THE PASSPORT OF THE
GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
(GDR)

AND IT'S HISTORY
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FOREWORD

Time passed so fast and Germany is already unified since more than two decades. A state called German Democratic Republic (GDR) existed just fifty years - but what are 5 centuries in world history – just an eye-blink. East Germany or “the other Germany” was a short living construct. I am German and if you asked me 25 years ago if there was a chance for unification then I would answer “No”. I believe nobody really expected that everything happens so fast and peacefully.

May 1945. Germany is in ruins after WWII and divided in four Allied Occupation Zones (see picture) controlled by the Allied Control Council (ACC) with its members United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union and France (later added but without duties).

In March 1948 the Allied Control Council became obsolete and the construct GDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) comes alive slowly based on the former territory of the Soviet Occupation Zone or SBZ (Sowjetische Besatzungszone). The German Democratic Republik was founded in October 1949.
Extract...

The just founded GDR issued its very first regulation for passports on 12 January 1950 but you might be surprised to read that this regulation was considering Diplomatic and Service passports only.

§1 Diplomatic and Service passports are issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
§2 Diplomatic passports are issued to Government members eligible for diplomatic immunity and diplomatic rights. Family members are eligible for diplomatic passports… Diplomatic passports can also be issued to heads of delegations and their deputies who travel on behalf of government or public interest abroad.
§3 Service passports may be issued to the following persons:
   a) Government members or administrative staff of the Government of the German Democratic Republic, members or administrative staff of the governments of the countries of the German Democratic Republic and employees or employees of public agencies or bodies, if these people carry on a business trip abroad or business abroad is active.
   b) Members of delegations who travel in the government's behalf or in the public interest abroad.
   c) Administrative staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
§4 (1) The color of a diplomatic passport is red, service passport are in dark green color.
   (2) Diplomatic passports are printed according the appendix A, Service passports are issued according appendix B.
§5 Holders of Diplomatic passports or Service passports do not have diplomatic rights on the German border and are not entitled to preferential treatment if they are not in possession of a "Grenzempfehlung, an official confirmation allowing for a fast-track border clearance.", which was issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in consultation with the Ministry of the Interior for that border crossing.
§6 Endorsements are made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
§ 7 (1) Diplomatic passports are valid up to two years, Service passports up to a period of six months.
   (2) The scope of Diplomatic passports can be restricted to certain foreign countries.
   (3) The scope of Service passports is limited to the countries noted in the passport.

*Remark:* Translated by the author.
13 April 1950
Implementing Rules on the issue of Diplomatic passports and Service passports were issued. The full text in German language can be found here

25 January 1951
Regulation on the return of German identity cards when moving to West Germany or West Berlin

1 June 1952
West-Berlin citizens must apply for a travel permit in East-Berlin to enter the GDR

15 December 1952
The freedom to travel for individuals within the GDR is now limited to a range of 100 km

25 February 1953
Regulation on the confiscation of German identity cards on the issue of inter-zone passes

29 October 1953
Regulation on the issue of identity cards of the German Democratic Republic

14 November 1953
First implementing provision on the issue of identity cards of the German Democratic Republic

24 June 1954
Second implementing provision on the issue of identity cards of the German Democratic Republic

15 September 1954
Passport Act of the German Democratic Republic

Five years after founding the GDR there was now a passport act for citizens of the “Democratic Republic”; four years after implementing rules for Diplomatic and Service passports.

Extract...

§ 1
(1) German nationals who left the territory of the German Democratic Republic to travel abroad are obliged to identify themselves with a passport.
(2) For each border crossing a visa is required.

§ 2
(1) Persons who do not hold German citizenship must identify themselves both when entering or leaving the territory of the German Democratic Republic as well as spending time in this area through a passport.
(2) For each entering or leaving the territory of the German Democratic Republic a visa is required.

