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CHILDHOOD, MEMORY, AND THE COLD WAR

EDITED BY MNEMOZIN



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Searching for Childhood Gummi Bears¹

Nadine Bernhard

I was born in 1981 in East Berlin and thus lived the first eight years of my childhood in the GDR. After reunification, I lived still in Berlin, but now in the Federal Republic of Germany. The division of east and west (Germany) has been an important experience that has been part of my life and identity ever since. It seems that this is prevalent in particular in Germany where the division between east and west is reproduced continuously in education, politics, media, and everyday life. When, in a Reconnect/Recollect workshop, I saw another participant's photo of a bear, I was moved to think of a family holiday in Poland in 1991, where we children could buy milk ice cream (called Lody) in the shape of this bear. It tasted wonderful. The memory of sweets is the association that leads me to a memory that I now share with you.

Every year in spring, there was a little fair in the parking lot in front of their high-rise building. They lived on the 23rd floor. The fair had only a few stalls, but for her as a child it was huge. When she was 5 or 6 years old, she was also allowed to go to the fair alone and she divided the pennies she got or saved by collecting paper and glass. One half of the money she wanted to use for the one-armed bandit and the other half for sweets. Her favorite sweets were big

¹ This is a childhood memory produced as part of the Reconnect/Recollect project discussed in the introduction to this book.

soft gummi bears in the shape of the rabbit and wolf.² She loved these sweets and tried to save them by dividing them up for the following weeks/or days. Unfortunately, not long after 1990, these gummi bears were no longer produced. Still, today she tries new varieties of soft gummi bears in the small hope to find the taste again. But she has never been lucky.

2 Ну, погоди [Well, Just You Wait!]. My mother still has dishes with the motives of the rabbit and wolf and I remember vividly how my sister and I always argued who would get the plate or the cup.