and ČSSR did espouse policies that specifically favored beer over liquor, they simply tried not to call any public attention to their efforts.

In short, where Kochan sees silence, I see cacophony if not schizophrenia in the governments' approaches. The seeming impossibility of squaring openly-stated public health goals with messaging about beer serves as some of the strongest proof of the power that this cultural commodity wielded in these societies. There is also a strong argument to be made that the East German and Czechoslovak regimes did favor beer as a more moderate alternative to liquor, at least tacitly. Yes, liquor was condemned, wine was praised, and beer was treated ambiguously, but wine remained difficult to acquire in many cases, especially in East Germany, and, in all cases, far more expensive than the average worker wanted to pay for a drink.²² The state refused to merely use its economic planning powers to cut production of alcohol, which, de facto, left the competition for thirsty customers a battle between distilled spirits and beer.²³ In Czechoslovakia, historically, this competition had come loaded with nationalist meaning as well, not against Germans, but against Slovaks. When temperance sentiments rose during the interwar years, Czech beer industry leaders argued directly to President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk that beer should receive preferential treatment in the First Republic, in part, in order to move the

State Planning Office, "Návrh na řešení přebytků vína," 8 July 1959, NArch-C, Státní úřad planovací II, Praha - ka. 283.

²² It is telling that one of the GDR's leading anti-alcohol voices, Rudolf Neubert, called for the state to massively increase wine imports as a measure to promote moderate drinking, "Fröhlich sein ohne Narkose der Gehirnrinde," *BZ*, 27 January 1960; see also Schminke, "Zur Frage der Verbreitung des Alkoholismus," 1245.

²³ MfG, "Protokoll der Tagung zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholismus am 28. 4. 1960," 28 April 1960, BArch-L, DQ 1/21624, 2.

Slovaks away from the dangerous and immoderate spirits that they preferred.²⁴ Efforts to build up brewing capacity in Slovakia in the postwar period, already mentioned in Chapter Three, demonstrate that this impulse carried over to the socialist period.

Beer's ambiguous, if not favored, position in discourse on alcohol abuse is just as apparent from what contemporary figures did not say about it as what they did say. Take, as a first example, a 1950 letter from the leadership of an anti-alcohol counselling office in Brno, the second largest city in the Czech lands. Even a group such as this one that aimed for severe reductions in alcohol consumption across the board tacitly accepted a hierarchy of danger from different beverages. After repeatedly stating, in their own words, that their campaign involved various methods of "anti-alcohol" agitation, they then reported on their experiences holding discussions with school children who (allegedly) asked very specific questions, such as "why does the state produce liquor?" The children also supposedly queried, "why do the nationalized businesses continue the capitalist practice of profiting from the sale of liquor?" Four questions focused specifically on spirits, two on wine. Only once did beer appear in the entire document, and then only to demand that "alcohol-free drinks receive all the same advantages and discounts as beer." That is scant condemnation, especially in comparison to the quote from Lenin that closed out the letter, declaring that "liquor leads back to capitalism, not forward to socialism!"²⁵ In East Germany, a strikingly similar approach appears in the already-mentioned youth protection laws worked out in Saxony in the early 1950s. The earliest version of the law, from December of 1948, described the types of beverages forbidden for publicans to serve to youths under eighteen years of age in extended detail. "Liquors are spirits of any type, all liqueurs, brandy, brandy-blends, rum, etc... Predominantly [*Überwiegend*] alcoholic beverages are all

²⁴ Petr Joza, *Historie pivní lahve v Čechách: Pivovarnictví a Obchod* (Prague: Universum, 2018), 175.

²⁵ B. and M. to KSC Central Secretariat, 25 April 1950, 5-6.

drinks that contain alcohol by means of a natural fermentation process or mixture, and where the alcohol is decisive for the enjoyment and flavor of the drink.”²⁶ Despite the extensive description, it remains unclear if beer (or wine for that matter) would fall under either category. The same paragraph from a new version of the law updated less than a year later replaced any mention of “predominantly” alcoholic beverages with the less ambiguous “strong alcoholic beverages,” a term used almost exclusively for distilled spirits.²⁷ A subsequent version from three years later still used that formulation.²⁸ Any possibility that beer and wine might fall under the purview of the law therefore faded to a singular focus on liquor.

The beer/liquor hierarchy of danger appeared most consistently in documents that had to set policies to deal with consumption in everyday life, such as those mentioned above. To be clear, though, zealous anti-drinking voices certainly existed and rejected any such differentiation, often by implication, but sometimes quite explicitly. A 1957 article in the central organ of the KSČ, *Rudé Právo*, attacked alcohol and tobacco consumption on such a stark and broad basis that it impressed even officials in the East German Ministry of Health, who had the piece translated and added to their own files. The column claimed that a tendency toward pleasure seeking expressed in growing rates of drinking and smoking “is proof of the petite-bourgeois ideology in the widest circles of our population.”²⁹ The article’s particular scorn focused most heavily on the continued practice of advertising for these items in the socialist state, pointing out posters on street cars that “propagandized a drinker’s idyll” by daring to suggest that “it is most

²⁶ "Erläuterung zur Verordnung zum Schutzes der Jugend vom 14.12.1948," 14 December 1948, HsArch-S, 11401 Nr. 2874.

²⁷ Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, Office of the Minister President, LRS, "Verordnung zum Schutze der Jugend vom 20. September 1949," 20 September 1949, HsArch-S, 11401 Nr. 2874.

²⁸ "Bericht über die Situation auf dem Gebiete des Jugendschutzes und Vorschläge für eine Neufassung der Verordnung zum Schutze der Jugend vom Jahre 1949," 27 February 1952, HsArch-S, 11401 Nr. 2874.

²⁹ "Auszüge aus dem Schreiben der Abteilung Planung und Statistik vom 6. 12. 1957: 'Was berichtet das Zentralorgan der Kommunistischen Partei der tschechoslowakischen Republic "RUDE PRAVO" über das Gesundheitswesen?'" 6 December 1957, BArch-L, DQ 1/20523.

convenient to have bottled beer at home.’ Or ‘the truth lies in wine, that’s why we sit with a bottle of Gravin.’”³⁰ The author finished his denunciation with a call to action. “I am of the opinion that all relevant offices and organs, including the press, radio, television, film, and other informative mass media must engage far more strongly in the struggle against alcohol consumption [*gegen den Alkoholgenuß*] and smoking.”³¹ When officials in that same East German Ministry of Health worked up a screenplay for a short anti-alcohol film aimed at young people a few months later, they felt no need to draw lines in the sand between different beverages in their imagined lecture to the protagonist, Fred.

Some say that alcohol is a *Genußmittel*. Well, Fred, we don’t want to beat around the bush here. Alcohol is poison, and it acts like poison. Of course, when you take the first sip you feel nothing. Maybe you even like it. But while you lick your lips it begins to act, begins to lower the inhibitions. First the inhibition against getting drunk. You don’t want that of course, but alcohol is sneaky... the blood takes it into the entire body – even the brain. And up there it acts as poison.³²

Those working against alcohol consumption on a conceptual level felt a free hand to speak in such blanket terms, but their contributions to public discourse in East Germany and Czechoslovakia pale in comparison to the mountains of evidence suggesting that liquor, wine, and beer each had different valences for ordinary citizens in terms of their health effects and social symbolism.

At a leadership and Party level, rhetoric and policies dealing with alcohol changed substantially starting in the late 1950s in many countries across the Soviet bloc, including

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² R. S. and P. U., "Szenarium 'Gift für Fünf Groschen' (Arbeitstitel: 'Jugend und Alkohol') (2. Fassung)," 18 January 1958, BArch DQ 1/21817, 4 - 5.

Czechoslovakia and East Germany.³³ These efforts did not emerge from nowhere and they went beyond the propaganda campaigns and cultural crusades on which the current literature focuses.³⁴ The legal and institutional shifts that occurred around this time not only demonstrate that many layers of the government apparatus were brought into the fight against chronic intoxication, but also show much of what the East German government thought about alcohol abuse, its causes, and its possible remedies. As alcoholism and alcohol abuse started to receive greater public attention, some of the earliest public comments focused on the monetary costs of helping those whose relationship to alcohol put them in dire need of care. The question revolved around the state health insurance, which opened the door to any number of arguments about the collective responsibility to help individuals whose own actions had led them to harm.³⁵ In cases of alcoholism, growing acceptance that it be classified as a disease rather than a failing of personal will helped secure insurance coverage for treatment.³⁶ However, in the event that an individual (almost always a man) drank himself to such a point of incapacity that he risked the safety of himself or others and ended up in the hands of the police or medical professionals, the state (with plausible support from much of the public) took the opposite approach. In March of 1961 the Council of Ministers order the Ministry of Health to adjust the health insurance system so that persons receiving assistance from public services as a direct result of intoxication would pay the full amount of their own transportation and care. The necessary changes to both the trade union-run social insurance network and the state insurance provider took place over the remainder of 1961 and 1962. The “people” would no longer bear the burden of such

³³ "Alkohol - der Feind der Jugend," 22 November 1957, BArch-L, DQ 1/21632. Kochan, *Blauer Würger*, 32.

³⁴ Kochan, *Blauer Würger*; Barsch, *Von Herrengedeck und Kumpeltod*.

³⁵ Dr. med. Helmut Metze, "Warum soll der Staat bezahlen?" *BZ am Abend*, 6 February 1958; Heinz Kempfer, "Wer Geld hat, um sich zu betrinken..." *Der Morgen* (Potsdam), 16 February 1958.

³⁶ S., Accounting Department of the Central Administration of the Greater Berlin District FDGB to the Health and Social Services Department of the Magistrate of Greater Berlin, "Betr.: Stationäre Krankenhausbehandlung," 6 February 1960, BArch-L, DQ 1/20523.

irresponsibility.³⁷ Interestingly, the most prominent counterargument against such a step once again emerged from the gendered dynamic of alcohol abuse in postwar society, as there were those who pointed out that the financial burden would be felt not just by the drinker, but “his” wife and children who already likely suffered from the man’s reckless behavior.³⁸ The state sought to ratchet up the pressure on anyone whose drinking could be deemed merely irresponsible even as it sought technocratic solutions for those suffering from real addiction.

Existing scholarship offers competing narratives on the end objective of state-led anti-alcohol campaigns at this time. Take a pair of works published on alcohol in the GDR within a few years of each other. Gundula Barsch’s 2009 title, *Von Herrengedeck und Kumpeltod*, argues that Ulbricht’s regime largely ignored abuse and addiction, casting a positive spin on rising consumption levels as a sign of a blooming socialist economy. Only in the late 1960s and 1970s does she see true acknowledgment of the problem and comprehensive efforts to deal with it from public health and law enforcement officials.³⁹ Thomas Kochan, on the other hand, argues that the years around 1960 represented a major turning point, with the GDR government launching an all out attack on what they considered destructive drinking habits, most especially the culture of liquor consumption and the networks of poorly-lit watering holes heavily represented in the country’s urban areas.⁴⁰ A Czechoslovak source, however, makes clear how public health officials at the time viewed the situation in a broader context of the Soviet-aligned East, and serves as yet another reminder that very little of the East German leaders’ policies emerged from

³⁷ Dr. M., Head of Legal Department, MfG to the Legal Department of the MdI, "Anweisung Nr. 1 über die Kosten für ärztliche Behandlung und Beförderung bei Alkoholmißbrauch," 3 October 1962, BArch-L, DQ 1/23154.

³⁸ "Protokoll über den Ausspracheabend betr. den Entwurf einer V.O. über die Betreuungsstelle für Trunkene," 9 January 1957, BArch-L, DQ 1/21232; "Medizinisches Katerfrühstück," *Norddeutsche Neueste Nachrichten*, 4 March 1957; Dr. med. Wohlauf, Bernburg, "Der Griff zum Glas: Ausweg oder Selbstbetrug?" *Freiheit* (Halle), 22 May 1958; Dr. R., Department Head, Department of Common Illness, MfG to the School of Graphic and Applied Art at the Prorectorate for Study Matters, "Plakatthemen," 4 February 1959, BArch-L, DQ 1/2648, B. 233-234

³⁹ Barsch, *Von Herrengedeck und Kumpeltod*, 166–75.

⁴⁰ Kochan, *Blauer Würger*, 16; 31–35.

original ideas. In a 1960 booklet from the ČSSR's Ministry of Health, the authors describe a socialist international movement to combat rising alcohol consumption. Not surprisingly, they single out the Soviet Union as a pioneer in the field, having established an exceptional health education program and begun "a war against alcohol on a wide front" as early as 1954.⁴¹ (Interestingly, even as the Czechs praised the Soviets as pioneers in the field, East German officials had explicitly stated that they thought the Czech model superior to programs in the USSR). In 1955, Poland implemented new measures for the protection of youth against alcohol. Czechoslovakia followed in 1956, then Bulgaria, and finally Hungary and the GDR.⁴² In this light, both states' shift toward greater energy in the fight against alcohol consumption toward the end of the 1950s appears par for the course, which makes it questionable if those efforts really emerged from uniquely domestic concerns or the initiative of certain teetotaling leaders such as Walter Ulbricht.

What did set Czechs and East Germans apart from their fellow socialist societies, though, was the predominance of beer over wine and distilled spirits in their alcohol cultures. The more intense their programs against alcohol, abuse, and addiction became, the more contradictory these states' refusal to openly attack the most popular alcoholic beverage in their societies appears. Far beyond refusing to just attack it, state officials understood that many of their policies aimed at reducing liquor consumption would actively increase demand for beer unless the wine supply dramatically improved, which they could not achieve. Showing how agonized their attempts to thread the needle between public health and cultural preferences were, however, in 1959 an official in the Czechoslovak State Planning Office dismissed out of hand a suggestion from brewery representatives that the state publicly promote beer consumption even as he

⁴¹ Vodrážka Bartoňová, *Nebezpečí Návyku na alkohol*, 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1-4.

acknowledged that consumers were being incentivized through economic mechanisms to drink beer over spirits. To further complicate matters, the brewers had based their argument on experience “from other countries in the socialist camp” (presumably Poland and the USSR among others) where the governments did actively propagandize for beer to displace hard alcohol consumption.⁴³ The contradictory messaging around beer in Czech and East German sources from these years is not as surprising when one understands that leaders in both states were stuck between widespread notions that beer was a drink of moderation (reinforced even by fellow socialist governments) and knowledge that beer already made up the largest portion of their population’s consumption of alcohol. With hundreds, perhaps thousands of individual functionaries and decision-makers involved in determining public messaging and policy on alcohol, it was almost certainly a combination of factors, including beer’s popularity and belief in the greater evil of liquor, that led officials to treat beer with kid gloves.

In any case, the result was the same; a steady campaign of mixed messages leaving endless room for ambiguity and confusion. A 1958 episode of the East German weekly newsreel *Der Augenzeuge* cheerfully reported the lifting of food rationing in a telling manner. In the usual tone of self-praise, a female narrator announced:

Countless bockwursts will be eaten and they will remain available at every kiosk’s snack counter for 44 cents. That’s a reason for joy, because that leaves enough for an extra beer. Prost! While one chooses his beer, another his *Schnaps*, but that will be getting more expensive. And we should be happy about that.⁴⁴

⁴³ Information for Minister [unamed] from State Planning Office, "Návštěva závodu Východočeské pivovary n.p. Pardubice," 3 May 1959, NArch-C, Státní úřad planovací II, Praha - ka. 283; Department of Domestic Commerce, "Informace pro s. Pavla," 2 June 1959, NArch-C, Státní úřad planovací II, Praha - ka. 283.

⁴⁴ *Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge* (1958/A 45), Q6UJ9A0045HN [Accessed 8 June, 2021]

This is just one example, from a moment that both primary and secondary sources identify as an acceleration point in the fight against alcohol consumption in these states, when East German and Czech audiences received a remarkably bifurcated message on beer. Was beer alcohol, just like *Schnaps*? Or was the true threat only in liquor, leaving wine and beer something... different?

In the 1960s and 1970s, the state-run media and public information services ratcheted up the frequency and harshness of messages warning against excessive drinking and the schizophrenic approach to beer continued unabated. While distilled spirits received the strongest condemnation in these channels, beer came in for its fair share of negative press, including a few explicit rejections of popular notions that it represented any less of a threat than liquor.⁴⁵ In the same time period and through the same media, however, the regime's newspaper contributors, television producers, and filmmakers transmitted open celebration of beer, and especially loved to praise milestones of industrial progress that promised to bring about an economy of abundance, with quality beer for all.⁴⁶ Even contemporary commentators on issues related to alcohol abuse noted the inconsistency at play.⁴⁷ To be sure, the regime tried to square these two

⁴⁵ Examples from East Germany are abundant in my master's thesis and published journal article cited below. The following examples prove the Czech case: "Opatření podniku proti alkoholismu," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů*, n.p. Plzeň, č. 7 (July 1973): 3; *Filmový zpravodaj 1974/14*, ČT, IDEC: 274 532 36048; "Slovo lékaře," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů*, n.p. Plzeň, č. 2 (February 1975): 5-6; Ing. Jaroslav Pesler, "Vliv alkoholu na lidský organismus," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 12 (December 1976): 4-5; *Československý filmový týdeník 1962/46*, ČT-A, IDEC: 212 562 26270/0046; Vondrážka and Bartoňová, *Nebezpečí Návyku na alkohol*; PhDr. Josef Viewegh, *Alkohol - můj nepřítel: O životě a díle protialkoholního pracovníka Jana Novotného* (Třebíč okresní národní výbor - okresní protialkoholní sbor, 1967); *Civilizace na rozcestí - Pořád: Míra lidského štěstí* (1967), ČT, IDEC: 267 531 09804.

⁴⁶ *Televizní noviny*, 19 December 1965, ČT, IDEC: 265 531 39999/1219; *Televizní noviny 1962*, ČT, IDEC: 262 531 39999/0121; *Televizní noviny 1962*, ČT, IDEC: 262 531 39999/0808; *Televizní noviny 1963*, ČT, IDEC: 263 531 39999/0122; *Televizní noviny 1963*, ČT, IDEC: 263 531 39999/0423; *Televizní noviny 1963*, ČT, IDEC: 263 531 39999/1219; *Televizní noviny 1964*, ČT, IDEC: 264 531 39999/0813; *Televizní noviny 1965*, ČT, IDEC: 265 531 39999/0727; *Televizní noviny*, 28 August 1965, ČT, IDEC: 265 531 39999/0828; *Televizní noviny*, 27 October 1966, ČT, IDEC: 266 531 39999/1027; *Televizní noviny*, 3 October 1966, ČT, IDEC: 266 531 39999/1003; *Televizní noviny*, 29 December 1970, ČT, IDEC: 270 531 39999/1229; *Televizní noviny*, 5 January 1972, ČT, IDEC: 272 531 39999/0105; *Televizní noviny*, 13 December 1972, ČT, IDEC: 272 531 39999/1213; *Televizní noviny*, 12 August 1972, ČT, IDEC: 272 531 39999/0812; *Televizní noviny*, 24 June, 1974 ČT, IDEC: 274 531 39999/0624.

⁴⁷ P. Úbl, "Opatření proti kriminalitě mládeže a vliv odborného učiliště na mladou generaci při prevenci přestupků či trestné činnosti," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 9 (September 1979): 3-5.

ideas with its oft-repeated admonitions that the population should “drink responsibly” or “always in moderation.”⁴⁸ This, apparently, helped media creators constantly portray beer drinking as an everyday, usually harmless, and often positive activity while avoiding charges that they were “promoting” or advertising alcohol consumption, something that leaders in both states claimed was strictly unacceptable in a socialist society.⁴⁹ But even these weak admonitions, which also telegraphed the government’s powerlessness to change popular habits, contradicted other policy avenues seeking to address rising alcohol consumption. After all, why work to promote wine and vilify liquor if abusive drinking were merely a result of poor choices and insufficient willpower? If that were the case, the type of beverage would make no difference, but both GDR and ČSSR leaders pursued different strategies for different kinds of drink. In both cases beer, which, by sheer weight of volume, must have contributed substantially to high rates of alcohol abuse and addiction, received the benefit of ambiguity in a way that liquor never did. By not taking a hard stance on the people’s drink, the regimes signaled that it should remain the people’s drink. Those signals matter for what they prove about the power of this cultural commodity in German and Czech society, much more than they do for their actual impact. Indeed, despite being public health enemy number one, consumption of distilled spirits also continued to rise steadily in both states. By the end of the 1970s, with demand for alcohol still rising and the immense investments

⁴⁸ Gillespie, “The People’s Drink: The Politics of Beer in East Germany (1945-1971),” chaps. 2–3; John Gillespie, “Imbibing the Future: Alcohol Moderation and Modernity in 1960s and 1970s East German Broadcast Media,” *Contemporary European History* 32, no. 3 (February 2022): 352–64.

⁴⁹ “Auszüge aus dem Schreiben;” “Zpráva o účinnosti dosavadního souboru opatření k řešení problematiky alkoholismu a jiných toxikománií v ČSR,” n.d. [after 18 August 1980], NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 P3/81 5/6; *Mahlzeit DDR*, episode 4, “Prost Mahlzeit DDR: Kali, Pfeffi, blauer Würger Teil 4,” directed by Anreas Kuno Richter, aired November 30, 2003, on MDR, accessed January 1, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRZozffy-A8>; timestamp: 8:40; MdJ, “Erster Entwurf: Maßnahmenplan zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholmißbrauchs,” 25 June 1970, BArch-L, DP 1/2485, 3.

needed to substantially expand brewing capacity unavailable, liquor even overtook beer as the population's primary source of alcohol by volume in East Germany.⁵⁰

Then again, while it is impossible to distinguish exactly how much beer or spirits (or wine for that matter) contributed to abuse and addiction, there were some striking statistical correlations that seemed to support the "beer is not the problem" camp in the fight for public health. Looking first at Czechoslovakia, it turns out that the beer-guzzling Czechs did not, necessarily, present their government with the most headaches concerning alcohol abuse. In the late 1970s, Slovakia had marginally higher rates of admittance for anti-alcohol treatment in psychiatric facilities than the Czech lands, with roughly seven out of every 500 Slovaks receiving care as opposed to six out of every 500 Czechs. Rates of crime resulting from intoxication also ranked higher in Slovakia, at 40.4 percent of all crimes as opposed to 34.9 percent in the Czech lands in 1978.⁵¹ In both cases the difference remains small, but it is striking considering the Czechs' world-class status in beer consumption alongside rising wine and liquor intake throughout the socialist period.⁵² In East Germany, too, officials worrying over higher rates of abuse and alcohol-related crime laid out in clear numbers where the country's worst hotspots for such problems were. The map of where alcohol-induced crime occurred most often, in particular, closely mirrored a map of the higher liquor-to-beer consumption ratios in the state.⁵³ The Northern districts around Frankfurt an der Oder, Schwerin, and East Berlin show the greatest occurrence. In a 1966 report law enforcement officials in the GDR vacillated back and

⁵⁰ Fabian Tweder, *Vita-Cola and Timms Saurer: Getränkeseason in der DDR* (Berlin: Elefant Press Verlag, 1999), 8; "Opatření podniku proti alkoholismu," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 7 (July 1973): 3.

