



Divided

by Sue Hitchcock

Heidrun got off the bus at the Brandenburg Gate, from which it was just a short walk through the Tiergarten to the Science Library where she worked. On bright mornings she would take the time to admire the view through the arches to the trees in Unter den Linden, but under dark clouds, the history of the gate, dividing the city into Communist and Western, Capitalist zones, made her fearful.

After shelving the books returned the previous day, she unlocked the door to admit the readers at ten o'clock and returned to her desk where she was cataloguing theses submitted by Ph.D. students. She had hardly begun when the Head librarian called her over.

"This is Doktor Heilbronn, who will be researching in your area." And turning to the plump, middle aged man, "Heidrun, here, will be able to show you the system and answer any questions you have."

The gentleman snapped his heels together and gave a small bow, Heidrun smiled and offered a hand to shake.

"Pleasure to meet you, Fraulein. Surely we have met before? Did you work here before the wall came down?"

Heidrun giggled. She had been only two years old when the Wall was broken down by the desperate East Berliners. Then she started to feel annoyed. Surely she didn't look that old. She wasn't even thirty yet.

"I don't come from Berlin. I grew up in Warnemunde, on the Baltic. So you must be wrong. Never mind! What do you wish to read?"

“I wish to study the geology research made in Russia.”

Heidrun knew exactly what he needed, which pleased her somewhat, and she led him to the separate room where Referativny Zhurnal was kept. The title covered all the Soviet Scientific papers, subdivided by subject, each published several times a year, some only twenty pages, some sections two centimetres thick. She settled him at a desk, slapped the plastic-covered guide in front of him and turned to go.

“Please forgive me. Could you direct me to the Geology area? You know, I am sure I recognise your face.” And he made an ingratiating smile.

Heidrun had more things to think about than fantasies concocted by strangers, but still maybe she had seen his face before, but he would have been far younger. She used her coffee break to search through images of the smashing of the Wall on the internet. There he was, sitting atop the Wall, leg dangling over a painted slogan, and cheering for all he was worth. He was a freedom fighter, admired by all Westerners, and beside him, a woman, not unlike Heidrun, waving the black, red and yellow flag of West Germany. But Heidrun had Communist parents and, though glad of the unification of Germany, she still felt an underlying prejudice against her. It is questionable whether anyone relishes being mistaken for someone else.