§ 8
(1) Whoever is leaving the German Democratic Republic to abroad or from abroad without authorization, or who is leaving the prescribed destinations, travel routes and travel dates and other restrictions on the trip shall be punished with imprisonment up to three years.
(2) Likewise punished, who for one or other false information surreptitiously through a permit to leave or enter the German Democratic Republic.
(3) The attempt is punishable.

§ 9
Foreigners who violate the stipulations of this law and implementing rules and regulations may be expelled from the German Democratic Republic.

30 August 1956
Amending the Passport Act of the German Democratic Republic

11 December 1957
Amending the Passport Act of the German Democratic Republic
Much stricter rules were implemented to reduce the amount of “Republikflüchtlinge” (refugees) for short time the amount was really reduced but in 1960 the level of refugees reached a again a level of 202,711 which was 40% higher than in 1959 were 144,225 people were counted. In some years before building the wall up to 300,000 “escaped” every year the GDR.¹

In 1960s the GDR implemented also stricter rules for travels between West- and East-Berlin. In consequence the “Interzonenabkommen” (Inter Zonal Agreement) was cancelled by West-Germany.

8 September 1960

The Ministry of Interior of the GDR ordered that West-German citizens travelling to East-Berlin will need a stay permit. These permits were issued at every transition point. Citizens from West-Berlin were exempt from this rule.

13 August 1961

In the night from 12th to 13th August 1961 “THE WALL” was started to build up.

13 June 1968

Amending the Passport Act of the German Democratic Republic

A visa is now mandatory to enter the GDR. People from West-German need a passport and West-Berlin citizens an ID-Card. Both need an entry-exit permit / transit permit. GDR citizens travelling to West-Germany or West-Berlin need now a passport and a visa. Before this date travels from and to GDR was possible for “Germans” with an ID-card only.

28 June 1979

Amending the Passport Act of the German Democratic Republic

Abolished by Unification Treaty of 31 August 1990 with the proviso that passports issued remain in force until 31 December 1995!²

¹ “Republikflucht”: Flucht und Abwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1961 ... von Damian van Mélis,Henrik Bispinck
² http://www.verfassungen.de/de/ddr/passgesetz79.htm
PASSPORT TYPES IN GENERAL

In 50 years of existence of the state, from 1949 to 1990, the GDR issued by my knowledge 4 types of passports.

- Standard passport
- Diplomatic passport
- Service passport
- Alien passport

Of course the design and content of these documents changed over the years and you will see samples of all types at the following pages.

One question I already can answer which I have been asked many times.

“When was the first GDR passport issued?”

Well, as just stated before there might be early 1950’s Diplomatic or Service passports issued but in fact in all the years I never saw one.

Ordinary citizen’s passport should be available from end of 1954 but also here I never saw such an early issued document.

My oldest GDR passport was issued on 29 May 1956 in Berlin.

The very first passports were issued for “German nationals”. This statement of nationality was missing later on and was in fact against international standard. The GDR had in the beginning also the idea of “one German state” but defined later its own nationality. Mid-1960’s (?) the statement “German nationals” was not any longer made in the passports.
STANDARD TYPE 1954 – 1965 (?)

Hard cover
Color: dark blue
Pages: 24
Language: German, Russian, English and French
Format: ca. 10.8 x 15 cm

Valid till 28 May 1958

Profession: Shooting master (!)
Issued 29 May 1956 (my earliest GDR passport)

Early visa with border stamps and revenues
...with old “Volkspolizei” revenue (German for the "people's police"), actually expired in 1958 but renewed in 1961 (!), shortly before the wall was build and then valid till 1966

This “Collective Travel List” belongs to another passport I own and was issued for a journey from 25 May to 20 June 1959 to Albania
Issued April 1961, 4 month before the wall was build (!)
STANDARD TYPE 1966 – 1986 (?)