⁵¹ "Svodná informace ke zprávám o účinnosti dosavadního souboru opatření k řešení problematiky alkoholismu a jiných toxikománií v ČSR a v SSR," n.d. [after June 1980], NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 P3/81 5/6.

⁵² "Zpráva o účinnosti dosavadního souboru opatření k řešení problematiky alkoholismu a jiných toxikománií v ČSR," n.d. [after 18 August 1980], NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 P3/81 5/6. tab.č.3.

⁵³ Dr. W. W. and Dr. eoc. W. D., Institute for Market Research, "Rationelle Verbrauchsnorm Spirituosen," December 1978, BArch-L, DL 102/1264.

forth between discussing alcohol as a general problem for criminality and blaming liquor, specifically.⁵⁴

Following up on a theme of Chapter Three, gender also played a clear role in the different treatment of distilled spirits, wine, and beer. As already mentioned, signs of increasing alcohol consumption, abuse, or addiction rates for women set off alarm bells with state officials and public health experts in a way that the comparatively sky-high and still rising numbers for adult men simply did not.⁵⁵ The justification for this unequal panic always ran that the tendency toward destructive drinking was rising faster among women than men, but then this is not surprising considering how much metaphorical ground the female segment of the population had to make up. In 1948, a contributor to a Christian pastoral journal in Czechoslovakia wrote that “[p]articular concern is given to drinking alcohol, smoking, and gambling among women... this used to be avoided and up to now was only typical for careless, dishonorable, deranged, or eccentric women. We must tell girls that men might be ‘interested’ in such women but will never want a permanent union with them.”⁵⁶ Some psychologists of the time also presented alcoholism among women as a fundamentally different disorder than for men. The theories of Dr. Wilhelm Solms from the University of Vienna made their way into the files of East Germany’s public health officials, where they could read that female alcoholism in many cases resulted from a tendency to “play a masculine role in life” and express “unconscious homosexual tendencies.” Unlike male alcoholics, where their profession and frequent opportunities to drink played a

⁵⁴ "Bericht über die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung der Arbeitsgruppe 'Alkoholriminalität - begünstigende Bedingung im Handel,' 1966, BArch-L DP 1/2019.

⁵⁵ Dr. Ernst Gabriel, Wien, "Das Bild des neuen Alkoholismus und seine Vorbeugung durch den Arzt," Zweiter Sommerkurs zum Wissenschaftlichen Studium der Verhütung des Alkoholismus, Genf, 25 June - 6 July 1956, BArch-L, DQ 1/21817, 6; MfG, "Protokoll über die Alkoholikertagung am 14.1.1960," 18 January 1960, BArch-L, DQ 1/21624; Legislative Department, MdJ, "Vermerk Betr.: Tagung zur Vorbereitung einer Aufklärungsaktion gegen den Alkoholmißbrauch am 14. 1. 1960 im Ministerium für Gesundheitswesen," 25 January 1960, BArch-L, DP 1/1397.

⁵⁶ "Alkohol, karban a kouření," *Edice duchovní péče o mládež církve Československé* 51 (1948): 2-4.

major role, “with the female drinker, alcoholism is always an expression of a psychic maldevelopment.”⁵⁷ Rising rates of alcoholism among women, and growing concern with the phenomenon, appear globally during these years, but in East Germany and Czechoslovakia the sharp discrepancy between men and women in preference for beer, and the relatively poor wine supply, left panic around female alcohol abuse closely tied to panic about rising consumption of liquor, specifically. By 1981 in East Germany, while 96 percent of men said they drank beer compared to 70 percent of women, exactly 81 percent of both groups said they drank spirits. For both male and female respondents, wine counted as their least likely beverage to regularly drink.⁵⁸

Combining the correlation between beer drinking and apparently lower rates of abuse with long-standing and thoroughly embedded cultural assumptions (such as gendered drinking habits and their relationship to abuse) it is perhaps not surprising that a begrudging preference for beer over liquor gained legal backing in the GDR and ČSSR to match its rhetorical power. Even here, though, the agonized ambiguity over beer continued. In a 1970 working paper from the East German Ministry of Justice, a new program for combatting alcohol abuse demonstrates the vacillating nature of the unnamed author’s approach to alcohol. After starting out with a declaration that the Ministry intended no “undifferentiated impact on the enjoyment of alcohol in the framework of the social and personal lives of the citizens” the document then suggested stricter measures to reduce the presence of alcohol in many spaces. This included, in one case, “banning the sale or consumption of alcohol (including beer) in retail establishments.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Dr. Wilhelm Solms, Vienna University Psychiatric-Neurological Clinic, "Alkoholismus bei Frauen - Vierter Sommerkurs zum Wissenschaftlichen Studium der Verhütung des Alkoholismus in Genf," 4 - 15 August 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21624, 3, 7.

⁵⁸ Dr. P. D., Institute for Market Research, "Dokumentation zur Befragung 'Verbrauchsgewohnheiten bei einigen ausgewählten Genußmitteln,' Teil: Alkoholische Getränke," December 1981, DL 102/1497, 15.

⁵⁹ MdJ, "Grundsätze und erste Vorschläge für die Ausarbeitung eines Programms zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholmißbrauchs," 17 February 1970, BArch-L, DP 1/2485, 6.

(parenthesis in original) The author's need to specify that beer counts as alcohol speaks for itself. Afterward, however, the working paper also suggests direct measures to "change drinking habits" away from liquor and toward wine, alcohol free beverages, and "low-alcohol beverages." By process of elimination, the latter term must refer to beer, though the author refuses to openly say so.⁶⁰ The same kind of linguistic maneuvering appears with a high frequency in GDR public health records to more or less explicit degrees of favoritism to beer, but always in internal communications, never public rhetoric.⁶¹ The most blatant example of a preference for beer, though, comes from Czechoslovakia in the early 1980s, when yet another set of new government measures designed to "solve the problem of alcoholism" in the Czech lands listed ban after ban on alcohol sales in various spaces, such as factory canteens, public gatherings, sports events, dance clubs, and military commissaries. In practically every case, however, an exception is made for beer. Only in entertainment venues designed for youths did beer fall under the same prohibition as wine and liquor.⁶²

By 1989, East Germans drank more beer per person than any other state's population on Earth (they also drank the most liquor per person).⁶³ National boundaries make these numbers somewhat misleading, however. Had the later Czech Republic been counted separately, it would

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ MdJ, "Grundsätze für die Ausarbeitung des Programms zur Bekämpfung des Alkohomißbrauchs," 22 January 1970, BArch-L, DP 1/3035; MdJ, "Erster Entwurf: Maßnahmenplan zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholmißbrauchs," 25 June 1970, BArch-L, DP 1/2485; Institute for Market Research, "Probleme der prognostischen Entwicklung des Verbrauchs an Alkoholischen Getränken bis zum Jahr 1990: Ergänzungsmaterial Nr. 9 zur Prognose der Entwicklung des Konsumgüterverbrauchs der Bevölkerung der DDR bis zum Jahr 1990," 20 September 1973, BArch-L, DL 102/753; Dr. W. W. and Dr. eoc. W. D., "Rationelle Verbrauchsnorm Spirituosen," December 1978, BArch-L, DL 102/1264.

⁶² "Svodná informace ke zprávám o účinnosti dosavadního souboru opatření k řešení problematiky alkoholismu a jiných toxikománií v ČSR a v SSR," n.d. [after June 1980], NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 P3/81 5/6; "Zpráva o účinnosti dosavadního souboru opatření k řešení problematiky alkoholismu a jiných toxikománií v ČSR," n.d. [after 18 August 1980], NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 P3/81 5/6; "Vládní návrh: Zákon české národní rady ze dne o ochraně před alkoholismem a jinými toxikomaniemi," n.d. [1980] NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 P3/81 5/6; "Důvodová zpráva k návrhu zákona ČNR o ochraně před alkoholismem a jinými toxikomaniemi," n.d. [1980], NArch-C, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 P3/81 5/6.

⁶³ Tweder, *Vita-Cola and Timms Saurer*, 8.

have easily surpassed its neighbor to the north in beer consumption, rivaled only by the Bavarians.⁶⁴ While it is impossible to prove a hypothetical, it seems likely that beer consumption in the GDR would have been even higher had the woefully inefficient planned economy not held back the supply at every turn.⁶⁵ Multiple primary and secondary sources leave little doubt about this. Despite drinking more beer than any other country on Earth, East Germany still could not make as much as its people wanted.⁶⁶ The beer it did make often failed to meet even the state's own standards for quality, which is to say nothing about their appeal to consumer desires.⁶⁷ Still, the numbers are astounding, as is the lack of any real success or, apparently, sincere intentions to stem the alcohol tide that public health officials openly decried. But even as they decried it in their internal communications, the state's highest leadership continued to try to keep the prevalence of alcoholism in East Germany out of public discourse. As one East German psychologist wrote in his peer review of an alcoholic's personal memoir published in 1989, there had been a "years-long suppression of the subject out of the public consciousness."⁶⁸ Overall, state policies are more suggestive of a dismissive attitude toward the alcohol problem than with

⁶⁴ *Comecon Data 1990* (Vienna: Vienna Institute for Comparative Economic Studies, 1991), 163.

⁶⁵ A representative example shows all of the difficulties in their fullness. Even when the breweries produced sufficient beer, which did happen on a regular basis, there were often shortages in basic packaging and adjacent materials such as bottles, bottle caps, beer crates, and carbon dioxide. See B., Head of Inspection, District-Managed Industry and Food Industry and Schulze, Head of Inspection, Trade and Supply, Committee of the Workers and Farmers Inspection, "Information über Ergebnisse der Kontrolle zur Produktion und Versorgung mit Bier und alkoholfreien Getränken," 9 July 1982, BArch-L, DC 14/1619.

⁶⁶ *Mahlzeit DDR*, episode 4, "Prost Mahlzeit DDR: Kali, Pfeffi, blauer Würger Teil 4," directed by Andreas Kuno Richter, aired November 30, 2003, on MDR, accessed January 1, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRZozffy-A8>; Kochan, *Blauer Würger*, 78; Institute for Market Research, "Probleme der prognostischen Entwicklung des Verbrauchs an Alkoholischen Getränken bis zum Jahr 1990: Ergänzungsmaterial Nr. 9 zur Prognose der Entwicklung des Konsumgüterverbrauchs der Bevölkerung der DDR bis zum Jahr 1990," 20 September 1973, BArch-L, DL 102/753.

⁶⁷ A representative example from Suhl, which was a moderately large producer of beer, shows that in 1982 an average of 43.1% of all beer met technical quality standards. See Workers and Farmers Inspection, Suhl District Committee, "Information über den Stand der Vorbereitung der Getränkesaison 1983 bei Bier und alkoholfreien Getränken einschließlich der Sicherung einer qualitätsgerechten Produktion," 23 February 1983, BArch-L, DC 14/1707.

⁶⁸ Dipl.-Psych. K.-H. W., "Gutachten zu 'Rosa Nacht und Schwarzes Licht' von H.-U. Strack," 15 February 1988, BArch-L, DR 1/2326, 239.

any kind of earnest desire to get a grip on the issue. Despite the fact that year after year officials in both states' ministries for health, justice, youth, and others produced internal documents explaining their efforts to restrict and reduce alcohol consumption, the bird's eye view reveals those words to be just that, words – with little concrete action to back them up.

One might suggest that the SED put less effort into improving the beer supply as a result of their publicly expressed concerns about alcohol consumption, but evidence from the time suggests no such thing. If anything, the opposite appears to be true. As we have already seen, while beer never achieved the kind of official endorsement that wine did as a “drink of moderation” and state organs regularly identified it as a potential cause of drunkenness, abuse, and addiction, skyrocketing liquor consumption and dim prospects for improving the wine supply left beer as the lesser of two evils if the primary goal was to reduce consumption of spirits. Though their ultimately-stated goal remained to direct people toward low-alcohol beer and non-alcoholic alternatives, state officials managed to justify the need to produce even more beer as a kind of transitional beverage on the road to lower alcohol intake. In that way, obstacles in the beer supply hindered the state's policy of lowering alcohol consumption.⁶⁹ Officials in the East German Ministries of Health and Justice paid close attention to alcohol and anti-alcoholism policies developed and implemented in other countries, both socialist and non-socialist. In the 1980s, this meant that they kept track of early-Gorbachev era efforts in the USSR to finally clamp down on high rates of abuse and addiction. Minister of Justice Hans-Joachim Heusinger even wrote a report on the new campaign for the President of the GDR's High Court after a visit to the Soviet Union in 1986. He reported glowingly (with typical propagandistic verve) on the positive effects of new alcohol restrictions in reducing a number of very serious

⁶⁹ MdJ, "2. Entwurf: Maßnahmeplan zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholmißbrauchs," 14 September 1970, BArch-L, DP 1/2485; Institut für Marktforschung, "Probleme der prognostischen Entwicklung...", 5-6.

issues.⁷⁰ Despite absolutely being aware that those problems bedeviled their own population, Erich Honecker and the socialist leadership in the GDR reacted to Gorbachev's anti-alcohol policies with the same level of enthusiasm that they embraced *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which is to say none at all. While in the 1960s alcoholism rates in East Germany remained under 1 percent of the population, by the mid-1980s that number had more than doubled to 2.3 percent, and those official numbers certainly understated the problem.⁷¹ Many public health experts and law enforcement officials had been warning that alcohol abuse and alcoholism were serious and growing crises in the GDR since at least the 1970s. By the late 1980s, with consumption numbers that had done nothing but grow since then, the SED rejected any major intervention to address the issue, refused to acknowledge the scope of the problem as even their fellow Eastern bloc states had done, and continued to pump money into making more alcohol, with some voices suggesting that more beer might help.

The wider lens of Eastern bloc politics also helps to illuminate Czechoslovakia's struggles with high rates of drinking by making clear just how economically and politically invested in the beer industry the state was, to a degree that even the GDR could not match. The ČSSR not only made enough beer to support domestic consumption in the heaviest beer drinking region in the Soviet sphere of influence (Bohemia), it also exported heavily and served as the leading engine of the beer industry for all COMECON countries. Take, for example, the efforts of the Soviet Union to combat alcohol abuse in the later decades of communist rule. The campaign that ultimately resulted in Gorbachev's failed effort to reduce consumption with

⁷⁰ V. I. Terebilov, President of the Supreme Court of the USSR, "Der XXVII. Parteitag der KPdSU und die Aufgaben bei der Vervollkommnung der gerichtlichen Tätigkeit," 16 April 1986, BArch-L, DP 2/2562; A. Sucharev, Minister of Justice, RSFSR, "Die neue Etappe des rechtlichen Aufbaus," *sovetskaja justicije* 14 (1986): 5-9.

⁷¹ Kochan, *Blauer Würger*, 363.

heavy-handed restrictions on the sale of alcohol and banning it entirely in certain situations went through a number of earlier, less punitive phases, including a strong push in the 1970s and 1980s for the USSR to greatly expand its brewing capacity and put more beer on the market as an alternative to spirits. This industrial development plan received regular coverage in Czechoslovakia's internal beer industry news service as the Czechs served as crucial partners in helping to build beer-related facilities in fellow socialist states.⁷² No critical voice in these publications questioned the theory that favoring one alcoholic beverage over another one could successfully combat alcohol abuse and high rates of consumption.

Czech officials knew from experience that an ample beer supply by itself would not reduce alcohol abuse, but they seemed just as in thrall to the idea that beer was the lesser of two evils compared to spirits and they implicitly enshrined that logic in the law. Yet, in the same time period, via the same media sources, and reaching the same eyes came frequent polemics against excessive drinking, abuse, and rising rates of alcoholism in Czechoslovakia itself, several of which explicitly pilloried any theory that beer did not "count" as alcohol or that it represented a "harmless" beverage because of its ubiquitous consumption and reputation as a "people's drink" (*lidové nápoj*).⁷³ Though leaders in the ČSSR spoke more openly and directly about alcoholism

⁷² "Svět kolem piva," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 12 (December 1972): 5; "Různé informace z odborných časopisů," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 5 (May 1976): 6; "Pivovarství v SSSR," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 1 (January 1977): 5; "Různé / ze zahraničních časopisů," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 3 (March 1977): 5; ing. St. Augustin, "Výstavba pivovaru v socialistické Etiopii," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 5 (May 1980): 4; ing. J. Štrunc, "5 milionů hektolitrů československého piva do SSSR," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 4 (April 1978): 1.

⁷³ "Opatření podniku proti alkoholismu," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 7 (July 1973): 3; *Filmový zpravodaj 1974/14*, ČT, IDEC: 274 532 36048; "Slovo lékaře," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 2 (February 1975): 5-6; Ing. Jaroslav Pesler, "Vliv alkoholu na lidský organismus," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 12 (December 1976): 4-5; P. Úbl, "Opatření proti kriminalitě mládeže a vliv odborného učiliště na mladou generaci při prevenci přestupků či trestné činnosti," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů n.p. Plzeň* č. 9 (September 1979): 3-5.

as a problem in their country, they, like the East Germans, continued to put forward manifestly contradictory policies and rhetoric on beer that offered no real progress on reducing alcohol consumption and abuse. They continued to do so right up to the moment that their regimes collapsed within weeks of each other in 1989.

The “Liquid Bread” Problem

“In München steht ein Hofbräuhaus,
doch Freudenhäuser müssen raus,
damit in dieser schönen Stadt,
das Laster keine Chance hat.”

(In Munich stands a Hofbräuhaus,
But pleasures houses must get out,
So that, in this beautiful city,
Vice will have no chance.)

- Spider Murphy Gang, “Skandal im Sperrbezirk” (1981)

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In a 1986 article in the West German beer industry journal *Bier Aktuell*, a commentator from the German Brewers’ Association’s Society for Public Relations sounded the alarm on the language used in a recent report from the Federal Ministry of Youth, Family, Women, and Health. The report gave an updated look at the federal government’s assessment of alcoholism in West Germany, including concerning developments such as the rising number of people reckoned to be suffering from the disease in the FRG, 1.5 million out of a population of roughly 63 million, up from the 900,000 calculated in 1975 (and, at around 2.4 percent, almost exactly the same as what East German officials reported for their country.) The beer publication’s contributor, however, expressed scarce concern for the overall state of alcohol-related public health in his state. Rather, the article articulated horror at some of the word choices made by the officials, who did not “keep a sufficiently clean separation between the terms ‘beer’ and ‘alcohol.’” The brewers found especially offensive the functionaries’ consistent use of the

phrasing, “alcohol, and in particular beer...” which the article’s author argued would certainly lead to “an undifferentiated equation of the two terms.” The column finished with a call to arms. “The Society for Public Relations sees itself as called upon to consider measures that will counteract any further discriminatory tendencies against beer in the realm of health politics.”⁷⁴ While a sympathetic reading of the article might accept that repeatedly singling out a single alcoholic beverage at every mention of the term “alcohol” does seem somewhat prejudicial, that assessment can only be maintained in ignorance of the longer history of alcohol politics in Germany, and the entire Central European Beer Zone, which had for decades if not centuries fostered a remarkably widespread public discourse suggesting (both implicitly and explicitly) that beer simply was not “alcohol,” but rather “liquid bread” or a “basic foodstuff.” In this light, the 1985 West German government report reads more like a desperate attempt to correct for popular health misconceptions that might lead to significant harm to the population, or, in other words, precisely the kind of thing that a responsible government body is supposed to do. FRG officials had a difficult fight ahead of them on this front against long-entrenched and still popular notions.

In a similar manner to East Germany, significant public concerns over alcohol abuse and addiction in the West took time to reemerge after World War Two, and early discourse tended to focus on “vulnerable” groups. A 1955 article in the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* noted that the first “German sanatorium for alcohol-addicted women” had just opened near Ravensburg in Baden-Württemberg. Reporting that rising living standards had lifted the number of alcoholics in the Federal Republic to 300,000, the article expressed greater concern that the ratio of male to female addicts had shifted dramatically. Whereas in the past only a single woman received

⁷⁴ German Brewers Association Society for Public Relations [GFÖ], "'Suchtbericht': Undifferenzierte Behandlung von Alkohol und Bier," *Bier Aktuell* 7 (September 1986): 3-5.

treatment for every fifteen men, now the relationship was a mere three to one.⁷⁵ Much as in the East, and around the world, more frequent occurrences of female alcoholism served as one of the early standout issues that drew greater attention to rising consumption levels in the West.⁷⁶ Overall, the 1950s in the FRG brought regular but not overly-panicked coverage of alcoholism and abuse-related issues in the media. France received frequent coverage for serious issues with alcohol-caused disease, new addiction treatment facilities opened in several West German cities, and the early signs appeared that drunk driving would become a hotly contested issue for both drinkers and the businesses that served them.⁷⁷ In a clear sign of their unapologetic stance on the issue, alcohol producers in 1958 openly attacked reports of increasing alcoholism in the FRG with a joint statement from their own research association dismissing concerns with the argument that consumption of pure alcohol in 1956/57 remained lower than it had been in 1939, 1921, 1914, and far lower than in 1900. They also pointed out that no official organ in the FRG registered alcoholism cases, meaning that the numbers remained estimates only.⁷⁸

Broadly speaking, public and state-level concern with rising rates of alcohol consumption and related public health and crime issues grew steadily through the 1960s, 70s, and 80s in a manner quite similar to what happened in the GDR and ČSSR. In fact, discourse on the alcohol problem among officials, and to some degree the media, in East and West Germany represents one of the more striking convergences between the two states, with the notable exception that

⁷⁵ "Im Kampf gegen die Suchtgefahren: Eröffnung des ersten deutschen Kurheims für alkoholsüchtige Frauen," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 21 May 1955.

