

Xenophobic Sentiment in the GDR (March 7, 1989)

Abstract

Although the number of foreigners in East Germany was much smaller than in the West, xenophobia was even more rampant. This anonymous satirical verse, which was based on a well-known Christmas poem, expresses anti-foreigner sentiment.

Source

Anonymous Poem Sent from the Publicly Owned Enterprise Plasta Espenhain to Horst Schumann, First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) District Leadership in Leipzig

As I leave the department store,
there's nothing left on shelves or floor.
And crowding the door, still wanting in
are Polish families with their kin,
while out beyond the giant gate
Germans patiently stand and wait.
At the market as I walk around
Czechoslovakians everywhere abound.
They went shopping, their pockets are full.
There's no more left—they got it all.
And as I was riding home on the bus,
the guy sitting opposite me was a Russ'.
Enraged I ran into the store to buy cheese,
in front of me stood a Vietnamese.
I tripped out the door, poor me, oh my,
in front of me was a Cuban guy.
Come on, dear Erich^[1], be our guest,
from all that is yours, give us half the rest.
The Pole has money, the Russian has light,
but we've got friendship and that's alright.

NOTES

^[1] Reference to General Secretary of the SED and GDR head of state Erich Honecker—trans.

Source: Anonymous poem sent from the VEB Plasta Espenhain to Horst Schumann, First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party district leadership in Leipzig, Received on March 7, 1989; reprinted in Henrik Eberle, ed., *Einverstanden. E. H. Parteiinterne Hausmitteilungen. Briefe, Akten und Intrigen aus der Honecker-Zeit*. Berlin: Schwartzkopf & Schwartzkopf, 1999, pp. 311–12.

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