Hard cover
Color: dark blue
Pages: 24 (52)
Language: German, Russian, English and French
Format: ca. 10 x 14,5 cm
Early stamp about the validity of the passport
“valid for all states and the political independent unit of West-Berlin”
Version with 52 pages issued in 1966, different design e.g. DDR Logo
THE PASSPORT OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (GDR) AND ITS HISTORY

…again different wording
“all foreign countries”

52 pages
VISA EXAMPLES

Albania

And even Canada was possible in early days...

...“England” (United Kingdom)
Austria and Yugoslavia...

Denmark..., visa for 30 days

West-Germany, visa for 30 days
West-Berlin – multiple visa, border crossing Friedrichstrasse

Again different wording...West-Germany; independent political unit West-Berlin
Residence authorization 1970 in a US passport
STANDARD TYPE 1986 – 1988(?)

Soft cover  
**Color: dark blue**  
Pages: 48  
Language: German, Russian, and French. **English was cancelled since this version**  
Format: ca. 9.5 x 13.5 cm (a bit smaller than the previous version)

The following characteristics are no longer recorded since this version:

- Special characteristics  
- Profession  
- Family status

**But from now on it is stated that this passport is property of the GDR (in German only).**
THE PASSPORT OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (GDR) AND ITS HISTORY
STANDARD TYPE 1988 – 1990(?)

Soft cover
Color: sky blue
Pages: 48
Language: German, Russian, and French
Format: ca. 9,5 x 13,5 cm (a bit smaller than the previous version)
It’s not verified during which period this type was issued but based on statistic data from a fellow collector the period could be June 1988 till March 1990.
"New design"
“New design”
STANDARD TYPE 1990…

Soft cover
Color: dark blue
Pages: 48
Language: German, Russian, and French
Format: ca. 8,5 x 13 cm (again a bit smaller than the previous version)

Slightly different design of the cover…
The 1990 issued types are very common and easy to find...
DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT

Soft cover
Color: red
Pages: 48
Language: German, Russian, and French
Format: ca. 10 x 13,8 cm

Data based on the SPECIMEN I do have in my collection!

This is a rare piece...
This Diplomatic passport of Erich Mielke, Minister for State Security (German: Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (MfS)) was at auction in 2004 with other documents. 3 days before auction ended the price was at 2010€.
SERVICE PASSPORT

Hard cover
Color: green
Pages: 48
Language: German, Russian, and French
Format: ca. 10 x 14,5 cm

Data based on the SPECIMEN (~70’s) I do have in my collection!
### Passport of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Its History

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<th>Wehramt</th>
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<td>Nom de guerre</td>
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<table>
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<th>Der Passeur</th>
<th>Signaturen</th>
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**Der Minister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten**

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**DP 150138**
THE PASSPORT OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (GDR) AND ITS HISTORY

Hard cover
Color: green
Pages: 48
Language: German, Russian, and French
Format: ca. 10 x 14,5 cm

Data based on the SERVICE PASSPORT (11 April 1989) I do have in my collection!
ALIEN PASSPORT

Hard cover
Color: green
Pages: 24
Language: German, Russian, English and French
Format: ca. 10,5 x 15 cm

Ca. 1970
CHILD PASSPORT

Two samples of Child passports issued 1980 and 1987
OTHER DOCUMENTS

INTER-ZONAL TRAVEL PERMIT (GERMANY)

1. Remarks of Zonal Boundary Control Crossed at:
   Очерез зональных контролирующих пунктов. Просмотрен через:
   Indications du poste de contrôle à la ligne de démarcation: Était
   passé à — Bemerkungen der Passthrough-Überschnitten

Date — Jours — Date — Datum
Signature and Stamp of the Post Commander — Подпись и печать
   Штамп Контролера поста — Unterschrift und Stempel des
   Postkommandanten — Zone

Passed Zonal Control Post at — Просмотрен через зональных
   контрольных пунктов — Est passé au poste de contrôle — Pas-
   sreibgrenzbefahlsers dieser Stelle