⁷⁶ Dr. Ernst Gabriel, Wien, "Das Bild des neuen Alkoholismus und seine Vorbeugung durch den Arzt," Zweiter Sommerkurs zum Wissenschaftlichen Studium der Verhütung des Alkoholismus, Genf, 25 June - 6 July 1956, BArch-L, DQ 1/21817; N., Area Specialist, Department of General Health Protection, MfG, "Entwurf," 6 November 1956, BArch-L, DQ 1/20523.

⁷⁷ "Todesursache Trunksucht," *Die Welt Berlin*, 18 May 1957; "Moderne Trinkerheilanstalt," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 20 May 1957; "Es gibt keine Ausnahme," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 22 May 1957; "Kampf dem Alkohol im Straßenverkehr," *Der Tagesspiegel* (Berlin-West), 7 February 1958; Karl Puhmann, "Der Alkoholmißbrauch in Frankreich," *Der Tagesspiegel* (Berlin-West), 27 July 1960.

⁷⁸ "Kein Alkoholismus in Deutschland," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 22 April 1958.

SED leaders insisted that socialism would ultimately end alcoholism (which resulted from capitalism in the first place) and that addiction remained an isolated problem for some individuals, rather than a symptom of any underlying social issues.⁷⁹ On that point, the willingness of many West German politicians and health professionals to openly acknowledge the eventual epidemic scale of alcohol abuse more closely aligns with developments in Czechoslovakia, where the government by the 1980s readily admitted that alcohol abuse constituted a “mass negative social phenomenon” rather than a problem for isolated individuals.⁸⁰ Still, GDR and FRG public health figures and doctors working on abuse-related issues regularly attended the same conferences, and not always in neutral countries.⁸¹ Like their fellow Germans to the East, West Germany progressively enacted stricter legal reforms over the years to address particular issues such as drunk driving, alcohol advertising, and youth intoxication, and in both cases reformers faced real and perceived resistance from entrenched interests.⁸² Press freedom in the West allowed for the occasional sensationalist media report to cast alcohol abuse and addiction as a full-blown crisis in the FRG, but, as we saw, the GDR was

⁷⁹ It is interesting, for example, to compare the above citation from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* in April 1958 to comments from an East German liquor-industry representative the following month, see Address at the Spirits Professional's Conference Technical Commission, "Thesen von Dr. Lahm...(illegible), Rostock, zum Thema Alkoholgenuß und Alkoholmißbrauch," 8 May 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21817; see also "Aus der Sprechstunde Dr. med. B-s: Über den Alkoholismus," *Tribüne* (Berlin - East), 3 May 1958.

⁸⁰ "Svodná informace ke zprávám," 6.

⁸¹ "Mäßigung bei Alkohol- und Nikotingenuß," *Neue Zeit*, 14 May 1958; Dr. S. to Central Department of Healthcare, MfG, "Betr.: Gründung eines 'Nationalen Komitees zum Studium des Alkoholismus in der DDR,'" 27 June 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21817.

⁸² "Herabsetzung der Blutalkoholgrenz geplant?" *Der Tagesspiegel* (Berlin-West), 6 June 1959; Pa., Head of the Legal Department, MdJ to the Legal Department, MfG, "Betr.-: Verordnung über die vorübergehende Unterbringung von Personen im Zustand der Trunkenheit und Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholmißbrauches," 11 July 1958, BArch-L, DP 1/1397; Dr. med. Dipl.-Chem. F. P., Department Leader at the Ruhr-Region Hygiene Institute in Gelsenkirchen, "Alkoholbeeinflussung im Betrieb," Vierter Sommerkurs zum Wissenschaftlichen Studium der Verhütung des Alkoholismus, Genf, 4 - 15 August 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21817; Dr. med. Dipl.-Chem. F. P., Department Head at the Hygiene Institute of the Ruhr Region in Gelsenkirchen, "Alkoholbeeinflussung im Betrieb," 4 - 15 August 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21624; State Secretary Dr. T., MdJ to S., Central Division I, MdJ, "Maßnahmen gegen Alkoholmißbrauch," 30 January 1959, BArch-L, DP 1/139; "Versicherungsschutz auch bei über 1,3 Promille im Blut," *Der Abend Berlin* (West), 12 August 1960; "Auszug aus der Niederschrift über die 292 Sitzung des Agrarausschusses des Bundesrates am 11.9.70," 11 September 1970, BayHStA, StK-GuV 12115.

not without its public proselytizers suggesting that rising consumption constituted a major issue for East Germany and socialism more general. Officials were also much more open about their concern in internal documents.⁸³

Public information campaigns in West Germany sought to educate youth, especially, about crime and health concerns related to alcohol with language and imagery that grew increasingly urgent and desperate as the years passed and consumption continued to grow.⁸⁴ By the mid-1970s government representatives spoke with rising panic. In 1976, the chief medical official in the Upper Franconia County Government reported back to his superior in the Bavarian state government from a “model seminar” on alcohol abuse prevention with dire warnings. 1.5 million people in West Germany were affected by “alcohol-related disruptions,” and he affirmed expert views that alcohol-related illness and harm represented “the largest social-medical problem that the Federal Republic is dealing with.”⁸⁵ Drawing on widespread concerns from the 1960s that West Germany was experiencing a “drug wave” among its youth relating to the protest movements, officials in the 1970s pronounced an “alcohol wave” that threatened to overwhelm state resources.⁸⁶ In his work on East Germany, Paul Betts has shown how central

⁸³ "Endstation Sucht: SPIEGEL-Enquete über den Alkoholismus in Deutschland," *Der Spiegel* 43 (1960), BArch-L, DQ 1/21632; Ben, "Die Prozenste im Glas: Mediziner machen sich Gedanken um den Alkoholmißbrauch," *BZ am Abend* (Berlin-East), 21 January 1960;

⁸⁴ *Blick in die Welt* (1970/46), BIDW20170, <https://www.progress.film/search/asset/50518049> [Accessed 18 January 2023]; Walter Reißig, "Modellseminar zur Alkoholeindämmung fordert: Alle müssen mithelfen!" 10/11 April 1976, *Tageblatt*. "Familie und Alkohol: Szenen aus dem bundesdeutschen Alltag," *Partner* 10, no. 5 (May, 1976): 24.

⁸⁵ Dr. R., Head Medical Director of the Upper Franconia County Government to Dr. H., Chair of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group to Combat Drug and Intoxicant Abuse in Bavaria, Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, "Modellseminar zur Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs für Multiplikatoren aus den Regierungsbezirken Oberfranken, Mittelfranken, Unterfranken und der Oberpfalz vom 5. - 8. April 1976... Zusammenfassung der wesentlichen Ergebnisse," 14 April 1976, BayHStA, MInn 110959.

⁸⁶ H. Huther, "Tätigkeit der 'interministeriellen Arbeitsgruppe zur Bekämpfung des Drogen- und Rauschmittelmißbrauchs in Bayern' bei der 'Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs,'" In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976), published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 25-33. 1976. BayHStA, MInn 110959; E. Schuster, "Epidemiologie des Alkoholmißbrauchs," In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976), published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 34-51. 1976. BayHStA, MInn 110959; E. S., Ministerial Councilor in the Bavarian State Ministry for Work and Social Order, "Zur Typologie des Alkoholikers," In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976),

alcohol abuse and related domestic violence were to a shockingly high percentage of divorces and other marital issues in that country.⁸⁷ A 1976 report in the West German *Partner* magazine explained the rapidly rising divorce rate in the FRG partly with the experience of divorce court judges, who explained “that in a very high number of divorces the alcohol problem played a primary role.”⁸⁸ The coin could flip the other way, though, as another report from the model seminar in Bavaria that same year argued that the “enormous rise in female alcoholism” in previous years resulted “in part from an incorrectly developed social emancipation” of women bringing greater burdens and weakened social structures that lead to psychological strain.⁸⁹ The thrust of the report seemed to be that female emancipation itself, rather than a lack of support from their partners or society, directly drove women to become alcoholics. Few or no positive changes occurred on the alcohol front by the 1980s, when, as already shown, government reports from the federal level flashed red lights concerning levels of consumption, abuse, and addiction in the West, and beer producers, at least through their industry group, pushed back against a “discriminatory” focus on their product.

The defensive response of brewers to anti-alcohol messaging should surprise no one, because as fear rose of crisis-level alcohol abuse in the FRG, public health officials desperately tried to fight the notion that beer was somehow exempt from issues related to “alcohol.” Their concerns grew from a very real phenomenon. Asking if West Germans considered beer to be

published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 51-58. 1976. BayHStA, MIInn 110959; R. M., "Alkoholmißbrauch bei Jugendlichen - Situationsanalyse und mögliche Gegenmaßnahmen der Schule unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Faches Sozialarbeit - Referat gehalten bei einer Fortbildungstagung für Fachlehrer im Fach Sozialarbeit an der Realschule, Bereich Schwaben, am 11.11.76," 11 November 1976, BayHStA, MIInn 110959.

⁸⁷ Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 100.

⁸⁸ Ernst Knischewski, "Scheidungsprobleme und Alkoholmißbrauch," *Partner* 10, no. 5 (May, 1976): 2-3.

⁸⁹ Dr. Herbert Riemenschneider, Head Medical Director in the Government of Upper Franconia, "Besondere Probleme beim Frauenalkoholismus," In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976), published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 78-86. 1976. BayHStA, MIInn 110959.

more “demon alcohol” or more “liquid bread” is no mere flight of poetic hyperbole. Certainly, it would be preposterous and condescending to suggest that the vast majority of adult Germans did not understand that beer contained alcohol, and that alcohol bore no substantial differences from the alcohol in wine or *Schnaps*. But that is not the question. The question is whether they consistently encountered messaging that suggested beer, despite its alcohol content, had enough nutritional value and positive health effects that those actually outweighed the possible negative impact of intoxication. Did this information come from reliable sources that were likely to garner public trust? In short, was it possible for ordinary FRG citizens to genuinely believe that beer consumption, even in substantial volumes, supported rather than hindered a healthy body? The answer is yes.

As a first piece of evidence to prove this, one may consider the debates whether beer should be classified as a *Genußmittel* or *Nahrungsmittel*. With Bavarian leaders often the most persistent champions of the idea, West Germans received a steady flow of reassurances and arguments that beer counted as a basic foodstuff, not a luxury. Such statements came frequently, often offhandedly, sometimes as supporting premises for unrelated conclusions. When the Bavarian Council of Ministers met in June of 1952 to discuss a possible price increase for beer, one participant pointed out that this was only appropriate considering that “the price of all foods have risen more than beer... and we always say that beer is not a *Genußmittel*, but a *Nahrungsmittel*.”⁹⁰ In a neat encapsulation of the good medical press that beer could receive, the worry from public health officials about the effects of that press, and the fact that professionals in both Germanys remained in a kind of dialogue with each other, a 1955 article from the West German newspaper *Der Tag* ended up in the alcohol-related files of the East German Ministry of

⁹⁰ Meeting minutes of the Bavarian Council of Ministers, 24 June 1952, BayHStA, StK-GuV 1119.

Health. Headlined “Na, dann Prost! Bier ist gesund,” (“*Well then, cheers! Beer is healthy*”) the column reported that “recent scientific investigations have confirmed old knowledge” that beer supports a healthy appetite and good digestion. This, according to the article’s author, represented just one more reason why “all cultured nations” increasingly appreciated beer “for the health of the population [*Volksgesundheit*].” Not only its gut-health qualities, but also its capacity for “the displacement of high-percentage alcoholic beverages and intoxicants” had caused even those countries previously closed off to beer increasing production of the beverage.⁹¹

One easy trick for those in the pro-beer camp to acknowledge the medical fact of alcohol’s potential harm to the body yet still categorize beer as an overall healthy beverage came from their use of the word “moderation” without any indication of what “moderate” beer consumption meant in concrete terms. In his 1957 *Bayerisch Bier*, Helmut Hochrain states the undeniable truth (though not for the reasons he thinks) that “[t]he fight over whether beer does people good or harm is almost as old as beer itself, and the conflict involves more dilettantes and fanatics than in any other.” He proves his own point on the following page by relaying that “doctors have long recognized a special status for beer which, when enjoyed sensibly, is salubrious to humans. It lifts physical and psychological wellbeing and allows spiritual values to come forward.”⁹² Proponents of the “beer is healthy” argument generally put forth these same arguments over the years: beer has nutritional value (liquid bread), beer quenches thirst, beer supports digestion, beer contains important vitamins and minerals, and beer relaxes psychological strain while fostering a sense of contentedness. While there is a degree of scientific truth to all of these claims, the key in every case is quantity, not quality. In general, any

⁹¹ “Na, dann Prost! Bier ist gesund,” *Der Tag* (Berlin), 19 May 1955.

⁹² Hochrain, *Bayerisch Bier*, 55-56.

positive effects of beer consumption, like wine consumption, will be overtaken by the negative effects of alcohol at levels of intake that many people may still consider to be “moderate.”⁹³ Texts and commentators that proclaimed beer as a wonderful health supplement “in moderation” without specifically defining that term therefore left the most crucial piece of information entirely up to the individual to determine. German beer promoters added another wrinkle to the equation by emphasizing the “natural purity” of the beverage, at least when it was made according to the *Reinheitsgebot*. The 1957 industry booklet *Bier – Unser Volksgetränk* opened an entire chapter of the book with the words “Beer is a pure natural drink. Malt, hops, yeast and water are the basic ingredients.”⁹⁴ Of course the text also includes many of the common arguments for beer’s positive effects listed above, such as “[i]t quenches the thirst. It’s good for sick and weakened organisms just as much as it – in moderation – serves to maintain health.” “A liter of beer... corresponds to the nutritional value of 165 grams of beef, 200 grams of bread, 650 grams of fish, 65 grams of butter, or 7 eggs.”⁹⁵

The available evidence suggests little change in the dynamics of this argument over the years. If there was a notable shift in the discourse around beer’s impact, it almost certainly would be most apparent in the volume of literature entering the public realm to either promote its health benefits or warning against its risk. Such a thing is almost impossible to accurately quantify given the size and scope of the West German media landscape and the lack of comprehensive data on such a specific question. No polling or survey data on popular views of beer’s health impact has come to my attention, which would be the ideal source base for tracking real movement on the issue. Looking qualitatively at individual examples, what becomes clear is just

⁹³ <https://jissn.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12970-015-0088-5>; <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-11027841/Is-BEER-key-staying-hydrated-heatwave.html> ;

⁹⁴ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 25.

⁹⁵ *Bier - Unser Volksgetränk: Ein Dokumentarisches Bildwerk Über Das Bier*, 111.

how little either side in the debate appears to have forced any movement on the other side. In 1967 the Allensbach Institute for Opinion Polling asked West Germans “what can a person do for their health?” 66% answered the most popular option, and that was eating more vegetables. Only 31%, and an almost equal percentage of men and women, responded “drink little alcohol.”⁹⁶ It seems reasonable to assume that if alcohol in general constituted a limited concern for most of the population at that time, beer, with its oft-repeated promotion as a health drink, would represent an even lesser worry. Certainly, it can be said that associations of beer with wellbeing along with both folk-wisdom (such as “*Durst wird erst durch Bier schön*” or “only with beer is thirst beautiful”) and “scientific” proclamations of beer’s healthy nature never went away.⁹⁷ Bavarian state officials and German beer industry leaders never stopped labeling the beverage as a “foodstuff” and rejecting the label *Genussmittel*. Public health officials continued to openly mock and attack that reversal of what they saw as the truthful categorization.⁹⁸ In the 1970s, as the German beer industry began to build its defenses against the threat posed to the *Reinheitsgebot* by European integration in the common market, Bavarian officials still demanded that federal officials remain “unanimously” committed to defending the Purity Law because “the destiny of our people’s foodstuff beer” now lay in their hands.⁹⁹ Even then, brewers in the

⁹⁶ Elisabeth Noelle and Erich Peter Neumann, Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Jahrbuch der öffentliche Meinung, 1965-1967* (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1967), 16.

⁹⁷ *Blick in die Welt* (1960/31), BIDW20255 [Accessed 8 July, 2021]; *Blick in die Welt* (1963/11), BIDW20593 [Accessed 9 December, 2021]; Weihenstephan Bavarian State Brewery, "Ein Betrag zur Geschichte des Bieres," n.d., BayHStA, MK 67372; M., "Alkoholmißbrauch bei Jugendlichen," 6; Herr M. M. to Bavarian Minister-President Dr. Franz Josef Strauß, 18 March 1987, BayHStA, MInn 113043.

⁹⁸ H. H., "Tätigkeit der 'interministeriellen Arbeitsgruppe zur Bekämpfung des Drogen- und Rauschmittelmißbrauchs in Bayern' bei der 'Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs,'" In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976), published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 25-33. 1976. BayHStA, MInn 110959; Dr. rer. nat. J. H. Ellgring, Psychologist, Max-Planck-Institute for Psychiatry and Social Psychology in Munich, "Soziale Bedingungen und Auswirkungen des Alkoholismus," In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976), published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 68-74. 1976. BayHStA, MInn 110959; Mosaner, "Alkoholmißbrauch bei Jugendlichen," 6.

⁹⁹ Economic Advisory Council of the Union, "Protokoll einer Sitzung des Ernährungsausschusses des Wirtschaftsbeirates der Union am 6. Mai 1971," 21 May 1971, BayHStA, StK-GuV 12115.

European Community outside of Germany also happily reported (though in a more responsible fashion than the examples shown here) on the possible positive health effects of beer “in moderation.” As late as 2002 the European Union’s brewing industry trade group produced a pamphlet titled “The Benefits of Moderate Beer Consumption.” Though they did define “moderate” as 1-3 drinks a day for men and 1-2 for women before going on to list possible health benefits of that quantity of consumption, even this relatively responsible publication calculated its quantities with the somewhat misleading premise that “a drink” of beer meant .25 liters, or about half of a British pint. Considering that this information comes as a footnote with an asterisk in smaller print at the bottom of the page, and considering that the standard serving sizes for beer in much of Europe is .33 liters or .5 liters, this seems intentionally designed to leave a false impression of the volume being recommended for some readers.¹⁰⁰ Chapter Five offers additional evidence of how important beer’s role as a nutritional staple in West Germany became in the 1980s during legal disputes between the FRG and EEC.

One-sided arguments for beer’s harmlessness or even health benefits spread much more freely in the West, but even under the tight state censorship of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the persistence of such ideas speaks yet again to how stubbornly folk-custom and lore carried on in late twentieth-century Central Europe alongside other traditions and ideas associated with this cultural commodity. In general, all of the above evidence shown for the FRG corresponds with similar examples from the ČSSR and GDR in their four decades of existence.¹⁰¹ Consider some of the texts regarding beer that could still pass state censors in the

¹⁰⁰ *The Benefits of Moderate Beer Consumption*, Second Edition (Brussels: CMBC – The Brewers of Europe, 2002), 7.

¹⁰¹ Prof. Dr. F., "Aktentotiz Aus der Diskussion anlässlich des Fortbildungslehrganges über Systematik, Methodik und Didaktik der Gesundheitserziehung und Aufklärungsarbeit vom 23. - 28. November 1959," 23 - 28 November 1959, BArch-L, DQ 1/2648; Draft Ordinance, "Verordnung über die Kosten für ärztliche Behandlung und Beförderung bei Alkoholmißbrauch - Begründung," n.d. (before 1 October 1962), BArch-L, DQ 1/23154; Vi., "Zu Gast bei den Burgkeller-'Geistern,'" *NZ*, Aug. 29, 1966. 24; Viewegh, *Alkohol - můj nepřítel*; L., "Vermerk," 1

late 1980s to become freely available to East Germans and Czechs. In 1987 East German author Bodo Homberg submitted to Ministry of Culture reviewers the manuscript for a book titled *Rundegesang und Gerstensaft: Gereimtes und Ungereimtes über das Bier (Rounds and Barley-Juice: Rhymed and Unrhymed about Beer)*. As one might guess from the title, it contained music, poetry, and prose about beer with a highly positive take on the beverage and its social role. While the book itself is a collection of older literature, and therefore could be viewed as an objective study, the reactions of the critics, written in 1988, speak to the continuities in theme and cultural relevance of beer's historical popular reputation. The peer reviews gathered by the publishing house and submitted to the Ministry of Culture give a quick snapshot of how the text, which was published in 1988, openly praised beer and received little in the way of pushback. "I believe I have given sufficient praise to this book about beer," wrote one critic. "Beer must be taken seriously... because it eases cooperation between people of good will under socialism." That same reviewer noted that beer's qualities as a social lubricant worked "at least among so-called men (occasionally women also join in)."¹⁰² "Beer, the most popular alcoholic drink not just of the Germans..." wrote another. "The easy-to-read, knowledgeable epilogue is appropriate to the subject: a humorous look is taken at past and present, a slight discrepancy is notable between the affectionate and cheerful distance of the reflections and the apologetic engagement... such as setting beer in contrast to *Schnaps* and drugs."¹⁰³ This mild rebuke, that

August 1968, BArch-L DP 1/2019; "Nová úprava v poskytování režijního piva zaměstancům," *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 11 (November 1968): 6-7; *Adéla ještě nevečeřela* (1977), directed by Oldřich Lipský (Bohemia Motion Pictures, 2017); "Programm des Modellseminars für Multiplikatoren zur Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs veranstaltet von der Regierung von Mittelfranken im Auftrag der interministeriellen Arbeitsgruppe zur Bekämpfung des Drogen- und Rauschmittelmißbrauchs," 19 April - 22 April 1977, BayHStA, MInn 110959.

¹⁰² [parenthesis in original] Union Verlag, Application to Ministry of Culture to Publish Book *Rundegesang und Gerstensaft. Gereimtes und Ungereimtes über das Bier* by Bodo Homberg, 3 July 1987, BArch DR 1/2456, C. A. review, 334.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Prof. Dr. K. B. review, 336-337.

perhaps the book had been too uncritical in its praise of beer, pales in comparison to three full reviews from notable cultural figures in East German society that overflow with endorsements.

Another text, published in 1983 and popular enough that the fourth edition appeared already in 1986, speaks directly to the positive press that beer continued to get on the popular health front in East Germany. Emil Ulichberger's *Rund ums Bier* contains not only wide general praise for the people's drink, but also poetic vignettes such as the following:

If the beer drinker is healthy, he drinks to stimulate strength,

If he is sick, he drinks because beer helps.

