



Finding Aid for the Erich Honecker papers and photographs

Collection processed by Lindsay Hansen, June 2005.

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URL: <https://www.wendemuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/HoneckerFindingAid.pdf>

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Description is in English.

Finding aid updated using Describing Archives: a Content Standard (version 2021.0.0.2).

Repository:

Wende Museum
Culver City, California

Local identifier:

2011.900.769

Title:

Erich Honecker papers and photographs

Date:

1971 - 2001

Extent:

Approximately 5.2 linear feet (1 box, approx. 50 books)

Creator(s) / Collector(s):

Honecker, Erich

Abstract:

Erich Honecker's personal papers in the Wende Museum's collection document the last four years in the life of the communist leader who ruled East Germany from 1971 to 1989. In his will, Honecker specifically requested that his personal papers be housed in a non-German institution. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Honecker was imprisoned in Berlin's Moabit Prison and charged with thirteen counts of manslaughter for ordering deadly force against its own citizens who were trying to flee East Germany. Honecker stood trial for crimes against humanity beginning in November of 1992. The trial ended early in January 1993, however, due to Honecker's failing health. He died in Santiago, Chile, of liver cancer in 1994. Honecker's personal archive includes legal correspondence from his defense lawyers regarding the trial and medical records from various doctors outlining his liver cancer. There are detailed reports of the allegations against Honecker, the individuals who filed charges, information about the appeal process, and news articles with Honecker's handwritten annotations, as well as drafts and notes for Moabiter Notizen. The archive also includes books from Honecker's library, which are embossed with his personal stamp.

Physical location:

Stored at an off-site storage facility.

Conditions governing access:

The collection is open for access; however, items in this collection do not circulate and may be used in-house only.

Some materials in the collection are restricted; consult repository for details.

Language of material:

Materials are predominately in German with some materials in Russian (Cyrillic).

Physical characteristics and technical requirements:

This collection does not have any special technical requirements and is open for access with some restrictions. If you have questions about these materials please email collections@wendemuseum.org.

Conditions governing use:

Copyright restrictions may apply.

Property rights to the physical object belong to the Wende Museum. Literary rights, including copyright, are retained by the creators and their heirs. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine who holds the copyright and pursue the copyright owner or his or her heir for permission to publish where the Wende Museum does not hold the copyright.

Rights statement for archival description:

Pursuant to its open access policy, the Wende Museum makes the Finding Aid to the Erich Honecker papers and photographs and the metadata contained within available for public use.

Immediate source of acquisition:

Donated by Margot Honecker, 2004.

Preferred citation:

[Identification of item]. Erich Honecker papers. 2011.900.769. Archive. Wende Museum.

Administrative / Biographical History:

Erich Honecker was born in Wiebelskirchen, Germany, on August 25, 1912. The son of a coal miner, Honecker was a Communist sympathizer from a young age. A Communist youth leader in 1931, he was arrested by the Gestapo in 1935 and sentenced to ten years in prison in 1937. At the war's end in 1945, the Red Army liberated Honecker and he became Chairman of the FDJ in 1946. Honecker was responsible for the 1961 construction of the Berlin Wall and passed a law prohibiting unauthorized emigration from East Germany.

Honecker replaced Ulbricht as the First Secretary of the SED in 1971 and remained in the position until the fall of communism in 1989. During his time in power, Honecker signed three treaties with West Germany: the "Transit Agreement" and "Traffic Treaty" of 1972 and the "Fundamentals Treaty" of 1973. Honecker resisted Soviet leader Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika reforms in the mid 1980's.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Honecker was charged with thirteen counts of manslaughter; he had ordered the shootings of people trying to flee East Germany and as a result 350 people died. Having sought refuge in Moscow, Honecker was deported to Germany and stood trial beginning in November of 1992.

