

Jens Reich was born in 1939 in Göttingen and grew up in Halberstadt. He studied medicine and molecular biology at Berlin's Humboldt University and began as a junior doctor in his home town. After further study in biochemistry, he turned to research work. In 1964, Jens Reich obtained his doctorate on "Arterial Vascular Sounds" and from 1968, he worked at the Central Institute of Molecular Biology of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin-Buch. Research assignments included time at the Institute of Biophysics at the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Pushchino near Moscow. In 1976, the dissertation for his second doctorate was on "Time and Motion in the Metabolism of Living Cells".

But Jens Reich was not just involved in the sciences and research. All his life, he has also been interested in social developments and political processes in the GDR and later, in a reunited Germany. As early as 1970, he took part in a private "Friday Circle" of which he was also a co-founder. This was where a group of approx. 30 opposition-minded citizens met in secret to undertake "analysis of the rotten system" that was the GDR. From the 1980s, this circle was being bugged by the State Security Ministry and records were kept of its meetings. Professionally, Jens Reich specialised in computer applications in biology and medicine, being appointed as professor of biomathetics in 1980 and working at the same time as head of department at the Central Institute of Molecular Biology. But Jens Reich lost both these posts in 1984 when he refused to break off his contacts in West Germany or to join one of GDR's faction parties. He was further sanctioned for his oppositional attitude with a ban on travel to countries in the West. But this did not stop Jens Reich from publishing critical analyses of the GDR system in the West German review "Lettre International", using the pseudonym "Thomas Asperger". In September 1989, Jens Reich was then of course one of the authors and first signatories of the appeal "Aufbruch 89 – Neues Forum" – "Fresh Start 89 – New Forum", leading to the founding of the New Forum. On 4 November 1989, Jens Reich, along with Friedrich Schorlemmer, Christa Wolf, Ulrich Mühe and other well-known figures in the GDR, was one of the speakers at Alexanderplatz in Berlin during one of the biggest of the demonstrations held at that time. In March 1990, in the first and only free elections to the GDR's parliament, the Volkskammer, he was elected for the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen – Alliance 90/The Greens – and after official reunification in 1990, he was a member of the German parliament, the Bundestag, for three months. In 1991 and as representatives of "The Peaceful Demonstrators of Autumn 1989 in the GDR", Jens Reich and five other civil rights campaigners were awarded the Theodor Heuss Medal. After reunification, Jens Reich was able to continue as a molecular biologist, returning as head of department for biomathematics at the Central Institute of Molecular Biology in Berlin. From 1992, he led the "Bioinformatics" group at the Max Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine in Berlin-Buch. As visiting professor at the German Cancer Research Centre in Heidelberg in 1992/1993, he was involved in the development of research projects in the field of molecular bioinformatics. Finally and from 1998, Jens Reich was professor of bioinformatics at the medical faculty of Humboldt University, Berlin. But alongside his scientific work, for Jens Reich, his political and journalistic activities have continued to be a crucial part of his life's work. In 1994, Jens Reich was put forward by an independent group as a candidate for the office of president and was also nominated by Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, losing out, however, to Roman Herzog of the CDU. This in no way discouraged his social commitment. As early as 1990, Jens Reich co-published "Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik", writings on German and international politics, and in 1997, he was a founding member of the "Willy Brandt Circle" in Berlin, an affiliation initiated by Günter Grass and Egon Bahr and dedicated to questions of peaceful coexistence between nations and of socially conscious and fair coexistence on the domestic front. Jens Reich is also a member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and since 2001, has been a member of the German National Ethics Council. He also deals with the issues at the interface between science and ethics in an audiobook with himself as the reader. "Teufelsfragen" – "Devilish Questions" – looks closely at the ethically conflictive

issues in biomedicine, calling for rational elucidation of what in research is vision and what is science fiction. Only then can a moral judgement be made, starting with the old question: what should be done and what shouldn't? A question that has repeatedly been raised by Jens Reich both as a scientist and as a civil rights activist. In 2007, writing for "Die Welt" under the headline "The Wall made us hostages to the Cold War", Jens Reich recalled the day the Wall was built and summed up for the present day:

"For the younger generation, every contemporary report from that time is like something from a different world, from its dim and distant past, before they were a part of it. They do not easily see the long shadows of this short 20th century, the fetters that still bind us to it and have left their mark on our knowledge of the world and our mentalities. And many older people who experienced the East Block, from within or from without, want to forget, not to remember, or they romanticise the past into nostalgic memories of their youth. That sort of amnesia is dangerous.

It keeps us from learning, hinders warning against the repetition of history's mistakes. Warning against overstretched imperium is still topical, if not any longer for us as Germans (I hope). The warning against the utopia of a state that seeks to organise its citizens' happiness, if necessary against them and, by force, still holds true. This must be heeded, as the challenges become serious that this new century brings with it."