If he is thirsty, he drinks because beer quenches;

If he is not thirsty, he drinks

Because something must be wrong with him.

If he is hungry, he drinks because beer supports digestion.

If he is warm, he drinks beer because it cools;

If he is cold, he drinks beer because it warms.

If he is excited, he drinks beer because it calms;

If he is weary, he drinks beer because it excites.

In melancholic moods he drinks beer,

Because it brings cheerful thoughts;

If he is happy, he drinks because it brings him back to himself.

If he is sleepless, he drinks beer for a good rest;

If he is sleepy, then beer keeps him awake.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Ulichberger, *Rund Ums Bier*, 113.

Less poetic, but arguably more important is Ulichberger's explanation on the following page of the "official" public health line on beer. "The designation used still today that beer is 'liquid bread' is thoroughly misleading in the opinion of science [*nach Meinung der Wissenschaft*] and should disappear from our vocabularies." After acknowledging the limited nutritional value of beer compared to actual food, however, Ulichberger then goes on, "However, there is much that one may go to bat for with beer that speaks to a moderate pleasure. Many scientists praise this drink as a food- and pleasure-good on account of its low alcohol content."¹⁰⁵ Such a partial, weak, and contradictory message on beer's health impact could hardly move the needle on popular attitudes, even for those who did read this book.

A very similar text to *Rundegesang und Gerstensaft* appeared in Czechoslovakia through a state-owned publishing house in 1985. Written by Boris Grušin, a Russian sociologist who had spent a great deal of time in Prague, *In Pivo Veritas (Truth in Beer)* presented a collection of anecdotes and Czech proverbs loosely gathered around the central theme of beer and life in the pubs of Prague. An entire chapter devotes itself to popular wisdom about beer and health, with the unsurprising overarching theme that beer serves as a positive good for the human organism and its holistic wellbeing.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps most interestingly, the foreword noted that the author saw in these tidbits "interesting linguistic forms expressing the relationship to life and [corresponded to] his kind of folk and national analysis." In a manner that suggests the overall argument of this dissertation, Grušin saw that Czech beer-culture expressed something "about the relationship to life, the love of homeland [*lásce k vlasti*], worry and joy, the collection of popular wisdom handed down from generation to generation."¹⁰⁷ Despite decades of rising concerns about

¹⁰⁵ Ulichberger, 114.

¹⁰⁶ Grušin, *In Pivo Veritas*, chap. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Pavel Auersperg, foreword to Grušin, 8.

alcohol and its abuse, despite the authoritarian structures to tightly control speech (especially published works) in their countries, and despite concerted official attempts to tear down popular differentiation between “beer” and “alcohol,” the liquid bread narrative remained a powerful one in the GDR and ČSSR as well.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

Controlling public opinion is difficult, but as this chapter has shown, leaders and public health experts in the FRG, GDR, and ČSSR could not even gain substantial control over the public discourse regarding alcohol and beer in their states despite roughly forty years of concerted efforts to do so. The failure appears in authoritarian socialist states and a democratic capitalist one, among Germans and Czechs, under political leaders both socially conservative and liberal. That they failed to reduce alcohol consumption, or even slow its ascent, in these years is not difficult to understand. Curbing drinking through top-down restriction had been attempted in the very recent past before the founding of these three states, and public health officials from all three countries looked back on American and Scandinavian Prohibition as horrible models that promised only failure and negative unintended consequences. But the fact that they failed to even stop open celebration, praise, and ubiquitous normalization of beer consumption speaks far more to the qualities of the beverage itself in these cultures. Here, the examples of East Germany and Czechoslovakia are more instructive, as they did manage to curb advertisement and limit the appearance of hard spirits in popular media.¹⁰⁹ Tellingly, when some Bavarian officials

¹⁰⁸ Dr. Andrew C. Ivy, Professor of Physiology and Department Head of Clinical Science, University of Illinois, Chicago, "Physiologie, Psychologie und Pharmakologie des Alkohols," 4 - 15 August 1958, BArch-L, DQ 1/21624.

¹⁰⁹ Kochan, *Blauer Würger*, 121–22; "Protokoll der Tagung zur Bekämpfung des Alkoholismus," 28 April 1960, BArch-L, DQ 1/21817; G. T., Citizen of Freiberg, KMS District to the Secretariat of the Chairman of the State Council, "Betr.: Alkohol," 15 February 1965, BArch-L, DQ 1/3614, B. 27 – 29; "Bericht über die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung der Arbeitsgruppe 'Alkoholriminalität - begünstigende Bedingung im Handel,'" 1966, BArch-L DP 1/2019.; ABI, Control Department, "Bericht: über Probleme zur Leistungssteigerung und rationellen Verwendung der Rohstoffe in der Spirituosen-, Wein- und Sektindustrie," 12 December 1974, BArch-L, DC 20/19689;

suggested that they might request a “voluntary” pause on advertising for alcoholic beverages, it was the presumed rejection of any such effort by the brewing industry that most clearly spoke against the plan.¹¹⁰ The wide range of different attempted lines of attack by public health officials on entrenched habits of beer consumption, and the diversity of resistance, rejection, and dismissal that they received at every level of society is best explained by the concept of beer as a powerful cultural commodity for both German and Czech societies. Brewers (where they had the power to influence policy) would not stop advertising or tolerate attempts to curb the positive public image of their product for the sake of their profit margins or production quotas. Media creators, even in socialist states, would not stop representing real and normal life for the vast majority of their fellow countrymen by eliding a ubiquitous beverage from their portrayals and commentaries on everyday customs and behaviors. Most importantly, ordinary citizens just would not stop drinking the people’s drink, for so many of them their daily (liquid) bread.

¹¹⁰ "Auszug aus der Niederschrift über die 292 Sitzung des Agrarausschusses des Bundesrates am 11.9.70," 11 September 1970, BayHStA, StK-GuV 12115; H. H., "Tätigkeit der 'interministeriellen Arbeitsgruppe zur Bekämpfung des Drogen- und Rauschmittelmißbrauchs in Bayern' bei der 'Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs,'" In *Verhütung und Eindämmung des Alkoholmißbrauchs: Modellseminar Freising 1976* (5. - 8. October, 1976), published by the Government of Upper Bavaria, 25-33. 1976. BayHStA, MIIn 110959.

Part Three - In the Name of Beer: A Cultural Commodity in Multinational Disputes during the late Cold War (1975 – 1989)

In the 1980s, decades of simmering tensions in international law and diplomacy over beer-related issues boiled over on both sides of the “Iron Curtain.” In 1987, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) struck down a West German (FRG) import ban on beers not conforming to the German Beer Purity Law or “*Reinheitsgebot*.” The government defended its authority to define the word “beer” in the interests of public health and consumer protection, but ultimately the court declared the Purity Law an unfair barrier to free trade, asserting the rights of the Common Market over the unrestricted freedom of West Germany to “protect” its citizens.¹ While the court did not accept their reasoning, the case forced German brewers and their allies in government and media to formulate arguments for the *Reinheitsgebot* that could carry weight both in a sophisticated international court of law and the public sphere. They ultimately landed on a kind of German particularism emanating from their country’s unique beer culture and consumption habits. The rest of Europe could have its “chemical beer,” they argued, but this beverage represented more than an object of trade for Germans, it was a bedrock cultural and nutritional staple of the populace.² For its part, the majority of the German public rallied around the superiority of *Reinheitsgebot* beer and the unique importance of German beer culture to the nation, falling back on a kind of “consumer sovereignty” to accomplish what the law no longer could.³ This defensive tactic hints at how grassroots sentiments of national and regional culture could accommodate themselves to

¹ “Judgment of the Court of 12 March 1987. Commission of the European Communities v Federal Republic of Germany. Failure of a State to fulfil its obligations - Purity requirement for beer. Case 178/84,” <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:61984CJ0178>

² 2nd Draft of Rejoinder in European Court of Justice to Legal Complaint by Commission of European Community against Federal Republic of Germany, “Rechtsache 178/84,” 21 April 1985, BArch-K, B 189/29962, esp. pg. 12; Joachim Volk, “Der Streit ums Bier,” *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 15 May 1986.

³ ” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2018), 286–87; see figure 2.

the realities of market integration, but also the potential for backlash if those cultures were perceived to be under direct threat.

In a parallel case in August of the following year, Czech border officials suddenly started denying entry to certain East German individuals and freight trains attempting to cross the southern border into Czechoslovakia (ČSSR).⁴ The Czechoslovak Ministry for Foreign Trade had forbidden the transport of German beer labeled “Pilsner” into or through its territory, citing a nearly century-old and ongoing dispute over the term. The Czechs argued that only beer produced in the Bohemian city of Plzeň could legally bear the title “Pilsner” or any of its derivations. After decades of bilateral and multilateral negotiations, the ČSSR government now matched actions to their words, targeting their “brother socialists” to the North. After two weeks and ten freight cars of beer halted at the border, the two sides struck a compromise. “German Pilsner” would never again be seen (literally) in the Czech lands. The goods could only be transported across their territory in unmarked sealed train cars. This resolution did little to rectify any financial or economic damages claimed by Czechoslovakia. Instead, the socialist leadership seemed satisfied to strike a symbolic blow solidifying Czech national claims to be the true and original owners of the world’s most popular style of beer, and deemed that intervention important enough to justify a diplomatic incident with a close ally and fellow CMEA (Community of Mutual Economic Assistance- COMECON) country.

Part One made clear how easily Czech and German governing authorities could be drawn into a close, mutually supportive relationship with the brewing industries in their states purely by virtue of beer’s economic import. Part Two revealed how deep the ties between beer and bedrock notions of group identity (including national identity) in the GDR, FRG, and ČSSR ran in the

⁴ "Information der Bezirksleitung Dresden," 23 August, 1988, BArch-K, DY 30/17661.

second half of the twentieth century and how intransigent those attitudes remained. Chapter Four showed that state leaders in the Germanys and Czechoslovakia tried and largely failed to impose their political will against the entrenched cultural and economic power of beer. Part Three provides a climax and culmination of these trends, as it shows that even the most fundamental political projects that had defined the postwar era for these three states still had to leave room for special treatment of the people's drink. It considers the European Commission's lawsuit against the West German import ban on non-*Reinheitsgebot* beers in parallel with a trade conflict between East Germany and Czechoslovakia over use of the term "Pilsner." The former challenged the extent of the FRG's unquestionable commitment to European integration, a cornerstone of its foreign policy since Adenauer led the country out from under the shadow of the Third Reich. The latter put the supposedly fraternal solidarity and cooperation of socialist states, the ideological commitment to class identity over national identity, and the East European economic integration enforced by Soviet tanks to the test.

In many ways, these events, which reached their climax at the end of the period under study, at the height of "peak beer," and just before the revolutions of 1989, perfectly encapsulate the arguments laid out in all the preceding chapters. I argue that political, business, legal, and media actors in these states blended the economic and cultural importance of beer to elevate unextraordinary trade debates to matters of grave concern for governments and ordinary citizens. With their rhetoric and legal strategies, they transformed fights over control of national beer culture into battles for national sovereignty and intensified the disputes by tying them to both Central Europe's dark history of nationalist violence and contemporary efforts to build international unions. Looking forward from the 1980s to consider where this dissertation leaves Germans and Czechs in terms of their place in the larger geopolitical and economic environment

of Europe and the world, Part Three also demonstrates how the European Court of Justice's power to impose decisions on member states gave the European Community an advantage over COMECON in resolving flare ups of nationalistic antagonism that cropped up around sensitive issues such as cultural commodities. Considering how the politics of nationalism has played out in Western and Eastern Europe since 1989, this close comparative look at two cases of "gastronationalism" is suggestive of the deep wells of sentiment attached to matters of national culture in that period, and how different state governments viewed their role in managing those emotions.

Disputes over something as seemingly innocuous as the labeling of beer drove claims to national particularism in the West and an escalation of "national communism" in the East by combining a historical sense of cultural sovereignty with economic self-interest.⁵ Michaela DeSoucey, in her case study of disputes between France and the EEC/EU over foie gras, refers to these political episodes as "gastronationalism." These chapters show the power and applicability of that research angle for international relations and food law on both sides of Cold War Europe. Among COMECON countries, too, food could be a "contested medium of cultural politics that demarcates national boundaries and identities."⁶ Part Three also helps to drive home a key argument of this dissertation by showing that the line between economic and cultural nationalism (just like the line between the economic and cultural power of cultural commodities more generally parsed out in Chapters One through Four) can be maddeningly blurry and hard to find, although it is absolutely certain that both played a role. This potent cocktail of motivations appears just as evidently in the FRG, where the wider public not only knew about the *Reinheitsgebot* case but

⁵ On the concept of national communism see Peter Zwick, *National Communism* (Boulder, CO 1983).

⁶ Michaela DeSoucey, "Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union," *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 3 (June 2010): 432-455 [e-version, no page numbers].

vocally involved itself in the debate, as in the East, where the details of a tense conflict between socialist allies remained mostly confined to top-level governmental channels even if the generally outlines of the dispute were more widely known. The patterns of rhetoric and discourse used by Czechs and Germans in these arguments reveal the depths of beer's historical and cultural capital in both societies, available to be accessed by political and business leaders as well as ordinary citizens. In both West and East, some contemporary critics judged these sentimental outbursts over "our beer" as nothing more than self-interested manipulation by businesses and states fabricating demagogic tales of injustice to protect or increase profit margins.⁷ Though understandable in the hyper-commercialized world of postwar modernity, this was and remains a cynical oversimplification that obscures valuable lessons.

In an argument with relevance to both cases, Terrell says of the *Reinheitsgebot* case that, "challenging the juridical authority of the law read as a challenge to West German sovereignty, cultural practice, and perhaps even identity."⁸ The details of the case and its aftermath presented especially in Chapter Five bear out the truth of this claim. They also show how the West German government wove those threads into its actual legal arguments before the court and how the picture of an overwhelmingly negative reaction to the ruling among Germans reported at the time, while largely accurate, misses some surprisingly nuanced and countervailing voices in the public sphere. Those voices may have been in the minority, but they show the difficult balance that West Germans had to strike between their attachment to this cultural commodity and their desire for the state's sovereign power to regulate (or "defend") it against the Common Market. Having built up the

⁷ Summary of Information on Pilsner Question Delivered to GDR Embassy by L. S., n.d. (attached to letter from 12 February 1986), NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV ka. 408, inv. č. 627; Message from K. H. to R., State Secretary, Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, "Betreff Bier-Reinheitsgebot," 14 March 1987, BayHStA, MIInn 113043; Bavarian Radio Transcript, "Funksprechstunde," Recorded by Dr. L. v. H. and sent to Dr. E., Official in the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, 18 February 1986, BayHStA, MIInn 113043;

⁸ Terrell, "The People's Drink, 283.

threat of losing the import ban for years, FRG business, media, and political leaders who had previously denounced the Commission's case refused to abandon claims that their country had a unique and superior beer culture, instead pivoting to the neoliberal solution of the "sovereign consumer." After years or even decades of painting foreign "chemical" beer as an existential threat to a pillar of German society, they had few other options. They had to maintain their support for the very popular German beer law without attacking the also popular and politically sacrosanct project of European unification, which had been vital to their state's international rebirth after World War Two.⁹ Shouting that "the customer is sovereign" allowed them to square the circle, putting the onus back on the people to maintain the purity of German beer.

Considering these two episodes in tandem also provides a unique take on the history of European economic integration, and specifically the relative success of West and East in tamping down nationalistic behavior by state governments. The EEC and EU's long-term success on this front is not really in dispute, though France's "empty-chair" stonewalling in the 1960s and events since the 2008 financial crisis serve as potent reminders that the road to cooperation was not smooth and its future is far from certain.¹⁰ Analysis of the COMECON, however, has shifted recently. Older historiography viewed the Eastern Bloc as purely and thoroughly dominated by the Soviet Union, with the Warsaw Pact and CMEA mere "transmission belts" of Soviet policy.¹¹ More recent publications still recognize that the USSR played a powerful leading role in the organization, and classify COMECON as simply a failed response to the Common Market.¹² But some scholars have argued that the CMEA, at times surprisingly independent from Soviet policy,

⁹ Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993).

¹⁰ "Empty Chair' Policy, Rather Than Resignation, Is Seen Over Grain-Price Issue," *New York Times*, October 24th 1964; S. Bulmer, O. Parker, I. Bache, S. George, and C. Burns, *Politics in the European Union, 5th Edition* (Oxford 2020), chapter 5.

¹¹ T. Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945* (New York, 2005), 5.

¹² N. Păun, "The EEC and COMECON. A Difficult Relationship, 1960-1974," *Journal of European Integration History* 26, no. 1 (2020): 127-138.

exerted significant influence on intra-bloc trade in Eastern Europe and served East European states as a platform to assert their autonomy against Soviet domination.¹³

Chapter Six shows that increased room for maneuver could also mean more opportunities for intra-bloc conflicts, with no reliable way to settle them.¹⁴ The CMEA failed to establish a mechanism of enforcement for resolving trade disputes, leaving states such as Czechoslovakia both compelled and willing to get what they wanted unilaterally. In the West, on the other hand, the ECJ's power to impose a decision on member states provided a reliable bypass to similar trade skirmishes. From the perspective of reducing tensions between nation-state governments this is obviously a positive. Where problems might emerge is if the enforcement of Common Market principles generates a backlash strong enough to threaten popular support for integration. How the West German public reacted to this imposition and struck a balance between their "national drink" and the Common Market makes all the difference. From the COMECON perspective, of course, the public was less of a concern. Focus remained on intergovernmental action. From that standpoint, the deep and extensive control that the EEC established over its member states' relations far exceeded the supposed domination of the Soviet Union over the Eastern Bloc in the areas of day-to-day trade, leaving those areas open for national conflict to fester. And fester they did, intensifying fights over hot-button issues such as cultural commodities.

Historical context for the two cases extends back a century or more into the past, but the immediate conditions that set the three Central European states on their paths to the events these

¹³ C. Riches and J. Palmowski, "COMECON," in *A Dictionary of Contemporary World History*, Oxford University Press, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780191890949.001.0001/acref-9780191890949-e-513>; L. Crump and S. Godard, "Reassessing Communist International Organizations. A Comparative Analysis of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact in relation to their Cold War Competitors," *Contemporary European History* 27, no. 1, Feb 2018, 85-109; E. Dragomir, "Romania and the Beginning of CMEA Controversies over a Common Trade Policy Towards the EEC, 1969-1972," *European History Quarterly* 50, no. 3 July 2020, 495-523.

¹⁴ Romania seems to be the only case that gets significant attention on this front, in the context of its efforts to block further integration favored by the Soviet Union and other CMEA states, see Dragomir, *Romania*.

chapters emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. The progression of both cases shows that arguments about beer's economic and national cultural value blended into each other from the very beginning, with all sides strategically emphasizing the aspect best suited to their needs in a given moment. Supporting West Germany's highly-profitable beer export market and the uniquely abundant small- and mid-sized breweries in Bavaria offered powerful arguments for the *Reinheitsgebot* within the FRG. But economic protectionism did not accord with the Common Market. Thus, when it came time to argue in front of the European high court, West Germany's lawyers focused on matters of culturally-conditioned consumer expectations and public health implications of German beer culture. Likewise, Czechoslovak officials claimed to their East German counterparts that the Pilsner dispute constituted a serious economic harm to them by hurting demand and sowing customer confusion about a valuable export product that they sold all over the socialist and non-socialist world. At other times, though, they openly tied the dispute to the history of violent national conflict between Czechs and Germans, spoke of the inimitable, geographically-dependent character of Pilsner beer, and demanded that the GDR fundamentally alter its labelling practices (dismissed as a mere "cultural habit" in East Germany) in the name of friendly socialist relations. Both cases show how the historical trajectory of important cultural commodities peaked into "gastronomicalism" in the late Cold War, and how the different power structures in the two blocs made the final determination on the outcome. West Germany cooperatively, albeit grumpily, changed its law to accord with the Common Market, while Czechoslovakia acted unilaterally and aggressively to force a compromise with its second closest ally and fellow socialist state.

In the end, Part III demonstrates that treating the financial and symbolic importance of beer for Germans and Czechs separately is inherently misleading. Beer was a cultural commodity. It inhabited both worlds. As these international disputes played out, actors in the industry, in

politics, or in the media could pull on either the economic or cultural thread depending on what seemed most useful to them at the moment. But the two issues were interlinked and inseparable within the wider framework of national self-interest. Because the two chapters form two sides of the same coin and the same argument, Part III provides a single introduction and conclusion, rather than standalone sections in each chapter.

Chapter 5: The Common Market vs. “Pure” German Beer

“The *Reinheitsgebot* is the oldest consumer-protection food law that still – almost 500 years later – applies today. It is thanks to the *Reinheitsgebot* that German beer is a food- and *Genussmittel* without chemical additives, a pure product of nature. That explains the popularity, the special status and the regard for German beers around the world.”

Wohl-bekomm's... ein Prost dem Bier (1981)¹

Controversy and debate have shrouded claims and counterclaims made about the *Reinheitsgebot* since before a member of the Bavarian parliament first uttered the word in 1918.² The German Brewers' Association states that a decree from the Bavarian Duke Wilhelm IV in 1516 ranks as one of the oldest (if not the oldest) still valid food purity laws in history and to this day guarantees the high quality and safety of German beer.³ In fact, only one provision out of several from Wilhelm IV's decree still influences German brewers, namely, the restriction that only barley, hops, and water be used in the making of beer.⁴ A number of scholars and experts have sought to bolster twentieth-century claims that the “Beer Purity Law” provides the essence of German beer excellence, and just as many have (successfully) unpacked the myths and discredited oversimplified teleologies leading from sixteenth-century Bavaria to the present-day Federal Republic.⁵ The 1516 Beer Decree experienced multiple alterations over the years and the

¹ Johanna Schulz and Hans Jann, *Wohl-Bekomm's... Ein Prost Dem Bier* (Forchheim in Oberfranken: Forchheimer Reihe F. Streit, 1981), 23.

² Terrell, “The People's Drink”, 176.

³ See the relevant webpages of the German Brewers Association today: Reinheitsgebot, German Brewers Association. <https://brauer-bund.de/reinheitsgebot/> (accessed 14 April 2022).

⁴ S. Bergmann, “Der Saft der Gesellschaft,” *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte* (4-2016), 3.