Date, and Name of Post
   Jour, et nom du lieu
   Datum und Name der Stelle
Signature and Stamp of Post Commander — Подпись и печать
   Штамп Контролера поста — Unterschrift und Stempel des
   Befehlshabers dieser Stelle

2. Notes of the Military Commander or Bürgermeister
   in the Zones of Destination — Очерез зональных контролирующих
   пунктов и местных властей — Indication du Commandant
   Militaire ou du Bürgermeister des Zones de destination — Be-
   merkungen der Militärbefehlshabers oder Bürgermeisters in der
   Zone des Bestimmungsortes

Arrived in Town of
   Использован в городе
   Date d’arrivée dans la ville
   Ankunft in der Stadt

Departed from Town of
   Изъят в городе
   Date de départ de la ville
   Abreise aus der Stadt

Signature and Stamp
   Подпись и печать
   Unterschrift und Stempel

B ** № — 486139

INTER-ZONAL TRAVEL PERMIT (GERMANY)
МЕЖЗОНАЛЬНЫЙ ПРОПУСК ДЛЯ ПРОЕЗДОВ
(ГЕРМАНИЯ)

FERMIS POUR UN VOYAGE INTERZONE
(ALLEMAGNE)

INTERZonen-REISEPASS (DEUTSCHLAND)

Valid for one complete journey only
Действительный только для одной поездки туда и обратно
Valid pour un seul voyage aller et retour
Nur für eine Reise gültig

1. Dieser Pass ist unübertragbar und gilt nur für die Person,
   für die er ausgestellt ist.

2. Der Inhaber muss sich an seinen Bestimmungsort binnen
   24 Stunden nach seiner Ankunft und am Tage seiner
   Abreise aus der Stadt oder Zone eintragen.

3. Der Inhaber trägt die Verantwortung bezüglich der Er-
   füllung aller Vorschriften, betr. Transport, Aufenthalts,
   Rationierung etc., in der Zone und am Bestimmungsort.

4. Dieser Pass ermächtigt den Inhaber keineswegs zur Einreise
   in irgendein gesperrtes Gebiet; es sei denn, dass ausdrück-
   lich eine Einreise auf dem Pass eingetragen ist.
...issued 1952 by the Control Commission for Germany

This document was issued also in different colors and sizes. (white at region Düsseldorf 1947, grey – region Berlin 1950, red - region Berlin 1951 and orange - region Berlin 1952)
SINGLE ROUND-TRIP INTERZONAL PASS

POUR UN SEUL VOYAGE ALLER ET RETOUR
SINGLE ROUND-TRIP INTERZONAL PASS
РАЗОВЫЙ МЕЖЗОНАЛЬНЫЙ ПРОПУСК

Einfacher Rundreise-Interzonen-Pass

1. Dieser Paß ist nicht übertragbar und ist nur gültig für die Person, auf die er ausgestellt ist.
2. Der Inhaber muß sich auf der Ankunftsstation innerhalb 24 Stunden nach Eintreffen melden und am Tage der Abreise in der Stadt bzw. Zone.
3. Der Inhaber ist verantwortlich für die Beachtung aller Vorschriften in Verbindung mit dem Transport, gemachten Unterbrechungen, Lebensmittelausstattung etc. in der Zone und am Flughafenummernplatz.
4. Dieser Paß gibt dem Inhaber nicht das Recht, irgendeiner der verbotenen Bezirke zu betreten, die im Paß nicht angegeben sind.

