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978-0-521-86956-0 - *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany*

Jonathan R. Zatlin

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The Currency of Socialism

MONEY AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN EAST GERMANY

There is perhaps nothing so commonplace and yet so mystifying as money. But to European communists, money was clearly an instrument of economic exploitation and spiritual alienation. In this groundbreaking study, Jonathan R. Zatlin explores the East German attempt to create a perfect society by eliminating money and explains the reasons for its failure. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including unpublished communist reports, secret police files, literature, jokes, letters written by ordinary people, and conversations with key German politicians, this book shows how the communist regime undermined the political authority of socialism and created the material conditions for its demise. By exploring both the economic and the cultural function of money, Zatlin challenges traditional approaches to economic planning by offering a novel explanation for the collapse of communism in East Germany and a highly original interpretation of German unification. Written in an engaging and lucid style, *The Currency of Socialism* brings to life the scurrilous competition for power among communist officials and the everyday burdens experienced by ordinary East Germans.

Jonathan R. Zatlin is Assistant Professor of History at Boston University. He has published articles in *German History*, *German Politics and Society*, *Theory and Society*, *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, and *H-German*, among other journals. Zatlin was a co-winner of the Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize awarded by the Friends of the German Historical Institute in 2001.

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JONATHAN R. ZATLÍN

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Washington, D.C.

and



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For Katharina, Leora, and Max

כשאנחנו ביחד, כלנו שמחים

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Soviet-style regimes officially encouraged all sorts of communal endeavors, including the writing of books. In East Germany, however, “collective authorship” rarely translated into real cooperation or intellectual exchange, constricted as the work was by the compulsion to ideological precision, the lingering hierarchies of German academic traditions, and the power relations that pervaded the dictatorship. In contrast, this book is in many ways truly the product of a collective enterprise. I feel fortunate to have benefited from a remarkable combination of institutional and intellectual support during the time that it has taken to write it.

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Trabant, the Wartburg, and the End of the GDR,” in *German History* 3:15 (1997), pp. 358–80; “Consuming Ideology: Socialist Consumerism and the Intershops, 1970–1989,” in Peter Hübner and Klaus Tenfelde (eds.), *Arbeiter in der SBZ-DDR* (Essen, 1999), pp. 555–72; “Eingaben und Ausgaben: Das Petitionsrecht und der Untergang der DDR,” in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 45:10 (1997), pp. 902–17).

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While I do imagine this book as a collective enterprise, the liberal emphasis on the individual must nevertheless have the last word: Despite the kind assistance of these scholars and friends, I alone am responsible for the views expressed in this book.

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AHB	Foreign Trade Enterprises (<i>Außenhandelsbetriebe</i>)
BArchB	Federal Archives in Berlin (<i>Bundesarchiv Berlin</i>)
BStU	Federal Representative for the Materials of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic (<i>Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatsicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik</i>)
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany (<i>Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i>)
CoCom	Committee for Coordinating East–West Trade
Comecon	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
DIW	German Institute for Economic Research (<i>Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung</i>)
DM	West German mark (<i>Deutsche Mark</i>)
ESS	Economic System of Socialism (<i>Ökonomisches System des Sozialismus</i>)
GDR	German Democratic Republic
Genex	Gift Service and Small Export Company (<i>Geschenkdienst und Kleinexport GmbH</i>)
FDGB	Free German Trade Union (<i>Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i>)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
HA XVIII	Economic desk at the Ministry for State Security (<i>Hauptabteilung XVIII</i>)
HO	Retail Organization (<i>Handelsorganisation</i>)
IFA	Industrial Association for Automotive Construction (<i>Industrieverband Fahrzeugbau</i>)

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KoKo	Commercial Coordination Area (<i>Bereich Kommerzielle Koordinierung</i>)
MEW	Marx-Engels Collected Works (<i>Marx-Engels Werke</i>)
MfS	Ministry for State Security (<i>Ministerium für Staatssicherheit</i>)
Ministry for ALF	Ministry for General Machine, Agricultural Machine, and Automobile Construction (<i>Ministerium für Allgemeinen Maschinen-, Landwirtschaftlichen Maschinen- und Fahrzeugbau</i>)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEP	New Economic Policy
NES	New Economic System (<i>Neues Ökonomisches System</i>)
Oibe	Stasi Officer on Special Assignment (<i>Offizier im besonderen Einsatz</i>)
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
Politburo	Political Bureau of the Central Committee (<i>Politisches Büro des Zentralkomitees</i>)
Riko	directional coefficient used in calculating the value of the East German to the West German mark (<i>Richtungskoeffizient</i>)
SAPMO-BA	Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (<i>Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv</i>)
SBZ	Soviet Zone of Occupation (<i>Sowjetische Besatzungszone</i>)
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i>)
SMAD	Soviet Military Administration
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany (<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i>)
Stasi	Ministry for State Security (<i>Ministerium für Staatssicherheit</i>)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VEB	People's Own Factory (<i>Volkseigener Betrieb</i>)
ZK	Central Committee (<i>Zentralkomitee</i>)