⁵ Dr. K. Gattinger, “Die Obrigkeit maischt mit,” *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte* (4-2016), 28 - 34; Prof. Dr. F. Meussdoerffer, “Mythos “deutsches Bier,” *Damals: Das Magazin für Geschichte* (4-2016), 42 – 44.

idea of “purity” only entered the conversation in the twentieth century. Most important to this chapter, even after World War Two, few Germans outside of brewing circles knew or cared about the *Reinheitsgebot*, and only a concerted PR campaign, especially in the face of national and multinational market integration, really brought the issue into popular consciousness.⁶ Indeed, as the Google Ngram chart below makes clear, only after World War Two did the term begin a slow and gradual increase in usage in German-language texts available to Google Books. Then, in the late 1970s, as the EEC attacks on the *Reinheitsgebot* intensified, use of the term grew at a breakneck pace before plateauing just about the time of the 1987 ECJ decision.

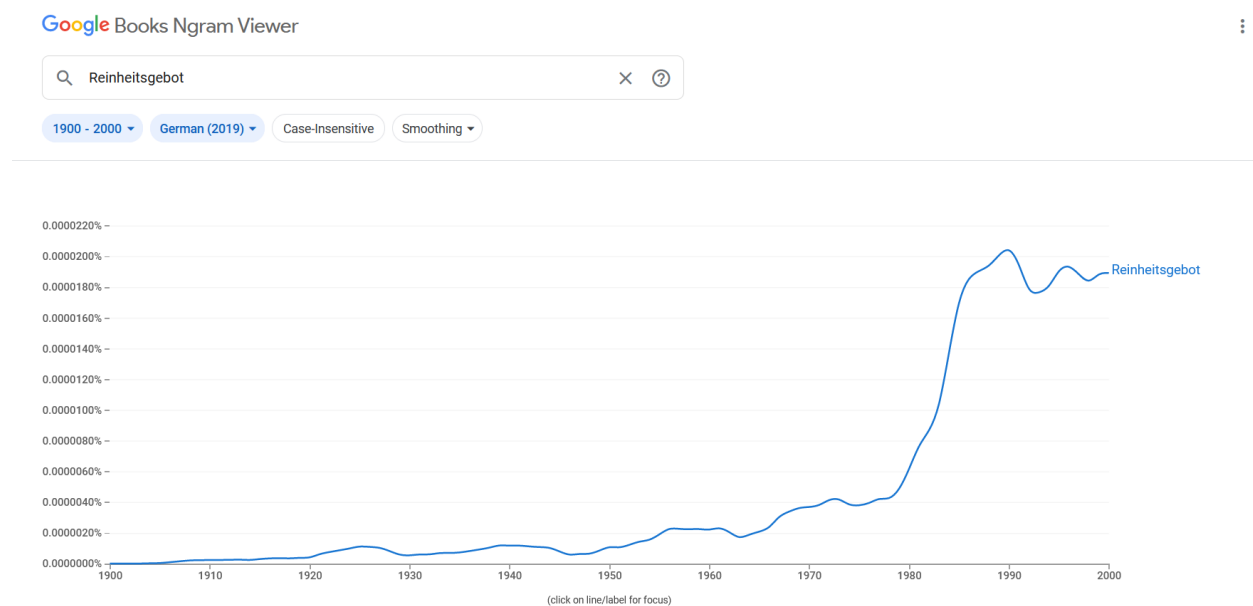


Figure 9 Google Ngram: “Reinheitsgebot” 1900-2000

Still, whether it captured the hearts of the masses or not, the German Beer Tax Law of 1952 enshrined a modified version of the *Reinheitsgebot* into West German law, setting the FRG on a

⁶ Terrell, “The Peoples Drink,” chapter 4.

collision course with the forces of market “harmonization” in the soon-to-be-formed European Economic Community. With the introduction of the Common Market, the European Commission adopted plans to eventually replace state-specific regulations on trade goods, including foodstuffs and beverages, with blanket ordinances for the entire community to reduce the friction in trade channels.⁷ Beer did not escape notice in these efforts, and with the rest of the EEC states taking a more permissive attitude toward the definition of beer, it seemed likely that any effort at harmonization would require Germany to let go of its restrictive rules. However, the earliest efforts to bring about a more unified beer market in the 1960s and 1970s, led first by the EEC’s dedicated beer industry advocacy group and then by the European Commission, both failed in the face of German intransigence, driven primarily by the southern Federal States and especially Bavaria. During the negotiations, the German representatives in the advocacy group and its official committee for coordinating commercial activity insisted that, rather than “lower the quality” of German beer, the other member states should just adopt the *Reinheitsgebot*, a massive economic imposition not to mention an insult to the national food cultures of other member states.⁸

At the crux of the issue, unsolved as the 1970s gave way to the 1980s, lay two consequences of the strict German Beer Tax Law. First, Germany banned the use of all chemical additives in domestic beer production, even if they had been cleared for use in other foods. The ban extended to imported beer as well, preventing “chemical beer” from being sold in Germany.⁹ Second, beer

⁷ Michelle P. Egan, “Regulating European Markets: Mismatch, Reform and Agency” (Ph.D., United States -- Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, 1996), chaps. 3–4, accessed January 16, 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304259215/abstract/B19F4EEF6B2247E8PQ/1>.

⁸ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 200 -230; Dr. N., Federal Ministry of Health, “Bericht in Stichworten: Gegenstand - Richtlinienvorschlag zur Angleichung der Rechtsvorschriften der Mitgliedstaaten über Bier,” 9 October 1969, BArch-K, B 189/1481, B. 24-26; Schulz and Jann, *Wohl-bekomm's*.

⁹ I have omitted some of the legal minutia for the purposes of this paper. The German food safety law (LMBG) at the time played a major role in the additive debate and the court saw tremendous haggling over terms like “technical necessity,” see “Debatte über den Untergang des biertrinkenden Abendlandes: Die EG bring das deutsche Reinheitsgebot für den Gerstensaft ins Wanken,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15 May 1986.

could only be sold under the label “*Bier*” in Germany if it conformed to the list of acceptable ingredients enshrined in the Tax Law. For lagers, by far the most common style in Europe and the world, this meant that producers could only use malted barley, hops, water, and yeast to make beer. Even additive-free beers that used rice, corn, or sugar remained *verboten*.¹⁰ From the perspective of the free trade mentality rooted at the heart of the EEC, this exemplified a unilateral non-tariff trade barrier, and one that the European Commission eagerly sought to break down. Still, efforts at harmonization within the Community in general began to stall in the 1970s.¹¹ Only in the following decade, with a renewed push to remove trade barriers of all types fueled by Europe’s turn toward neoliberal economic solutions and a new court-centered legal framework following the landmark *Cassis de Dijon* ECJ decision (also involving German import/export and also about alcohol) did the necessary elements come together to start forcing such issues at a more rapid pace.¹²

Having tried and failed to work out compromises through negotiation, the Commission resorted to legal compulsion, suing the government of the FRG before the highest European court on February 12th 1982.¹³ The suit ultimately aimed to achieve two goals.¹⁴ The Commission requested that the ECJ force West Germany to allow imports of beers produced with chemical additives if the country of origin had authorized their use. They also asked the Court to require that the FRG allow beverages labelled “*Bier*” into its market even if they contained “adjuncts” (i.e.,

¹⁰ J. Volk, “Der Streit ums Bier,” *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 15 May 1986.

¹¹ Egan, “Regulating European Markets,” 177-178.

¹² Egan, 211.

¹³ “Betr.: Klage der EG-Kommission vor dem Europäischen Gerichtshof gegen die Bundesrepublik Deutschland wegen der Anwendung des Reinheitsgebotes für Bier auf aus anderen Mitgliedstaaten eingeführtes Bier - Rechtssache 178/84,” 26 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156, 3.

¹⁴ I use the word “ultimately” here because the process of refining the exact principles on which the complaint rested took several years of back and forth filings by both the Commission and Federal government.

substitutes for malted barley or wheat).¹⁵ The justification for the request centered on a theory of “mutual recognition” within the EEC that had replaced “harmonization” as the conceptual underpinning of Common Market regulation. By this principle, the EEC asked member states to accept import goods if they met the regulatory standards of the producer country. The Community had its own rules to prevent harmful or dishonest international commerce and all the member states had relatively strong food safety regimes, so it seemed justifiable to claim that what was good enough for one member state was good enough for all, with notable exceptions.¹⁶ Those exceptions existed in cases where obvious extenuating circumstances made mutual recognition a potential harm to a member state’s citizens. Free movement of goods and services formed the core ideal of the Common Market, so the burden lay with West Germany to prove that the importation of beers with additives and adjuncts threatened their population more than the other hundreds of millions of Europeans in the EEC.

The Germans took up the challenge with gusto. Parts of the brewing industry along with their political and cultural allies had spent years preparing for this fight. The Bavarian Brewers’ Association had sharpened its legal and rhetorical knives on earlier disputes like the “sweet beer conflict” of the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷ The “Action Committee for Pure Beer” founded in 1970 gave way in 1974 to the “German Institute for Pure Beer,” both designed to organize political and industry efforts to maintain the *Reinheitsgebot*.¹⁸ Widespread advertising campaigns and heated

¹⁵ V. Kuhl, *Erfolgreiches Bier-Marketing nach dem Urteil des EUGH zum Reinheitsgebot: Marketing-Entscheidungen der deutschen Brauindustrie nach dem Verfahren des Europäischen Gerichtshofes um die Anwendung des Reinheitsgebotes auf Importbiere* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 23.

¹⁶ Kuhl, *Erfolgreiches Bier-Marketing*, 24-25; Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 285.

¹⁷ A legal dispute led by Bavarian Brewers and their political allies at the state level to strictly enforce a trade and sales ban on beers made with added sugar. The *Reinheitsgebot* prevented such beverages from being made in Bavaria but not from being brewed elsewhere and distributed in the Free State. See Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 184 – 200.

¹⁸ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 218; German Institute for Pure Beer, “Pressemitteilung,” 16 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156.

media diatribes had laid the groundwork for grassroots organizing. The Federal Ministry for Youth, Family, Women, and Health had weighed in publicly on the side of the Purity Law as a public health issue back in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁹ That backing became even more crucial once the matter went to court, because the FRG based one of its two lines of defense entirely on the grounds of protecting the health of its citizens. In the four years between the original filing of the legal dispute in 1982 and the opening of oral arguments in May 1986, the team assembled to represent the Federal Republic collected expert testimonials to bolster their assertions and exchanged fire with the Commission through legal filings.²⁰

The Germans faced a difficult task of arguing that nutritional habits and consumer expectations unique to their population justified the import ban without explicitly framing the argument as a defense of national culture. The case revolved around a duel between Articles 30 and 36 of the Treaty of Rome. Article 30 forbade non-tariff barriers to trade unless a particular need could be proven, such as that detailed in Article 36, which allowed import bans in the interest of “public decency, order, and security; the protection of human, animal, or plant health and life; [or] national cultural assets.”²¹ The final sentence of Article 36, however, ruled out “arbitrary discrimination” in trade, meaning the necessity of the restriction had to be proven by objective measures and any trade hinderance had to be in proportion to the threat. Moreover, as DeSoucey points out, the provision for “national cultural assets” primarily referred to “national cultural treasures of artistic, historical, or archaeological value” and members most often used it for audiovisual productions.²² The Common Market aimed to eliminate trade barriers for mass

¹⁹ Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 212 – 215.

²⁰ “Debatte über den Untergang des biertrinkenden Abendlandes: Die EG bringt das deutsche Reinheitsgebot für den Gerstensaft ins Wanken,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15 May 1986.

²¹ Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, 25. März 1957, Articles 30, 36.

²² Michaela DeSoucey, “Gastronationalism,” *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 3, accessed January 6, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122410372226>.

produced goods, including food products such as beer, regardless of their cultural meaning to any one nation. Still, Article 36 opened the door for environmental or health exceptions, which could be especially useful in cases that dealt with food. Member states could also claim that culturally-ingrained traditions would make certain product labels inherently deceptive to their citizens if the designation did not match the general expectation. In their filings, the Commission at one point argued that the tension between these two principles constituted a “real problem in the field of conflict between the free movement of goods and health protection.” The German delegation somewhat cheekily stated that this was one of a limited number of statements with which they agreed.²³ Still, as clear proof of just how much the case rested on the principle of national beer culture even in the minds of the Commissions’ representatives, at one point in their first rejoinder to the German defense, the EEC’s lawyers argued that “not every German beer meets claims of high quality just because it adheres to the *Reinheitsgebot*.” In a footnote they expounded, “these applies, for example, for many beers from the GDR.”²⁴

The German’s second rejoinder most precisely shows the legal strategy they employed to carve out a space for the *Reinheitsgebot* between the two treaty provisions. Dr. Martin Seidel from the Economic Ministry took charge of assembling an eighty-three-page brief in which the FRG put forward a cornucopia of points that all boiled down to a simple argument on the question of both additives and adjuncts: beer is more important to the people of West Germany than those of other member states, and therefore the FRG must be allowed to set its own rules for the beverage. The West German defense took up the additive issue first, claiming a unique threat to German

²³ 2nd Draft of Rejoinder, 2; “Betr.: Klage der EG-Kommission...,” 26 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156; German Brewers Association Society for Public Relations [GFÖ], “Rechtsstreit um das *Reinheitsgebot*,” *Bier Aktuell* 4 (1986), 6-7.

²⁴ R.C. B. and J. S., “Erwiderung eingereicht gemäß Artikel 41 der Verfahrensordnung des Gerichtshofs von der Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften in der Rechtssache 178/84 - Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaft gegen Bundesrepublik Deutschland - wegen Anwendung des sogenannten *Reinheitsgebotes* auf aus anderen Mitgliedstaaten eingeführte Biere,” 12 February 1985, BArch-K, BU 102/334150, 6.

public health because of their national proclivity for beer. According to the FRG, the European Commission wanted to override the legitimate and legally enshrined right (in Article 36) of member nations to protect the health of their citizens by forcing them to allow food imports with higher concentrations of chemical additives than their domestic laws permitted.²⁵ The Commission had attempted to dismiss this concern by repeated references to scientific consensus that none of the additives in question had been found harmful to humans, making a total ban on their use disproportionate.²⁶ However, Germany forbade use of some of the additives in question in any food product because its lawmakers had not seen sufficient evidence of their “harmlessness.”²⁷ Moreover, the World Health Organization generally advocated the greatest possible reduction in the use of food additives, given the rapid increase in chemical substances being consumed around the world.²⁸ As West Germany’s food-chemistry expert, Professor Konrad Pfeilsticker, testified, the threat of introducing more additives into the food supply resulted not from each individual substance, but the potential effects of their interactions with one another and the long term impact of their accumulation in the organism, which science had not yet fully determined.²⁹

Having established doubt on the safety of consuming a mixture of additives in significant quantities, the FRG then struck the note of national food culture. Even additives permitted in other foodstuffs in Germany had to be banned from beer, because Germans drank so much beer that the

²⁵ “Betr.: Klage der EG-Kommission...,” 26 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156, 6-7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

²⁷ The technical difference between an additive being proven harmless as opposed to having not been proven to be harmful was a particularity of Germany’s food safety laws, which required the former, while the EEC insisted on the latter, see EuGH, Urteil des Gerichtshofes vom 12. März 1987 “Vertragsverletzung - Reinheitsgebot für Bier,” in der Rechtssache 178/84, 12 March 1987, BayHStA, MIInn 113043, pp. 5, 21; K., Ministerial Advisor, Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, *Vertraulich* - Reinheitsgebot für Bier; Auswirkung des EuGH-Urteils, 8 December 1986, BayHStA, MIInn 113043, pp. 6-7.

²⁸ *Betr.: Klage der EG-Kommission...*, 26 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156, p. 13.

²⁹ Prof. K. P., “Gutachten erstellt im Auftrag der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Zur gesundheitlichen Beurteilung des Reinheitsgebotes für Bier,” April 1985, BArch-K, B 189/29962.

quantitative impact would be exponential.³⁰ In Germany, beer comprised 26.7% of the “nutritional volume” consumed by men, making it the most-consumed single food product for males.³¹ Though they pointed out other supposed inconsistencies in the Commission’s argument, the German legal team defended the ban on additives primarily on the grounds of a legitimate concern for their health impact. They would necessarily acquire a considerable presence in the German diet if they were added to beer, a “*Volksnahrungsmittel*” (basic foodstuff).

The German delegation had real hopes for a favorable decision on the additive question, but their defense of the *Reinheitsgebot*-based definition of “*Bier*” appears mostly symbolic. Only fourteen pages of the eighty-three-page brief deal with this issue. Tellingly, the case once again rested on a unique German national relationship with beer, including their colloquial references to the beverage as “*Gerstensaft*” (barley-juice).³² West Germans, the FRG claimed, were conscious beer consumers, and attentive to the character of their product. They had a culturally ingrained expectation that any beverage called beer in their country would conform to the principles of the *Reinheitsgebot*, meaning not only that it would be free of chemical additives but that it would not be made from adjunct ingredients such as rice, corn, or tapioca. The FRG furnished representative polling that showed a majority of Germans susceptible to being misled if the term for a product that they frequently referred to as “barley-juice” were also used to describe beverages with a

³⁰ “Betr.: Klage der EG-Kommission...,” 26 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156, 16.

³¹ There was some controversy over the consumption statistics being used by the FRG. Most countries report beer consumption in terms of the average number of liters consumed per person per year by dividing the total volume consumed by the total population. West Germany sought to emphasize its case by pointing out the uneven distribution of beer consumption in practice, with adults drinking more than children, men more than women, southern Germans more than northern Germans, and adult Bavarian males drinking more than anyone. This allowed them to report some truly massive numbers. An earlier draft of the brief included the specific calculation that men in the FRG, on average, drank more than 300 liters of beer per person per year. The Commission and even the Court disputed what they considered creative statistical manipulation. “Zusammenfassung des Sach- und Streitstandes und des Plädoyers in der Rs 178/84 ‘Reinheitsgebot,’” 26 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156, 6; Advocate-General Sir Gordon Slynn, “Schlussanträge... in der Rechtssache 178/84,” 18 September 1986, BayHStA, MIInn 113043, 19.

³² “Betr.: Klage der EG-Kommission...,” 26 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156, 82.

“significant” quantity of adjuncts.³³ If breweries in other members states wanted to sell their products in West Germany, they were not prevented from doing so, but they would have to conform to the *Reinheitsgebot* or else designate their beverages as something other than “*Bier*.”³⁴ With that, the brief comes to an end requesting that the ECJ dismiss the matter entirely.

In the ten months between the closing of oral arguments on May 14th 1986 and the court’s announcement of a decision on March 12th the following year, West Germans publicly and privately wrangled with the fate of the *Reinheitsgebot*. The forms that their anticipations and anxieties took speak clearly to the popularity of the arguments for German cultural exceptionalism put forward by the state’s advocates. The first reactions came from reporters covering the oral arguments in the case. On May 15th Joachim Volk of the *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* blasted away at potential consequences of the case (albeit with apparently intentional hyperbole). “Staunch as a German oak, the *Reinheitsgebot* has stood all these years on our borders firmly holding back the flood of chemically-adulterated *Gerstensaft*... And now we are to lose our pure beer? Our beer that we have cherished and cared for over 470 years and is one of the last symbols of our, as God only knows, bedraggled national identity?”³⁵ In a draft report marked “confidential” for the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, one advisor spoke of making preparations for the likely day when the court would overturn the import ban, likening the ensuing crisis to no less an event than the Chernobyl disaster earlier that same year and making it sound as if an invasion were imminent. “The urgency [to make preparations] is based on the consideration that it could come to a renewed loss of confidence by the populace in the administration if, on ‘Day X’ – as in the case of Chernobyl

³³ Ibid., 82; A survey conducted on behalf of the German Brewers’ Association in 1985 had shown just over 60 percent of customers being susceptible to being “misled” in their expectations even if the packaging mentioned its ingredients, see GfK Market Research, “Verbraucher-Erwartungen: Eine Untersuchung der GfK Marktforschung,” March 1985, BArch-K, B 102/334150.

³⁴ “Betr.: Klage der EG-Kommission...,” 26 May 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156, 81.

³⁵ J. Volk, “Der Streit ums Bier.”

– the federal government and the states are talking with twelve tongues... Also on ‘Day X’ there will be truckloads and tanker-cars of foreign beer standing on the German borders.”³⁶ Alarmist language aside, both sources had in common an understanding that the import ban on adjunct beer was doomed, as did other, more sober, news reports. It was an obvious violation of the principles of the Common Market with no public health justification and the justices on the court had already indicated how easily the FRG’s arguments about consumer deception could be circumvented. Some hope remained for the additive issue but even that was slim.³⁷

Public reactions to the case in Germany might have been even more vociferous in the lead up to the verdict if not for the German legal team’s tactics. The lead author of the FRG’s brief in the case, did his best to hold back a full-throated public attack on the ECJ or the European Commission by government or industry representatives out of fear for how it might change the court’s perception. After a meeting with the members of the German Institute for Pure Beer on June 4th, he reported, “before I had even given my report I was being asked if now was the time to stop with the ‘virtuous restraint’ and start carrying out political agitation in the German public in defense of the *Reinheitsgebot*.” The government’s lawyer pushed back and received support from the leading figure of the institute.³⁸ The Purity Law’s proponents yearned to take their case to the people, and others did not have cool heads to restrain them. Ten days after the meeting in the Institute, the Chairman of the Food Service and Restaurants Union openly criticized the court process and even politicians from the labor-friendly SPD who expressed skepticism toward their government’s position. “We’re not getting on board with this nonsense,” he declared.³⁹ As Figure

³⁶ K., “Vertraulich - Reinheitsgebot für Bier.”

³⁷ “Reinheitsgebot: Schwerer Stand für Bonn,” *Die Welt*, 15 May 1986; “Debatte über den Untergang des biertrinkenden Abendlandes.”

³⁸ Dr. S., BMWi, “Vormerk: Betr.: Klage der EG-Kommission gegen die Bundesregierung wegen des Reinheitsgebots für Bier - hier: Presse- und Verlautbarungspolitik - Bezug: Mitgliederversammlung des Deutschen Instituts für reines Bier e.V. am 4. Juni 1986,” 4 June 1986, BArch-K, B 102/334156, 1.

³⁹ “Gewerkschaft NGG kämpft für reines Bier in ganz Europa,” *Hannoversche Neue Presse*, 14 June 1986.

2 makes clear, some businesses and individuals in West Germany moved to circle the wagons, declaring even before the decision that they would remain loyal to the *Reinheitsgebot*. In the end, none of this agitation for national beer culture could change the outcome in court, but that does not make it unimportant.

