

Foreword



Spread all over the globe, a group of scientists is engaged in the study of the highly complex mathematical features of the sub-atomic particles. We form a tight community, seeing one another regularly at conferences and workshops, and often writing papers together where our latest views are displayed. One prominent member of this community is Harald Fritzsche, who became well-known around 1971 when he wrote papers together with Nobel Prize winner Murray Gell-Mann and others, papers in which he laid the roots of a very novel way to understand the behavior of quarks inside protons, pions and other such particles. Quarks were still hypothetical and controversial notions in those days, and his papers showed an expertise that made us believe that the author must have enjoyed a privileged past enabling him to grab one of the many opportunities offered by some top university in the western world.

Few of us, however, were aware at that time that Harald had escaped from Eastern Germany only a few years before, in 1968. He left a country that was surrounded by a fence or a wall, made practically impenetrable by armed guards and land mines. Life conditions had been harsh there, and students were not allowed even the slightest amount of political freedom to develop and express their own independent views of what an ideal society should be like.

When the local authorities of the town Leipzig, where he studied, decided to bring down a very ancient church in order to create a glorious new Karl Marx Platz, this was just too much for some of the students and other inhabitants to bare, indeed for all those who still cherished some awareness of past culture, other than the modern communist ideals of the time. In this delightful book, the author describes this situation, and what happened next. His protestations had brought him into trouble, and, some way or other, Harald Fritzsich had to leave. He wanted to go to the West anyway, to study quarks and other mysterious riddles that he had read about in the few and scattered scientific renderings that he had been able to put his hands on, and he wanted to work out some very important ideas that he had. Everything, his family, his friends, and his girl friend had to be left behind. He had no choice, and indeed he had to go soon, knowing that the authorities were after him.

This book is of historical importance. It describes the tensions created by a ruthless regime in a defenseless community, the feelings of helplessness as well as the resourcefulness of those who wanted to make a difference, and then had to escape under life threatening conditions. No-one at the time knew whether the tiny pinpricks of the protesters would help at all to bring about any change in a seemingly perpetual situation and whether the monolithic autocrats could maintain their communist rule forever. Indeed, only few could surmise that less than two decades would be needed to bring the cold war to an end. What happened should not be forgotten. Personal accounts such as the one here are real jewels.

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