The trial ended early in January, 1993, due to Honecker's failing health. It was stated that Honecker's cancer was terminal and that it was a violation of civil rights for the trial to continue. When Honecker fled to Chile, doctors there stated that, "in strict medical terms (his cancer) is not terminal. . . . It's not

terminal, but it's a serious situation." Karin Gueffroy, mother of the last person killed at the Berlin Wall, said that Honecker is now "seeking from the court the humanity that he formerly didn't grant to others."

Honecker died in Santiago of liver cancer on May 29, 1994. In his memoir, *Moabiter Notizen*, Honecker stated that "if it were up to me, East Germany would still exist." During his trial, Honecker credited the Berlin Wall with preventing World War III.

Scope and contents:

Collection consists of legal and medical documents, news clippings and manuscripts related to the last four years of Honecker's life. Includes legal correspondence from Honecker's defense lawyers regarding his trial, medical records from various doctors outlining Honecker's liver cancer, numerous news articles with Honecker's handwritten annotations, and drafts and notes for Honecker's final book, *Moabiter Notizen*. There are detailed reports of the allegations against Honecker, the individuals who filed charges, and information about the appeal process.

Separated materials:

Books from Erich Honecker's personal library have been absorbed into the Museum's larger book collection.

System of arrangement:

Arranged in the following series:

Press: News clippings from German newspapers and magazines covering Honecker's life and trial. Many clippings have Honecker's handwritten notes on them.

Medical records: Official records from prison and hospital doctors outlining Honecker's condition and overall health.

Manuscripts: Honecker's notes and drafts for his final book, *Moabiter Notizen*, written about his time at Moabit prison.

Legal documents: Records from courts and Honecker's lawyers, outlining allegations, evidence, judgments, and appeal information.

Photographs: Photographic prints of images taken during Honecker's regime as First Secretary of the SED.

Personal library: Erich Honecker's private collection of books. Books are embossed with a personal stamp. (Note: these materials are housed with the Museum's larger book collection. Linear footage not known.)

Subject terms:

Germany (East)--Politics and government
Honecker, Erich
Politicians--Germany (East)--Biography
Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
Trials (Crimes against humanity)
Trials (Political crimes and offenses)

Box inventory :

Series I: Press, circa 1991-1992 box 1, folders 1-3

box / folder	folder title	date(s)
box 1, folder 1	<i>Spiegel</i> /articles	1991
box 1, folder 2	GDR accomplishments	circa 1991
box 1, folder 3	Fulberth articles	1992

Series II: Medical Records, circa 1992 box 1, folders 4-5

box / folder	folder title	date(s)
box 1, folder 4	Hospital / Prison	1992
box 1, folder 5	Diagnosis	1992

Series III: Manuscripts, circa 1991 box 1, folders 6-10

box / folder	folder title	date(s)
box 1, folder 6	Interview	1991
box 1, folder 7	<i>Moabiter</i> , draft I	1991
box 1, folder 8	<i>Moabiter</i> , draft II	1991
box 1, folder 9	<i>Moabiter</i> , draft III	1991
box 1, folder 10	GDR notes	circa 1991

Series IV: Legal documents, circa 1987, 1992

box 1, folders 11-17

box / folder	folder title	date(s)
box 1, folder 11	Appeal instructions	1992
box 1, folder 12	Appeal	1992
box 1, folder 13	Berlin Court	1992
box 1, folder 14	Allegations I	1992
box 1, folder 15	Allegations II	1992
box 1, folder 16	Allegations and statements	1992
box 1, folder 17	Meeting minutes	1987

Series V: Miscellany and photographs, circa 1971-1990; 2001

box 1, folders 18-20

box / folder	folder title	date(s)
box 1, folder 18	Ministerrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik	1989-1990
box 1, folder 19	Photographs: Honecker and Soviet leadership	1973; circa 1971-1989
box 1, folder 20	Photographs: Honecker, press / publicity photographs	1990; 2001; circa 1971-1989

Series VI: Personal library, undated

book stacks

location	description	date(s)
gen. shelving	Erich Honecker's personal library	undated