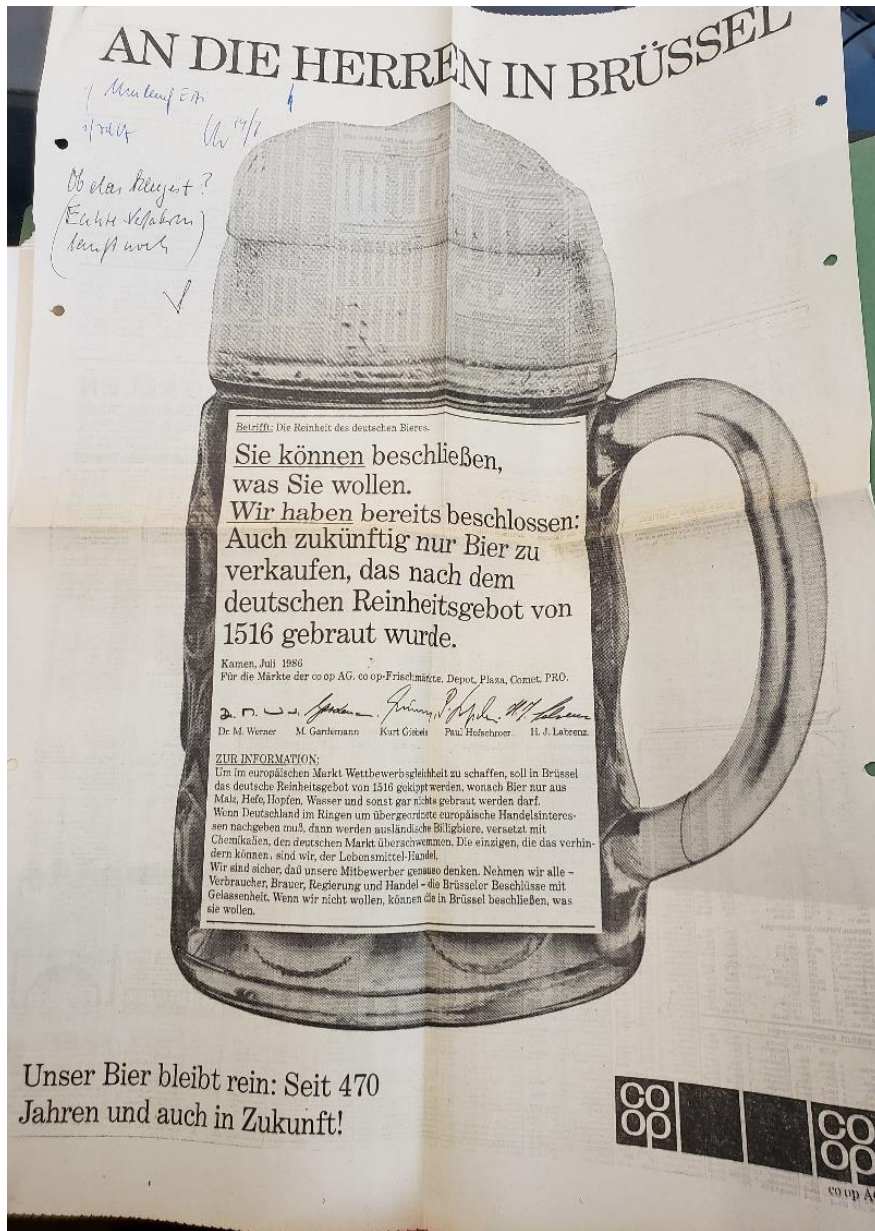


Figure 10. “To the gentleman in Brussels: You can decide what you want. We have already decided: We will continue to only sell beer that is brewed according to the German *Reinheitsgebot* from 1516.” July 1986. Courtesy Bundesarchiv Koblenz. *BArch-K, B 102/334156*

If the *Reinheitsgebot* had been primarily an issue for beer industry insiders in West Germany coming out of World War II, the ECJ trial put the final nail in the coffin of that obscurity.⁴⁰ In surveys conducted afterward, almost three quarters of Germans claimed to have

⁴⁰ Terrell, "The People's Drink," 286–87.

heard about the court's judgement in the case, and nearly 90 percent of beer drinkers had. Almost 60 percent of those surveyed could even give a precise or fairly accurate description of the *Reinheitsgebot*, which, considering its specialized nature, is impressively high.⁴¹

The most interesting numbers from these surveys show the population's personal views of the Purity Law and suggest some nuance in understandings of the balance between national cultural sovereignty and the ideal of free trade. Germans widely accepted the rule despite its failure in court. However, the nature of that acceptance carries a great deal of importance considering that the case for the *Reinheitsgebot* relied almost entirely on arguments about the uniqueness of German cultural life, the importance of beer to the German diet, and the right of the nation-state to place its people's best interests above the good of the Common Market. 97 percent of Germans thought non-*Reinheitsgebot* beers should be labelled as such, proving that they perceived and cared about the qualitative difference between "pure" and "impure" beer. Opinions split about 50 – 50 on whether or not the Purity Law was a necessarily "good, smart and sensible thing," but only 6 percent actively saw it as a negative. 70 percent doubted that their fellow Germans would drink any non-*Reinheitsgebot* beer and barely more than one in four thought that a beer made with rice and corn could taste just as good as a "pure" malt beer. This effectively means that the pro-*Reinheitsgebot* camp had won in its efforts to make rice, corn, and other non-malt ingredients taboo.⁴² In losing the battle for legal proscription, they seem to have won the war for German hearts and minds.

⁴¹ Kuhl, *Erfolgreiches Bier-Marketing*, 52; similar polling showed a strong majority of acceptance as far back as 1985, see "Stellungnahme des Deutschen Brauer-Bundes zu Berichten über Angebliche Verstöße einzelner Brauereien gegen das Reinheitsgebot," 6 March 1985, BArch-K, B 102/334150.

⁴² Kuhl, *Erfolgreiches Bier-Marketing*, 52; Other surveys gave back similar or even somewhat better looking results for the *Reinheitsgebot* camp, see "Stellungnahme des Deutschen Brauer-Bundes zu Berichten über Angebliche Verstöße einzelner Brauereien gegen das Reinheitsgebot," 6 March 1985, BArch-K, B 102/334150; Terrell, "The People's Drink," 286-287.

Still, even if most West Germans agreed with the *Reinheitsgebot*, the existence of a sizable opposing minority remains important, as does other evidence pointing to a diversity of opinions among the pro-Purity Law camp. In polling conducted on behalf of the German Brewers' Association, 40 percent reported willingness to try "impure" beers and more than one in five thought it was a good thing that one could purchase non-*Reinheitsgebot* beers in Germany.⁴³ A considerable number of Germans, then, actually sided with the ECJ and the European Commission, at least implicitly, that the import ban was not justified, or perhaps not necessary, to "protect" German beer. While most FRG citizens believed that *Reinheitsgebot* beer had superior quality to beer made with adjuncts and additives, they did not all buy the argument that allowing sale of those beers in Germany would threaten them or their beloved *Volksgetränk*. The polling proves first and foremost that the German public genuinely cared about beer, and they cared enough to understand the issue with a degree of complexity. Their attachment to this perceived unique German tradition cannot be merely attributed to successful advertising campaigns by profit-focused brewers' associations and allied government ministries. As shown in Chapter Three, the link between beer and German culture has substantial roots running back to at least the nineteenth century. Though industry and political leaders in the Federal Republic expanded and melded the more extreme Bavarian emphasis on the *Reinheitsgebot* to a more moderate sense of beer as a national symbol in the late twentieth century, an older and more grassroots notion of beer as a German cultural commodity had already existed and likely made the ground fertile for notions of German beer exceptionalism or "gastronationalism."⁴⁴ Recall, for example, the POW newspaper in World War Two that explicitly contrasted authentic and traditional German beer production

⁴³ Kuhl, *Erfolgreiches Bier-Marketing*, 53.

⁴⁴ The "more moderate sense of beer as a national symbol" is my contention. On the Bavarian angle, see Terrell, "The People's Drink," especially chap. 4.

guaranteed by purity laws with “American superficiality.”⁴⁵ By the time of the ECJ trial, such overtly nationalistic appeals for the *Reinheitsgebot* had given way to more pacific sentiments of cultural tradition and pride in excellence, but a majority of Germans clearly agreed in principle with the sense of superiority expressed by Edmund Stoiber, then head of the Bavarian State Chancellery, when he claimed that the court’s ruling was “unifying Europe around the lowest common denominator.”⁴⁶

It is also apparent that German brewers and politicians struck a nerve with the populace when they framed the *Reinheitsgebot* as a public health and environmental issue. In an open letter to the Chair of the Working Group of Consumer Associations published just before the court gave its verdict, Bundestag member Halo Saibold of the Green Party attacked the organization’s anti-Purity Law stance, which it justified with the promise of lower prices overall. “The reality,” wrote Saibold, “is that the consumer of today pays lower relative prices for food than in the past. Beyond that, many so-called lower prices are only possible because of environmentally-damaging, cruel, and quality-lowering production methods. Does [the Working Group] want even cheaper products?”⁴⁷ Private citizens also genuinely worried about the presence of chemicals in their beer, judging from some of the letters that reached representatives during and after the trial.⁴⁸

Considering the depth and diversity of popular attitudes, it is all the more striking that many critics and even a few supporters of the *Reinheitsgebot* argued that the German government and industry fought for the Purity Law for one overriding reason: pure profit motive. Without denying

⁴⁵ Rinne, “Chapter 6: Bee Stings and Beer: The Significance of Food in Alabamian POW Newspapers,” 133–34.

⁴⁶ “Kampagne: Unser Bier bleibt Rein,” *Brauindustrie* 3 (1987), 278.

⁴⁷ Open Letter from Green MP Halo Saibold, (Member of Economic Committee) to the Chair of the Consumer Association, “...zu ihrer ablehnenden Haltung gegenüber den Reinheitsgeboten...,” 10 March 1987, BayHStA, MInn 113043; Terrell, “The People’s Drink,” 212.

⁴⁸ Message from Dr. M. to Bavarian Minister President Dr. Franz Joseph Strauß, 31 March 1987, BayHStA, MInn 113043; Message from Herr M. M. to Bavarian Minister-President Dr. Franz Josef Strauß, 18 March 1987, BayHStA, MInn 113043.

the financial interest at stake for the pro-*Reinheitsgebot* camp, it must be said that many of these commentaries missed the genuine concern and affection for beer in Germany described above. Certainly, economic self-interest provided a key and possibly leading impetus to try to keep the restrictions in place. Although supporters often referred to the superior taste, health benefits, and agricultural importance of the *Reinheitsgebot*, business considerations always lurked just below the surface. In fact, it occasionally caused discord in the German camp when brewers or officials openly talked about the law's financial benefits to the brewing industry, rather than the loftier ideals being presented to the ECJ and the public.⁴⁹ Internal documents often made the point much more explicitly, such as that same draft report to the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior that suggested German brewers may eventually have to abandon the *Reinheitsgebot* to remain competitive once the ECJ struck down the import ban, but noted that the time was not politically opportune to do so.⁵⁰ Opponents, naturally, tended to ignore high-minded arguments about quality and culture and cut straight through to the effect of the law on the bottom line of German brewers and tax coffers.⁵¹ Even Joachim Volk (author of the "German oak" metaphor) reassured his readers that the end of the import ban for "impure" beer did not represent a threat to them, because they could always choose to drink the better German beer. Rather, he wrote, "what is currently being brewed up in Luxemburg threatens, first and foremost, the German brewers. It threatens their sales,

⁴⁹ Dr. N., Leader of Beer Harmonization Delegation to EEC, "Betr.: Angleichung der Rechtsvorschriften über Bier in Brüssel; hier: Fragestunde am 13./14. Mai 1969," 12 May 1969, BArch-K, B 189/1481, p. 15; I. Cornelßen, "Hoffen und Malz," *Manager Magazin*, H. 1 (1985), 114-121.

⁵⁰ K., "Vertraulich - Reinheitsgebot für Bier," 4, 10.

⁵¹ Dr. N., Federal Ministry of Health, "Bericht in Stichworten: Gegenstand - Richtlinien vorschlag zur Angleichung der Rechtsvorschriften der Mitgliedstaaten über Bier," 9 October 1969, BArch-K, B 189/1481, 2; Bavarian Radio Transcript, "Funksprechstunde," Recorded by Dr. Louis von Horst and sent to Dr. Erpf, Official in the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, 18 February 1986, BayHStA, MIInn 113043; Message from K. H. to Rosenbauer, State Secretary, Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, "Betreff Bier-Reinheitsgebot," 14 March 1987, BayHStA, MIInn 113043.

their business. Beer from abroad, cheapened with chemicals... will gain a considerable share of the German market.”⁵²

Though the motives of German brewers’ associations and government officials for defending the *Reinheitsgebot* may have been largely based in economic self-interest, it remains apparent that they could not manufacture such deep and intense popular concern with a commodity out of nowhere. Though most of the German public clearly disliked the ECJ ruling, the fact that domestic brewers were still held to the Purity Law and that the direct impact of the court decision on the domestic beer market was minimal probably forestalled a stronger reaction. Still, such gastronomic nationalist rhetoric by a state government suggests the potential for such an issue to spark a widespread backlash. Had the circumstances been different, had the ECJ ruling actually required a change to Germany’s internal laws (it should be remembered this was the original plan under the theory of “harmonization”) or caused a significant immediate impact on the German beer market, that three-quarters (roughly) of Germans who thought their beer simply better than most of what was swilled in the rest of Europe may have felt a distinctly negative shift in their attitudes toward European integration.

⁵² Volk, “Der Streit ums Bier.”

Chapter 6: The Pilsner Wars

“The glorious history of the Roman domination of Jerusalem was being enacted all over again. The prisoners were taken out and brought before the Pilates of 1914 down below on the ground floor. And the examining justices, the Pilates of the new epoch, instead of honorably washing their hands, sent out for stew and Pilsen beer, and kept on transmitting new charges to the public prosecutor.”

- *The Good Soldier Schweik*¹

“Není političejší nápoj než pivo. Pivo je mocnější než Klaus s Zemanem. Pivo vladné.”

(“There is no more political beverage than beer. Beer is more powerful than [President Václav] Klaus and [President Miloš] Zeman. Beer reigns.”)

- *O pivu a u piva* (2012)

“Pilsner muss nicht aus Pilsen kommen.”

(“Pilsner doesn’t have to come from Pilsen.”)

- Radeberger Company History²

During the *Reinheitsgebot* dispute, hardline Purity Law advocates refused to use the word “beer” when describing a beverage made with adjuncts or additives. When forced to reference them, they placed the word in quotation marks to indicate that these products did not meet German legal standards for “real beer.”³ The European Commission’s lawyers argued, and the court agreed, that this willfully ignored the concrete reality that “beer” is a “generic term” (*Gattungsbezeichnung*) which refers to a wide array of products, of which *Reinheitsgebot*-conforming beers represented only one category, a small minority of the world beer market.⁴ Ironically, German brewers and courts used precisely this same argument throughout the twentieth century to declare that “Pilsner” was a “generic term” for a particular style of beer, of which Pilsner Urquell, made in the city of Plzeň/Pilsen, represented only one example, a small minority of the

¹ Jaroslav Hašek, *The Good Soldier Schweik*, 1921, 8.

² <https://www.radeberger.de/geschichte/> [accessed 15 January 2024].

³ Press Release, Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, “Rosenbauer bedauert Reinheitsgebotsentscheidung des Europäischen Gerichtshofs,” 12 March 1987, BayHStA, MInn 113043, 2.

⁴ Advocate-General Sir Gordon Slynn, “Schlussanträge... in der Rechtssache 178/84,” 18 September 1986, BayHStA, MInn 113043, 16; EuGH, “Urteil... Reinheitsgebot,” 12.

Pilsner market.⁵ A historical *fait accompli* comprised the core of these legal decisions. German courts in the early twentieth century declared that Pilsner Urquell *would* have had a legitimate claim to protect the term as a designation of origin, and thus prevent any competitors from calling their beers Pilsners and reserve the right to sue for trademark infringement anytime they did, if the case had emerged later when more robust trademark laws existed. As it was, too much time had passed, and use of the term was too widespread to walk it back. As long as other breweries “delocalized” their brands by including the name of actual origin (i.e. not “Pilsner” from Leipzig but “Leipziger Pilsner”), the word Pilsner enjoyed no legal protection. These rulings serve as critical background and context to the later disputes between Czechoslovakia and East Germany.⁶ Disputes that ended with the only concession ever made by a German government on the “Pilsner” question.

As the story goes, in the 1830s and 40s, two historical developments combined to produce a new kind of beer that would change the world (of brewing). First, Gabriel Sedlmayr of the Spaten Brewery in Munich utilized an indirectly-heated kiln invented in England to produce a new kind of dark malt that tasted clean, without the smokey flavor produced by the direct-fired kilns used at that time. This new malt, combined with an old Bavarian practice of “lagering” (or storing) beer at cold temperatures for a relatively slow, long maturation, produced a robust but smooth dark beer.⁷ The reputation of this new product spread to nearby Bohemia, where the citizens of Plzeň/Pilsen, despairing of their community’s failure to produce good beer and threatened by

⁵ An example of the intricate legal theorizing behind this that also references earlier relevant court decisions is, Working Group “Pilsner Bier” in the Economic Group of Breweries and Maltsters, “Denkschrift zur Frage der Bezeichnung ‘Pilsner Bier,’” October 1940, BayStB; see also Deutscher Brauer-Bund e.V. “Bericht 1988-90,” Bonn, 1990, 86.

⁶ Working Group “Pilsner Beer,” “Denkschrift.”

⁷ J. Pilcher, “The Global Invention of Lager Beer,” The Taproom, in Seeing the Woods: A Blog by the Rachel Carson Center, written 30 November, 2017; N. Carr, “Munich Dunkel: The Original Dark European Lager,” Kegerator.Com, 6 March 2015, <https://learn.kegerator.com/munich-dunkel/> (accessed 15 April 2022).

imports of the new Bavarian style, founded a new “Citizens’ Brewery” in 1839 and invited a Bavarian brewmaster to produce the new style of lager for them.⁸ This brewer, Josef Groll, chose to kiln (basically roast) the malted barley as lightly as he could, producing a bright golden lager instead of the dark Bavarian type. He also used the renowned hops of Bohemia’s Žatec/Saaz region and did so generously, creating a beer with a predominant hop aroma and prickling bitterness.⁹ Thus was born “Pilsner,” both the original beer and the style category.

Only hindsight shows the significance of this event, and hindsight can be easily bent to the will of those in power at any given moment. For example, according to a 1940 legislative memorandum produced by the Nazi-era Economic Group of Breweries and Maltsters in Berlin, after its invention all was quiet on the Pilsner front for nearly three decades until the late 1860s.¹⁰ In that decade, breweries outside of the city limits of Plzeň/Pilsen started to use the term “Pilsner” (or Pilsener or Pils) to describe their beers. The 1940 memo claims that the Citizens’ Brewery first took “decisive action” to address these developments with a suit before the German Imperial Court in 1901, thus allowing “Pilsner” three decades to spread as a designation of style, rather than a protected indicator of geographic origin. Repeated attempts to prevent use of the word by German breweries failed to sway German judges, and on February 7th, 1933 (notably just eight days after Adolf Hitler was named German Chancellor) the highest German court effectively declared the matter a *fait accompli*. The judges noted that, if the infringement had first occurred in the 1930s

⁸ Technically it was a group of around 260 “brewing-rights citizens” who founded the brewery. The Bohemian king Václav II had granted brewing rights to the city’s denizens in 1295 and their descendants and heirs continued to hold those rights. See S. Valter, “Trochu z historie pivovaru,” *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců západočeských pivovarů k.p. Plzeň č. 3* (March 1984), 4-5; Rainer J. Christoph, Dagmar Svatková, Václav Petěřík, “*Mal bayerisch - mal böhmisch*,” *Geschichte, die Brücken bauen* (Plzeň: Förderkreis Deutsch-Tschechischer Schulen zwischen Nürnberg und Prag, 2007), 124.

⁹ Pilcher, *Invention of Lager Beer*; “How Pilsner Urquell Changed Beer Forever,” Pilsner Urquell company website, <https://www.pilsnerurquell.com/stories/how-pilsner-urquell-changed-beer-forever/> (accessed 15 April 2022); Peolmans and Swinnen, *Economic History of Beer*, 13.

¹⁰ Working Group “Pilsner Beer,” “Denkschrift,” 6, see also C. Boyer, “Das deutsche Reich und die Tschechoslowakei im Zeichen der Weltwirtschaftskrise,” *Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte* 39, H. 4 (1991), 559.

and been brought to trial, commercial law would have forced them to side with the Citizens' Brewery. However, because the dispute originated when the law was less solidified and German brewers had subsequently built entire businesses around Pilsner-style beer, the word had *de facto* become a "generic term" rather than an indicator of origin.¹¹

This ruling as well as the preceding cases took place under the shadow of nationalist conflicts between Czech and German-speaking communities in Central Europe.¹² The Citizens' Brewery tried to strike a neutral stance in these disputes from its position in the mixed city of Plzeň/Pilsen, making it justifiable to claim that the business favored neither Germans nor Czechs through World War I and the interwar period.¹³ After the German annexation of the Sudetenland, the brewery forced out "non-Aryan" shareholders and members of the board of directors, and during the occupation Protectorate officials installed a German director alongside the Czech man who had held the post up to then.¹⁴ The 1940 legislative memorandum emerged from that context, and ignored critical details from the history of Pilsner beer, such as the fact that the Citizens' Brewery actually started disputing the use of the word by other producers as early as 1852, not two decades later, and had trademarked "Pilsner Bier" in 1859.¹⁵ Later Czechoslovak officials complained that both postwar German states continued to stand by this flawed and self-serving narrative, which had informed the court's 1933 decision, in spite of the "changed political

¹¹ The memo goes on to its own arguments about why Pilsner Urquell has no rightful claim to injuries and why the term "Pilsner" in no way represents a misleading label from non-Pilsen breweries, Working Group "Pilsner Beer," "Denkschrift," 3-6.

¹² Conflicts that occurred despite and in some cases because of the "indifference, ambivalence, and opportunism" toward nationalism displayed by large segments of the population, see Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, x; King, *Budweisers*.

¹³ P. Joza, *Historie pivní lahve v Čechách: Pivovarnictví a Obchod* (Prague, 2018), 149.