Angebogene Interzonenpässe sind der ausstellenden
Zentralstelle für die Ausstellung zu überreichen und de se rendre à
et de se rendre à
und sich weitergeben nach
Nürnberg

Le porteur est autorisé à franchir la ligne de démarcation à
Bearer is authorized to cross the Demarcation Line at
Разрешается пересечь демаркационную линию в пункте

Le porteur est autorisé à franchir la ligne de démarcation à
Bearer is authorized to cross the Demarcation Line at
Разрешается пересечь демаркационную линию в пункте

Motif du voyage
Purpose of Journey

Privatreise

Date d'émission
Date of Issue
Дата выдачи
Datum der Ausstellung
Дата выдачи

Date de naissance
Date of Birth
Дата рождения
Datum der Geburt
Дата рождения

Nom et Prénoms
Surname and Christian Names
Фамилия, имя и отчество

Reiser, Robert
Berlin D 65, Schüttr. 50

Date et lieu de naissance
Date and Place of Birth
Дата и место рождения

21. Jull 1920
Nürnberg

Genre et numéro de la pièce d'identité
Identity Document No. and type

49/47-704-52

Profession
Profession and Occupation
Профессия и род занятий

Agent-Angestellter

Representant de la maison ou de l'établissement
Representative of firm or concern

Vertreter von Firmen oder Konzern

Signature et cachet de chef du poste de contrôle
Signature and stamp of the Commander of the point:

Penchout et Stempel des Bedienstbaren des Grenzüberganges:

Il doit être répondu aux questions en allemand.
(Answers to be given in German.)

(Antworten in Deutsch zu geben.)

Nürnberg

Zentralstelle für die Ausstellung Interzonen-Pässe

1. Nürnberg
2. Berlin-Quarter Napoleon
3. Interzonen-Pass

14 Oct 2011 © Tom Topol, Passport Collector & Editor of www.passport-collector.com page 48 of 56
...issued 1953
ENTRY PERMIT

Limited entry permit issued 1952
Entry permit issued 1955

Permit issued 1981 for a temporary stay in the protection zone (area close to the wall)
TRANSIT VISA (PERMIT)

Transit visa for travelling by train...
Transit visa for a single journey through the GDR demanding to keep the predefined travel route within shortest travel time...

Application to travel to GDR...~1972
Transit visa 1963 – US passport
COLLECTING TIPS & GUIDING PRICE

Well, I do have around 30 items in my collection and the early issued passports are difficult to get. See also my remarks in the different chapters. 1990’s are quite common and always in good condition. As mentioned earlier the last issued type was valid until expire or latest until Dec 1995. So here it is worth to look more into details as a GDR passport from 1991 to 1995 with visas of foreign countries is something special.

Late GDR passport with Israeli visa issued 1993 (!). Thanks to A.S. for sending in this picture.

The items mentioned in “Other Documents” are also quite rare to find except the Transit Visa (Permit) which is common.
Here are some estimates based on my own experience which might be useful for collectors.

\[ C: \text{common} \quad R: \text{rare} \quad RR: \text{very rare} \quad RRR: \text{extremely rare} \]

**Standard type 1954 – 1967**
- Rarity: 1954 – 1965: RRR, Value: min. 50€
- 1966 – 1967: RR, Value min. 30€

Remark: Passports issued in 1961, the year of building the wall, are more valuable.

**Standard type 1968 – 1981**

**Standard type 1982 – 1989**
- Rarity: C, Value min. 15€

**Standard type 1990…**
- Rarity: C, Value min. 10€

**Service passport**
- Rarity: RR, Value min. 70€

**Alien passport**
- Rarity: RRR, Value min. 200€

**Provisional passport**
- Rarity: RRR, Value min. 100€

**Diplomatic passport**
- Rarity: RRR, Value min. 200€

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Tom is a passionate collector of passports and related travel documents with focus on German papers from 1700 to 1970. Furthermore he is the editor of the ONLY website for passport collectors. The website is well recognized by the passport collector’s community worldwide. Tom is working as Quality Manger with international companies (Medical Devices, Engineering and Project Business). Currently based in Switzerland but often at other locations on the globe.

---

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I like to thank the following contributors for their support:

F.M., Germany
G.S., Singapore
A.S., USA
W.K., USA

Please contact me if you think I need to add something or if you see some mistakes. Do you have a passport BEFORE 1956? Then I would love to get a scan! Your contribution is valuable and most appreciated!