¹⁴ A. Skála et al., *Dějiny města Plzně*, Vol. 3: 1918 – 1990 (Plzeň, 2018), 527.

¹⁵ E. Jalowetz, *Pilsner Beer in the Light of Practice and Science* (Plzeň, 2001), 9; Message from Doc. PhDr. Jaromír Obzina, Vice-Premier, ČSSR Government to Gustáv Husák, General Secretary, KSČ and President, ČSSR, "Informace o výrobě a označování Plzeňského piva," 30 January 1986, NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV ka. 408, inv. č. 627, 1.

situation.”¹⁶ Those “changes” included the expulsion of the vast majority of the German population from the new Third Czechoslovak Republic and the establishment of Communist-controlled governments in both East Germany and Czechoslovakia.¹⁷ Before Germany had even officially surrendered to the allied powers in May 1945, a revolutionary factory council in Plzeň/Pilsen seized control of the brewery, which then fell under management of a provisional government before officially becoming a “national business” on September 13th the following year. From that point forward, the brewery inarguably was a Czech operation and Pilsner Urquell a Czech beer.¹⁸ These roots of the Pilsner debate in the context of open and extremely violent national conflict must be kept in mind as the story moves to the postwar era.

Pilsner Urquell always oriented its business more heavily toward export than other major Bohemian breweries, and that continued even across the emerging Cold War divide.¹⁹ This kept the beer conspicuously present in the beer culture of both East and West Germany. In one particularly telling 1953 episode of the GDR comedy short series *Das Stacheltier*, a stereotypical Bavarian man visits the East German city of Leipzig to attend the trade fair but, having been misled by Western propaganda about how awful the East is (he constantly fears he will be arrested and sent to Siberia), he brings along enough food for the entire trip as well as five large cans of Hofbräuhaus beer. Naturally, he meets some Bavarian “expats” living in the GDR, who show him the wonders of life there, and on the train ride home he gets drunk with friendly East Germans as they gulp bottles of Pilsner Urquell before being arrested by sinister West German police for

¹⁶ Obzina to Husak, “Informace o... Plzeňského piva,” 30 January 1986, 2.

¹⁷ Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, epilogue; King, *Budweisers*, conclusion; E. Glassheim, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (Pittsburgh, 2016); B. Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁸ Though under the political umbrella of Czechoslovakia, the beer heartland of the state lay squarely in Bohemia, especially Prague, České Budějovice, and Plzeň, see Skála et al., *Dějiny města Plzně*, 550.

¹⁹ Skála et al., *Dějiny města Plzně*, 560.

violating trade sanctions.²⁰ In more concrete terms, Czechoslovakia and both German states had significant trade in beer ingredients and equipment as well as the finished product starting in the 1950s.²¹ Demand for Pilsner-style beer in both Germanys grew steadily, and at one point the FRG took in around 70 percent of all Pilsner Urquell exports to “capitalist” countries.²² By the mid-1960s, however, as beer exports and imports increased, the Pilsner issue reemerged.

“Labelling products with the words ‘Pilsator’ or ‘Pilsner’ is a sole right of the people-owned company Pilsner Urgell [*sic*] in Plzen... Labelling and selling other beers as such is misleading to consumers and, moreover, a violation of trademark regulations valid in the territory of the CSSR.”²³ With these words the Czechoslovak Ministry of Transportation opened a new front in the Pilsner dispute on the first of March, 1966. They targeted the German Democratic Republic, and specifically the catering company for its passenger trains, Mitropa. The quotation above accurately captures how the document zigzags back and forth between broad claims, (i.e. the term Pilsner is “used unjustly” by the people-owned Berlin Breweries) and the narrower request that Mitropa stop selling these beers on trains that cross Czechoslovakia. The East German

²⁰ Das Stacheltier 11/12 - Das GROSSE Abenteuer (1953), Q6UJ9A002RY1 (Accessed 6 May, 2021), timestamp 28:15; see also Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge (1956/39), Q6UJ9A0048WS (Accessed 11 June, 2021), timestamp 3:00; Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge (1954/B 76), Q6UJ9A0049G8 (Accessed 10 June, 2021), timestamp 2:00.

²¹ “Další exporní úspěch Plzeňského Prazdroj,” *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 1 (January 1971), 10; S., BMEL HG 2, “Vermerk. Betr.: Preisbildung des Hopfens,” 27 February 1950, BArch-K, B 116/41429, 1-2; “Hauptbuchhaltung - 1. Quartal 1957,” 24 April, 1957, BArch-K DY 42/861.

²² S., “Vermerk. Betr.: Preisbildung des Hopfens,” 27 February 1950; Message from K., Director of VEB Brewery- and Cellaring Machinery Magdeburg to E., Head Director of VVB Nagma Leipzig, “Erteilung einer Genehmigung zur Besichtigung unseres Werkes durch eine Delegation aus der CSR,” 5 October 1959, HsArch-S, 11580 Nr. 466; “Úkoly exportu v letošním roce a porovnání s rokem minulým,” *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 3 (March 1972), 2.

²³ It is worth pointing out that the Czech author of this document uses the German acronym “VEB,” which literally translates to “people-owned company,” whereas the actual name of the Pilsner Urquell brewery in Czech translates to English as “national company” or “national corporation.” I have no explanation for why this document misspells “Urquell” as “Urgell”, but the error appears throughout, see Message from MfV - ČSSR to the Legal Department, MfV - DDR, “Abschrift,” 1 March 1966, BArch-L, DM 1/12642, 1.

government apparently ignored the wider arguments and only bothered to dispute the Mitropa element, but the larger implications are plain.²⁴

Much of the teeth-gnashing from the Czechoslovak camp centered on a single East German brand, Radeberger Pilsner, and here the historical continuities become especially obvious. Radeberger Export Beer Brewery, based in a town just northeast of Dresden and about sixteen miles from the Czechoslovak border, claimed the best reputation of any East German beer producer.²⁵ Though its production remained less than half that of Pilsner Urquell during the Cold War era, both breweries operated on a similar model within their respective socialist economies. They produced the most sought-after premium beer brands in their countries and exported heavily, including shipments of considerable volume to western markets such as the USA, France, and West Germany.²⁶ Their rivalry leads back much further, nearly a century before Czechoslovakia and East Germany took up the fight. Radeberger, founded in 1872, claims that at the time of its founding the Pilsner style was “still in its infancy and had potential for improvement.”²⁷ Radeberger’s official company history celebrates defeating a lawsuit that challenged its use of “Pilsner” in 1910 and titled one section of its history “Pilsner does not have to come from Pilsen.”²⁸ It also argues that Radeberger “perfected” the Pilsner style, improving over the original.²⁹ The 1940 memo from the Economic Group of Brewers and Maltsters also singles out Radeberger as an

²⁴ Message from Dr. T., Head of the Legal Department, MfV-DDR, to W., Deputy Minister, MfV-DDR, “Betr.: Warenzeichnung für Pilsner Biere,” 23 June 1966, BArch-L, DM 1/12642.

²⁵ Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge (1954/44), Q6UJ9A0048BN [Accessed 27 May, 2021]; Die DEFA Wochenschau: Der Augenzeuge (1957/A 55) [Accessed October 12, 2020]; Mahlzeit DDR, episode 4, Prost Mahlzeit DDR: Kali, Pfeffi, blauer Würger Teil 4, directed by Anreas Kuno Richter, aired November 30, 2003, on MDR, accessed January 1, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRZozffv-A8> timestamp: 3:45 – 11:45.

²⁶ For Radeberger, see Mahlzeit DDR, episode 4, 3:45 – 11:45; for Pilsner Urquell, Skála et al., *Dějiny města Plzně*, 552-565.

²⁷ The legislative memo from 1940 (see footnote 48) states that non-Pilsen breweries started using the term in “the late 1860s,” but it is not specific in this regard. I have no evidence to doubt Radeberger’s claim, see “Geschichte,” on: Radeberger Pilsner Website, <https://www.radeberger.de/geschichte/> (accessed 16 April 2022).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

important element in the dispute between Pilsner Urquell and German Pilsner brewers.³⁰ After World War II, the two state-owned brands competed in export markets for hard currency desperately needed by their cash-strapped governments, and both received rare major investments to expand their export capacity further.³¹

With both breweries now owned “by the people” and a new diplomatic framework of “socialist brotherhood,” the Czechoslovak government pressed for advantage in the Pilsner fight starting in 1966. Both economic success and national pride were on the line. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the ČSSR sought economic success by means of national pride. In any case, as previous chapters have already argued, the two impulses are largely inseparable. Rhetorically, though, socialist leaders still had to walk a fine line with the proper place of national self-interest in the ideological framework of the Soviet Bloc. Likely not wanting to sound overly nationalistic, Czechoslovak officials declared the issue “primarily an economic one” for them while delegitimizing the East German use of the word “Pilsner” in the frivolous light of merely “preserving certain customs of the population.”³² But Czechoslovak officials directly tied the German “abuse” of the Pilsner label with the past political domination by Germany.³³ East Germany’s failure to correct an abuse originating in its expansionist past could also be construed as a failure to fully reject its nation’s historic imperialist ambitions, a mortal sin under the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, though one that Czechoslovakia’s representatives chose not make so explicit. Moreover, and speaking closely to the notion of landscape nationalism discussed already in Chapter Three, Czech sources repeatedly made the claim that the use of “Pilsner” by breweries

³⁰ Working Group “Pilsner Beer,” “Denkschrift,” 7.

³¹ Skála et al., *Dějiny města Plzně*, 555-556; *GDR Magazine* 1969 No. 26. (1969), Socialism on Film, http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/Details/N_507496_GDR_Magazine_No_26_1969 (Accessed January 10, 2019).

³² Summary of Information on Pilsner Question Delivered to GDR Embassy by L. S., n.d. (attached to letter from 12 February 1986), NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV ka. 408, inv. č. 627, 2.

³³ Obzina to Husák, “Informace o... Plzeňského piva,” 1-2.

in other locations represented an inherent deception to customers, because the word was “derived from the geographical designation of the city of Plzeň, located in the territory of the ČSSR, and is bound with the location of production, its ecological conditions, and more than one hundred years of high-quality production of a Czechoslovak product.”³⁴

These arguments did not impress the GDR. After the initial demand reached the East Germans on March 1st of that year, the countries’ respective ministries of foreign trade opened negotiations to find a resolution to the entire matter. The Germans requested “patience” on the Mitropa issue until expert talks concluded. A representative from the ČSSR Ministry of Transportation sharply rejected this request, demanding again that “Pilsner” beers immediately stop being served on trains in his country’s territory regardless of the broader negotiations.³⁵ In a follow up phone conversation, a legal representative from the GDR’s foreign trade ministry slammed the door on Czechoslovak hopes for a government intervention, and added that he would consider any unilateral actions from the ČSSR “fundamentally wrong for the relations between two friendly socialist countries.”³⁶ Neither side shied away from deploying the language of socialist internationalism in pursuit of national self-interest.

Among the dozens of neatly typewritten documents in the East German files that describe the back-and-forth over the Pilsner question, one could easily overlook the two messy handwritten pages that cover nearly a decade of the dispute. The Czechoslovak side abstained from enacting

³⁴ Czechoslovakia was first founded in 1918, so to call it over one hundred years of a “Czechoslovak” product is a willful anachronism, see Information on Pilsner Question Delivered to GDR Embassy by L. S., n.d. (attached to letter from 12 February 1986), p. 1.

³⁵ Message from Dr. T., Legal Department Head, MfV-DDR to Section for Administrative Matters, MfV - ČSSR, “Betr.: Markenbezeichnung ‘Pilsator’ oder ‘Radeberger Pilsner’ - Bezug: Ihr Schreiben von 1.3.1966,” 13 April 1966, BArch-L, DM 1/12642; Message from W., Head of Legal and Contract Department, MAI-DDR to the Legal Department, MfV-DDR, “Bezeichnung ‘Pilsner Bier,’” 6 June 1966, BArch-L, DM 1/12642.

³⁶ W. to Legal Department, “Bezeichnung ‘Pilsner Bier,’” 2.

any of the unilateral retaliation that they had threatened.³⁷ Expert negotiations began in November of 1966 and the two sides agreed to unspecified compromises including “certain, non-fundamental, name changes.” This agreement required the confirmation of both ministries of foreign trade, which never seems to have happened. The remainder of the document consists of follow-up remarks in different handwriting over a period of almost nine years as, time after time, no further progress could be reported. In 1969, the relevant official in the East German Ministry of Foreign Trade noted that negotiations had stopped and the two sides had made no plans to resume. Several following comments from the early 1970s state simply “situation completely unchanged.”³⁸ What these nine years of non-activity show accords with descriptions from oral testimony on this matter, namely that the GDR’s strategy simply comprised of stalling, diverting, and kicking the can down the road.³⁹ Czechoslovakia’s repeated demands and threats, followed by no action, indicate that it lacked either the ability or the will to open a rift with the country that it considered its most important partner after the USSR.⁴⁰

Ironically, efforts to restrict German use of the word Pilsner found more success against the imperialist capitalists in the West than they did with fellow socialists in the East, according to Czechoslovak accounts. In exchange for a promise not to use the term “Munich” in the names of their beers, Pilsner breweries struck a deal in 1967 to prevent their Munich counterparts from designating their products as “Pilsner,” “Pilsener” or “Pilsen”. The shortened term “Pils” remained

³⁷ In a bit of historical foreshadowing, these threats included stopping “German Pilsner” beer at the border, W. to Legal Department, “Bezeichnung ‘Pilsner Bier,’” 1.

³⁸ Legal Department, MFV, Running Update of Expert Negotiations, 13 December 1966 - 30 June 1975, BArch-L, DM 1/12642.

³⁹ *Mahlzeit DDR*, episode 4, 10:25.

⁴⁰ “Material, für das Gespräch des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der DDR, Genossen Willi Stoph, mit dem Minister der Justiz der Tschechischen Sozialistischen Republik, Genossen Dr. Antonin Kaspar, und dem Stellvertreter des Minister der Justiz der Slowakischen Sozialistischen Republic, Genossen Dr. Milos Barta, am 30. 08. 1988,” 29 August, 1988, BArch-L, DC 20/4911, 153.

unrestricted.⁴¹ This limited victory did not extend to the rest of the FRG, and in 1971 the internal newsletter of Western Bohemian Breweries, which included Pilsner Urquell, reported to its readers that Czechoslovak legal representatives in West Germany were taking legal action against labels with the phrase “beer brewed in the Pilsner style” (*Bier nach Pilsner Brauart*). The article claimed that these efforts had been successful, because the German Brewers’ Association recognized the danger that Czechoslovak breweries could start labelling their beer as “brewed in the Munich style” and intervened with the German Patent Office to have trademark claims denied.⁴² A follow up article three years later reported that the fight continued to convince West German brewers not to use the designation, and that new fronts had been opened in the legal battle to stop the use of any label that included the words “urquell” (original source) or related names such as “ur-typ Pilsner” or “ur-pils.”⁴³ How successful these efforts really were is unclear and likely buried in dozens of legal documents scattered across Germany, but it certainly presents a more complex picture than the only secondary source reference I have seen to this dispute, in the 2003 docuseries *Mahlzeit DDR*, which stated that the “FRG just laughed at Czech claims” on the Pilsner matter.⁴⁴ Still, the central theater of this “Pilsner war” remained in the East.

In 1974, the dispute between Czechoslovakia and East Germany took on a new urgency. In that year COMECON officially suggested agreements to protect designations of origin for products in the bloc.⁴⁵ The Eastern economic organization’s renewed push for greater cooperation and further integration came as a reaction to the EEC’s adoption of a Common Commercial Policy, which made individual negotiations between its member states and COMECON states subject to

⁴¹ Obzina to Husák, “Informace o výrobě a označování Plzeňského piva,” 30 January 1986, 2.

⁴² “Dochází i dnes ke zneužívání naší ochranné známky Prazdroj?” *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 7 (July 1971), 3.

⁴³ Dr. M. Beneš, “Současná situace naší ochranné známky v NSR,” *Podnikový zpravodaj zaměstnanců Západočeských Pivovarů, n.p. Plzeň*, č. 7 (July 1974), 4.

⁴⁴ *Mahlzeit DDR*, episode 4, timestamp: 11:20.

⁴⁵ *Mahlzeit DDR*, episode 4, timestamp: 10:00 – 12:00.

a common community policy.⁴⁶ Though implementation of the system experienced multiple delays, the EEC managed to successfully complete this large step toward trade integration in the early 1970s, putting greater pressure on Eastern states such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany that did substantial export/import business with the West. COMECON's leaders reacted with an attempt to meet a more united front with a more united front, but the Pilsner case exemplifies the difficulties they faced. Under COMECON's new framework for product naming rights, Czechoslovakia immediately laid claim to "Pilsner," "Pilsener," and "Pils," which received quick rejection from the East German camp. The talks dragged on for years. The GDR's foreign trade officials, noting that the ČSSR had taken some vaguely described action against Austria on the same matter the previous year, tried to kickstart bilateral talks once again.⁴⁷ Negotiations between leaders of both states' patent offices took up the dispute in 1978. Even still, in that same year Pilsner Urquell's law firm in Prague wrote to Mitropa, "[t]he use of this designation by breweries other than our client, Pilsner Urquell, n.p., even in combination with other elements, is in violation of Czechoslovak law and such beers are subject to customs intervention."⁴⁸ Mitropa, apparently caught off guard having assumed that twelve years of diplomatic negotiations and ongoing talks would produce some kind of agreement, curtly refused to be moved on the matter and once again gestured to the pending COMECON agreement as the eventual solution.⁴⁹

The Czechoslovak response ratcheted up the stakes further. Pilsner Urquell's legal representative dismissed the COMECON talks as hopeless and suggested that Mitropa's intransigence violated international agreements stretching back to the nineteenth-century (Paris

⁴⁶ Dragomir, "Romania and the Beginning of CMEA Controversies," 495-523.

⁴⁷ MfV, Running Update of Expert Negotiations, 13 December 1966 - 30 June 1975.

⁴⁸ Notice from Dr. T., Legal Advice Bureau 10 in Prague to S., General Director of MITROPA, 21 April 1978, BArch-L, DM 1/12642.

⁴⁹ Message from S., General Director of MITROPA to Legal Advice Bureau 10 in Prague, 21 June 1978, BArch-L, DM 1/12642.

1883 and Madrid 1891). Just as West German *Reinheitsgebot* advocates argued for the righteousness of their cause based on their version of the true history of German culture and traditional consumption habits, so too Czechoslovak officials cried that the GDR had ignored inconvenient realities from its national past to its own economic benefit. And if reminding them of the “truth” of the two country’s shared history did not get the job done, the Czechs hoped that appeals to socialist solidarity against the West would. They argued that East Germany’s refusal to recognize their right to the Pilsner designation played into the hands of the capitalist enemy in the West. “My client believes that you will see their point of view on this matter, especially in consideration of their struggle with western competitors, who are constantly pointing to the use of these designations by GDR breweries and in Mitropa train cars [to dismiss similar claims against them].”⁵⁰ The East German refusal to acknowledge Czechoslovakia’s exclusive right to produce Pilsner beer amounted to a betrayal of socialist solidarity to the benefit of the West.

To compare, once the European Commission got a second wind of market integration in the early 1980s and finally decided to push the *Reinheitsgebot* matter, it brought suit and got a legally binding decision in its favor in just over five years. Five years may seem like a long time, but compared to the three decades of back and forth between the GDR and ČSSR over a similar trade dispute with no sign of resolution nor any path to enforce one, the ECJ trial looks like a speedy and decisive mechanism. Even moments that looked hopeful for a compromise in the East turned out to be false starts because nothing forced the two sides to follow through. By 1980, some degree of rapprochement appeared likely. Multiple documents from the East German Ministry of Transportation, Patent Office, and Mitropa indicate that the GDR saw the opportunity for a compromise solution, whereby East German breweries would refrain from using the words

⁵⁰ Message from Dr. T., Legal Advice Bureau 10 in Prague to S., General director, MITROPA, 26 July 1978, BArch-L, DM 1/12642.

“Pilsner” or “Pilsator,” in any export beers that might enter Czechoslovakia, but they would retain the right to label them “Pils.”⁵¹ Mitropa’s General Director warned that this would create more difficulties than might at first be apparent. Asking breweries to switch labelling practices could cause considerable production issues in an economy that already struggled mightily in that area. Moreover, trying to limit changes to only the beers that crossed ČSSR territory would make last-minute substitutions impossible when supply hiccups did occur (which happened often), and would not prevent people with “German Pilsner” from randomly crossing the border, technically violating the Czechoslovak customs requirement.⁵² Still, all of the relevant state organs agreed to the plan in principle, with a four-year grace period to implement the necessary changes. Where the process broke down this time is not evident from the available sources, but five years later the two sides remained entrenched in their demands for certain details of the agreement, and apparently increasingly bitter that their “generous” offers of compromise kept failing. The issue had risen to the level that the East German Prime Minister Willi Stoph and Czechoslovakia’s Vice-Premier Jaromír Obzina had taken charge of the talks and the dispute became a subject of discussion in a meeting between General Secretaries Erich Honecker and Gustáv Husák in early 1986.⁵³ The sticking point boiled down to the all-important export beer market, which both East Germany and Czechoslovakia valued as a source of meaningful revenue in hard currency. The Czechs remained adamant that GDR beers could not even use the shortened “Pils” for beer shipped abroad. That

⁵¹ MfV Legal Department, “Vermerk,” 7 February 1980, BArch-L, DM 1/12642; Message from Prof. Dr. H., President, Office for Patents and Inventions to Arndt, Minister, MfV, 28 February 1980, BArch-L, DM 1/12642; Message from S., General Director, MITROPA to Dr. T., Head of Legal Department, MfV, 28 March, 1980.

⁵² Schwandt to Thiele, 28 March 1980.

⁵³ Doc. PhDr. Jaromír Obzina, Vice-Premier, ČSSR Government, “Informace pro generálního tajemníka ÚV KSČ s. G. Husáka,” 12 February 1986, NArch-Ch, KSČ-ÚV ka. 408, inv. č. 627.

was enough of a deal breaker that the problem could not be resolved, and in 1988 Czechoslovakia finally made good on its threats.⁵⁴

The Pilsner border incident in August 1988 lasted just a few weeks and saw ten freight cars of beer refused entry at the border, as well as the confiscation of at least one unfortunate individual's personal "travel supply" consisting of fifteen bottles.⁵⁵ In the end, the short peak in the conflict brought about a partial compromise that three decades of talks had failed to produce, but only in the realm of transportation across Czechoslovakia, and only after the Czechs had forcefully blocked access to their territory for the offending goods. To get the trains rolling again, the GDR agreed to hide any mention of "German Pilsner" on containers and ordered Mitropa not to serve the beers during transit across the ČSSR. A full resolution of the origin-designation issue, however, would require further high-level talks.⁵⁶ The fact that the path to compromise started with a direct phone call between the East German and Czechoslovak ministers of foreign trade, both of whom reported progress on negotiations to the highest levels of their administrations, underscores the importance of the dispute. Of course, it is impossible to say what further developments would have looked like had both authoritarian states not been overthrown by peaceful revolution the following year, completely upending the dynamics of the Pilsner question. Nothing suggests that continued talks would have produced a definitive solution when so many words and spilled ink had failed to do so already, and Czechoslovak officials now knew that unilateral action could get them some progress. It does not seem outside the realm of possibility that they would have escalated to broader forms of economic punishment against their socialist

⁵⁴ Message to Prof. Dr. H., President of the Office of Invention and Patents, DDR, 25 April 1980, BArch-L, DM 1/12642; "Information," 9 August 1988, BArch-L, DY 30/1766.

⁵⁵ Customs Administration, DDR, "Information," 22 August, 1988, BArch, DY 30/17661; "Information der Bezirksleitung Dresden," 23 August, 1988, BArch-L, DY 30/17661.

⁵⁶ Message from G. B. to Willi Stoph, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, "Information," 19 August, 1988, BArch-L, DC 20/4911, 159-161.

allies, putting new pressure on an international system already shifting after the Soviet Union signaled a loosening of its iron grip on the Eastern bloc. Instead, the system collapsed first.

Part Three Conclusion - “The Customer is Sovereign”

In a press release immediately after the ECJ decision, a Bavarian state government representative stated, “the customer is sovereign. The state can only be the advocate of the consumer, not their legal guardian.”⁵⁷ Indeed, the German beer consumer became the sovereign authority on the fate of the German *Reinheitsgebot*, but not for lack of trying by their government. The Federal Republic, the German nation-state, tried everything short of threatening the project of European integration to keep full sovereign power over a cultural commodity, and only in defeat did its political leaders fall back on appeals for a kind of grassroots consumer nationalism. German leaders could, and did, argue that their goals were in the best interest of the entire European Community (Edmund Stoiber, Joachim Volk, and others argued that the best solution was an EEC-wide *Reinheitsgebot*), but the adjudicative power of the Court forced the FRG to prove the merit of such claims on the basis of evidence, or else abandon this line of defense. Despite decades of metaphorical kicking and not-so-metaphorical screaming about tradition, purity, health, and consumer expectations, the power of the ECJ forced German public figures to adjust their rhetoric to the reality of the Common Market. The court’s decision may merely have taken the power to enforce a rejection of “foreign” beer out of the hands of the government and placed it into the hands of citizens. But in doing so it decoupled political power from the impulse to promote national beer culture, and thus did defeat gastronationalism (the desire to unify the will of the nation with

⁵⁷ Press Release (from the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior or other Bavarian State Government office), Der Europäische Gerichtshof zum Reinheitsgebot für Bier, n.d. [between 12 and 16 March, 1987], BayHStA, MIInn 113043.

the powers of the state on matters of food culture) in this case. The German people, the judges wrote in their opinion, had every right to their consumer customs and traditions, so long as their government did not lock them in to those habits by denying access to any alternatives.⁵⁸ The only catch was to ensure that customers had all of the information needed to make their sovereign choices without risk of deception. Thus, the most important response to the ECJ ruling from the German side involved adding some version of the phrase “brewed according to the German *Reinheitsgebot*” to most German beers. Armed with sufficient knowledge, the German beer drinker would succeed where the state had failed to protect the national beer culture.

In the East, too, the issue boiled down to one of beer labels. The Czech argument for more than a century had been that calling a beer “Pilsner” when it did not come from Plzeň constituted an unscrupulous lie and deception. Just as a customer drinking a Munich lager knows from the name to associate the quality and tradition of that beer with the German nation, with Bavaria, and with the city of Munich; so too should anyone drinking a Pilsner think of the Czech nation, of Bohemia, of Plzeň. In its own way, then, Czechoslovakia also argued for a kind of consumer sovereignty, specifically for a removal of the deceptive misinformation that, in its leaders’ opinion, made it impossible for customers (foreign customers with hard currency) to make a fully-informed decision about their beer purchases. They demanded that people should decide for themselves whether they want to drink the authentic, original Pilsner beer or a German product attempting to imitate it. German use of the geographic term muddied the waters and made the relationship between the two options unclear. There was no open talk of “consumer sovereignty” in the East because there was no neoliberal ideal. There was, however, plenty of lip service to socialist internationalism as a smoke screen for the pursuit of bald gastronationalism of both economic and

⁵⁸ EuGH, "Urteil des Gerichtshofes vom 12. März 1987 'Vertragsverletzung - Reinheitsgebot für Bier,' in der Rechtssache 178/84," 12 March 1987, BayHStA, MInn 113043, 15; Egan, “Regulating European Markets,” 197.

cultural variety. The brutal, violent history of Czech/German relations in the twentieth century, which should have lost all relevance under the “new political circumstances,” became a battleground in a war over beer labels.

In the end, for all the similarities of the cases and for all that they show the power of cultural commodities to spark nationalist sentiments in the very recent past, the difference in the progression and outcome of the two disputes came down to geopolitical power structures. While the Federal Republic succeeded in holding off the European Commission until the forces of market integration gained renewed strength in the 1980s, Czechoslovakia refrained from unilateral action against its socialist neighbor until Soviet dominance began to soften in the same decade. One state fought a rearguard action against a union that it had willingly, enthusiastically helped to build. The other impatiently waited until it could reassert its sovereignty to address its historic grievances within an alliance system imposed on it by Soviet military might. Ironically, it was the abandonment of more collaborative and voluntarist (i.e. democratic) methods of market integration in the West, and the failure or refusal to create a more authoritarian international structure in the East that drove the two sides to such different outcomes. COMECON’s inability to adjudicate disputes and impose decisions on member states prevented resolution and kept both sides pursuing their goals in the spirit of national communism. No court could force the two sides to prove their claims in a legal, evidentiary manner, so both continued making the same unproven, and often unprovable, arguments. Whether they spoke like neoliberals in the West or like socialists in the East, both sides continued to drink like nationalists.

Epilogue: Back to Where We Started - Beer After 1989

The “*Wende*” (“turning point”) and “*Sametové Revoluce*” (“Velvet Revolution”) shook the world of beer and brewing in the soon-to-be unified Germany and Czech Republic just as it shook almost every aspect of life. The full extent of those changes and disruptions cannot be detailed here. As it relates to the subjects of this dissertation, however, the actions taken by both states in the aftermath of the revolutions, especially the continued wrangling over the issues discussed in Part III, are particularly telling of how beer set out on the path to the recent events described at the start of the Introduction, and an excellent jumping off point for recapitulating the major arguments of the preceding chapters.

Any claims that German reunification (and concomitant changes in “national” attitudes) had a direct impact on the future of the *Reinheitsgebot* would be speculative at this point. Still, the following can be said: in the immediate wake of the European high court’s decision in 1987, at least some industry experts and officials in the Bavarian state government, traditional bastions of pro-*Reinheitsgebot* politics, bemoaned the fact that losing the import ban would probably necessitate an end to the regulation in Germany as well. As they wrestled with the outcomes of the court’s decision, officials in the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior envisioned an inevitable chain reaction leading to the unthinkable. “In my view,” wrote one advisor on food law, “it will not be a matter of how long the *Reinheitsgebot* can be kept, but perhaps if and when it will be politically possible to throw it overboard in order to rescue as many small and mid-sized breweries as

possible.”¹ This suggests that the Purity Law may have rested on shakier ground even with its supporters than the government and industry’s public pronouncements suggested in the late 1980s.

Three years later, the rule celebrated a new triumph. With the revolutions behind them and Germany on the path to reunification, the 1990 German Brewers’ Association’s semi-annual report not only staunchly defended the *Reinheitsgebot* but cheered the expansion of its sovereign domain to the hundreds of breweries of the German Democratic Republic, which had “voluntarily” adopted the Purity Law ahead of a legislatively prescribed deadline. One suspects that the new managers of those breweries had quickly estimated their hopes of competing in the German beer market with “impure” beer to be exactly zero, hence their rush to “volunteer.” Even with the government’s legal power to cordon off Germany from “chemical” beer eliminated, German brewers, cultural commentators, and government officials had created an environment largely toxic to alternatives and a kind of grassroots cultural sovereignty had taken the place of state power to shut out any significant market share for non-*Reinheitsgebot* beer. The customer not only was sovereign on beer matters, but wielded that power quite effectively in precisely the manner the German brewing industry would have hoped.² Of course, this sentiment aside, the state did still wield its power in the name of German beer to require that GDR breweries adopt the Purity Law.³ Consumer sovereignty, it seems, would be extended exactly as far as the ECJ could compel it to be extended, and no further.

That same 1990 Brewers’ Association publication also makes note of an ongoing appeals process in Italy, where a 1984 lawsuit by the Pilsner Urquell company had met with shocking and

¹ K., Ministerial Advisor, Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, *Vertraulich* - Reinheitsgebot für Bier, p. 10; see also Die Versuchsanstalt für Bierbrauerei erwartet einen 'knallharten' Wettbewerb - Vorstand: Entscheidung über Reinheitsgebot wirft lange Schatten auf uns, in: Münchner Merkur, 23 April 1987.

² Press Release (from the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior or other Bavarian State Government office), Der Europäische Gerichtshof zum Reinheitsgebot für Bier, n.d. [between 12 and 16 March, 1987], BayHStA, MInn 113043.

³ Deutscher Brauer-Bund e.V. Bericht 1988-90, Bonn, 1990, pp. 44-45.

threatening success. The then-national company in Plzeň sued the Poretta Brewery in Varese over its labelling of a beer as “Pilsner” under contract for the Danish Tuborg Brewery. Under the 1958 Lisbon Agreement (in effect since 1966) Italy and Czechoslovakia had agreed to mutually protect designations of origin certified by the other member states. In 1989 an Italian court ruled in favor of Pilsner Urquell, and as of 1990 the matter remained under appeal and unresolved. Though Germany did not sign the Lisbon Agreement and therefore could not be sued in the same way, the Brewers’ Association felt worried enough that it promised to “work intensively, especially at the level of the EEC, to ensure that the term Pils(e)ner and Pilsen continues to be viewed as a generic term and not as a designation of origin, as it has been for decades in Germany in accordance with jurisprudence. However, it must also be ensured that existing designations of origin remain protected.”⁴

This last sentence is especially poignant. Within a few years of the 1990 report’s publication, the Bavarian Brewer’s Association filed for protection of the term “Bavarian beer,” which was granted in 2001 and has been used by Bavarian brewers as the basis for multiple lawsuits within the EU.⁵ “Kölsch” beer from Cologne has been a protected geographical indication since 1997.⁶ “Munich beer” followed one year later.⁷ Under roughly the same formula (though,

⁴ Ibid., 86.

⁵ H. Lovells, Coexistence of “Bavaria Holland Beer” trademark and the geographical indication “Bayerisches Bier” in Europe? in: Lexology.com, <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=9aea10b7-dd28-47ea-a9df-f963189ffdce> (accessed 18 April 2022).

⁶ A Guide to Kölsch, in: Brewer-World, <https://www.brewer-world.com/guide-to-kolsch/> (accessed 18 April 2022).

⁷ In total, nine German beers have received the EU’s Protected Geographical Indication. A similar number of Czech beers have acquired the same protection, but none of them relate to beer from Plzeň. Of monks and marks: Munich beer, from: German Patent and Trade Mark Office, last updated 10 August 2021, https://www.dpma.de/english/our_office/about_us/history/70_years_patent_office_munich/part_3_munich_trade_marks/muenchnerbier/index.html (accessed 18 April 2022); EU Quality schemes (TSG, PDI, PDO), from: Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, <https://eagri.cz/public/web/en/mze/food-industry/eu-quality-schemes-tsg-pdi-pdo/> (accessed 18 April 2022); Geographical Indications: IP Protection for Wines, Foodstuffs and Agricultural Products, 16 August 2017, LexDellmeier Intellectual Property Law Firm, <https://lexdellmeier.com/en/blog/geographical-indications-ip-protection-wines-foodstuffs-and-agricultural-products> (accessed 18 April 2022).

thankfully, radically different political circumstances) as the 1933 German High Court decision, the *fait accompli* for the brewers in Plzeň continues to sit uncomfortably in parallel with an insistence that other designations are sacrosanct and must be protected. That is not to say that the arguments of the German brewers and European courts are invalid. As Pilsner Urquell itself proudly claims, “over 70 percent of all beer drunk today is in the pilsner style,” making any present-day attempt to reclaim “Pilsner” as the sole property of that brewery as impractical as trying to recollect the grains from a clump of sand dropped into the ocean a century ago. What is more realistic, however, and what appears to have become the real goal of the brewery in Plzeň as well as Czech government officials by the end of Communism, was to use every avenue to draw the beer-drinking world’s attention back to the “Original” Pilsner for the prosperity of the brewery and the pride and renown of Czech beer culture and brewing. It should come as no surprise, then, how negatively many Czechs reacted to the wave of foreign purchases that swept all but one of the major breweries in their country out of the hands of domestic owners in the years after the reestablishment of a market economy. Evžen, who spoke bitterly in the Introduction of Americans, Japanese, and Africans running Czech breweries, followed up that statement by concluding “its common sense, it would be better if we [Czechs] were to buy some African brewery, rather than the other way around.”⁸

Did brewers in Cologne, Munich, and Düsseldorf hasten to protect their designations of origin under EU law because they needed to protect their brands from unfair competition, or because they wanted to celebrate and lay claim to a significant feature of their regions’ unique cultural heritage? Did the representatives of the Pilsner Urquell brewery continue, even after the fall of Communism, fight for their sole right to use the term “Pilsner” because, as they

⁸ *O pivu a u piva: Za doprovodu Slovanských tanců* (2012), ČT, IDEC: 312 294 34011, timestamp: 10:15.

themselves suggested, the very conflict “strengthen[s] the popularity and exclusiveness of the beer produced in Pilsen” or was it because national pride in the most renowned Czech beer was on the line? The answer to both questions is simply: yes, to all of the above. In that answer lies the essence of what it means for Czech and German beer to be a cultural commodity as described by this dissertation. It is that essence that has kept state leaders and powerful government officials in these lands constantly bending over backward to give special consideration to beer culture, to shield it, to protect it, to give it aid. This is the answer to the “big question” that faced me as I began to research beer in East Germany in 2016 for my master’s thesis. Why did the state continue to make beer, and so much of it? Why devote the resources if they are so desperately needed elsewhere? Why not clamp down on celebrations and joyous paeons to the “people’s drink” if they did not want people to drink so much alcohol? Because beer is a cultural commodity. What it cannot win by pure economic rationale it achieves by its cultural power, its importance to the most common expressions of identity, its sheer, banal, ubiquitous, and generally positive “normalness” in everyday life as the citizens of these countries understood it.

Six chapters later, I believe this history of beer in postwar Central Europe has staked a position in the three broad historical debates that I presented at the outset. As I have argued, and as the quote from Eley and Blackbourn suggests, continuity must be viewed as a spectrum, not a binary. Despite the recent surge in attention to slow-changing aspects of human life such as culture, food, and transnational patterns of trade and migration, the majority of what captures historians’ attention continues to be relatively short periods of change, rupture, and conflict. Even long-term studies that cover hundreds of years tend, in their detailed analysis, to present consecutive and connecting narratives of change over time. This dissertation only has a single chapter that eschews, to some degree, the comfort of telling a story. While this impulse is

eminently understandable and may go as deep as the way that humans have evolved to process information and understand their surroundings, it is a habit that must be constantly checked with reminders such as Braudel's *Mediterranean*. Human time is just one kind of time, and we do not need to look as deep as geology or climate to see patterns that outlive many generations.

Take the Lesser Beer Zone presented in the chapters above. Bavaria and Bohemia are central to the story of why Central Europe is regarded as the beer heartland of the world, and they have been for at least a century. Saxony, on the other hand, is a story of what could have been but never was. Bavarians and Bohemians might point to their regional landscapes as the source of their success, the famed quality of their brewer's barely, their hops, and even their water supplies. I would argue that politics played a major role as well. By the time of the great industrial boom in beer production, including the growth of long-distance export trade, at the end of the nineteenth century, Saxony already found itself integrated into a unified German Reich with Bavaria and the Northern Rhineland. Bavaria became the most powerful force in German beer culture and remained so in West Germany after the war even after the Rhineland began to outstrip it in production. Bohemia sat behind the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and later Czechoslovakia, giving the already-flourishing Bohemian beer industry a dominant position in its own political realm. But if politics alone had cast Saxony into the shadow of Bavaria before 1945, it ceased to do so thereafter. Other factors must therefore explain why, despite being home to several internationally celebrated brands and having spent forty years as the beer engine of a country whose citizens eventually drank more of the people's drink than any other in the world, Saxony's global reputation for beer making (probably unfairly) pales in comparison to its renowned neighbors. The difference is partly material, Saxony never produced as much beer as its neighbors and its hops and barley are not world famous in the same way. But the cultural

aspect cannot be ignored. Bavaria and Bohemia forged their regional beer cultures in the crucial age of nation-state building, and those projects remained deeply linked thereafter. Saxony never did. The new East German state never came close to building a new East German nation, and when its citizens talked about a quintessential German *Bierland*, they still tended to mean Bavaria. As many commentators have pointed out, a truly discernible separate East German identity emerged most strongly after reunification, and thus it is probably not surprising that the strongest signs of a “Saxon *Bierland*” have emerged since then, including both *Ostalgie* (see Figure 7) and odes to the ties between beer and “*Heimat*” extolled in the discourse of the Saxon Brewers’ Association today.⁹

That connection between beer and *Heimat* brings us back to the notions of identity at play in this dissertation. As Alon Confino has written, the idea of *Heimat* “linked the German of the present to immemorial notional ancestry of the past.”¹⁰ Those cultural or symbolic links, as Confino suggests, are imagined, contrasting sharply with the idea of continuity, which suggests a genuine causal relationship between what came in the past and what exists in the present. Identity is the glue that holds the imagined and the real together for the individual, or perhaps the vessel in which they come together. While the meaning of a cultural commodity to a sense of self-understanding or group belonging is indeed “re-imagined” by every new generation and person, it is not reimagined from nothing. This study takes as its starting point the most fundamental short-term rupture in economic, political, and cultural of the last century for Germans and Czechs and it proceeds through a period of breakneck transformation in all three areas thereafter. Yet, much of the cultural and social meaning ascribed to beer and beer drinking in 1989 bears

⁹ <https://www.brauerbund-sachsen.de/www-brauerbund-sachsen-de-de-rund-ums-bier-ge>.

¹⁰ Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 93.

striking resemblance to 1979, 1969, 1959, and, yes, even 1949, 1939, 1932, and 1913. Much like *Heimat* (or its Czech equivalent: *Domov*), what those cultural associations meant and their impact on a sense of identity could and did vary greatly to different individuals at different times under different circumstances, but beer, too, was “endowed with a symbolic manual that imposed certain limits.”¹¹ Thus, neither East Germany nor Czechoslovakia managed to convincingly imbue beer culture with socialist ideology.¹² Bavaria remained the essential German land of beer even when it did not produce the most and even across the Cold War divide, and substantial progress made in women’s rights and female empowerment in the later decades of the twentieth century did not fundamentally shift the overwhelmingly masculine nature of beer culture. It is not that change or progress in these areas is impossible, but that with cultural commodities of such import the timescale for substantial evolution is long.

The final word must go to the role of the state. As I have contended throughout this study, the combined economic and symbolic power of cultural commodities makes them remarkably good at drawing political leaders in to act on their behalf (or, as in Chapter Four, not work so directly against them). This was true, as I have shown, in states both democratic and authoritarian, embracing both market capitalism and socialist central planning. Beer is hardly the only example of this dynamic. In 2015, then-President Barak Obama (hardly the most nationalistic of recent American leaders), spoke of his government’s decision to rescue the “Big Three” American auto manufacturers in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis by arguing with evocative language that “[t]his is the heartbeat of American manufacturing right here. And it was flat-lining. And we had a choice to make.”¹³ The economic consequences of failing to rescue the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dimmel, *Die Budweiser Aktienbrauerei*, 127.

¹³ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/01/08/president-heads-michigan-talk-about-our-auto-industry-heartbeat-american-manufacturi>

industry would doubtless have been tremendous, but the symbolism of such a loss for a country with an intense national affection for car culture certainly played a substantial role in the decision, or at least in the way it was justified. It is not by any means my intention to suggest the way that governments should go about managing cultural commodities. I will argue, however, that they should never be mistaken about the full implications of the actions that they may take to promote or challenge them. The material and immaterial aspects of these goods are inseparable. Policies supposedly aimed only at material ends will inevitably result in immaterial fallout, and vice versa. Czech authorities banned all alcohol sales from factory canteens but excluded beer because, after all, a Czech man who has worked a hard day deserves his liquid bread. The preferential treatment given to beer in the Czech lands, which exceeded even Germany, might go a long way to explain why beer consumption in the Czech Republic, for good or ill, remains the highest in the world even as the Germans have begun to drink significantly less in recent decades. The Federal Government of West Germany may have defended the *Reinheitsgebot* for fear that German breweries would succumb to competition and throw German workers out of their jobs, but the manner in which they went about their defense and the rhetoric that they explicitly and implicitly endorsed doubtless left many Germans feeling as though wealthy European beer magnates and shareholders in giant non-German beer conglomerates were sacrificing aspects of their national identity and possibly their health on the alter of the Common Market. The transition from socialism in both East Germany and Czechoslovakia saw the majority of both states' breweries privatized, sold to foreign entities, bought by West German brewery groups, or simply shuttered. Anger at this turn of events is not hard to find in popular sources, and likely contributes to feelings of nostalgia. As the vignette at the start of Part II states "beer must be taken seriously," no longer for its role in building socialism, or any of the other

political fights of the late twentieth century. Now, beer must be taken seriously because this is the stuff that populism is made of.

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